

Cultural spaces of popularized psychological knowledge: Attachment parenting in Turkey

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journals.sagepub.com/home/cap**Anna Sieben  and Ayşe Yıldırım**

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Abstract

The psychological concept of attachment is constantly evolving. Approximately 70 years after attachment theory was first introduced by John Bowlby in the late 1940s, the notion of attachment is still in flux with continually changing ideas of what it means to be a good parent. One path along which attachment as a concept is moving from academia to everyday life is the philosophy of attachment parenting which was first established in the US by William and Martha Sears. Ideas about attachment theory and attachment parenting are frequently accompanied by critical comments on “Western” cultures. This critical perspective on modernity, individualism, and autonomy is portrayed in the first part of this article. The second part traces attachment as a concept transferred to Turkey. Rather than studying academic work on attachment in Turkey, this article focuses on popularized versions of attachment theory which gain ground as part of the parenting philosophy of attachment parenting. This article analyzes parents’ blogs, websites, self-help books, fieldwork protocols, and interviews with parenting trainers and parents themselves. It focuses on how popular scientific use of attachment parenting in Turkey is accompanied by discussions of cultural identity, cultural values, and belonging. The article shows that attachment theory and parenting are used in quite diverse ways to comment on Turkish (parenting) culture, ranging from anglophile readings to more conservative appropriations of attachment theory as Anatolian education. These forms of popularizing attachment theory challenge the sociological concept of psychologization.

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Introduction

Sociologists and historians alike have analyzed the use of psychological knowledge in everyday life and pointed toward the nexus between psychology and subjectivity in European and North American cultures. The use of psychological knowledge and techniques is seen to replace, at least partly, pastoral care (Bohn, 2017). Eva Illouz (2008) calls psychology's contribution to society a "saving of the soul" that is specifically modern in its involvement in working, loving, or communicating. Psychologization is seen as a culturally specific way of addressing a person, closely linked to individualism and—according to some authors—neoliberalism (e.g., Crespo & Serrano, 2010; Rose, 1998). Cultural spaces of psychologization are characterized as liberal—as spheres where the ideal development of the individual includes a psychological liberation from his or her roots (family, parents, or milieu) (Rose, 1998). Maik Tändler (2016, p. 37, translation AS & AY) argues: "The development and distribution of psychological knowledge is closely linked to a Western and modern imperative for the subject which is asking for constant self-surveillance and self-modelling in order to achieve individuality." Several other authors have framed psychologization in a similar way (Herman, 2003; Maasen, Elberfeld, Eitler, & Tändler, 2011; Mahlmann, 1991; Rose, 1998; Straub, 2012).

This "narrative of psychologization" is challenged by the popularization of attachment theory through attachment parenting, at least to some extent. As will be outlined in the next part of the present article, attachment parenting can be read as a critique of what is seen as "Western parenting" or, more generally, "Western culture." Advocates of attachment parenting argue that any form of parenting should be natural, traditional, and intuitive—and that this is opposed to cultural values of modern childrearing, technically mediated parenting, or individualistic perspectives on children's development. Parenting should be done on the basis of connectivity, intimacy, and sensitivity. Some of these critical perspectives on Western parenting culture can be traced back to foundational texts of attachment theory (i.e., Ainsworth, 1967; Bowlby, 1953/1968) while others have their roots in the work of Jean Liedloff whose description of Ye'kuana and their parenting style has influenced attachment parenting to a large extent. She argues that close bodily contact and emotional bonding in early infancy are prerequisites for happiness in later life, a concept which is, from Liedloff's perspective, incompatible with Western individualism. At the same time, advocates of attachment parenting and attachment theorists such as John Bowlby argue that secure attachment experiences enable children to subsequently become independent adults, fully capable of living autonomously. Securely attached adults are said to be able to

experience closeness in relationships yet also become separate, individualized, and independent from others. The present article analyzes this coexistence of the ideals of independence and interdependence and related binaries such as nature/modernity or individualism/collectivism referred to by advocates of attachment parenting.

Furthermore, psychologization is—explicitly or implicitly—mainly perceived as a cultural phenomenon of Western Europe or North America (e.g., Herman, 2003; Illouz, 2008; Rose, 1998)—where psychology has been established as an academic discipline and psychology departments are still seen to be at the forefront worldwide. Psychological knowledge has been popularized on a global scale for a long time now, however. Little is known about the processes of translation (both literally and metaphorically) and appropriation that take place when popularized psychological knowledge moves transculturally (not in the academic sphere, but as lay knowledge¹). On the one hand, the present article examines psychologization as a global phenomenon; on the other hand, it also looks at it from a local and very narrow perspective. It takes attachment theory as a psychological approach and presents empirical fieldwork on the popularization of attachment theory using the example of attachment parenting in Turkey.

Turkey is an interesting cultural context for the study of psychologization: psychology was established as an academic discipline in Turkey over 100 years ago and has since been relatively heavily influenced by European and US-American psychology (Gülerce, 2011; Kağıtçbaşı, 1994). In comparison to the success story of psychology in the US and Western Europe, the development of psychology in Turkey was less influential on academia and society: up until the 1960s, the position of psychology in the academic sphere was marginal (Kağıtçbaşı, 1994) and in Turkey there was no cultural phenomenon similar to the psycho-boom that take place in other countries in the 1970s (Gülerce, 1991a; Maasen et al., 2011). This has been partly explained by the dissonance between everyday practices, for example, for treating mental health problems, and academic psychological knowledge (Gülerce, 1991a; Kağıtçbaşı, 1994).

Academic studies on attachment theory have been conducted in Turkey for decades (for example, Gülerce, 1991b). But the popularization of attachment theory through attachment parenting—which is the subject of this article—is relatively new in Turkey and still in the early stages. Whether or not attachment parenting as an Anglo-American approach to parenting is seen as culturally appropriate and how it is translated and interpreted is therefore still open to debate. Rather than assuming that Turkish culture is Western or non-Western, modern or traditional (Mardin, 2008), collectivist or individualistic (Hofstede, 2017), the present article analyzes how appropriations of attachment parenting are accompanied by discussions or statements about an individual's own cultural belonging. How do the dualisms of independence/interdependence, nature/modernity, or individualism/collectivism unfold when the concept of attachment is transferred to a country—Turkey—that is “typically described by foreigners and Turks alike as a nation

in between: between East and West, between the modern and the traditional, and between numerous other variations of that binarism” (Rahimi, 2015, p. 31)?

To sum up, this article aims at broadening the narrative of psychologization by examining new cultural spaces of popularized psychological knowledge—attachment parenting and Turkey.

Attachment theory, attachment parenting, and their ambivalent approach to “Western” individualism

Attachment theory was developed in the 1940s by Bowlby, continued first by Mary Ainsworth and, subsequently, it spread to many parts of the world as a research framework. It states that children and their caregivers build a close emotional bond and the quality of this bond (ideally stable, sensitive, and warm) affects children’s development throughout their childhood, as well as later in life. Bowlby (1953/1968) bases his approach on psychoanalysis (e.g. Freud, Klein) and ethology (e.g. Harlow, Tinbergen, Lorenz, Hinde). (See for detailed historical reconstructions of intellectual and cultural influences on Bowlby: van der Horst, LeRoy, & van der Veer, 2008; van der Horst & van der Veer, 2010; van der Horst, van der Veer, & van Ijzendoorn, 2007; van Rosmalen, van der Horst, & van der Veer, 2016; Vicedo, 2013.) Attachment theory continues the tradition of psychoanalysis in seeing the parent–child relationship as central to development but it moves away from the concept of conflictual complex relationships and replaces them with the ideal of natural, loving primary relationships between children and their mother. The father has become—in comparison to previous psychoanalysis—peripheral and is usually modeled as providing support for the mother or as a secondary attachment figure. (Later attachment research looks into the father–child relationship in more detail, e.g., Grossmann et al., 2002.)

Culturally, attachment theory was embedded in war and post-war United Kingdom. It can be read as a response to a parenting paradigm in the first half of the twentieth century which has been described as modern, medicalized, technically mediated, and said to encourage a greater physical and emotional distance between a parent and child (e.g., widespread use of strollers and playpens) (Kanieski, 2010). Furthermore, the experience of war itself and the evacuation of children in the UK led to an increased awareness of attachment. Bowlby famously studied children who were isolated from their parents after death, hospitalization, or quarantine (Bowlby, 1953/1968). Bowlby himself established the idea that attachment is one of the most natural things yet it required a psychological theory to remind people of the need to form caring relationships with their children. This is certainly a general theme in attachment theory texts: attachment comes naturally but people have become estranged from it in the modern world.

This skepticism surrounding modern techniques of child-rearing might explain the ongoing fascination of attachment researchers for foreign cultures with different or, rather, “better” attachment behavior. Ainsworth traveled to Uganda in

1954 and described the healthy attachment behavior of Ganda mothers and infants in her book *Infancy in Uganda* (Ainsworth, 1967). Although not psychological in its theoretical and methodological approach, Jean Liedloff's (1977) ethnographic study on the allegedly happy relationship between Ye'kuana parents and their children, *The Continuum Concept: In Search of Happiness Lost*, has become a famous reference point for attachment research as well as lay understandings of good and attached parenting. The reception of Liedloff's book is accompanied by the narrative of modern parents having forgotten the essentials of how to treat their children. The author is very dismissive of her own US American culture, and of civilization more generally, arguing that while animals know how to raise their offspring so that they can develop optimally, civilized human beings have forgotten how to do so (Liedloff, 1977, p. 8). Civilization estranges people from their instincts, thus making good parenting based on intuition impossible (Liedloff, 1977, p. 38). In her view, individualism, liberalism, and the appraisal of rational thought are opposed to good parenting which is characterized by attachment and, primarily, close bodily contact.

In a similar fashion, a German popular scientific documentary (Schwerdt, 1992) contrasts healthy attachment behavior on the Trobriand Islands (based on original footage by Klaus and Karin Grossmann, two attachment researchers) with "modern, stressful and hectic life, isolated in anonymous apartment buildings" where mothers cannot pay attention to the attachment needs of their children.² Clearly, the well-known critique of the romanticizing and othering view on the "noble savage" applies here. At this point, we would like to conclude that these authors have a double agenda: on the one hand, they argue scientifically and call for more knowledge on children's development in order to become better parents while, on the other hand, they criticize modernity (including its individualism and ideal of rationality) for having estranged humans from a more intuitive practice of attached parenting.

Liedloff's continuum concept and attachment research have strongly influenced the parenting style known as attachment parenting which was developed by a US American pediatrician and his wife, William and Martha Sears (Sears & Sears, 2001), in the 1980s and has been published in several self-help books. Attachment parenting combines psychological research with the concept of natural parenting. It is from Liedloff, rather than from Bowlby, that attachment parenting takes its strong focus on close bodily contact between mother and child. Attachment parenting is summarized by its "7 Baby B's" (Sears & Sears, 2001): birth bonding, breastfeeding, babywearing, bedding close to baby, belief in the language value of your baby's cry, beware of baby trainers, and balance. These Baby B's are described as tools for parents to achieve a sensitive form of communication with their baby. Primarily, attachment parenting is used by parents of infants and toddlers (but can be extended as a parenting philosophy to older children). Attachment parenting is said to be instinctive yet parents have been robbed of it by "decades of detachment advice" (Sears & Sears, 2001, p. ix). Sears and Sears (1997) also link attachment parenting with ideas of Christian education, for

example, in their book *The Complete Book of Christian Parenting and Child Care* (Sears & Sears, 1997).

As with other forms of “intensive parenting” (Faircloth, 2013; Wall, 2010), attachment parenting is said to boost the development of children’s intelligence (Sears & Sears, 2001, p. 12: “Relationships, not things, make brighter babies”). But there is an even stronger emphasis on social values that attachment parenting promises to teach children. Sears and Sears (2001) mention compassion, empathy, responsiveness, and the capability of intimacy:

There is something wonderfully special about these children: they are compassionate, caring, and responsive, and they trust themselves and the people who are close to them. We believe that attachment parenting immunizes children against many of the social and emotional diseases that plague our society. (Sears & Sears, 2001, p. ix)

The authors also argue that children’s experiences in close, reliable, and sensitive relationships with their mothers makes them good friends, colleagues, and spouses in later life. The goal is interdependence, a form of being connected to others which is not the same as dependency or independency: “‘We do it.’ This is the most mature stage. [...] Interdependent people know how to work with others and get the most out of their relationships while asking the most of themselves as well” (Sears & Sears, 2001, p. 21).

Sociological studies on individuals who identify as attachment parents have been conducted in the United States, United Kingdom, and, sporadically, in other countries (e.g., Iceland, Simonardóttir, 2016; France, Faircloth, 2013). It has been described as a middle-class phenomenon (Green & Groves, 2008), often accompanied by other parenting practices termed “natural” such as long-term breastfeeding. In an ethnographic study, Charlotte Faircloth (2013) examines parental practices of mothers in the UK and France who identify as attachment parents and are members of La Leche League (an international organization that supports breastfeeding women). Faircloth identifies three different types of argument these mothers use to justify their style of parenting: first, “what science says is best,” second, “it feels right in my heart,” and, third, “it’s natural.”

What we find fascinating in Faircloth’s empirical study is the close association of attachment parenting with a critique of what one interviewee calls an atomized society:

I feel generations of people born in the fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties, I think there was an impact from non-breastfeeding practices. . . and I think a lot of the problems that we have are linked to that, not just pollution and all that stuff. I don’t know; the atomisation of society, the disconnection. (Faircloth, 2013, p. 120)

For this mother, attachment parenting is a way of articulating a critique of an individualized and detached society and a call for stronger relationships and interpersonal connectivity.³ Interestingly, this call for closeness is not seen as being

opposed to ideals of independence or autonomy in later life, as this mother illustrates: “I hate to sound preachy. But we really hope that by the time she is a teenager, she will have had her fill of being held and touched and breastfed, and be quite a secure person” (Faircloth, 2013, p. 145). This mother articulates the idea that a child can have enough closeness so that he or she does not become dependent on others as an adult. Bowlby formulated a similar idea in one of his famous quotes:

The provision of constant attention day and night, seven days a week and 365 days in the year, is possible only for a woman who derives profound satisfaction from seeing her child grow from babyhood, through the many phases of childhood, to become an *independent* man or woman. (Bowlby, 1953/1968, pp. 76–77; emphasis AS & AY)

In this quote, Bowlby describes the early phase of close attachment as necessary for later independence. Thus, attachment theory and attachment parenting combine two ideals: they are in favor of interdependent and strong relationships which potentially call into question the Western ideal of the individual as autonomous and independent. But independence reemerges because interdependence is seen as a necessary precursor of independence.

We think that this integration of independence and interdependence is one reason for the success of attachment theory and of attachment parenting as a popularized approach to parenting: this creates a niche (parent–child relationships) in which interdependence is seen as superior without refuting the ideal of independence completely. The use of psychological knowledge to argue in favor of connectivity and strong interpersonal bonds is, in our view, a welcome addition to the narrative of psychologization which has focused too exclusively on the use of psychological knowledge for distancing oneself from social ties.

Empirical case study: Attachment parenting in Turkey

Empirical approach

Following Illouz’s (2008) example of studying therapeutic culture in the US, the present article uses a broad spectrum of empirical material: interviews with parents, expert interviews, self-help books, websites, blogs, social media, and protocols from fieldwork (e.g., from parenting courses). The article presents the preliminary results of an ongoing research project and documents two visits to Istanbul in 2017, of six weeks’ duration in total and an analysis of Turkish online material in 2017 and 2018.

The actors in the field we interviewed or studied as authors of blogs and self-help books are all positioned in between professional psychology and popular psychology. They are all parents themselves and speak partly from the perspective of their own parenting experience. At the same time, they offer professional expertise, for example, in their self-help books or parents’ classes. However, most of

them have not been trained as psychologists. We only included blogs in our research that have been written by psychologists but address the general public and not other psychology experts.

The empirical material was collected successively. We present the extensive empirical material in the chronological order we discovered it. This process can be subdivided into three phases: first, we conducted fieldwork using the Turkish branch of Attachment Parenting International (API), located in Istanbul, as our starting point. Since 1994, ideas about attachment parenting have been communicated through the non-profit organization API founded in the US as an instrument for the globalization of attachment parenting. It offers members in other countries the opportunity to establish their own national branch but requires a strong coherence in the content taught and communicated online. We interviewed the founder of API in Turkey and used the organization's online presence as empirical material. In our research, we also included all the organizations closely affiliated with API—Zen World International, Doum, and Annezen, three private organizations offering counseling for pregnant women and for mothers. We interviewed their founders and attended four parenting classes or workshops. These classes were observed and described in research protocols. Five mothers (of toddlers or pre-school children) who were participating in classes run by one of these organizations were interviewed (problem-centered interviews, Witzel & Reiter, 2012). No other organizations that explicitly teach attachment parenting could be found in Istanbul.

Second, we extended our search and continued with Turkish blogs with the keywords “attachment parenting” or “doğal ebeveynlik” (natural parenting). “Doğal ebeveynlik” has been used as a Turkish translation of “attachment parenting” by attachment parents. We discovered and analyzed 12 blogs, all written by mothers.

Third, we continued with material using the term “güvenli bağlanma” (“trustful attachment”⁴) which is also used as a translation of “attachment parenting.” We included all 44 blogs or examples of online presence of parent educators that we found in our analyses. The keyword “güvenli bağlanma” also led us to the work of Adem Güneş and Hatice Kübra Tongar. Both are authors of popular self-help books in Turkey, four of which we included in our research. Güneş founded an institute for educating parents on attachment theory in Istanbul. We interviewed a trainer who works at this institute, a mother who had attended parenting classes at Güneş's institute (with a pre-school child and one older child), and one who had read his books. We also went to a talk Tongar gave at a town hall for parents in the neighborhood. We interviewed one of the mothers (of a toddler) who attended this talk. We did not find any other authors of Turkish self-help books who refer to attachment theory so directly.

Additionally, we interviewed six mothers (of toddlers and pre-school children) who have not been in contact with any of these attachment parenting organizations, blogs or self-help books. Interviewees were recruited through friends and

colleagues but none of them was previously known to us. These interviews are not the main focus of this article and serve as a control group.

In total, our empirical material contains 14 problem-centered interviews with mothers and 5 expert interviews, 56 blogs or examples of online presence, 4 self-help books, and observation protocols from five parenting classes or public talks.

Rather than providing a detailed reconstructive interpretation of the documents collected, which is beyond the scope of this article, the present article aims to portray a cultural field at a glance. In order to manage the large amount of material (which is also relatively diverse) and to present it here, we systematically asked three questions: Why do actors think attachment is important? What cultural values do they associate with attachment or attachment parenting? What cultural values do they distance themselves from? These questions are influenced by our area of interest outlined above: how does attachment parenting fit into the way parents locate themselves culturally—in relation to other parents in their own culture, in relation to the history of parenting culture, and in relation to imagined or experienced parenting cultures in other parts of the world?

Our standpoints and perspectives on the empirical case are in some ways complementary: one of us grew up in Turkey, the other in Germany; one has trained as a psychologist, the other as a sociologist.

API in Turkey and affiliated organizations

We began our research with the website of API in Turkey. The page itself is in English and not very informative.⁵ More detailed information can be found on related pages on social media, especially Facebook. API Turkey cooperates with La Leche League in Turkey. It is also closely related to three private organizations in Istanbul, Zen World International, Doum, and Annezen. These organizations mainly address well-educated, English-speaking, upper middle-class or upper-class parents in urban Turkey. In 2017, they also jointly organized a fair called “Doğal ebeveynlik fuarı” (Natural Parenting Fair).⁶ We did not actually attend this event in person but used the detailed online documentation as our source. The aim of the fair was to bring companies and parents together. Psychologists, social scientists, nutritionists, and midwives all gave presentations on topics such as breastfeeding, babies’ sleep rhythms, babywearing, or food and diet. During the one-day fair, companies presented and sold their products in the entrance hall.

We were able to interview three women who are experts working at Doum, Zen World International, or Annezen (trainers and managers at the same time). Two of them share the experience of living in the US for several years before moving back to Turkey and starting to counsel parents. All three are mothers themselves and began advertising attachment parenting after finding it useful themselves. All of them use the term “attachment parenting” in English (even in Turkish-speaking contexts) or “doğal ebeveynlik” (natural parenting) in Turkish (Devecigil, 2017, p. 15). Yoga, Pilates, or meditation courses for parents and pregnant women are also provided at these four facilities as well as courses on babies’ body language or

bilingual education. One example of a course title is “Baby sign language & attachment parenting circle.” Courses are taught in English (primarily for expatriates) or Turkish. Zen World International uses the slogan “positive parenting” on its Facebook page.⁷

Doum cooperates with nurses, midwives, and doulas (non-medics who provide support for mothers before, during, and after birth), and advocates attachment between parents and their children. Instead of focusing on practical or technical aspects of childrearing, Doum foregrounds love and attachment. Its philosophy is that rather than buying things for their babies, parents should build a trustful relationship by holding them. Consequently, Doum does not advertise any products. Like API, Doum stresses the need for “nonviolence and compassion” in leading children (and not letting them be “free”). In the interview, this ideal of communication is contrasted with a hierarchical model which is very common in Turkey and the interviewee locates herself and her colleagues in a cultural niche. Massive differences can be seen between their own upbringing or that of their grandparents’ generation (for example Pir-i).⁸

All three trainers we interviewed emphasize that parents have to change themselves and their habits before they can be good parents. It is not the baby who needs to adapt but the parent. At the same time, they advise parents not to do everything in a completely different way: most parents have been brought up in an authoritarian way and now want to teach their children freedom. This can be dangerous as children might feel lost or develop a problematic form of egocentrism.

At Annezen, we were able to observe a workshop called “API Turkey parent support group—for free.” It started with a welcome to the participants and the hosts. The trainer introduced attachment parenting practices and emphasized “affectionate interactions” as the main goal. She asked participants to express in one word how they felt as mothers on an emotional level. The answers included curiosity, liquidity, entirety, and liberation of perfectionism. Symbolic body language is also explained and recommended. It is said to support closer attachment and to calm children down because they feel as if their needs and emotions are being taken into account. Fathers as well as mothers are recognized as interaction partners, with similar expectations regarding physical proximity and body language. As long as there is compassionate and nonviolent interaction, salutary communication and interaction is achievable.

In Turkey, two problematic styles of parenting are identified by the attachment parenting trainers in the interviews. The first one is a “Western” and modern philosophy which is associated with a detached way of handling babies. All interviewees name Dr. Spock as a Western author and argue that his books have changed child-rearing in Turkey since the 1970s. His work is seen as advocating an artificial way of nurturing babies (formula instead of breastfeeding) and as disabling attachment. A hierarchical, restrictive tradition of parenting is described as the second problematic style of parenting.

In the interviews, Liedloff’s book *The Continuum Concept* is considered to be very influential and referred to as “the father of attachment parenting.” It is

stressed that these principles of attachment parenting are not taught as mandatory but more as a holistic humanistic philosophy which enables trustful relationships. Sometimes “nonviolent parenting and compassion” (Şiddetsiz ebevenlik ve şefkat) is used synonymously with attachment parenting. “Nonviolence and compassion” are seen as particularly important and essential for Turkish culture with the goal being a “compassionate family for a compassionate society.” The interviewees report that in their parenting classes, the principle of non-hierarchical communication is applied and that they try not to force anyone into a parenting philosophy. One interviewee associates her engagement for attachment parenting with the ideal of democratizing life in Turkey.

Attachment parenting is not seen as an entirely new phenomenon because it is all about intuition. Two interviewees report that gypsies in Turkey and people in Africa have been babywearing their children for a long time now. All that is new about it is the consciousness of its psychological importance.

The mothers we interviewed and who identify with attachment parenting are all well-educated: some of them are doctors, others are engineers. Attachment parenting, again, primarily means nonviolent communication for them. Furthermore, they aim at being responsive to the character and the needs of their child. Some—not all—of them were concerned about being too impatient or aggressive as parents. Bodily closeness is not stressed as being particularly important. Also, returning to work as mothers does not seem to be a big issue for them (in contrast to attachment parenting mothers in London for whom staying at home is a high priority, see Faircloth, 2013). In the interviews, attachment parenting is accompanied by distrust in Turkish culture, particularly in the Turkish education system: They are interested in alternative forms of schooling such as Waldorf pedagogy and they articulate being anxious about their children entering the age of compulsory school education. Most of the interviewees express a desire to move away from Istanbul—either to a remote area in Turkey or to a country in Western Europe (Spain, Italy, or Germany were mentioned). Some of them have already made plans to leave. Although these parents are in favor of attachment parenting, they criticize the way it is tied up with commercial interests (through selling products or workshops).

Doğal ebevenlik (natural parenting)

During our research, we noticed that no direct translation of “attachment parenting” is used. One blog offers a discussion under the title “Attachment parenting. Bağımlı mı bağlı mı? (Attachment parenting. Is it dependency? Is it boundedness?)” Both terms—*bağımlı* as dependent and *bağlı* as bounded—are seen as inappropriate to the blogger because they do not represent the “highest humanistic, natural and romantic emotions” of attachment parenting.⁹ In the following article, the blogger introduces Sear’s theory. As “doğal ebevenlik” is a common translation for “attachment parenting,” we continued our online search with this keyword. Thus, we discovered 12 blogs,¹⁰ some referring directly to the idea of attachment, others

more broadly to the opposition of natural and artificial. Natural parenting is defined as a sensitive non-artificial way of treating children. It covers different areas: attachment, natural food (first breastfeeding, later organic food without additives), sport during pregnancy and after giving birth (yoga and Pilates), avoidance of insecticides and medicine, use of ecologically friendly materials. Nonviolent communication is another ideal mentioned in these blogs. Babywearing and products for babywearing are recommended. In this context, the English concepts of “babywearing” or “sling” are used and babywearing is seen as positive for the baby. Bloggers distance themselves explicitly from the “traditional” thinking that children become spoiled if they are carried around too much (holding babies to one’s breast—“kucaklamak”).

These bloggers are all mothers and seem to be writing for women. Most bloggers have always lived in Turkey and never moved abroad; most of them went to university and seem to be middle class. On most of their blogs, no religious or cultural references are shared. There is one blog, however, that advertises natural parenting but then proclaims it to be “Western” and argues that the same ideas have been developed in their own Anatolian tradition. Western styles of parenting are criticized for merely making life comfortable for the parents.¹¹ Another blogger links natural parenting to nationalism.¹² From her perspective as a counselor for breastfeeding women, natural parenting enables children to become adults who do great things for their nation. She emphasizes that breastfeeding is a democratic right. One of these bloggers links natural parenting to “güvenli bağlanma” (trustful attachment), to the work of Sears and of Güneş, which we will look at now.

Güvenli bağlanma (trustful attachment) and Anadolu pedagojisi (Anatolian education)

The work of Güneş appeared when we searched for either of the terms “doğal ebeveynlik” or “güvenli bağlanma.” We did not interview him personally but his online presence and publications provide a wealth of material. He has published several self-help books for parents (we included two self-help books in our research: *Doğal Ebeveynlik* (Güneş, 2013) and *Güvenli Bağlanma* (Güneş, 2016), teaches classes,¹³ has his own YouTube channel,¹⁴ and has given several interviews in the media. (We focused on the interview “Konumuz Anadolu Pedagojisi?”¹⁵) Güneş heads the Bağlanma Terapileri Enstitüsü (Institute for Attachment Therapy) and is known for two concepts: “Anadolu pedagojisi” (Anatolian education) and “güvenli bağlanma” (trustful attachment). His work is directly based upon attachment theory. He stresses the relationships between vitality and early attachment experiences (Güneş, 2016). He holds mothers, fathers, and society at large responsible for providing positive attachment experiences.

On the one hand, Güneş uses Western concepts of education and, on the other hand, he explicitly turns away from the West as a source of psychological knowledge. He argues that Western ideas about education in general and attachment theory more specifically have already been formulated in Anatolian culture. Parents in Turkey should remember this knowledge instead of turning to the

West for advice. According to Güneş, Western concepts are not appropriate for Turkish culture.¹⁶ He himself studied in the Netherlands and lived there for 15 years.

Güneş defines Anatolian education as the abandonment of punishment and reward.¹⁷ Children should be accepted as they are. In Turkey's past, child-rearing used to be child-centered and affectionate. As evidence of this, Güneş cites a French historian (Abdolonyme Ubigini) who visited Constantinople in the 19th century and wrote that he had never before seen a country where children were treated with such love and compassion (Güneş, 2013).¹⁸ He defines punishment as deliberately emotionally harming and humiliating. He does not clearly distinguish between physical or other forms of punishment. In his popular self-help book *Doğal Ebeveynlik*, he cites the example of a family with two children who have both been punished by their father and grandfather (Güneş, 2013, p. 213). The son does not listen to his parents and the daughter is described as lethargic. Güneş argues that his parents were not "natural parents." Here, he claims that natural parenting means that both parents fulfill their gender-specific roles. According to Güneş, the mother needs to teach love and compassion and the father decisiveness and authority (Güneş, 2013, p. 80). He has never seen a healthy child whose mother was the figure of authority in the family (Güneş, 2013, pp. 80–81). What remains unexplained, however, is precisely how the father should exercise his authority.

Searching for the keyword "güvenli bağlanma," we found an additional 44 blogs or websites.¹⁹ These all consist of short texts describing the importance of secure and trustful attachment for the development of children. Some are written by (mainly clinical) psychologists but address the general public. Most are written by mothers on their personal blogs. Most authors refer to Bowlby and Ainsworth as the founders of attachment theory. Some refer to Güneş and attachment researchers both in Turkey and abroad are cited. Since Sears is only mentioned twice, we assume that these blogs are not as closely associated with attachment parenting as those described above.

The benefits of attachment listed are manifold. They can be subdivided into four categories: cognitive and bodily development; avoidance of clinical symptoms (depression and personality disorders); development of social skills and the ability to experience emotional closeness (becoming a good friend and spouse); and, finally, the ability to distance oneself from others and to live autonomously. The last two categories are particularly interesting for the purposes of this article: whereas some bloggers stress the goal of building connections with fellow human beings, others argue that attachment leads to greater autonomy, including free exploration, curiosity, the ability to achieve detachment and individuality. Consequently, they have a different perspective on what is "wrong" about parenting culture in Turkey. The first group of bloggers criticizes the belief that children who have a lot of body contact and receive a lot of attention become spoiled ("kucaklamak," see above). The other group criticizes overprotective parenting in Turkey and argues that children grow up in a culture of fear and mistrust which makes parents inhibit their children's need to explore.

Cultural and religious references also differ. Three bloggers blame Western culture or modernity for a detached approach to parenting while three other bloggers blame religious thinking. In contrast, two bloggers refer to the Koran as a traditional source of knowledge about attachment. They argue that the Koran teaches love and compassion for children. At the same time, they distance themselves from “old” religious thinking which, in their view, supports an authoritarian and strict approach to parenting. Those who criticize Western parenting culture or refer to traditional religious thinking all cite the work of Güneş. Their perspective is also similar to Tongar’s take on attachment which will be described next.

Fitrat pedagojisi (pedagogy of divine nature) and attachment

A critical position on authoritarian parenting and punishment is also represented by Tongar who has recently published two books called *Bağırmayan Anneler* (Mothers Who Do Not Shout; Tongar, 2017) and *Fitrat Pedagojisi* (Pedagogy of Divine Nature; Tongar, 2015). The term “fitrat” is interesting here because it means nature, on the one hand, and can therefore be linked to ideas of natural parenting but it is at the same time clearly religious in its meaning. Tongar criticizes Turkish parenting culture for often being violent and proposes a new, loving style of parenting based on her reading of the Koran²⁰ and her own experience as a mother of two. She frequently refers to Elizabeth Pantley, a US American author of self-help books who teaches attachment parenting and to Marshall Rosenberg, who developed the approach of “nonviolent communication.” She explicitly argues in a psychological way by saying that physical or psychological punishment leads to forms of mental distress that can last a lifetime. She combines psychological insights with religious elements. Religion, however, is not the same as traditional cultural knowledge for Tongar. She advises mothers to distance themselves from their own upbringing, to think about parenting independently and to turn to the Koran for advice—instead of shouting and punishment, the Koran teaches love, nonviolence and compassion. Like Güneş, she advocates a strictly gender-divided style of parenting.

Tongar was a speaker at the summit “Ailede Çocuk Eğitim Zirvesi 2017”²¹ (Family-Friendly Education Summit) which took place in December 2017 for the first time. We did not attend the summit but used its online documentation as a source. At this event, clinical psychologists, family coaches, and authors writing about education gave talks on topics such as children’s privacy, teaching religion without fear, violence-free education, or children’s mental health. Here, in contrast to the other fair “Doğal Ebeveynlik Fuarı” mentioned above, all female speakers wore conservative veils. Psychological knowledge is presented as a means for improving family life in conservative religious families. The summit was held at a five-star business hotel in Istanbul and comparatively expensive to attend.

Tongar also gave a talk at a town hall in an Istanbul neighborhood and we did attend this. All the women in the audience were veiled and the talk began with a collective prayer. Tongar presented her work on how to avoid violence in

education. She stressed the importance of prayer for calming down as well as the use of relaxation techniques and different communication strategies.

We interviewed three women: one of them had attended Tongar's talk, one had been at a workshop at Güneş's institute, and one read Güneş's self-help books. The interviews were quite different from those we conducted with mothers from attachment parenting classes. The women were working class or lower middle class and did not work themselves. They did not comment on Turkish culture or the educational system but were focused on their own problems with staying calm. They aimed to parent with less shouting and reflected on their own mental issues which they traced back to their own problematic upbringing.

Summary

All protagonists who have been portrayed call for a loving and nonviolent relationship between mothers and their children. Some promote breastfeeding and intense bodily contact between babies and mothers. In comparison to the description of attachment parenting in the Anglo-American context, as cited above, the theme of nonviolence (attempting to avoid aggressive forms of parenting, shouting, and being impatient) is more prominent in the Turkish context and the theme of close bodily contact (co-sleeping, babywearing, and breastfeeding) is less prominent. Attachment parenting is viewed as a natural parenting style.

Furthermore, some actors are in one way or another involved in advertising or selling products. Few organizations, such as Doum, limit themselves to offering classes for parents. Others organize fairs and summits where they sell their own products (for example, self-help books) or provide a space for others to display their products. The fees and product categories indicate that attachment parenting is mainly presented to middle-class or upper-class parents. Tongar addresses an additional audience by giving a talk in a town hall which was mainly attended by lower middle-class or working-class mothers from the neighborhood. Güneş's institute also attracts parents from diverse social backgrounds.

In none of these projects are gender roles challenged. All services are mainly marketed to mothers. However, at Doum, API, Annezen and Zen World International, different parental arrangements involving fathers or single parents are also valued and welcomed. Güneş favors traditional gender roles with mothers being attached and fathers having authority. Tongar promotes a very conservative model of the family in which the wife serves her husband. It is interesting to note that mothers in Turkey do not broach the subject of returning to work. This applies to all groups of mothers we interviewed and is markedly different from attachment parenting discourses in the UK, the US, or Germany, where a central theme is childcare and the mother's work. Faircloth (2013) states that attachment mothers in her study decide to stay at home for years. Although gender differences are present in the context of attachment parenting in Turkey, it is not as a result of working versus staying at home but the hierarchical role in the family (women

serving their husbands) and gender-specific parenting styles (loving versus authoritarian) that gender is negotiated.

All protagonists are united in their critique of Western parenting, which is associated with Dr Spock or modernity in general. However, the fact that attachment parenting is itself a Western phenomenon is reflected on very differently despite this general skepticism in Western the modern Western world. Here, two different types can be distinguished. The first group of counselors (API, Doum, Zen World International, and Annezen) and most bloggers offer an anglophile perspective on attachment parenting and they have international experience and connections (with strong ties to the US in particular). What they have come to know as attachment parenting abroad is basically taken to Turkey and only slightly adapted. This is indicated by the terms that are not translated into Turkish. This does not mean that there is no possible cultural translation. Potentially, the strong focus on nonviolent communication is an adaptation to the cultural context.

The second group departs from the anglophile tradition: Güneş is using this path of natural parenting in order to move away from using Western concepts, primarily attachment parenting, refusing Western concepts and promoting what he calls "Anatolian education." This can be read in different ways: as a process of remembering and revitalizing indigenous knowledge, as an intelligent way of appropriating Western concepts (and being in favor of these concepts without openly advertising them), or as an anti-Western campaign combined with false labeling. Tongar uses the Koran as the main resource of knowledge and integrates psychological knowledge only parenthetically. Her approach illustrates how psychological knowledge and expertise can be appropriated for a conservative project of religious education. In a few parents' blogs, natural parenting was also used in a nationalist or explicitly anti-Western manner.

Conclusion

In the introduction, we asked how independence and interdependence are negotiated when attachment as a concept is transferred to Turkey. Interestingly, this binary is not very evident in the empirical material from Turkey. The argument that attachment parenting is an antipole to "atomized societies" (as was claimed in Faircloth's study in London) was not used. Instead, attachment parenting was presented more as an alternative to violent forms of communication in the family. We understand this shift as an adaptation to a cultural context in which closeness in the family is not seen to be lacking. Neither interviewees nor authors complain about missing bonds but about violent and insensitive forms of communication. Furthermore, some parents distance themselves from overprotection and a culture of mistrust in children's abilities. Sometimes hierarchical forms of communication are criticized. It is the strong focus of attachment parenting on non-conflictual, loving relationships that is attractive to parents in Turkey. Here, it becomes apparent that attachment parenting in Turkey to some extent serves a different goal than in the Anglo-American context: it is not intended to tie families

closer together but to change their forms of communication. This motivation for attachment parenting is also evident in the arguments and blogs which see it as a tool for democratizing Turkish culture (an issue which, in other cultural settings such as the German context, is usually discussed in the framework of another psychological approach: Kurt Lewin's distinction of authoritarian, democratic, or *laissez-faire* education; Lewin, Lipitt, & White, 1939).

Whereas the binary independence/interdependence does not play a central role in our empirical data from Turkey, other binaries are very much present: the umbrella term "natural parenting" is opposed to parenting styles which are described as too artificial, distanced, or "modern." This anti-modern perspective of attachment parenting is clearly evident in all Turkish approaches that we encountered (sometimes in a personalized form of criticizing Dr. Spock). However, there are also marked differences between the protagonists. The group around API adopts attachment parenting explicitly as a Western concept and its members articulate an interest in learning from Anglo-American parenting styles. In the work of Güneş and Tongar (and on some blogs), the idea of attachment parenting being Western and anti-Western is at the same time dismantled and taken one step further by arguing that it is non-Western and in fact Anatolian or Islamic. Here, attachment parenting opens up a space to search for cultural origin and belonging and to reject "the West" more generally. It is interesting to note that attachment researchers have usually looked for good parenting in foreign cultures but not in their own premodern past. This does not apply to Turkey, where some use attachment concepts to rehabilitate their own history or traditions of religious knowledge.

It is also interesting that the popularization of attachment theory is in many cases accompanied by a spiritual aspect. This can be observed not only in Turkey but in different cultures (although this has not yet been analyzed in sociological studies on attachment parenting): Connections with religious concepts are either explicit through references to Zen Buddhism (Zen World International in Turkey), Christianity (Sears in the US), or the Koran (Tongar in Turkey), or via concepts with spiritual connotations (i.e. compassion, mercy and grace). Interestingly, these connotations are "speaking" to people with different religious backgrounds. More research is needed to uncover these links between attachment theory, attachment parenting, and religious thinking.

Finally, it is fascinating to see that attachment parenting and the ideals of nonviolent communication and loving relationships in the family speak to conservative and liberal parents alike in Turkey. Apparently, attachment parenting encourages ideals of parenting which are compatible with otherwise very different preferences. It is the conservative appropriation of psychological knowledge that is particularly surprising from the perspective of existing historical and sociological research on psychologization (see Introduction). Tändler (2016), for example, describes how from the 1970s onwards, psychologization in Germany usually went hand in hand with the imperative to free oneself from one's past, parents, and upbringing (including one's religious education) and to strive towards self-actualization. Attachment parenting offers a different, and, one might say,

more conservative model of psychologization: it promises to improve children's development without separating them from their parents and it promises a change in parenting culture without "breaking away" from with one's own parents. Consequently, it offers improvement without conflict and development through attachment. Additionally, the integration of attachment parenting into a conservative model of the family becomes possible through gender-specific roles: if it is only the mother who practices a psychologized style of parenting and is attached, loving, and nonviolent and the father remains an authoritarian figure, then traditional relationships in the family are at the same time transformed and maintained.

After all, does the empirical field we encountered and presented challenge or broaden the narrative of psychologization? In fact, some forms of attachment parenting fit better than expected: the strong focus of attachment parenting on connectivity and interpersonal relationships is not as evident in Turkey as it is in the US or the UK. The emphasis of Turkish attachment parents on communication is very much in line with Illouz's (2008) analysis of the "homo communicans"—a mode of psychologization that stresses the importance of communicating in a nonviolent way about one's emotions and motives. But the conservative and religious spaces of psychologization that we encountered in Turkey present a new terrain for the study of psychologization. Although these spaces are not unique for Turkey, they have not been in the focus of sociological research on psychologization so far. On the contrary, it has been stressed that popularized psychological knowledge steps in when religious knowledge declines in the process of modernization (Bohn, 2017). This does not apply to the popularization of attachment theory, which creates hybrid forms of knowledge, both religious and psychological. These hybrid forms deserve more attention in future research on the subject.

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Notes

1. For the transnational history of scientific knowledge, see, for example, Heilbron, Guilhot, and Jeanpierre (2008). We would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for providing this reference.

2. We would like to thank our colleague Alexander Kochinka for showing us this documentary.
3. It should be added, however, that advocates of attachment parenting do not always practice interpersonal connectivity themselves—Faircloth (2013) shows how much attachment parenting mothers distance themselves from mothers who parent differently and whom they view as bad mothers. Also, Sears and Sears (2001) comment dismissively on children who were not raised with attachment parenting and who apparently show little empathy towards other children (Sears & Sears, 2001, p. 24).
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18. This thesis is, however, highly contested. Turkish scholars (e.g., Onur, 2009; Örnek, 1979) describe physical punishment as a central element of education in the Ottoman Empire (as it used to be in a lot of other cultures, including European cultures) persisting afterwards, particularly in rural areas. "Osmanlı toplumunda gerek evde gerek okulda çocuk yetiştirme ve gitmenin en önemli araçları şiddet ve korkutmadır" (In the Ottoman Empire, the most important instrument of education at home and at school used to be violence and intimidation. Onur, 2009, p. 238).
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