Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Özge Savaş

Interviewed by Amanda Nkeramihigo
Interview conducted remotely using Zoom platform
October 15th, 2024

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AN: Amanda Nkeramihigo, Interviewer

PS: Özge Savaş, Interview Participant

AN: Good morning, Doctor Savaş. The first question is very simple. It is to identify you for the interview: Could you please state your full name and your date and place of birth?

OS: Sure, my name is Dr. Özge Savaş and I was born in Ankara in Turkey. February 6, 1987.

AN: OK, thank you. Can you tell us a little bit about how you first began to relate to feminism or any form of gender intersectionality theory and or activism?

OS: Sure. Yeah, I don't think I had an "aha" moment or that a specific event or a happening that I could remember that triggered my feminism. It sort of like has been in the background, and I guess pretty much cultivated in me by the women in my family, specifically my mom and my maternal grandmother. Although I don't think they would define themselves as feminists, especially at the time, maybe that might have changed now with maybe somewhat my influence, too. But I think it is mostly an effect of sort of growing up observing the power dynamics between my parents and within different gender roles in the family and the extended family and witnessing mostly my mom's opportunities being blocked or taken away. And some of it I know through my observation and witnessing, and some of it I know through her storytelling, things that happened even before I was born. The interesting part is that it wasn't difficult for me to sort of connect the dots, and seeing sort of the cruelty of the Patriarchs, and for her, for example, like what she's been through, she's been put through like, all her life. My mom grew up in a rural town in Turkey, in that sort of like inlands of Turkey. And she was a top student at her high school, was admitted to one of the best colleges in the city. And my grand-grandpa at the time told my grandpa that if he allows her to go to college, to the city, he will never forgive him. But it is an interesting time in the world history. It is the heightened political atmosphere of the '80s. There was a military coup in Turkey happening on September 12th, 1980. And it is sort of like in parallel, it could be put in context with all the other military coups that are happening around the world, especially in Latin America including Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Brazil. So, it is a time where the ruling class supports and encourages these military coups actively against an organizing working class that is uprising because of the economic and political crises of the late '70s.

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So, what is the relationship of this to my mom and her educational prospects in Turkey? The Turkish ruling class, hand in hand with the international bourgeoisie, declares a class war and opens up sort of like this class war, opening up the way for the neoliberal transformation of the country at the time. The cover story for the violent takeover, for this military coup is that this is a conflict between the left and the right, and the so-called conflict is happening on college campuses. And of course, through crafting a narrative that represented this, you know, as this conflict, the government then uses this to delegitimize the left, destroy the left and the youth at university who organize on the left would suffer as a result, and then the right emerges even stronger, stronger than ever.

So my grandpa and grand-grandpa, who were right-wing, pretty much who thought that a girl belongs home, this sort of narrative, that there's violence on college campuses gave them a very compelling cover story to deny my mum's educational rights. But that is why my mom has always been super invested in my education and my sister's education. And actually, funny story, I couldn't go to my own college enrollments on the day that I was supposed to be enrolled and like I was camping at a rock festival, but my mom went to enroll me. I was supposed to be there, but I was not able to get away. So, my mom went there to enroll me and she reported, after that, it was sort of like one of the best days of her life because she was living vicariously through me. It is almost like she was enrolling herself, you know, to the college. But even today my mom has always been sort of like a, you know, sounding board for me testing my hypotheses about the world. And she's a very good listener too. Later also like, you know, again, like, sort of connecting the dots, some of it, like my observations witnessing her emotional and psychological abuse in her relationship with my father and also directly, somewhat indirectly and somewhat directly experiencing his emotional abuse as well myself. And sort of like, you know, growing up [with] my sister, my mother and myself, the sisterhood was necessary for our survival. Yeah. So that is pretty much the beginnings of my feminism. It is rooted in the sisterhood.

AN: Yeah, that is amazing. OK, excellent. So, I think one of your papers actually discussed, I think it is the recent one, the baggage and the benefit that travel with the 'F' word and you discuss what feminism means to people, and the implicit cultural meanings associated with it. And you are in the United States, if I understand correctly, but you also came from outside of the United States. And that work was really interesting. Can you tell me a little bit about that? Like what you've learned and would like others to consider when it comes to feminisms, how it sounds like it is also generational the way that we consider it. Yeah, can you tell me a little bit about that?

OS: Sure. Yeah, it is interesting. So, some of the themes we identified in that work in terms of when you look at people outside the United States, especially women in the global South, their entry into feminism and feminist work is not often centering gender first. It is coming through different sorts of directions. And, you know, often through socialism or Marxism or thinking about social class. So that is sort of interesting and that I found very much in alignment with my personal experiences as well. Yeah, I don't know if this answers your question?

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AN: No, it does. It is great in a sense where feminism is not necessarily something you just come out where it is like I'm now a feminist. It is really there's all these things that happened, as in your story, in the background. And then it develops into a feminist identity. OK. So how would you say you've merged these feminist values, maybe even these transnational feminist values with your work as a psychologist?

OS: When I was at college, we didn't have a women's studies department for undergraduates or a program for undergraduates. But I was taking - as a sophomore - I was taking a class with graduate students, at a graduate level, a women's studies class where I was trying to decipher Sandra Harding, Dorothy Smith, Donna Haraway. It was pretty much for me. Feminism is an interesting aspect, mostly, you know… like there's not much talk about intersectional feminism in that work. But it is pretty much about subjectivity, what subjectivity means, and self-reflexivity and methodological - my fascination with feminism as an undergrad began with this interesting opening it provided for me - for the methods and methodological interventions and rethinking the methods, basically. And transnational. So, it was pretty much, you know, work that emerges from North America, Canada and the United States, and it was fascinating to be able to think about, you know, because I'm taking this boring research methods class in my undergrad class in psychology (laughs), and then there's this opening, even though it is so hard to understand and dense for a sophomore, it is fascinating.

AN: And remind me again: Where did you do your undergrad studies, in psychology?

OS: Yeah, I did my undergrad in Turkey. We have a system in Turkey where it is sort of one of the most stressful things for a young person, how I got into psychology. The stressful part is there is a nationwide exam. And you choose your major pretty much after the exam, before you go to college. So, unlike you know, in North America, you choose your major. And so, you're locked in, there is less flexibility and it is pretty rigid. But interestingly, this is fascinating to me looking back, all my choices were psychology, I knew. I don't know why, but I knew that I wanted to be in psychology. And then there's the disenchantment after getting in and realizing that this is super individualistic and, you know, it is sort of like a facade for spreading individualism, (laughs) this is how I felt.

AN: Yes. So, you were already kind of conscious at that point of the individualistic, maybe neoliberal kind of direction that schools were taking students into.

OS: Because, I mean, it is so strange. You're in this classroom…. So, I went to public school and pretty much all the kids, including myself, are coming from middle-class, working-class backgrounds. And we're sitting in this classroom, most of us are first generation, coming from, of course, Turkish-speaking households. Our teachers are teaching in English, the medium of education is English. They all receive their education at universities in the US, like their PhDs in the US. They came back to Turkey. Teaching us in English these published articles in English that are based on data coming, like pretty much you know, 95% of it is coming from students, from people who look like my current students [in the US]. Like I was not finding myself in that curriculum.

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AN: Right, of course! So how does that influence your own work and your own research? How do you move into that direction when you see this research and these teachings that are not necessarily reflective of your own experience. How does holding these feminist values and also this cultural background, how is that influencing your choices at that point? And then research and all of that?

OS: Yeah. So there, there was a process, a period of, sort of a long period of disenchantment and not knowing whether this is for me and whether I will ever find an opening for myself. It wasn't easy. And the interesting thing is, today we're talking about decoloniality, decolonial psychology, but it could be interesting to talk about it from within the US, from within the belly of the beast versus when you talk about it, you are in Turkey. Even today when I try to connect with my colleagues who do their work from within Turkey, they are much less receptive to some of the critical thinking and critical ideas about this opening in decolonial psychology because they are holding themselves to a very different sort of standard about what psychology is, or what psychology should be. Which is, I don't blame them, [it is] somehow necessary for their survival in academia, some criteria for you know what it is supposed to be. For me, how it started, I guess I found my way - it is a very long-winded path. I mean, the reason I chose psychology, I was interested in clinical psychology. Then I realized that it was going to be super individualistic and all these things that I could learn, whatever is available, is not explaining the reality that I am observing or that I live through fully. So, I started being interested more in developmental psychology and social psychology. I actually ended up doing a masters in Developmental Psychology. But at the time, although I wanted to study gender socialization and preschool children, again, because of the sort of the ["scientific"] standards and the thinking that people in Turkey - I did my masters in Turkey - sort of like the standards that they hold themselves to, my mentors, my advisors did not want me to bring in that gender perspective and did not allow me in a way to study gender. So, I ended up actually studying language and gesture development of infants from 8 to 12 months in my masters.

But then I was able to find my way to gender and feminist psychology at the University of Michigan, where I received my PhD, which finally sort of, and also through a joint program with women's and gender studies and psychology. So that is where I was able to finally find the sort of systemic understanding, intersectional feminism, and how to merge it with psychology and with individual development. Even then, although it was also tricky in the beginning, because I think people were, when I came to the program, others were struggling and trying to find ways of centering, race, ethnicity, social class. Like all these other axes of power. And I was actually, I think, more like trying to sort of understand gender and, because of my, you know, like being brainwashed and like maybe, you know, paying attention to all the other things coming from like, yeah, like the global South.

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AN: That is fascinating. Amazing. So, what in the beginning anyways, attracted you to psychology because you said you needed to choose a major, but you're already very fascinated with it. Can you tell me a little bit what attracted you to that?

OS: I don't really know. I think my experiences growing up and again like observing - I think I have a very heightened sensitivity to power and power dynamics. And that was what I was mostly interested in and. But my brain processes information at all three levels all the time, like the individual, interpersonal and systemic or institutional. I guess that took me a while to sort of figure that out. But in the beginning, even though I didn't know, I was very interested in the interpersonal dynamics and power that is embedded in that.

AN: Excellent. And what would you say, if we merge these two together, and you've touched on that a little bit, I don't know if you want to be a bit [more] specific about what aspect of your education in psychology did support your development as a feminist, or hindered it? And has there been kind of a balance. You know, you told me that your mother and your sister were kind of in this sisterhood together. But in your education, specifically, what has helped and what has hindered it, and what in your life kind of tried to balance that out?

OS: Yeah. What hindered it, I think I could have gotten to this work much earlier. And had I not been persistent and insistent on what I wanted to do and what was important to me, I could have easily, you know, given up and just like, you know, not become the person that I am today, or do the things that I really enjoy doing today. There were so many discouragements along the way. And some of it starting with my undergraduate education, like not seeing anything in the curriculum that was relevant to my experience as a woman, but also as a person who grows up in the global South. And then, later on in my master's with my experience of the first time that I could be an independent thinker and propose a project and my project idea gets rejected because it includes gender, thinking about gender. And then all the sort of encouragements that happened through my graduate program, like the PhD program that I was in, but then also there was always this missing part about decolonial thinking. Although I was involved in the Global Feminisms project [at the University of Michigan] at the time, you know, still pretty much involved in…in terms of the analytical lens, something was missing. And I think that the program wasn't giving that sort of like transnational and decolonial thinking. And I had to learn it myself.

AN: OK. Again, maybe in terms of your, your education and being a Turkish scholar working in the United States, I guess one of the things that is coming up that you're saying is that those things have also influenced your understanding of transnational feminism. And I guess where the hindrances are, but also perhaps like when people do get in your way basically, maybe that is not asked properly. But when things get difficult how has that informed your own way that you do your work or you support other people and your students, etcetera, as well as your research the way that you approach it when you know that there's these different hindrances that can come about, your colleagues you talked about before where you know sometimes you have to do certain things in order to be successful in your career. I wonder how that works in your own in your own mind and how you approach things.

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OS: Like you mean right now?

AN: Or is it easier right now, perhaps you found your way. We're continuously learning, yes. But maybe yeah, how it influenced the way that you approach your work, if there are moments where you know you might have to be strategic?

OS: Right. Yeah. So yeah, one thing that comes to mind is always becoming more aware over time of different audiences that you have, and you will have all your life, and choosing those audiences and sort of curating your work. It is not always the most cutting edge critical decolonial feminist publication that you will have. Sometimes, it includes an element of like post-positivism, post-positivist feminist thinking and it is, you know, it is still critical, but it is curated to a different audience. And sort of like finding those openings and deciding where your intervention is going to be with every project. But then also like I can sort of say a little bit about like - sometimes to my detriment - I think I'm a little bit, I'm sort of a very encouraging teacher and mentor and I want my students to get a chance to really do what they really want to do. Like work on what they really want to learn. Which sort of ends up being like - I end up doing more work for them, you know, to help them get there, you know? Those were the things, because I was denied some of those things as an undergraduate, I'm very sensitive and careful about [that].

AN: It is brilliant. I am actually going to come to a question about mentorship, your own mentorship that you've received and how you see yourself as a mentor. First, I'll ask a question that we've started to ask very recently and that is very difficult to answer. So, we don't expect that there's a clear answer: How would you define decolonial feminism or decolonial feminist psychology, or what it should be?

OS: Ohh what it should be.

AN: However, you want to answer that, because it is big, I realize.

OS: For me, the biggest connection between feminist work and decolonial work - and I did this thing that even like gesturally like put them on these two separate buckets – well how they come together and where they come together is thinking about relationality. And so, one of the things I think feminist psychologists, psychology work in the past sort of has done an overcorrection, like ended up getting us to this place where we are still stuck in the binaries. And our analysis, our gender analysis can't be sort of relational, and I think that is what the decolonial feminist thinking brings: relationality. And also, with, I think, the increased forced migrations that we are expecting to come, with all these wars and climate catastrophe, one of the things that we really have to more carefully think about is, the way we think about gender sort of almost, you know, created more problems somehow, and we don't know how to think about men. And I think that is a problem that, you know, can be helped with decolonial thinking.

AN: OK. Can you say a little bit more about how, perhaps, the way that we think about gender creates more problem? Is that something that you can identify specifically or?

OS: Yeah. Not specifically, but like I think the problem, what I'm referring to, is the binary. So,

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like, the way we just like, you know, look at gender differences, still that work is, you know, to a certain extent, I think it is prevalent.

AN: Yes, yes, for sure. And you did also touch on [that]. So, I think I'm having some echo. That is OK. So you, you did touch on the, issues that are related to migration, refugees and your work also touches on that, which I've have found fascinating because we don't see or at least I haven't seen a lot of work that also integrates that as a major part of something that we really need to be talking about in psychology, in decolonial, feminist psychology, etc. How do you apply this kind of intersectional lenses and maybe even CRT theory frameworks in your own research, especially as it comes to migration and refugee experiences and studies?

OS: Yeah. I think there is not one way that I apply these sorts of different lenses or theoretical sort of ways of thinking. Well, in some of my work that is application of surveys and using survey methodology, and [this] uses intersectional feminist thinking in terms of how we clump all immigrants together as like, you know, and like all of our theories from '90s on looks at immigrants as this like "attitudes towards immigrants," as if 'immigrants' is just like this one group, decontextualized, depoliticized. And so the intersectional feminist lens there becomes really useful in terms of thinking about, you know, what are the component, you know, identities of these people. And the places that they are coming from, depending on what they pack in their suitcases, it differs like how we see them differs. And that is one. And then on the other hand, with some of my work that is sort of more qualitative, narrative-based, and more phenomenological, some of my previous studies I did with resettled households in Southeast Michigan…So this is a great example, actually, using gender as a sort of like relational analysis rather than the categories. I started with categories, interviewing both women and men Syrian refugees. And then somehow arrived at this understanding of, when you deployed intersectional feminist and decolonial thinking and have an eye towards the institutional and systemic, like what is going on systemically, you start seeing it as not just women and men but seeing it as female-headed households and male-headed households. And male-headed households have women in them who have different experiences than women who are in the female-headed households. So that is sort of like an example that I could give and that is one way. But then also my work with interpreters and translators in the field, because of my language and cultural barrier working in the resettlement context it also has been interesting to think from a decolonial lens and sort of like how you establish trust in the field when you do this work, how you build relationships with the interpreter, but also have your interpreter build relationships with people, and sort of like your participants and the people in the community becomes your family as you do this work. So that is also, you know, an aspect of decolonial thinking that comes to play a role.

AN: Yes, absolutely. And it does sound like certain methods are more, perhaps better-suited to decolonial and feminist work in psychology, and particularly perhaps narrative analysis as one of the qualitative methods. Is there something about that that you particularly find effective. Is it really kind of people telling their own stories or is there - What has been your experience with it and how is that perhaps more effective?

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OS: Narrative analysis, you mean, or narrative thinking?

AN: Narrative analysis or thinking, and there may be other methods that you use. This is something that just jumped out at me, but there could obviously be other things, but yes, how have you found that to be more useful for the information or data that you're trying to kind of connect to.

OS: Actually, I'm currently working on a piece writing about this method that I developed in the field which I call Kindred Narrative Inquiry, which includes the working with interpreters as we do the sort of life story interviewing. Which is a very intimate form of interviewing. You know, you ask very personal questions to people. But it is not inherently feminist, it is not inherently decolonial. You just have to work on it. So, like, I think narrative inquiry or narrative analysis itself, again, like, is not inherently feminist. It creates a foundation, the basics are there for someone who has an eye for observing those power dynamics to build on, definitely more so than other methods we have in psychology, maybe.

AN: Amazing. OK, perfect. Could you tell us a little bit about your involvement - It sounds like you still have an involvement, with the Global Feminisms project. Can you tell us a little bit about it? And what your involvement is?

OS: Yeah. So, even when I first came to Graduate School, in discussions with my mentor Abby Stewart, at the time, the plan was to collect data from feminists in Turkey to, you know, expand the archive. Somehow, I took a detour. I got involved in the archive deeply. I did a bunch of other things in the archive, including, you know, like many publications, reading all the interviews from women's rights activists from all around the world and working on sort of like different thematic issues. But, I also did some lesson planning. I used the archive very frequently in my teaching. The interviews provided excellent sort lived experience, eye-opening for the students. I mean, I often hear from students after teaching with the archive that it was just like, you know, so mind blowing and they learn so much. I myself learn so much from the archive. And so, I guess like that is why my fascination took me sort of you know, like 11 years to come back. And currently I am collecting data from Turkey and feminists in Turkey to include in the archive. That work is definitely happening and another thing to watch.

AN: Brilliant. Look forward to it. I've had a chance to look at the YouTube channel and the web page. Yes, it is fascinating. OK great. So, and you did talk about using the archive in your class and so perhaps we can talk a little bit about your teaching and specifically with your background. How do you include feminism and maybe even decolonial feminism, etcetera, in your class?

OS: Yeah, I think it is almost becoming for me now sort of like, because it is spread all over, there's no gender theme in one week or whatever. Like it is, you know spread across. So, it is sort

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of invisible in a way. But also, it is very centred. For example, I'm teaching a political psychology class this semester, where we begin the first week of the class, we begin with the slogan, “The personal is political”, and the women's liberation movement, and sort of what that means in that context. Like, you know, the politics of psychology and the psychology of politics, sort of. I'm also teaching a cultural psychology class this semester, where gender and sexuality is a big part of it, but also always having this institutional lens. Like for example, thinking about marriage, but pretty much with a gender lens. Yeah, it is always, I think part of it. I also just transitioned, adapting to a new curriculum at a different college.

AN: OK. Yes, yes. Perhaps then we'll go into mentoring, which I suppose has also happened maybe with some of your students. But first I want to ask who have been your mentors? You did mention Abby Stewart, I think. And how they've mentored you and what you've learned from that and how do you mentor others or hope to be mentoring others?

OS: Yeah, yeah. So mentoring is huge and you don't realize how important it is when you're in graduate school, I didn't realize. And later you realize sort of like “ohh” like, how you have been mentored affects also how you mentor. But I was thinking about this recently, well, some of my mentors, definitely Abby [Abigail] Stewart, my graduate advisor, forever indebted. She's amazing. And also, Kay Deaux, who served on my dissertation committee, who's pretty much opened the way for this sort of intersectional thinking about migration and gender. Sara McClelland has been a role model for me, super critical thinker, great teacher. And I also think that I feel like I might have experienced Michelle Fine and Susan Opotow’s mentoring vicariously through Sara McClelland because those were her mentors. And only a few years ago, I had the chance to meet with both Michelle Fine and Susan Opotow, which was great. But yeah, also countless others that like, you know, through reading. Like Abby, for example, introduced me to Geraldine Moane's work very early on in my graduate School career, which again, maybe we didn't have something like “gender and colonialism” as a class [in] graduate school, but at least I had access through Abby to that tradition, way of thinking and the theoretical lenses. Molly Andrews has had a huge effect- her thinking about narrative and feminism. I met her at a luncheon, a mentoring luncheon at a conference, when I was a graduate student. Yeah, so those were all very influential. But I was also thinking about this recently that you know, a lot of my mentors were almost first generation in terms of they were, for a long time, they were the only ones in the room. And so now you know, thanks to them, we don't have to be the only one in the room. But it is also, well, it is also intersectional there are still places that we are the only ones in the room, in some ways. But also thinking, it is important [to note] that they've done it in the dark. We have a little bit more light. It is important to not inherit the burdens of the previous generation. And sort of decide what burden we will be taking and I don't know about that yet, if you ask me what the burden is going to be, not sure yet.

AN: I'm sure we'll find out as we go. So, if you want to ask about who, who you've been

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mentoring or how you, whether you look forward to mentoring other students. But I think it just dawned on me that because this can also be used for educational purposes that we don't actually necessarily explain what mentorship is. What is what is mentorship. And why is it important?

OS: Yeah, I think there's no one-size-fits-all. It could be direct, it could be indirect. Like I said, for me, Abby is a direct influence like face-to-face, but she also gives me Geraldine Moane's book, which is this indirect influence. And my thing- I am thinking together with Geraldine Moane, right. And so that is one aspect. But then also there is - the mentors for you become the role models, as the people who persisted and because they've been at some point also been told that their idea is not worthy of following, pursuing, but they did persist, and they are in the places where they are today. So, seeing that is very important, and seeing that like there's light at the end of the tunnel and you know, if you do the things that you're supposed to be doing right now, perhaps that works out. Yeah. So, role models, just like observing, and also with the way they teach and give advice whenever you get stuck. You get unstuck. And also it is important always, I think, with mentoring to surround yourself with multiple mentors. It is just like something came to mind, also in relation to this is, I think pretty much more than almost halfway through my graduate school career, there was one conversation between Abby and me because of the sort of way I grew up, the way I saw mentorship was sort of like, the mentor tells you to do something, and you would do it, right? And Abby once told me, had to tell me that like, I'm not giving you permission. I'm giving you advice. Feel free to take the advice or not. I'm like, "ohh!" (laughs) That is a new concept. But after that point, becoming aware of that, and how I approach my students and mentoring, you know, with my students, has been really important.

AN: That is fantastic. So, we're getting closer to the end…. I wonder if you could speak to how you navigate your personal and professional demands in your own life. And I know that sometimes that is a gendered question and sometimes that is also connected to where people come from and expectations in their own personal lives. And is there anything that you can share about how you navigate the demand from these two worlds.

OS: I don't. I'm not going to lie; I don't think I've figured it out. But, speaking of intersections and yes, like where you come from, I think that is a big part of it. One of the challenges of being a scholar away from [the] home you grew up in is that a number of your significant relationships are maintained or have to take place over the phone, or online. And there's time difference too. And so that becomes a challenge. It might mean that your vacations look different than what other people's vacations are. When summers are, for example, writing time for many faculty, for those of us who have to be visiting [the] home we grew up in, in home countries, we have to juggle other responsibilities. And the things that we've perhaps delayed otherwise. So yeah, other than that though, I think everyday life, I try to be very intentional about how to take care of my whole being, body-mind. And sometimes I think of our work in academia [is] not so different

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than athletes. So, you have to really have a balanced diet, sleep well, exercise to keep a critical mind and to keep things, ideas, flowing. It is almost like the movement of the body is mimicked in the movement of the ideas. For example, when I'm working on something like writing something and I get stuck, I go for a run and then I get unstuck, right? So, these are the kinds of things I think the everyday life of an academic.

AN: Yes, I think that is actually great advice. I think a lot of us, I don't know if it's graduate students, we kind of go in a room and we're just in there just thinking all the way through and forget to take care of our bodies. And I think that is excellent advice, so thank you for that. Which actually goes to my next question and maybe that is part of that. What advice would you give to feminist activists who are entering Psychology today? We'll start with that.

OS: Well, I think I sort of, maybe said it, like it is persisting on the things that other people will tell you that your idea is not worthy of pursuing. Insisting on that and putting the work in. But also you have a lot of work to do, and we need you, and thinking critically and intersectionally. Choosing very carefully who you put at the center when you're asking questions that you're asking. And your answer will change depending on who's at the center. And I think it is important to remember our foremothers who have taught us about self-reflexivity because that is your biggest sort of weapon against the charge of subjectivity. Sorry for the weapon reference, I didn't mean to get militaristic. The charge of subjectivity will be thrown at you. And self-reflexivity is your tool to accomplish strong objectivity.

AN: This is fantastic. Thank you. What would you say? I mean you've touched on that and maybe to put a bit of a fine point on it in terms of what, what do you see as the inroads that feminists have made in psychology at the up to now and what roadblocks do you think still remain?

OS: Yeah, I think for me, the biggest contribution of feminist thinking to psychology, is an expansion of methods. Again, like you know, challenging these binaries, subjectivity/objectivity. The opening for more qualitative [inquiry]. I think there is a sort of like connection between this relational, qualitative, and feminist thinking. What challenges remain or what roadblocks? I think, a lot of the thinking that shapes the field. Meeting organizations which do great work - like I go, for example, I try to go every year to at least two conferences, SQIP, the Society for Qualitative and Inquiry in Psychology, and SPSSI, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, both have been amazing in terms of bringing feminist thinking and encouraging feminist thinking in psychology and centering it. But, I think because these organizations have been, you know, very US-centric and are just shaping the field or the critical thinking in the field, a lot of it still is alienating to the thinkers from the global South. And I think I've seen maybe more opening in the recent years in terms of thinking about, you know, there are special issues on decolonial psychology and there's conference themes with decolonial psychology. But I think we have to do a little bit more intentional work in connecting this sort of like intersectional feminist thinking and decolonial thinking in our field.

AN: I think one of the questions that I realized I hadn't asked is, but perhaps you've touched on,

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is about whether or not you have experienced any discrimination based on your gender, ethnicity, orientation, sexual orientation, otherwise, or just your background not being American. For example in being from Turkey, I mean and working in the United States or just being a feminist in general, what has that been like and how have you dealt with it.

OS: I don't think I know a specific case of discrimination. Discrimination feels, to me a big sort of charge to throw around. But I also do not know if my CV was ignored and ended up in a different pile. You know, I don't know the jobs that I didn't get, interviews that I wasn't offered, so, because of my foreign sounding name and everything, right? But I can perhaps say a little bit more about microaggression. I know, for example, that my authority as a teacher, my intellectual authority, for one, has been undermined and challenged more than probably others. I am very approachable. And that doesn't always, you know, serve me well. And I've been granted less credibility because of a combination of my age, gender and accent, and I have to work a little bit harder to show that I know some things. Yeah. But I deal with it by, you know, I had to teach myself over time what critique to take seriously, when to be humble and recognizing better when someone else, someone is projecting their own issues on me. And also surrounding yourself with feminist, queer and anti-racist friends is a cure.

AN: Yeah. Excellent. What accomplishment do you most value and are most proud of at this point and why?

OS: Yeah, I think I I'm sort of like very early career, I don't think like, you know, like all the great people that you've interviewed in this archive, my accomplishments are very minor in that sense. But it is probably the relationships that I built. I value a lot through my work. I did not think that this work would bring me the sort of like, you know, a family and friends. And so, the relationships with various collaborators who later became friends, or friends who became collaborators. And then expansion of those friendships. And then the relationships that I built in the field with people, with communities that I interact with. Like one that I was thinking of recently is my friend Zaynab, for example, who is a 17-year-old Afghan young woman who grew up in Turkey before resettling in the US. And so, we were able to speak in Turkish. She's in Vermont, but we still keep in touch even after I moved to Massachusetts and talk over the phone, like at least once a week. So, these are some of the accomplishments. I feel like, again, like... I had not thought that people that I meet through my work would become a family.

AN: That is lovely, and yes, absolutely, having the right people around you is key. Especially since when you were talking about, the thing that we're very aware of about the push for being an individual, it is just your work, it is you, you're the academic. But we don't ever do, I don't think, anything in silo, by ourselves. We learn from everybody, and so I love that you're bringing that up and making that clear. Actually, I keep thinking that I'm done, but maybe I'll ask one last [question]: Since your work does explore concepts of self and identity and belonging, and I feel like that is also coming through here, how do you see these themes - It might be obvious, but I'd like maybe for you to talk about a little bit: How do you see these themes intersecting with feminist and decolonial feminist psychology. These ideas of self, identity, belonging.

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OS: Oh, interesting. Yeah, it is not necessarily an obvious link. I think, again, I go back to sort of like thinking feminists and decolonial work provides a lens or a way of thinking, a way of looking at the power dynamics which are very essential to how we, you know, see ourselves, how we interact with others and how we feel we belong, or not belong, or are excluded. So that is how I sort of, where I see the connection. It is more like a methodical way of looking at those things.

AN: Yeah, that makes sense. Maybe [I will] put it to you to see if there are things that we haven't touched on that you feel are important for me or anybody else to know about yourself, about your career, your activism or psychology in general.

OS: I think pretty much we touched on everything. One thing that maybe I didn't mention, I think it is important. So yeah, we didn't talk about activism that much, or like the sort of intersection of my work, feminist thinking and activism. They don't always necessarily happen in the same venues or same places. But they, of course, influence each other. My engagement with the communities that I work with. But I was going to actually mention that one challenge of being an early career academic, and this is interesting for graduate students too, I think, to think about, is that graduate school can be really interesting in terms of, you build all these connections, and especially if you're more, doing community-based work like community-oriented and maybe like a little bit qualitative work too. So, you build these connections, and you don't know where your career is going to take you to. We can't necessarily choose where we're going to find jobs as academics, and with the sort of academic job market becoming increasingly more precarious for early career scholars, it is even, like people change jobs early in their career a lot, and they might be changing states, if not cities. And so, it becomes a problem especially if you're doing this community-based work, and if your feminist psychological work is also informing your feminist activism. I had to experience that. I had difficulty with that. Because, just as I was finding my people and, like, doing my work in the community, I had to leave and go to the next place. And that is why I also, like what I mentioned earlier with Zaynab, like being able to have this connection and talking on the phone every week with her is such a gift for me. It doesn't always happen. I mean, I still maintain some of my connections to people in Michigan, but all the coalition building that I did while I was there, because, as I was sort of on my way out, like around 2019/2020, post George Floyd, also because of the strong Arab presence in Michigan, there's a pro-Palestine strong presence back then even, like you know, today it is even maybe stronger. But back then they were building those coalitions with the BLM. And so, I was involved, and I was very involved, during the pandemic, with tenant organizing because of the heightened housing insecurity and precarities at the time with the pandemic. And all of that relates to feminist work because, you know, there is a through line with like domestic violence and housing insecurity, and, you know, racial justice. So, that is sort of like, I don't know necessarily where I'm going with this, but not to get frustrated because those connections are going to be built, and then will be lost and then will be rebuilt somewhere else. But those learnings will at least carry over to other places. And it is worth [it] to try again and again and rebuild and make the connections.

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AN: Excellent. Thank you so much. These have been very generous answers, and I will say on my end, I'm sure as an earlier career scholar I can see how you may not be sure of all the effects that you're having. But I can tell you, even with my conversations with Emily, but [also] with other people on the team, that you are having an effect, and your writing is influencing my thinking and making me look at things a little bit differently or just like helping somehow, and so I really appreciate that. And I want to see if Emily, if there's anything that comes up. No, no pressure. Just because we're wrapping up. And I want to see if you have something.

Emily: Yeah. Also, I just like, want to weigh in and thank you for letting me listen in this interview and also for creating these powerful images. So, it really had like also a personal effect on me on listening to your answers and elaborating on like mental and body blocks and how you deal with them, and like being in a room where maybe the light has been lit but still like being… yeah, so it was very, very helpful for me. And also, just like to weigh in on what Amanda was saying, I'm using your papers in my seminar, and I'm very interested to also being able in social psychology that is, but also hearing you talk about this kind of narrative inquiry, I'm so looking forward to maybe being able to use this one day in a Qualitative Methods course. Because it sounds so important that I have a lot of students who deal with exactly these issues you've been touching on and yeah, so thank you for this valuable work. Long story short.

OS: Both are so kind and generous. Thank you so much for inviting me, giving me this opportunity to answer your questions and giving me a place in this archive. It is an honor.

AN: Thank you very much.

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