

Critical Psychology in Turkey: Recent Developments

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Abstract

The present article focuses on some of the new developments in Turkey after 2008. Firstly it is laid out that how neoliberal policies in Turkey shaped psychology both as scientific and market enterprise because it is maintained that only by exposing this context actual state of affairs in psychology can be understood. Secondly, it is explicated how critical psychology attempts in early 2000s gave rise to the most recent critical psychology movement in Turkey. Thirdly, principles and practices of Association of Psychologists for Social Solidarity (TODAP) are closely scrutinized for this association has represented critical psychology movement in public in Turkey. Finally, although the writers of this article criticize TODAP's way of understanding of critical psychology, they underline historical importance of this movement in the context of Turkey.

Keywords: critical psychology, neoliberalism, Psychologists for Social Solidarity

Neo-liberal policies and transformation of psychology in Turkey

Psychology entered Turkey as an academic field during the first half of the 20th century, just like in many other European countries (Batur, 2006). But for a long time, psychology remained as an academic discipline that functioned as an auxiliary in support of pedagogy, psychiatry or politics; therefore, it could not become an independent profession. Psychology's professionalization took place primarily in the last 20 years.

Just like in other countries around the world, understanding psychology's current status as an academic discipline and a profession in Turkey requires an analysis of the sociopolitical context of neo-liberal policies. These policies have had an impact on the whole world in the last 30-40 years and have caused fundamental changes in the formation of societies and different professional fields (see Harvey, 2005).

Neoliberal policies were considered a solution to the crisis of capitalism that had begun in the 1970s. At the most general level, the crisis meant that capitalism restructured itself at the global level after resolution of Western welfare states and non-Western national-developmental economies. More specifically, restructuring capitalism at this stage of globalization required a transformation of social power, which means that the relationships between state, labor, and capital were reformed. Like other countries that sought capitalism at later stages, Turkey experienced a rapid and shaky transformation (Boratav et al., 2000). Turkey implemented structural adjustment and austerity policies enforced by international

political bodies as a requirement of the neoliberal development paradigm at the beginning of 1980s. It should be noted that it was the military junta of 1980 that made these implementations easy (Cam, 2006; Ercan, 2002). These policies included privatization of publicly-initiated institutions, limiting the state's role in economy and social services, restructuring economy to make the circulation of financial capital easier, and so on.

This period, which has been outlined above, had multiple effects on psychology as a body of knowledge and a profession. Like other scientific disciplines, the process of production of psychological knowledge has been shaped by the transformations that universities experienced. Modernity's university system, which institutionalized the ideal of autonomous production of science, sacrificed the ideal of producing "science" totally and quite openly as a result of neoliberal policies. Universities have become research and development foundations whose main purpose is to "sell" the knowledge necessary for the market, and have started marketing know-how techniques. Education, which was first constructed as a human right in the liberal sense, has now become a commodity that can be bought or sold (Alpkaya et al, 1999). Universities, besides having to align their existence according to the *economic reason* and the ongoing competition for the "student market," also had to reformulate themselves into being institutions whose primary purpose, and perhaps, sole responsibility, is the production of knowledge for the market, and to transform themselves into a *part* of the global market. The Bologna Process, which was put into practice to arrange the conditions for this competition and to rearrange the university educational system in Europe according to the Anglo-Saxon model, put an end to the humanistic conception of universities and made European universities commercial foundations in perpetual competition with one another (see Lorenz, 2006). Many universities in Turkey, which as a country does not have an original and inveterate university tradition, had already been organized in the Anglo-Saxon model long before that period. Following the first private university, the consecutive private universities founded in the 1990s accelerated the competition. The privatization of education in Turkey is associated with the decreasing quality of public education (Gök, 2002). Since, taking the preparatory courses for the university entrance exam and the university education itself became unaffordable for a large portion of society, the profile of the average student changed. The new generation of students was formed mostly by the children of the middle and upper middle classes who are more accustomed to 'the economic reason' of globalization and the neoliberal transformations.

It could not be expected that psychology as a discipline would have wholeheartedly joined the protests against and critiques of the implications of neoliberal transformation processes, which were directed by a few social scientists from other disciplines in Turkey; and as a matter of fact, it did not happen. Because psychology in its ideological blindness upholds the most strictly positivist tradition among the social disciplines in Turkey; and also because self-reflexivity is not part of its epistemic stance, psychology continues to believe in the usage of science for the benefit of society in a naïve way. Furthermore, since mainstream psychology in Turkey adheres to a point of view which simply reproduces an Americanized psychology (Batur & Aslıtürk, 2006), it has always had a tendency towards the pragmatic usage of psychological knowledge. Thus, it could be claimed that mainstream psychology is one of the disciplines which has displayed the most rapid adaptation to the neoliberal transformations that universities have been experiencing for a while.

When these changes were taking place in universities, the social field to which the knowledge of psychology is applied was also undergoing radical changes. Psychology had started to be considered by young people who were entering universities as a field which could offer viable

jobs and even monetary gain. Psychology as a profession had flourished. Due to neoliberal policies the rivalry in the labor and educational market reached an extreme level and provided the ground for applied psychology. Especially the models imported from the USA in fields, such as educational institutions, employment strategies, and regulations needed in traffic, where international relations and pressures urge governments to accept global norms, have made psychology more popular and have accelerated the process of its professionalization. Therefore, with the increase of the number of private universities, the number of psychology departments also increased and psychological services began to gain importance.

The flourishing of psychology as a profession became possible only with the emergence of a new social stratum, people- who deem psychological services as necessities and have the means to become 'customers' of these services. According to the golden rule of the market, demand is always bound to supply. The 1990s, when the neoliberal policies began to bear fruit, were the years when the culture of frenzied mass consumption was established as well. Decisively, it was also in this period that an urban middle class, consisting of well-educated children of provincial families who had come to the cities especially after the 1950s and had taken an important place in civil society, was established (see Rutz & Balkan, 2009). What is necessary to emphasize here is, firstly, that this middle class emerged right alongside the rapid economic development led by the neoliberal policies in the service and especially in the financial sectors; secondly, that a big portion of this class are wage earners; and thirdly, that they have better standards of living than factory workers or informal workers of small workshops because of the social and cultural capital that they hold. The white-collar classes generally have a distinct aesthetic and lifestyle compared to the proletariat. Therefore, this class has become the main subject of consumption culture and popular psychology.¹

In this period, psychology began to gain precedence in pop culture, becoming one of the main elements of consumption culture thanks to TV programs, self-help books, newspapers, and magazines. The psy-disciplines, as much as being a part of a certain culture, also produce their own culture, affecting socializing processes and altering daily life. Psychological interventions in areas formerly determined by traditional methods, such as childcare and family dynamics mean that these areas are gradually handed over to a group of professionals who represent scientific authority. Meanwhile, psychological terminology and lingo has begun to dominate everyday conversations. While the main 'consumer group' of the psychological services consists of a well-educated urban middle class with good careers, lower-educated groups have begun to demand such services thanks to television programs. As a consequence of this process of the popularization of psychology, a large segment of the population of Turkey has begun, on the one hand, to delve into issues such as childcare, self-knowledge, leadership, success, stress, etc.; and on the other hand, they also begun to learn about what depression, attention-deficit disorder, panic attacks, etc. are, and hence, to demand psychological treatment.

The increase in demand for psychological services can be understood if we consider that modern life makes people impotent. Individuals may need psychological services for their problems more than before because of their isolation in cities. The change from rural-flavored urban life in the 1970s, which was based on neighborhood cohesiveness, to an individualistic way of inhabiting urban spaces, may have weakened the social control over people and supported anonymity. However, the rapid disintegration of the solidarity which existed in the old urban life may isolate people. Whatever the reasons may be, the normalization of buying

¹ For some good sociological analysis about social differentiation in 1990s, see Kandiyoti & Saktanber (2002).

psychological services in society plays an important role in the vitalization of the market for psychology.

Effects of neo-liberalism on the psychology market

The processes outlined above in science and in the practice of psychology is only one dimension of a complex issue. Another, much darker dimension is the demolition that neoliberal policies bring forth in the world's societies. In so-called developing countries such as Turkey, it was hoped that these economic plans made by the private sector, rather than the state as the leading power of development, would create individuals who are competitive, ready to take risks, and are equipped with an entrepreneurial spirit. It was thought that it could be possible to create individuals in non-Western countries who are motivated to succeed, like those in Western countries. However, what was hoped did not happen (Akdoğan, 2002). In the end of the 1980s, poverty increased in the countries in which these plans were implemented, especially in Latin-American and African countries. At the same time, Turkey experienced the same consequences. Poverty in cities increased. Turkey become de-agriculturalized, and this process resulted in increased migration to the big cities. The informal sector, which employs a large segment of working class under precarious working conditions, increased rapidly. The working poor that had been used to describe a limited segment of society, was now used to describe almost every worker in society.² In other words, the middle class kept its middle position, not by means of its prosperity but by its social capital.

Psychology also was and remains deeply affected by these social changes. Because health services are totally privatized, the main customer group of old, the upper class, becomes the only group that can access psychological services. The lower classes that know and need these services can desire and demand them, but not access them easily. The inclinations of some critical psychologists to supply free service for society are quite meaningful in that context.

Not only the recipients but also the psychologists as producers of these services have been seriously affected, in their working conditions, by neoliberal policies. As the number of universities that have psychology departments increases, so the number of graduates increases, which means that the number of unemployed psychologists likewise increases.³ Employed psychologists are now ready to accept flexible and precarious work, and in this they share the insecure working conditions with other employees. Consequently, psychologists have had to face various problems. One of these has been that, until recently, psychologists did not have a legal definition of their profession. This meant that it was not clear who may work as a clinical psychologist, psychotherapist or school psychologist, and what should be their task description.

In March 2011, as a result of a long term struggle of psychologists, the Turkish government passed a decree that describes the legal licensure of clinical psychologists and their tasks in hospitals.⁴ However, this new decree is far from solving the problems; instead, it seems it will make the conditions worse. According to the decree, psychology is reduced to clinical

² For a profile of working poor in Turkey see Gündoğan et al (2005).

³ While there were only 6 psychology departments in 1985 in Turkey, later the number of departments increased exponentially, 13 in 1995 and 30 in 2005 (Sümer, 2012).

⁴ For Turkish text of the decree see: <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2011/04/20110426-1.htm>

psychology as part of the medical system, whilst other applied fields of psychology remain unregulated. Moreover, psychologists that have already been working in clinics and hospitals for a long time have to pass some central exams of the Ministry of Health to prove their competencies. According to the new decree, people have to have masters or doctoral degrees in clinical psychology if they want to work as clinical psychologist. Yet they have not to graduate in psychology! Anybody who studied engineering, theology, literature, or anything else, could work as clinical psychologist if he or she gets a masters degree in clinical psychology. Another problem is that the capacities of universities' master programs are not sufficient to cover demand in clinics. This means that universities have to offer masters degrees that do not really focus on scientific quality, but on rushed professional training. Anyway, the new regulation brings more problems than it solves and increases competition between psychologists.

Today, in all applied fields of psychology graduate level psychologists are required to participate in various certificate programs of private universities or professional societies in order to better survive in competitive conditions. The scientific quality of some universities is very questionable and their graduates are less competitive. Psychologists that cannot participate in certificate programs because of low income and high prices have to work under precarious conditions and practice without the professional training that is required.

Finally, while previously there was a more homogeneous view in the area of the profession, today a class-like split emerges between a small group of top-earner upper class psychologists and others which are either unemployed or have a very low income. Although there is a false appearance of psychology as a profession that promises a good future and significant earnings, which is taken into account for its symbolic capital, psychologists, like other service sector employees, are rapidly joining the working class. It is important to note that the trade unions in Turkey are weak, that psychologists are fragmented because of their employment in very different sectors, and last but not least, that their socialization as psychologists prevents them from joining unions, and hence, collectively resisting undesirable working conditions. This background information serves as a foreground for understanding the recent increase in interest in critical psychology; an interest that has developed primarily in young psychologists and students of psychology.

Critical psychology trends in Turkey

In the period when neoliberal policies started in Western countries at the end of the 20th century, the world witnessed the end of the liberating “grand narratives” in academic studies and a rapid expansion of postmodernist and poststructuralist approaches in social sciences. It was the result of social sciences' analysis of a new post-industrial or post-modern era and a search for a new paradigm to explain this new era. Although, there are many differences between these approaches if one were to compare them, their common ground is that grand narratives can only be dominating and excluding. For them, reality is nothing but subjective, particular, local, and partial (Acar-Savran, 2004).

The concept of “critical psychology” was used in German-speaking countries at the beginning of the 1970s especially for expressing Marxist approaches to psychology. However, the prevalence of the concept in English psychology texts was related rather to the emergence of approaches within the postmodern and poststructuralist paradigm. These approaches criticized mainstream psychology in versatile ways. In addition, some of these approaches deconstructed many concepts and theories of mainstream psychology – especially in social

psychology (e.g. Ibáñez & Íñiguez, 1997; Parker, 1989; Parker & Shotter, 1990; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

These Western approaches were rapidly taken on in other social sciences in Turkey's academic circles, but not in psychology, with the exception of small circles. It is not a surprise that mainstream psychology in Turkey was not influenced by these new approaches, since it is a follower of the world's – especially the USA's – mainstream psychology. However, when other departments in same buildings or campuses are experiencing striking changes, it remains astonishing that the psychology departments are so introverted that most psychologists do not know even the name Michel Foucault. It is traumatic to witness that social psychology keeps being produced in Turkey without any change. It is as if it does not have any problems, even though Western countries have significant amounts of literature on the crisis of social psychology (e.g. Parker, 1989; Parker & Shotter, 1990). This indicates the presence of two radically unrelated worlds. Additionally, as mentioned above, except for a few examples such as the work of Muzafer Sherif, psychology has been unable to relate its academic work to social life during its short life in Turkey; that is, it cannot be expected from psychology to respond to contemporary transformations of social life and the transformation which the discipline itself experiences at a university level in a critical manner. Therefore, critical psychology could not be sourced from that old psychology that suffers from intellectual and ideological blindness. As a result, postmodern critical approaches- (e.g. Edwards & Potter, 1992; Gergen, 1992) have either gotten stuck in a small academic circle with a lack of political effect or have been used especially by students in a more radical and leftist manner for pushing the boundaries of the academic world.

Batur and Aslıtürk (2006) analyze the perspectives which can be circumscribed under “critical psychology” in Turkey, relating them to Turkey's historical and political context. Batur's and Aslıtürk's article neatly analyzes the historical background that brought about the inclinations towards critical psychology in Turkey. In this article we will focus on more recent developments. Until recently critically oriented psychology in Turkey was limited to some academics at the university. Some of the exceptions were democratic psychiatry approaches and researchers connected to leftist political groups. But it can be claimed that this critically oriented psychology could not manage to position itself outside of mainstream psychology. Politically leftist and emancipatory researchers confined themselves to interpreting existing knowledge in psychology for the sake of democratization, instead of making historical and social criticisms of psychology and developing critical psychology. Using psychology pragmatically for the “right purposes” instead of dealing with the historicity of its concepts means turning it into a tool, so that its social functions can be changed according to the aims of the person who applies it. By doing that, the social function of psychology is personalized, that is, it is reduced to the personality of the psychologist (Markard, 2009, p. 26). In Turkey, this attitude still has crucial support.

Activity of critical oriented psychologists since 2008 has mainly taken place away from academic centers and independent from them. When one considers the social and political conditions of Turkey, it may be thought that it is too late for knowledge and the practice of critical psychology to emerge independently from academic settings. After the military coup of 1980, during many long years of oppression against public opposition, the social scene has radically changed. The traditional left has been largely expunged from the political arena. In subsequent years, movements such as the women's movement, the Kurdish movement, political Islam, legal leftist parties, unions, antimilitarists, homosexual rights movements, environmental movements, and the proliferation of other right-based organizations have filled the field of social opposition (see Şimşek, 2004). Some of these newly developed movements

have adhered to partial and sectional politics based on identities with no power objective. Radical Islamism could not be successful, but moderate Islam has absorbed the Islamic social demands by merging a conservative social policy with a neoliberal economic policy, ultimately coming into power. The legal left has tried to keep only its presence; it could not be the subject of the political agenda but was mostly a bystander. The main political movement that had an impact on the political agenda of the country in the last 20 years has been the Kurdish movement.⁵

Despite the temporal rise and variety of social opposition after 1980, it can be said that the young people of this period were quite apolitical, having been caught up in the neoliberal frenzy of consumption culture (see Bali, 2002). What has prevailed among these apolitical young people is mainly a banal Turkish nationalism and a big portion of society triggered by the Kurdish movement. Undoubtedly, the majority of young psychologists in Turkey fall in this category. On the other hand, this political setting has provided a ground for politicized psychologists to tread new ground.

2000s

Actually, it was much earlier than 2008, the year that a critical psychology symposium assembled in Istanbul, that politicized psychologists started to convey their political interests in psychology. What the symposium represented was the most important step for developing a collective initiative beyond individual attempts. Former generations of politicized psychologists either tried to understand the inequalities of their society through conventional psychology or experienced a clash between a world full of inequalities and a discipline that maintains its silence regarding inequalities.

The impetus for the 2008 period can be found in the beginning of the 2000s. Work started by psychologists after the great earthquake in 1999 led them immediately to encounter poor people for the first time. The role of psychology and psychologists in social problems started to be debated amongst psychologists, who were politically leftists but mainstream in their discipline. In addition, social issues such as the war between state powers and Kurdish guerrillas since 1984, ongoing banality with regard to torture since 1980, and intense violations of human rights, also urged psychologists to choose their position. Especially for psychologists who were working with traumatized people, it was very difficult to develop any approach towards “post-traumatic stress disorder”: State violence and violations against human rights were constant and for many people there was practically not a “*post-traumatic*” stage. This fact paved the way for psychologists who adhered to leftist politics and even personally encountered trauma to pursue a way into the mainstream institutions and to constitute the Trauma and Human Rights Commission in the Turkish Psychological Association (TPA). This politicizing of psychologists irritated the ones who argued for non-political psychology or even outwardly defended political authority. Moreover, psychologists who had a tendency towards left-wing politics wasted their energy in the power struggle inside the Turkish Psychological Association.

On the other hand, some young psychologists who studied abroad and were in touch with critical psychology there offered a different starting point for dealing with the issue. Instead of interpreting psychology from a certain political position, they argued for criticizing the place of psychology in actual power relations. They emphasized that any politicizing that set

⁵ For a history of Kurdish movement in Turkey see White, 2000.

aside the critique of psychology itself would make the internal relations of psychology with the political system invisible. The “Marxistpsychology” e-mail group founded in the first half of the 2000s by these psychologists and their internet site, which included some critical texts, were their first productions.

In 2006, the demand of some psychologists to join a rally against the occupation of Lebanon by Israel in the name of TPA was rejected by TPA’s governing body, which resulted in the formation of the broad based *Platform of Psychologists*. Since the Platform lasted only one year, critical psychologists searched for new avenues. Hence, the first issue of the online *Critical Psychology Bulletin* was published in March 2008. Also, a symposium was planned for that summer.

The symposium was organized on August 31st and September 1st by Sertan Batur, Ersin Aslıtürk, and Hilal Eyüpoğlu, and more than 100 young psychologists attended it. In the symposium, attendant psychologists spoke about the criticism of psychology rather than about critical psychology. They emphasized the alienation of psychology from society and its ideological functions. For the first time in Turkey’s history, psychologists came together outside the mainstream and loudly communicated their discontent with psychology both in academia and in the field. It also empowered the young psychologists by making peace with their identity – being “psychologists.” Once speaking of the discontent within psychology gained legitimacy and once the individual psychologists met others who shared their thoughts, they wanted to keep this discussion going through the email group and the online Bulletin.

Unfortunately, this initial enthusiasm could not be kept up at the same speed. In the email group, energy was wasted not for the expected discussions on the questions like “what kind of critical psychology” or “what kind of an organization,” but for some debates on political ideologies. Actually, since the people were newly acquainted and had different understandings of critical psychology, it was not realistic to have expected a good performance from the group in such a short period. “Tyranny of Practice” is unavoidable in Turkey; that is, in a country that does not have much theoretical production and accumulation, but where its leftist opposition must meet the needs of a rapidly changing social agenda. For those who claim sensitivity to the social problems in Turkey, the only way to go seems to be to involve the social problems in practice and limiting the struggle to democratic reactions without theoretical debates on principles. As a matter of fact, the psychologists getting together in Istanbul and Ankara after the Critical Psychology Symposium were no exceptions.

Psychologists for Social Solidarity (TODAP)

Psychologists who were members of the critical psychology email group and who engaged in meetings among themselves, wanted to intervene in daily politics and show their reactions as psychologists, which they subsequently did. In 2008, press statements and actions signed as “critical psychologists and psychology students” began to appear both for issues related to psychological knowledge and practice and for other issues not related to psychology in order to demonstrate solidarity. For critical psychologists, dealing with practical politics made Turkey’s agenda their own agenda. As mentioned above, since this agenda is quite dense and changing fast, it was obvious that critical psychologists would need more than an email group to meet it. Besides, the “loose partnership” that an email group provided was not adequate for acting faster or for providing identity. The process evolved rapidly to institutionalization and these psychologists called themselves *The Initiative of the Association of Psychologists for Social Solidarity* (abbreviated in Turkish as TODAP).

After the second symposium of critical psychology in 2010, the initiative officially decided to become an association. Probably, many psychologists who started the TODAP initiative imagined the structure of the association to be that of a standard professional organization, even a union, which would function as a democratic mass organization. These kinds of organizations in Turkey function by protecting the rights of its members, exposing and criticizing improper attitudes towards the profession, and showing political solidarity with other collectivities and organizations, even if the issues are not directly relevant to their profession. For these professional organizations, gaining public visibility by voicing their reactions is considered as a political success. Even though theoretically, being a professional organization and at the same time being a democratic mass organization may contain certain contradictions with regard to professional organizations in Turkey, setting aside these tensions create a pattern of opposition. Historically, the most established oppositional culture in Turkey is formed by the left. Therefore, in organizations of certain professional groups where the leftist ideology is hegemonic display some weaknesses of the traditional left and reproduce some of its usual patterns. Although all its members do not intend it, TODAP also displays all the characteristics of this leftist oppositional culture in the way it emerged, its language, its discourse, and its organization. For example, bestowing priority to practice against theory is one of the most salient characteristics of the leftist culture (see Batur, 2010). In its own texts (Gürsel, 2010; Üçer, 2010), TODAP pays attention to the discussion of critical psychology. Gürsel (2010) wrote an article in order to do away with the confusion within and outside of TODAP about what the association is and what it will do, and classified the works of TODAP into three main axes: the axis of labor, the axis of critical psychology, and the axis of social solidarity. Gürsel defines the labor axis as the struggle for the class interests of psychologists. Psychologists can be considered as proletarians because most of them are unemployed, students or precarious workers, and their interests are parallel to the working class. Here Gürsel clearly declares that they will follow a class-oriented ideological line. The axis of critical psychology is defined as the critique of mainstream theory and practices; this is the only axis among the three that justifies TODAP as an organization for the profession of psychology in particular. The other two axes can be found in many professional organizations in Turkey. The third axis is social solidarity. That is, psychology and psychologists may intervene in many social issues. Intervention in a certain issue is both a critical psychology practice and a social solidarity practice. Gürsel gives the example of homosexuals, one of the groups to which TODAP shows support. Showing solidarity to homosexuals can be seen, for Gürsel, as facilitating both social solidarity and changing the theory of psychology. We can interpret these words in the following way: showing solidarity to oppressed groups leads psychologists to discuss psychological theories about these groups. Solidarity with homosexuals leads psychologists to criticize heteronormative psychological approaches.

This article, which is the only text about TODAP, separates its identity and activity into three areas with only little or even no internal relation among themselves. It is not obvious which characteristics of TODAP actually make it a movement of “critical psychology.” If critical psychology is not only the critique of psychology, it is necessary to mention an alternative psychological knowledge and practice. However, there is not such a mention or even a pursuit for an alternative. If it contains an intention to produce a perspective that superimposes both theory and practice, a theoretical statement needs to be developed and put forth. TODAP’s tendency is to consider alternative knowledge and practice of psychology as a problem that could be faced along the way. What is critical psychology or what it should be are questions that might be answered in solidarity actions or labor struggle of psychologists. It has to be

determined here that the discussion of what critical psychology is has not been concluded, not even properly started. Instead, traditional leftist ideology and the usual oppositional and radical political discourse fill the gap in this discussion.

Critical psychology in Gürsel's article is framed as a reinterpretation of mainstream concepts in solidarity with oppressed people. It seems here that the aim is to open up some legitimate place in society for oppressed people by using the social prestige of psychology, which is interpreted "from the left". However, "oppressed people" mentioned there, such as the LGBT movement and proletarian movements, etc., are in more advanced positions in social legitimacy than the oppositional psychology movement, and it is a question of whether or not these movements need psychology for their social legitimacy. It appears more likely that the oppositional psychology movement needs the acceptance of these advanced movements for its own social legitimacy. It is easier to show solidarity through press releases in favor of these social movements for gaining legitimacy than to transform psychology itself and create its own conceptualizations and practices. Actually, the discourse of solidarity turns upside down here.

In addition, it is not clear what kind of philosophy of science will be applied to interpret the psychological concepts in favor of the solidarity for these movements. With this inadequate theory, it seems hard for oppositional psychology to resist the theoretical gravity of mainstream psychology.

Although TODAP shows solidarity with the oppressed and uses the practice of psychology for them, it cannot exceed mainstream discourse and conceptualization and thus helplessly reproduces the knowledge of a psychology that contributes to a system of the oppressor and the oppressed in the first place. For example, you can assert that capitalism causes "psychological disorders" and you can call workers therefore to fight against capitalism. But this pragmatic use of psychological terms reproduces disorder discourse and can lead to the legitimizing of medical psychology or even psychiatric practice.

TODAP limits its critical practice to the axis of labor and the pragmatic use of psychological knowledge. This attitude has some crucial problems. The image of psychologists as a part of the working class only is highly questionable; that is, it is a fact that both the emergence and the profession of psychology are internally bound up with the reproduction of relations of production and power relations in class society, and this fact is detached from the analysis. Solidarity with oppressed groups must be achieved through analyzing the contribution of psychology to the actual situation of these groups, and through pursuing ways to turn psychology into a part of social emancipation instead of being a part of power relations. Otherwise, solidarity discourse would limit itself to being a moral discourse. The social function of psychology, differing from individual intentions of psychologists – even contrary to these intentions – lies in the reproduction of power and production relations. Therefore, improving the working conditions of psychologists or the quality of psychology services simply means better quality of this reproduction.

The contradiction for the psychologist who wants to show solidarity with oppressed groups is that psychology itself has a social function of maintaining and reproducing power relations. The psychologist who wants to help a child to concentrate better in the classroom intends for the child to be successful in school, which may be important for better conditions of life in the child's future. However, the psychologist's individualistic approach focuses on the child and not on the competitive nature of the educational system under capitalism, and thus locates the problem in the individual, whilst accepting the system as unchangeable. In other words, the

psychologist who wants to help the child renders the structural problems of the educational system invisible whilst pathologizing the child. The psychologist can even diagnose Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder and so make the child a victim of pharmaceutical companies.

Reflecting on this situation and making the conflict visible for psychologists requires that the struggle is not limited to the improvement of working conditions of psychologists. Critically minded psychologists have to analyze the role of psychology in power relations and seek alternative emancipatory psychological practices against these relations – so that he or she does not limit solidarity to a moral discourse which determines which interpretation of psychological knowledge is better or more ethical than the other, but analysis psychology's social dialectics and shows solidarity in emancipatory practices which brings psychologists and other oppressed groups together in struggles against actual power relations.⁶

Without dealing with their own power positions and their own contributions to capitalist reproduction as well as their social being as psychologists, the exhortations by psychologists from leftist culture about psychology for the sake of oppressed people not only urge leftist psychologists to take a self-justified moralist position, but also urge them to classify psychologists as “good ones” and “bad ones”. Because of psychology's social being even leftist psychologists who work in mainstream institutions with mainstream methods reproduce power relations in some form, even when they accuse mainstream psychologists with being on the side of oppressors and exploiters. However, supporting this or that worker resistance without criticizing the social being of the psy-disciplines and our own practice seems to be only an alibi for staying away from a revolutionary critical psychology practice. In this way, leftist psychologists can free themselves from the responsibility of being a part of capitalist society and can continue working in mainstream institutions with mainstream methods. They do not need to develop new alternative emancipatory methods and to find funding for them; press releases and joining rallies against repression are the only tools to show solidarity with other oppressed groups.

This attitude is apparently not legitimate amongst other psychologists. Hence, the intended struggle for better conditions for psychologists becomes impossible because it is marginalized at the first step by a sharp moralist position. This pattern repeats itself often in many leftist political groups. Frustrated by the absence of social legitimacy and support as well as political power, it is not uncommon for them to discover “better ones” among “good ones”. They begin to speak harshly, become smaller and smaller and lose their perspective to unify social opposition. Being against the power creates new forms of power. The organization that must be an emancipatory one turns into an obstacle, so much so that we must emancipate ourselves from it (Batur, 2010).

The precedence that is given to practice over theory and critique in the Marxian sense in TODAP is characterized by its interfering with the political agenda by means of political positional declarations. This practice prevents a unified struggle of psychologists from different ideologies. Naturally, in order to claim to produce critical knowledge and practice requires ideological limits and has to exclude discriminatory ideologies. For example, such a

⁶ This interpretation is not similar to the “smash psychology” perspective, which emerged in student movements in the 1960s. The idea implied here is that the emergence of psychology and its subsequent functioning is related to some main problematic of capitalism, and that psychologists must come to terms with this social function of psychology in order to produce a theory and a practice of an alternative psychology. Otherwise, their production cannot stop psychologizing social problems; and contrary to its desires, it cannot be emancipatory psychology.

movement has to exclude sexist, heterosexist, or racist ideologies and discourses, whereas excluding them does not and must not mean defining oneself with actions and attitudes perceived traditionally as leftist in one's discourses and practices. An organization of critical psychologists has to analyze these ideologies and defend equal rights among people. But, it should not combine this critique with hostile attitudes against other psychologists who reproduce these discourses because they are not self-reflexive enough.

Our opinion is that adequate discussions have not been had yet in Turkey about what kind of an organization of critical psychology we can found. An organizational structure was founded before discussions on the subject had progressed and reached fullness. One of the lateral consequences of this process is that TODAP is generally considered as an alternative organization for TPA, regardless of whether or not TODAP positions itself so. TODAP seems to have taken itself to an energy-required position which is to damage the legitimacy of TPA, whether or not TODAP meant to do it or not.

The weakness and lack of discussions on getting organized during the period of TODAP's establishment process means that the question of "what we understand regarding critical psychology" was definitely not discussed. Founding an opposing institution like TODAP as an organization of a particular professional group, searching for the violation of rights of colleagues and publicly exposing them, exposing and criticizing psychological practices, looking for a consensus of psychologists' labor laws, and many other activities, require a certain degree of criticism of psychology, but this is not always critical psychology. We do not wish to say here that critical psychology is not understood, but we do emphasize that what critical psychology is and what it could be is not discussed. Of course, what is aimed at is not a particular approach to critical psychology that could be agreed upon or reached. On the contrary, the aim is a long-term and pluralist discussion about the kinds of critical psychology (or critical psychologies) we could develop within the conditions in Turkey. Where this discussion would lead us could have changed the process of organizing an institution founded by critical psychologists. We think the price paid for not engaging in this alternative process, which is usually considered pejoratively as "academism", is high. We think TODAP is a premature birth. It remains to see whether or not it will survive, or how long it will last.

Conclusion

This article intended to give a general overview of the "Recent Developments" in critical psychology in Turkey. Actually, we did not have to focus only on TODAP. We could also have discussed certain other current efforts in the field. There are some other initiatives in Turkey, especially certain academic ones, and the work of those psychologists who try to establish a connection between their discipline and the new social movements. In this context, it would be worth mentioning current growing tendencies in Turkey for denouncing hate crimes, human rights violations, the use of psychology in wars, or the dominant heterosexual approach within psychology itself (e.g. Göregenli, 2009a, 2009b; Değirmencioğlu, 2010). If TODAP is given the central place in this article, it is not because the writers consider those other initiatives pointless. If we kept TODAP at the center of our focus, this is principally because TODAP seems to embody what we consider most valuable: the gathering of all existing initiatives into a critical dialogue and an oppositional organization that can provide a certain ideal for this kind of a critical dialogue. Students appear to prefer this movement (or maybe it is just our insistence in being optimistic) and this makes us think that although TODAP has its own problems, it still has the potential required for such a transformation – a potential which is exponentially decreasing. At the very least, TODAP has the importance of

being the first organization to be established by critical and opposition psychologists. There are plenty of lessons to be learnt from this particular experience. Moreover, critical approaches in psychology have started to gain more visibility. We can at least firmly suggest that in the eyes of a new generation of psychologists, it is becoming more and more evident that traditional psychology has certain difficulties in defining the subject within the context of the neo-liberal era. This fact strengthens our hopes that, despite their newness, it will not take long for critical approaches in psychology to attain a legitimate position.

Summarizing the current situation as it developed over the last years, critical psychologists in Turkey can be categorized into four main groups with transitional borders:

1. There are a number of scholars who approach critical psychology solely with an academic interest, without giving much thought to its social and political implications. They work in areas such as critical psychoanalysis or discursive psychology, usually within the framework of postmodernist theories. It is not that they do not have any conception of society and politics, but they still do not seem to conduct their research with an emancipatory intention emanating from an *emancipatory* view of social politics. They have a certain influence on their students and they communicate their ideas at conferences. Often, their researches become objects of political discussion among students.
2. There are scholars who use their knowledge of psychology with an intention of making some progress in social life, believing that psychological knowledge has a potential to change society in good ways. They don't try to deconstruct psychology, although they are critical of psychological theories charged with ideological implications. They are using mainstream psychology for progressive politics, such as improvements in conditions of prisoners, or solving ethnic problems in democratic ways.
3. The third group is comprised of those who struggle in an oppositional psychologists' organization which acts like a trade union for better working conditions. They collaborate with other new social movements and the working class movement. They even consider psychologists themselves as part of the working class. In this sense, they represent a traditional leftist train of thought.
4. There are also others who prefer to stay out of these groups. They usually criticize the first group for *academism*, the second group for *pragmatism*, and the third group for *sectarianism*. Although they emphasize the unity of theory and practice, their attempts are limited to some theoretical discussions.⁷

It will take some time to see what kind of a dialogue those groups could establish between one another, and if they will engage in a common or united practice at all. We also need time to see how they will relate to the mainstream approach and to its institutions. Yet, we can confidently predict long-term development and developments in critical psychology studies.

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⁷ The writers of this article also share the contradictions of the fourth group, which they practically belong to.

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