Discourses of Psychologists on Sex/Gender in Turkey:
A Qualitative Study

Türkiye'deki Psikologların Cinsiyete/Toplumsal Cinsiyete İlişkin Söylemleri:
Nitel Bir Çalışma

Asya Studies

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to find out 'interpretative repertoires' used as discursive resources for sex/gender explanations of psychologists working in various fields in Turkey. Within the scope hereof, in-depth interviews were conducted with fourteen psychologists. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Interview texts were analyzed through discourse analysis. As a result of the analysis, four different interpretative repertoires were identified; dichotomy, feelings, nurture and difference. As to dichotomy repertoire, sex/gender is constructed within biology-society and woman-man dichotomies while it is defined as an individual and inner phenomenon in the feelings repertoire. When it comes to nurture repertoire, sex/gender is described as an identity acquired by nurturing processes while sexual differentiation is constructed as the source of difference and variety among people in difference repertoire. The results of the study manifest that the participants conceptualize sex/gender and sexuality within a dichotomous and essentialist framework to a large extent. The discourses of psychologists in Turkey have undergone some shifts in parallel with the transformations in Western psychology, however it is still possible to argue that essentialist, dichotomous and heteronormative assumptions on sex and sexuality keep forming their discourses to a certain extent in explicit or implicit ways. This is connected with the limited relation of (mainstream) psychology to other disciplines, critical and social constructionist perspectives, qualitative methodologies and activism as well as the fact that psychology in Turkey has mostly been imported from the West.

Keywords: Sex, Gender, Psychology, Discourse Analysis, Interpretative Repertoires

Öz

Bu çalışmada, Türkiye'de farklı alanlarda çalışan psikologların cinsiyete/toplumsal cinsiyete ilişkin açıklamalarına kaynaklık eden 'açıklayıcı repertuarların' tespit edilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Çalışma kapsamında, on dört psikologla derinlemesine bireysel görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Katılımcıların onayı dahilinde görüşmelerin ses kaydı alınmış ve ardından yazıya dökülmüştür. Görüşme metinleri söylem analizi ile analiz edilmiştir. Analiz sonucunda, cinsiyete/toplumsal cinsiyete ilişkin konuşmalara kaynaklık eden dört farklı açıklayıcı repertuara ulaşılmıştır; ikilik, hissiyat, yetiştirilme ve farklılık. İkilik repertuarında cinsiyet, biyoloji-toplum ve kadın-erkek ikilikleri içinde inşa edilmekteyken; hissiyat repertuarında içten gelen bireysel bir olgu olarak, yetiştirilme repertuarında ise yetiştirilme sonucu edinilen bir kimlik olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Farklılık repertuarında ise cinsiyet ayrımı insanlar arasındaki farklılık ve çeşitliliğin kaynağı olarak inşa edilmektedir. Çalışmanın sonuçları, katılımcı psikologların cinsiyeti ve ilişkili olguları, büyük ölçüde ikili ve özcü bir çerçevede kavramsallaştırdıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Batı psikolojisinde cinsiyetin ele alınışında son otuz yılda gerçekleşen dönüşümlere paralel olarak Türkiye'deki psikologların söylemlerinde de birtakım dönüşümler olduğunu; ama özcü, ikili ve heteronormatif cinsiyet/cinsellik varsayımlarının -açık veya örtük biçimlerde- Türkiye'deki psikologların söylemlerini belirli ölçülerde şekillendirmeye devam ettiğini söylemek mümkündür. Bu durum, (anaakım) psikolojinin diğer disiplinlerle, eleştirel ve sosyal inşacı perspektiflerle, niteliksel yöntemlerle ve aktivizm alanıyla kurduğu sınırlı ilişkisellikle bağlantılı olduğu kadar, Türkiye'deki psikolojinin büyük ölçüde ithal edilmiş oluşuyla da bağlantılı görünmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Cinsiyet, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Psikoloji, Söylem Analizi, Açıklayıcı Repertuarlar*

INTRODUCTION

As it has been argued, sex/gender[1] and sexuality are traditionally discussed in a dichotomous, essentialist and (hetero)normative framework; dehistoricized, fixed and universalized on the basis of biological/evolutionary roots within the psychology discipline (e.g. Clarke & Braun, 2009; Hyde, Bigler, Joel, Tate & Van Anders, 2019; Parlee, 1996), which can bring normative approaches and practices with itself (Ansara & Hegarty, 2012; Finn & Dell, 1999; Roen, 2011; Rosqvist, Nordlund & Kaiser, 2014; Parlee, 1996). On the other hand, this dichotomous, essentialist and normative understanding of sex/gender has been criticized since 1970s (depending on social and scientific transformations) and alternative approaches are being developed (e.g. Butler, 1990; Van Anders, 2015; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Within this framework, it can also be put forward that certain changes have occurred in various degrees for the last decades in the psychology discipline; strict dichotomous, essentialist and normative approaches have lost some of their effects and historical, cultural and ideological nature of sex/gender and sexuality are taken into more consideration (e.g. Hammack, Mayers & Windell, 2013; Hegarty & Massey, 2006; Minton, 1997). Especially in Western psychology, it is possible to see a wide research literature on sex/gender and sexuality, recognition of prejudices and discrimination produced by essentialist/normative approaches on different levels and a struggle to recover them (e.g. APA's declaration against the discrimination towards transgender people; APA, 2008).

Despite these relatively positive advances in the West (and other places of the world), the psychology community in Turkey can still be said to have a pretty narrow frame of discussion about sex/gender and sexuality. We confront this situation in two ways: A considerable amount of psychologists have limited and underdiscussed knowledge about sex/gender and sexuality, while this limited knowledge is largely based on essentialist and traditional assumptions seriously criticized today. Of course, this is not independent from Turkey's general societal atmosphere. Just like any other group of scientists and professionals, psychologists (and other mental health professionals) have some sexist, heteronormative and transphobic attitudes and practices, as certain studies indicate (e.g. Çabuk & Candansayar, 2010; Nil, 2010; Yetkin, 2009). However, these studies generally aim at revealing homophobia and sexism levels or discriminatory attitudes and practices of mental health professionals. Rare are the studies which discuss *intra-discipline* assumptions and discourses (prevalent in psychology discipline) related to these normative attitudes of psychologists.

At this very point, it is possible to state that assumptions, discourses and ideologies inherent in the psychology discipline in Turkey are not discussed much. However, theories and practices in psychology should be brought up for a deeper discussion when viewed from the perspective of sex/gender and sexuality. To this end, going beyond the measurement of psychologists' *attitudes* (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and conducting studies for understanding *discourses* and *ideologies* within the discipline itself are of great necessity. Thus, through in-depth individual interviews, this study aims at examining sex/gender explanations of psychologists working in various fields in Turkey, finding out *interpretative repertoires* used as resources for these explanations (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, 1995; Wetherell & Potter, 1988) and discussing all these within the context of dominant sex/gender discourses in psychology.

METHOD
1. Participants, Instruments and Procedure

In this study, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 14 psychologists from various fields of psychology in Istanbul. Participants were selected using snowball sampling. While four participants have bachelor's degrees, the rest finished graduate programs in clinical, developmental, experimental and organizational psychology. The participants work at institutions such as clinic, municipality, hospital, kindergarten, university, courthouse, nursing home and NGOs. Being between 24 and 56 years old, half of the participants define themselves as 'woman' while the other half as 'man'. The participants were volunteers and their anonymity were guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms (see Table 1).

In *semi-structured interviews,* some questions are previously prepared by the researcher but the interviews are not completely and strictly based on these questions and never continue as a classical QA form. The interview is rather open to participants' leading and deepening and thus participants find the

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[1] In this article, based on authors such as Van Anders (2015) and Hyde et al. (2019), 'sex' and 'gender' are not used separately so as not to produce the dichotomy between biology and society but used together as 'sex/gender' just to emphasize the intertwining of biological and socio-cultural factors.

opportunity to speak according to their own interpretation, not to the stereotypes in the researcher's mind (Smith, 1995). In this study, interviews are conducted based on the questions[2] below in a semi-structured style:

- What do you make of sex[3]? How can you define it?
- Do you have any idea about queer theory? What do you think about it?
- What can you say about your professional practice? Does this theory affect how you behave when it comes to the issues about sex?
- Do you think queer theory may contribute to psychology?
- What would a world without the concept of sex be like to your opinion?

Four pilot interviews were made before the main interviews to test the functionality of these questions prepared in accordance with the study's aim. During these interviews made with 4 psychologists working in different fields, the questions proved to be functioning accordingly and the flow of interviews proved to have no problems. The main interviews lasting between 53 minutes and 113 minutes were conducted between 3rd March 2016 and 26st April 2016. The interviews were recorded with a voice-recorder and then transcribed. Personal information of participants was anonymized in the transcriptions.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Occupation
P1	Woman	56	Clinical psychologist at municipality
P2	Woman	42	Clinical psychologist at private clinic
P3	Woman	26	Psychologist at kindergarten
P4	Woman	26	Psychologist at hospital
P5	Man	32	Psychologist at private clinic
P6	Woman	39	Clinical psychologist at private clinic
P7	Man	24	Psychologist at nursing home
P8	Man	42	Clinical psychologist at private clinic
P9	Man	44	Experimental psychologist at university
P10	Man	40	Organizational psychologist at university
P11	Man	30	Experimental psychologist at university
P12	Woman	32	Psychologist at courthouse
P13	Woman	34	Developmental psychologist at municipality
P14	Man	43	Clinical psychologist at NGO

2. Data Analysis

The study was designed according to *discourse analysis* which is one of the qualitative research methods. Following the approach of Potter and Wetherell (1987, 1995), *interpretative repertoires* were chosen as the analytic unit of the study. Interpretative repertoires are discursive resources which we utilize for constructing and justifying our explanations about the world. They can be seen as "the building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes and other phenomena" (Wetherell & Potter, 1988, p. 172). These building blocks carry culturally *available* explanation types (definitions, metaphors, images, etc.) which are used by speakers in accordance with their present interactional goals (such as legitimating one's own explanation, justifying oneself, convincing the person addressed, etc.). Having said that, discursive resources we use for constructing our explanations are variable and multiple, that is why we often make contradictory explanations while talking (Wetherell & Potter, 1988).

Discourse analysis is not a fixed method consisting of a series of steps. The analyst becomes *quite* familiar with the transcriptions reading them again and again in the frame of the analytic focus of the

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[2] In the entire study, psychologists' explanations about sex/gender as well as *queer theory* have been the subject of the study and the interview questions were prepared to this end. But the aim of this paper is to present only the results about sex/gender.

[3] The term 'sex' is translated into Turkish with 'biological' implication as *'cinsiyet'*, while 'gender' is translated with 'social' implication as *'toplumsal cinsiyet'*. In the meantime, in daily interactions the term 'cinsiyet' refers to 'sex' and/or 'gender'. Therefore, in the interviews we used the term *'cinsiyet'* (sex) in accordance with its daily Turkish usage and we used the term *'toplumsal cinsiyet'* (gender) only after the participants have used it.

study and thus s/he begins realizing *certain* types of explanations that come forward and/or repeat throughout the speeches (Potter & Wetherell, 1995; Wetherell & Potter, 1988).

RESULTS

As a result of the analysis, four different interpretative repertoires used as discursive resources for sex/gender explanations were identified: *dichotomy, feelings, nurture* and *difference*. The extracts were selected to show the typical examples within each repertoire.

1. 'Dichotomy' Repertoire

First of all, the participants seemingly interpret sex/gender in a dichotomous way. To put it in more detail, we come across two interrelated types of "dichotomy" in participants' explanations: (a) *the dichotomy between sex and gender* and (b) *the dichotomy between woman and man.*

Nearly all participants talk about "sex" based on a biological/anatomical structure on the one hand and "gender" corresponding to social roles and expectations imposed upon the "sexes" on the other hand as soon as they begin speaking. We come across this dichotomous framework as the primary repertoire used as the resource for participants' explanations in nearly all interviews. That is to say, this is the most ready and available repertoire for the participants while talking about sex/gender. For example, in the extract below, the participant *firstly* divides sex/gender into two as *biological* and *social* while talking about it.

> What i do make of sex umm I mean something came to my mind: one of them is that part emerging with genitals as soon as a person is born umm it is divided into womanhood and manhood but another group comes to mind which we can assume as the third type or category umm at same time one thing immediately came to my mind that roles and attributions formed by gender as soon as a person is born or even before coming to the world and one's being forced and restricted within these roles (Participant-14).

Additionally, we see that the primacy is given to the "biology" in this dichotomy. For most participants, biological distinction is *primary* while gender is *secondary*. For example, in the extract below, the participant begins talking by uttering "gender" but immediately after emphasizes the primacy of biology by saying "after biological differentiation". In other words, he is able to define gender only after grounding it on biological differentiation of sexes.

> What it made me think of is mostly gender, I mean after biological differentiation, you know giving the blue ID to the boy and pink one to the girl or having pink walls in the room if it is a she these are first things coming to my mind, I mean we give some meanings to it (Participant-10).

In the extract below, the participant expresses more directly that gender is a "product of sex". Thus, he constructs sex as a *fundamental* fact and defines gender as a secondary fact based on it.

> My approach from the very beginning is like that gender is a product of sex, our special evolution, why do we have social roles, they have not randomly come out after some historical accidents, umm, minds of men and women are partly different from each other and women's inclinations and men's inclinations are different (Participant-9).

The dominance of dichotomous discourse can be seen even in the explanations of the participants who want to prioritize the impact of society. For example, in the extract below, we can see the difficulty the participant has while trying to *emphasize* that; she says again and again that she does not deny the existence of the biology just to say the social aspect is "more important".

Of course there are some things coming from biology like hormones and so, I don't know I'm not so sure right now I cannot speak so scientific but the high estrogen hormone may provide women higher emotions umm yes when we take it on the face the women seem more emotional and I guess the biology has also an effect on it I don't know the percentage or how much it affects but yes there is biological thing that makes a woman more emotional but there are social expectations, too, that expect a woman to behave more emotionally and not ask the same for men, I don't know, boys don't cry, their emotions are signs of weakness and they have to be strong and crying is sign of weakness, all these things, and men may not show their emotions due to this social thing or cry whatever but biological side may be underlying their not being emotional but I don't know the exact proportions of biology and society but I'm sure there is a biological side still I think social expectations and pressures shape the behaviors of women and men much more (Participant-12).

In addition to the dichotomy between sex and gender, many participants divide both sex and gender into two within themselves. In the two extracts below, we can see the participants talk about both sex and gender in a dichotomous way. Moreover, in both extracts, gender dichotomy is justified based directly on biological distinction.

There is a kind of biological distinction, a physical biological distinction since we were created like this, you know woman has her own biology and man too. I think it is firstly different in biological terms and then society imposes some meanings on it and of course the religion does the same (Participant-3).

Principally we have some innate features and then some meanings are imposed on them we have a natural physiological structure and then some social psychological meanings are imposed upon it like being woman or man these roles depend on the sexes the values attitudes behaviors how we sit and act what we say and do (Participant-13).

Still, we can see that some participants go beyond -or at least try it- this dichotomy to a certain extent. For example, in the extract below, the participant *firstly* explains that being man and woman cannot be drawn with "strict lines", in contrast "there must be a range". However, he *immediately* states that the range is "more about gender identity" than "biological side". Thus, he keeps speaking on within the dichotomy repertoire by dividing the concept of sex/gender as biological and social and describing the former as fixed while the latter as malleable.

I guess it is not possible to draw strict lines like black and white between man and woman there must be a range but I think this does not change the biological definition too much umm I don't give too much care to the point where biological side confuses umm we may be talking about so rare numbers umm the basic mixing is more about gender identity I mean I could be purely a man in terms of sex but I cannot have the role of a man I may be defining myself as someone more fragile or someone acting sensitively I may be seeing myself as more female at some points (Participant-8).

2. 'Feelings' Repertoire
Some participants describe sex/gender as an "internal feeling". In this way, sex/gender is constructed as an *individual* phenomenon. For example, in the extract below,, the participant talks about "the feeling of sex" coming from a person's "essence". Here, as participant puts it, sex/gender is constructed as a completely individual feeling "from within" instead of an acquisition by social processes.

Sex is one of the most important issues and I don't think it has clear boundaries i mean the feeling and identity of sex is more pervious and it is based on people's choices it's not completely choice they have it in their essence it comes from within... (Participant-2).

This "internal feeling" depends not only on biological/physiological traits but also on the interaction of the physiological, psychological and emotional aspects and varies from one individual to another. In the extract below, the participant defines the feeling of sex/gender based on a multiple interaction as "one's own reality" and expresses that in cases where the person's anatomy and feeling does not overlap, not anatomy but feeling must be considered.

> (…) but not everyone feels parallel with one's physiological traits I mean there are emotional processes and psychological processes as I said before it is not only about one factor I mean one may have a female body but feel like a man or vice versa and have a relevant psychological structuring one can have sustain such a social process or life so the sex concept not only includes physiological elements or our innate traits I think it is more complicated, if there were only physiological traits we would not accept the reality of other kinds of sexualities, but to be born in a female body and feeling like a man is a reality or being born in a male body and feeling like a woman living like a woman living it with its all cultural social and psychological processes is another reality (Participant-13).

3. 'Nurture' Repertoire
Some participants explain sex/gender based on the term "identity". In these explanations "gender identity" is described as a concept shaped or acquired by such dynamics like "role model choosing", "parent-child relations" and "identification". Thus, here sex/gender is constructed as something not "from within" but "acquired later on", contrary to the feelings repertoire.

In the extract below, the participant explains her concept of sex/gender based on "identity" and states that the man or woman identity is formed not by "genitals" but by the child's "role model choosing" and goes beyond anatomy-based explanations to a certain extent. However, later on, she says that the child takes the anatomically similar parent as the model and refers to the anatomy again. Thus, the participant, on one hand, emphasizes the nurturing processes by describing gender identity as something *acquired,* on the other hand underlines the importance of anatomical similarity and grounds this acquisition of gender identity on a biological basis.

> *Participant-4:* umm I base sex on the identity so I consider it as woman identity and man identity the role model you choose shapes your sex I mean I don't think it's about genitals I have a vagina I'm woman I have a penis I'm man is not my style of thinking I choose some role model to shape my identity (...)
> *Researcher:* So where does this woman or man identity come from?
> *Participant-4:* I think it comes from family, it comes from my mother and father, I choose as role model who resembles to me much more and that one is my mother because she does not have a penis, either, she is similar to me she can give birth to and I can have child and there is a social identity, of course, there is something imposed upon you by the society.

This type of explanations can bring along the tendency of grounding some "problems" thought to be sex/gender-related (such as non-conformity with sex/gender norms or behaving like "the opposite sex") on nurturing processes. For example, in the extract below, the participant explains how she will work with a child brought to her due to the child's "inappropriate" sex/gender behaviors. As to the participant, if there is a problem about sex/gender, this probably arises from a disruption during role-modeling processes. And her mission as a psychologist is to find out if there has been such a disruption or not in this case.

> Since I work more with children I always dig their childhood how was this child's relationships with his father because I believe that umm if a boy's father is so hard so harsh if he umm comes and goes between two extremes, two bad extremes, the son cannot take his father as a model and you know all this oedipal complex stuff umm he cannot take the father as a model and says himself that I won't be such a man and then

at this very point he gives up his relation to his father step by step there must be some theories about it if I'm right I don't know them in detail but then he rejects being a man and inclines to act like a woman he begins taking the mother as a model and spends too much time with mother I mean there may be a social effect going beyond that biological rhythm and hormones I mean the child's experiences drive him to make a choice (...) umm what I would consider was that how he spent his time with mother with father and with whom he spent his time more if the father always works if he does not see his father if he is always with mother and how she pays attention to the child (Participant-3).

4. 'Difference' Repertoire

At the end of each interview, the participants were asked "what would a world without the concept of sex be like?" When the responses are analyzed, we can see that sex (or sexual distinction) is regarded as *the source of difference and diversity* among people. Sexual distinction is seen as the source of behaving and feeling differently and if the world lacks it "everyone would be the same" and "feel like the same" as to the participants' explanations. Thus, the sex is constructed as a prerequisite for being a different and unique individual. For example, in the extract below, by using the "potato" metaphor, the participant underlines that in a world without sexes, everyone would be plain and similar just like potatoes.

A world without sexes is even hard to imagine to me actually (...) when you first asked this a vision came to my mind, when you said without sexes, a potato, something without any zigzags something some certain image so similar umm it is such a reductionist vision but in a world without sexes I think people would be like potatoes, my vision is like this umm and this may inhibit differences I mean I feel like that a world with sexes may lead to differences but while thinking of a world without sexes, the only image in my mind is potato, which has no deficits no ups and downs, since the sex determines something at a point but there is no determining power in the potato (Participant-7).

In the extract below, the participant describes the world without sexes as "boring" and "dull" since the distinction between man and woman leads to differences. Moreover, sexual distinction is expressed to be the source of a "colorful and dynamic" sexuality.

What i made of without sexes is to come to a point where it is impossible to distinguish a man from a woman and umm I think I would not prefer it personally as I think being different is good and complementary I prefer a part which acts not like me but complements me umm and this does not mean that I will work and she will cook of course many things have changed but I would need to see a distinction between a man and a woman, the other situation without sexes would feel so boring and dull I guess (…) yes a world with sexes seem to be more colorful and dynamic with these differences, not good not bad but different (…) I guess if there are both woman and man, sexuality will be more colorful and if the difference between man and woman is erased or becomes vogue, sexuality will also be like more uninspired (Participant-8).

DISCUSSION

When we evaluate the results as a whole, we can see the traces of the dichotomous conceptualization of sex/gender in almost all explanations. That is to say, in explicit and implicit ways, 'dichotomy' repertoire functions as the dominant/primary repertoire used as the source of all explanations about sex/gender. This dichotomous framework keeps working in the background even where the participants utilize different repertoires. In other words, we come across the dichotomy between sex and gender in various ways throughout nearly all explanations. Moreover, the primacy is given to sex in this dichotomy; it is fundamental, determinant and fixed while gender is secondary.

In addition to the dichotomy between sex and gender, most of the participants divide both sex and gender into two. In these explanations, we again see the fundamental position of biology since gender dichotomy is grounded on biological distinction. Moreover, the biological determination is so clear that the participants mostly need not specifying it. Here we can argue that the reality constructed by dominant dichotomy repertoire works as a "common sense" knowledge for the participants (see Burr, 2003, p. 41). Another example of this is the difficulty that some participants have in trying to make alternative explanations going out of the boundaries of this 'common sense' to a certain extent. Seemingly, it is nearly impossible to speak without referring to biology for the participants.

Distinguishing 'gender' from 'sex' became popular in 1970s and offered an important chance to that era's feminist thinkers and activists. That is to say, the subordinate position of women in the society stemmed not from their nature or biology but from patriarchal social order, which gave feminists the opportunity to argue that the inequality between women and men was *not natural* but *produced* and thus could be changed. In that way, the term 'gender' gained wide prevalence as a useful concept both theoretically and politically (Hood-Williams, 1996; Stone, 2007). Nonetheless the dominant assumptions about sexual dimorphism and gender binary have rarely been discussed and biological essentialism sustained its existence (see Clarke & Braun, 2009; Hyde et al., 2019; Hood-Williams, 1996; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018).

As Hyde et al. (2019) stated, sex/gender binary and biological essentialism have been the dominant perspective within psychology from the very beginning even though some contrary advances were witnessed in the last decades. It is possible to explain our participants' difficulty in speaking without referring to biology/anatomy within this context. We also see this dichotomous/essentialist perspective in the explanations of participants where sexual distinction is constructed as the 'source of differences among people'. These explanations not only arise from the dichotomous sex/gender discourse but also reproduces it.

Depending upon the various transformations in Western (mainstream) psychology have gone through, dichotomous and essentialist conceptualizations of sex/gender and sexuality has been brought into discussion and criticized. The beginning of this transformation dates back to the feminist critics of 1970s, but the effect of critical and social constructionist perspectives, which have risen in social sciences as of 1980s, is also influential. These perspectives criticized essentialist/dichotomous assumptions and offered alternative explanations (see Burr, 2003; Butler, 1990; Hepburn, 1999; Kitzinger, 1994; Stone, 2007). Nevertheless, this transformation in psychology has been witnessed to be quite slow since the discipline of psychology includes this essentialist/dichotomous ideology throughout its history, and this ideology, in a sense, has become the 'common sense' of psychology and psychologists. The participants' explanations throughout this study make a typical example hereof.

In Turkey, a slower process than that of the West can be witnessed, which may have many reasons. One of the reasons is that psychology in Turkey was shaped by *imported* knowledge from the US for a long time, especially after the 2nd World War. Psychology in Turkey, on one hand, fell behind the transformations in the US, on the other hand became destitute of creating its own discussions (for a comprehensive review about the development of Turkey's psychology, see Batur & Aslıtürk, 2006). Another probable reason hereof is the limited relations of psychology with other social sciences and qualitative methodologies (Parlee, 1996). Psychology in Turkey, has been developed and institutionalized in such a context, could not internalize the transformations in the last decades within Western psychology and in the meantime, kept its distance from critical and social constructionist approaches in psychology. Even though there has been a critical psychology movement for the last 20 years in Turkey, institutional and academic psychology can be said to remain in a limited relationship with this movement. Thus, the reflection of this critical movement on professional practices is quite limited (for critical psychology in Turkey, see Batur & Aslıtürk 2006; Kayaoğlu & Batur, 2013).

We can typically encounter this situation in participants' explanations. For example; some participants use old-fashioned explanations like the assumption that the attitudes of parents may lead the child to "deny his/her own sex". Moreover, it is possible to say that the idea that some variations of sex/gender and sexuality (transgender, homosexuality, etc.), which are not defined as disorder/pathology anymore, may actually point to certain problems still exists to some extent even though these kinds of explanations are not used and defended in an explicit way. What has changed is the level of tolerance toward non-normative individuals. In other words, while the participants still have an essentialist/dichotomous perspective, they obviously state that it is not correct to discriminate and

marginalize non-normative individuals and groups because of their 'essential traits'. However, we do not see much questioning about how this oppression and marginalization can be related to the essentialist and dichotomous assumptions of sex/gender within psychology.

On the other side, that some participants can make alternative explanations (e.g. "gender must be seen within a range") despite the dominance of dichotomy repertoire can be associated with the transformations in psychology. The feelings repertoire, where the sex/gender is explained as "the feeling of the individual", can be connected to these transformations. Along with the developments in the last decades, there are more than one discourse that construct sex/gender and sexuality in various ways and compete each other (e.g. Hammack, Mayers & Windell, 2013). This is the reason why we come across such contradictory explanations in participants' speeches. This indicates that some alternative explanations (e.g. emphasizing range, variety or feelings) have accessed a certain level of *availability* even though they do not have the same power as essentialist/dichotomous discourse. Therefore, the participants can shift between explanation types that have become available to them at some levels and construct different versions of reality depending upon the present interactional context (see Burr, 2003; Potter & Wetherell, 1995). However, it is possible to argue that this might be related to their familiarity with Western literature. That is to say, these alternative explanations might not be available for everyone in Turkey but participants' psychology education based on Western curriculum and other qualities they have (abroad experiences, living in a metropole, being secular, etc.) may be giving them the opportunity to be familiar with these alternative explanations.

Still, it is rare to see the traces of social constructionist and queer perspectives in these alternative explanations throughout the participants' speeches. Hence it is possible to say that these alternative explanations are the revised versions of the same dominant essentialist/dichotomous discourse. Especially, since Western psychology took on the role of 'human rights defender' more and more (Ansara & Hegarty, 2012) with a 'liberal individualist' perspective (Riggs & Walker, 2006), this type of alternative explanations has become more available in psychology. The feelings repertoire can be discussed within this context since this repertoire constructs sex/gender as "the person's feeling" and makes it an individual right. Hereby oppression and marginalization towards non-normative people are being opposed increasingly. However, this issue is mostly discussed on the level of 'human rights' and 'recognition/tolerance' and 'normative' assumptions based on essentialist/dichotomous discourse are not brought into question (see Joel, Tarrasch, Berman, Mukamel & Ziv, 2014).

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, it is possible to argue that essentialist, dichotomous and heteronormative assumptions of sex/gender keep forming the meaning-making of the participants to a certain extent. This is connected with the limited relation of (mainstream) psychology to other disciplines, critical, social constructionist and queer perspectives, qualitative methodologies and activism as well as the fact that psychology in Turkey has mostly imported from the West. We need more studies based on critical and social constructionist perspectives to challenge dominant discourses and produce non-normative explanations.

When we evaluate the results of the study within Turkey's conservative and patriarchal cultural climate; we can say that "acceptance and tolerance" towards non-normative identities indicates a "positive" transformation in the context of Turkey. As many participants have stated, it can be said that psychology and psychologists have started to become more tolerant to a certain extent compared to the dominant cultural climate of Turkey. Such a transformation is, of course, quite substantial. However, considering the demographic characteristics of the participants in the study, it can be said that this transformation is especially significant for "western, urban, middle class, non-conservative" psychologists in Turkey. The way how psychologists, who live and/or study in different contexts and are therefore not so familiar with Western literature, relate to these "acceptance and tolerance" discourses is beyond the scope of this study. Hence, further studies conducting in different contexts will be worthwhile to understand the different aspects of the issue and comprehend it broadly.

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