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Preface

In tandem with the scant first-wave women's movement, the burgeoning secular Republic of Turkey abolished Sharia law and recognized women's civil and political rights by 1934. This enabled a limited number of elite women to be recruited into sex-typed professions, overshadowing men of lower social sectors and bolstering the nation's modern ideology (Boratav, 2011; Çakır 2021). Nevertheless, reluctant to fully eliminate structural barriers against public participation, the modernizing state simultaneously ignored the overwhelming majority of women's subordination in society, culture and the private sphere through traditional gender norms, social segregation and the surveillance of female sexuality. The decades of rapid social change marked by urbanization and industrialization have not been accompanied by a similar rate of transformation of cultural values, norms and attitudes in terms of traditional interpersonal, gender and family relations (Sunar & Fisek, 2005). Therefore, the enduring historical characteristic of Turkish society as a patriarchal culture persisted, placing significant expectations on women to uphold traditional roles within marriage, family, and motherhood. In Turkey, women continue to face grave challenges stemming from cultural norms, cultural and religious conservatism, and patriarchal structures such as underage and forced marriages, barriers to education, sexual harassment, domestic and honor-based violence.

The feminist movement in Turkey has significantly consolidated itself over the years and achieved pivotal legislative gains in terms of empowering women. Feminism has also strongly permeated the macro social sciences such as sociology, political science, international relations and economics. Nevertheless, psychology, psychoanalysis, and psychiatry, as fields with the potential to forefront and politicize women's experiences and mental health issues within the broader sociopolitical context, have largely maintained their mainstream and apolitical stances, and much work in these realms remains as individual initiative. A minority of clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychoanalytically oriented professionals perform their work based on feminist perspectives in their private practice, women's shelters, different NGOs, and engage in activism and advocacy research primarily focused on various forms of violence against women. As is the case with clinical psychology, vis-a-vis the stringent gatekeeping for research mirroring U.S. mainstream psychology, only a limited number of social psychology scholars investigate issues such as sexism and violence against women from a feminist perspective. There is a restricted quantity of gender courses available within psychology departments, as well as a scarcity of theses and published works pertaining to gender issues (Boratav, 2011).

This compilation is based on the symposium titled “Psychology’s Feminist Voices from Turkey: Complicating Mainstream Knowledge and Practice,” which took place on the 11th and 12th of January, 2024 at the Kilian-Köhler Center at Ruhr University Bochum. It comprises works from a sample of the small constituency of feminist scholars and activists who have been able to problematize and transcend mainstream approaches in clinical, social, developmental psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis. The authors include individuals who attempted to critically negotiate with positivism in mainstream psychology, the orthodoxy in classical psychoanalysis and the biomedical framework in psychiatry, challenging hierarchical institutional relationships and expanding their fields by incorporating feminist understandings in their work. The profiles also feature individuals who incorporated their research into their feminist activism against gender-based discrimination and violence.

The efforts of contributors question intra-individual, intrapsychic, and biomedical theories and applications within a contextualized framework that aims to transform clinical practice into a space for healing, empowerment, solidarity, and resistance. They linked their clinical practice with rigorous and socially equitable research in order to support wider feminist politics in the public domain and civil society, acknowledging the interconnected nature of these endeavors. Their efforts are all the more crucial in Turkey’s contemporary deteriorating landscape of increased gender-based violence and femicides, exacerbated by the government’s anti-gender politics. This political situation reached its climax with the arbitrary decision to withdraw from the Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in 2021, and is evident in the current discussions regarding the potential annulment of Law 6284 on Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence against Women. On top of these, the implementation of the present protective and prosecutory legislation remains consistently ineffective as local law enforcement agencies neglect or ignore legal procedures and measures when it comes to gender-based violence. Thus, the authors’ dedicated, extensive, and enduring feminist efforts, along with their incorporation of feminist psychology knowledge in both research and practice, combined with feminist political advocacy for women’s rights, dignity, and empowerment, serve to fill a crucial gap in Turkey’s challenging environment for women’s rights.

The book starts with a piece by a clinical psychologist and researcher, Dr. Büşra Yalçınöz Uçan, who traces her evolving relationship with feminism through personal experiences, academic work, and therapeutic practice. Drawing on feminist theories and intersectionality, she highlights her research on decisions to stay or leave in cases of intimate partner violence, enabling an understanding of gender-based violence not from individual-level trauma perspectives, but as a product of broader structural inequalities. She also delves into the intersection of feminism and psychoanalysis from the perspective of a

psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapist, reflecting on the challenges and possibilities of integrating these two fields. She sheds light on the role of psychoanalysis and feminism in the recognition of both personal and sociopolitical traumas, and in promoting a creative space. In that space, she emphasizes the importance of bearing and acknowledging both internal and external realities, a space where empathy and understanding coexist with the recognition of broader societal injustices. Ultimately, she underscores that despite the contradictions between psychoanalysis and feminism, both offer pathways for understanding and transformation, and provide opportunities for agency, hope, and resistance in the face of an often-unaccommodating external reality.

Leyla Soyduñ traces the trajectory of the development of feminist therapies, where the initial manifestation of gender-based trauma in hysteria studies was critically reappropriated by the feminist movement and its consciousness-raising groups, along with psychoanalytic feminism. She discusses the impacts of male violence on women's mental health, underscoring that women's mental health challenges should not be explored through essentialist frameworks, but rather through examining systemic discrimination, power imbalances, and social control inherent in patriarchal configurations. She explains how an egalitarian and empowering relationship in feminist psychotherapy connects social transformation to individual empowerment through investigations of male violence, power imbalances, and gender roles. She points out how these principles are embodied in Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation (Purple Roof), one of Turkey's leading feminist organizations dedicated to combating male violence and standing in solidarity with women who are survivors of violence through the implementation of feminist politics. As a feminist therapist and activist, she highlights how Mor Çatı's psychological support contributes to the broader feminist political movement by challenging societal norms related to violence.

Professor Dr. Şahika Yüksel describes the process by which her conventional approach to mental health, influenced by her training in traditional psychiatry, evolved following her involvement in the feminist movement and exposure to feminist literature. She details her endeavors to incorporate feminist viewpoints into the mental health field in Turkey, working in partnership with prominent mental health organizations to reform these establishments and promote societal transformation concerning gender-based violence and discrimination. Consequently, she outlines the ways in which feminist mental health professionals advocate for legal and institutional reform through a comprehensive approach, which includes organizing social support programs, conducting public education campaigns, collaborating with NGOs, and promoting progressive educational strategies for mental health practitioners. As a feminist psychiatrist and activist with decades of experience, she explores various measures at individual, community, and global levels to support survivors of gender-based violence. She emphasizes key principles such as the selection of

culturally appropriate and cost-effective therapeutic interventions, the acknowledgment of violence as a violation of human rights, and the promotion of economic and educational empowerment.

Dr. Ayşe Dayı traces the evolution of women's reproductive healthcare from the 1970s Women's Health Movement to feminist clinics, emphasizing empowerment, dignity, and criticizing medicalized practices. Based on research from feminist health centers in the U.S., she highlights how empowerment in reproductive care is experienced through safety, emotional support, and holistic care. Her contribution further examines the impact of neoliberal health reforms and conservative politics on women's reproductive rights and access to dignified healthcare, drawing connections between the U.S. and Turkey. Drawing on her researcher and activist identities, she advocates for a holistic, non-patriarchal approach to reproductive care, where women receive support in a nurturing environment that integrates mind, body, and spirit. She recounts how she enacts this goal by facilitating women's healing circles in Berlin, aimed at reconnecting women with their authentic power and exploring themes like gender, sexuality, menstruation, and childbirth. These circles, combining meditation, movement, art, and shared experiences, focus on healing cultural wounds caused by patriarchal systems and empowering women through collective exploration and self-expression.

In my contribution, I report the results of a qualitative study conducted with four feminist psychologists who work or volunteer at the Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation. The study explores the ways in which they have incorporated their professional identities with their feminist beliefs and activism, as well as how they have critiqued or moved beyond their mainstream education and training. The research indicates the significant shortcomings and limitations of traditional psychological and psychoanalytic approaches, and highlights the essential role of feminist clinical perspectives in addressing the widespread issue of gender-based violence and oppression in Turkey. As feminist psychology has considerably developed and expanded in Western contexts, showcasing the endeavors and obstacles encountered by feminist psychologists in a non-Western context also underscores the significance of international feminist psychology and transnational solidarity.

Dr. Ozden Melis Ulug presents a compelling case for the use of research as a feminist instrument in addressing gender disparities, advocating for feminism, and challenging discriminatory practices. In presenting her various research endeavors on how collective action for gender equality takes place and how solidarity in collective action between different disadvantaged groups occurs in authoritarian contexts like Turkey, she also discusses how her own collective action experiences have shaped her researcher and activist identities, as well as how her intersecting feminist, activist, and researcher identities combine and inform each other. Utilizing the examples from her research, she outlines various obstacles in the examination of collective action in complex en-

vironments such as Turkey, presenting conceptual, methodological, and contextual challenges while suggesting potential directions for future research in feminist collective action studies.

The book ends with a piece on methodological critique and a case for turning research into a feminist act. Dr. Doga Eroglu Sah delves into a profound contemplation of the process of her doctoral thesis. She emphasizes the dynamic, interactive, intersubjective, and transformative processes that form the basis of the research experience, which are often overlooked in the final output of psychological studies due to the strong influence of the positivist paradigm. Accordingly, she discusses the challenges of integrating a social constructivist perspective into her project while negotiating with the dominant positivism imposed by academic institutions and departmental relations characterized by hierarchical and ideological structures. Providing a compelling methodological critique, she thereby politicizes the imposition of positivism by psychology departments, a worldwide phenomenon, and challenges the normalization of the fact that students interested in exploring alternative and critical perspectives in psychology, such as feminist psychology and masculinity studies, as well as alternative epistemologies like social constructivism, are constrained by the expectations of a strict positivist paradigm. Meanwhile, from a feminist perspective, she offers a thoughtful account of reflexivity regarding the interviewing encounter and how research can contribute to feminist goals.

In conclusion, the contributions presented in this compilation highlight the critical role of feminist perspectives in reshaping psychological, psychiatric, and psychoanalytic and academic practices. Despite the challenges posed by Turkey's patriarchal culture and restrictive institutional frameworks, the authors exemplify how feminist scholars and activists have navigated and challenged these structures, using their work to advocate for women's rights and address gender-based violence. Through a combination of research, practice, and activism, they have not only advanced feminist psychology but also contributed to broader social change. Their efforts are particularly vital in the current political climate, where gender-based violence and femicides are escalating, underscoring the urgency of their feminism in both mental health and society at large. The book demonstrates the potential of feminist knowledge to disrupt and transform mainstream psychological approaches and offers a powerful model for integrating activism with scholarly work to promote social change and gender justice.

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