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Chapter Six

Cultural and Self-Related Considerations in Relationship Well-Being

With Particular Reference to Marriage in Turkey

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Marriage is considered as an important institution in almost all societies. It not only represents the legal aspect of the formation of families, but also involves important interpersonal and personal implications for individuals and families (e.g., Stack & Eshleman, 1998). Over the past three decades, relationship scientists have made significant advances in identifying the aspects of marriage that contribute to individual and relationship well-being (Proulx, Helms, & Buehler, 2007; Reis, 2013; Slatcher & Selcuk, 2017).

However, the related body of knowledge has been generally limited to Western-style love marriages. The Western perspective of marriage emphasizes partners' voluntary involvement in mate selection. Mutual self-disclosure is thought to be the central catalyst for promoting emotional intimacy (Reis & Patrick, 1996), which in turn provides the foundation of a long-term relationship. The couple is considered somewhat separate from the rest of both partners' kin, both physically—as reflected, for instance, by separate living arrangements and the decrease in frequency of contact with kin following marriage—and psychologically—as reflected by the priority of the spouse as the preferred source and recipient of emotional support. Yet not all cultures conform to these characteristics of Western marriage. (In fact, most do not.) For instance, mate choice may reflect the preferences of the kin more so than those of the spouses, as in the case of arranged marriages. Even when the marriage is strictly speaking not an arranged one, the kin's (dis)approval may still weigh more heavily in interdependent cultures where embeddedness in existing social networks is seen as a defining and inescapable feature of daily life (Adams, Anderson, & Adonu, 2004). Self-disclosure and emotional intimacy may not necessarily be the central predictors of relational well-being, but other aspects, such as fulfilling relational obligations, may take precedence. Finally, rather than creating a separate family unit, the

social function of marriage may be seen as further fostering one or both partner's ties with each other's kin. Given these nontrivial contrasts between the Western and non-Western grounding of marriage, does what we know about marital well-being in North American samples generalize to other cultures? Do cross-cultural differences simply reflect variations in the levels of marital quality or are the core aspects of relationship quality different across cultural settings? How do cultures influence self-related processes that are thought to contribute to marital quality?

Large-scale cross-cultural investigations such as the one featured in the present volume make invaluable contributions in addressing these questions. We believe these important attempts should be complemented with a multilevel perspective emphasizing not only cross-cultural differences but also the ways by which different cultures influence relationship formation and maintenance practices as well as self-construals affecting relationship well-being. Such a multilevel outlook enables understanding the interplay of psychological variables with the immediate and broader contextual variables which may be involved in shaping the nature of the intimacy and bonding processes observed at a particular place and time (Imamoğlu, 2009). This perspective is not new in psychology and has been traditionally championed as a general theoretical outlook to study human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), but it has not been employed much in the study of marriage, arguably one of the most defining aspects of adult development. In view of the rising globalization trends in the world, such a multifaceted outlook is becoming even more important. For example, although arranged marriage once was more prevalent in the more collectivist cultures of Asia and Africa, as a result of increasing international migration, it now seems to co-exist with self-choice marriages in Western Europe and North America (Penn, 2011), just as self-choice marriages now seem to co-exist with the traditional arranged marriages in more collectivist contexts.

Our aim in this chapter is to consider marital well-being within a multivariate framework encompassing not only the individuals and the couple but also the cultural institutions and practices in which the couple is nested. At the cultural level, we consider influences on relationship initiation (i.e., the degree to which kin vs. the partners are involved in mate selection), and functioning (relations with extended families and gender roles), and at the individual level we focus on the links between self-construals and marital quality. Although we discuss these issues with particular reference to marriage in Turkey (where most of our research is focused), our analysis is aimed at highlighting not only cultural differences but also similarities in processes underlying relationship maintenance and well-being. The fact that the initial Turkish marriage study, which constitutes the main focus of the present chapter, was part of a cross-cultural project spanning five different cultures (U.S., U.K.,

China, Russia, and Turkey) enables us to consider the Turkish case within a larger cultural framework. (For more information about the demographic characteristics of the Turkish sample see Appendix II.)

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON MARRIAGE

Although marriage is considered important virtually everywhere, cultures, as general meaning systems, may differ in terms of their conceptualization of marriage and the roles of partners in the formation and maintenance of the relationship. Perhaps one of the most basic culture-level differences lies in how the relationship is initiated: by the decisions mainly of prospective spouses themselves or of their kin. The former type of initiation is more prevalent in the more individualistic Western cultures, where most people seem to consider choosing one's spouse based on romantic love as a necessary precondition for marriage (e.g., Sprecher, Sullivan, & Hatfield, 1994). Accordingly, this marriage type has been referred to as self-choice, self-selected, self-initiated, free-choice, autonomous, love, or love-based marriage to emphasize the intermingled roles played by free-choice and love in its formation.

On the other hand, in more collectivist contexts characterized by interdependence, marital decisions are considered too important to be based solely on the feelings or decisions of young people because these decisions have wide-ranging implications not only for the couples but also for their families, and hence are arranged or at least initiated by the elders of the families or extended families. Accordingly, arranged marriages may assume many social functions such as (a) fostering "the preservation of the stratification structure"; (b) enabling "elders to maintain their control over family members"; (c) allowing them "to exercise caution and choice over who enters the family unit, and thus maintain harmony within the family by felicitous selection of the new spouse"; (d) allowing "for the furtherance of political linkages and/or economic consolidation between families"; (e) helping to "keep families intact over generations"; and (f) preserving "family property within the larger kin unit" (Fox, 1975, p. 181). Thus, prototypically arranged marriages seem more likely to be based on culturally relevant normative considerations such as family background, economic status, and reputation, whereas those based on self-choice are more likely to emphasize factors such as romantic love or interpersonal attraction, self-disclosure and emotional intimacy, communication, and personal fulfillment.

It is important to note that in contexts characterized by collectivist values of interdependence, mutual attachment is not necessarily considered unimportant for marriage. However, in contrast to the Western conceptualization of self-choice marriages, it is expected to grow after marriage. For example,

in Turkey, a proverb noting “There is a miracle in the wedlock” points to the expected growth of positive feelings and attachment after marriage. The culture also acknowledges the often uncontrollable feelings of infatuation as well, as represented by the Turkish word *gönül*. Reference to the heart’s nature can be exemplified by such proverbs as, “Heart’s will (i.e., *gönül*) does not abide by any decrees”; or “Love and intimacy cannot be enforced.” The importance of kindness, consideration, and tender care is emphasized by noting that “*Gönül* is like a crystal palace, that if it be crushed, it cannot be made again,” together with emphasis on intersubjectivity and synchrony; for example, “A true relationship is like two hearts beating together,” and “There is a path from one heart to another” (Imamoğlu, 2009). As these examples suggest, the cultural construction of marriage in Turkey is in fact quite similar to the attachment-theoretical definition emphasizing a strong mutual bond that involves the coregulation of psychological and affective states of spouses (Selcuk, Zayas, & Hazan, 2010). However, agentic mate choice with feelings of infatuation as its basis is not the only means of marriage initiation.

Initiation of Marriages in Turkey

Having grown out of one of the largest empires in history—the Ottoman Empire—and forming a geographic bridge between Asia and Europe, Turkey literally is situated at the East-West crossroads. Categorized as a traditionally collectivist culture (Hofstede, 2001), the country has undergone major changes in aspects of individual and societal functioning, including trends toward greater gender equality and individualism. These two changes also brought about a shift in marital initiation from family-arranged toward self-selected marriages in more urban, better-educated, and higher socioeconomic status (SES) segments of the society (Imamoğlu, 1994).

Contrary to the popular conceptualization of individualism and collectivism as two distinct modes of viewing the self and social reality, the trend toward individualism in Turkey did not seem to be accompanied by a decrease in relatedness (Imamoğlu, 2003). Despite increases in individualistic values, the Turkish sociocultural context is still characterized by a strong emphasis on close ties with the nuclear family, other relatives, neighbors, and social groups (Imamoğlu, Küller, Imamoğlu, & Küller, 1993). In line with the inherent interdependent nature of the social network, through marriage, extended families are expected to become socially united as relatives; for example, in Turkish, a special word, *hısım*, is used to refer to such marriage-related kinship, as different from biological kinship, or *akraba*. Thus, although the great majority of Turkish families are nuclear (Timur, 1972; Imamoğlu et al., 1993), in line with their functionally extended nature, families generally

play an important role not only in initiation but also in functioning and maintenance of marriage, providing instrumental and emotional support when needed. Indeed, harmonious relations with the extended families positively predict marital satisfaction in both self-selected and arranged marriages (Imamoğlu & Yasak, 1997). Continuing strong ties with family also buffer the negative influence of children on marital satisfaction. For example, although the number of children was negatively associated with marital satisfaction in the United States and Britain, this association was not significant for Turkish couples, particularly the wives (Wendorf, Lucas, Imamoğlu, Weisfeld, & Weisfeld, 2011), in congruity with trends observed in other collectivist cultures (Dillon & Beechler, 2010).

Increasing endorsement of individualistic values while retaining strong relatedness resulted in many gradations of the degree of family and spouse involvement or consent between the prototypical arranged and self-choice marriage types. For example, a recent study based on a large representative sample (Turgut, 2011) reported that although about half of the first marriages in Turkey were arranged by the families, in the majority of cases, the marriages were initiated by the families together with the consent of the couples, while in less than 10% of the cases the marrying persons’ consent was not obtained. Similarly, self-choice marriages generally involved family approval, and less than 3% of the marriages were formed solely by personal choice. Percentage of self-choice marriages tends to be higher among the younger, better educated, and higher SES individuals. However, even in the lowest SES group, percentage of marriages arranged solely by the families without getting personal consent was less than 13%.

Relationship Quality in Arranged vs. Self-Choice Marriages

Culturally oriented psychologists and social scientists have long been interested in whether self-choice and arranged marriages differ in marital satisfaction. This work has produced a mixed picture, with some studies (including those in Turkey) reporting that marital satisfaction is greater in self-choice than in arranged marriages (e.g., Imamoğlu, 1993, 2000; Imamoğlu, Ads, & Weisfeld, 2016; Lev-Wiesel & Al-Krenawi, 1999), others reporting the opposite finding (e.g., Madathil & Benschhoff, 2008), and still others reporting no appreciable differences (e.g., Regan, Lakhapal, & Anguiano, 2012).

From a methodological perspective, the “usual suspects” surrounding all naturalistic studies such as inclusion (or exclusion) of different covariates across studies, measuring different indicators of the outcome (in this case different aspects of marital quality), small samples, or low measurement reliability may account for the differences in the findings. However, one issue merits

special attention. Studies examining satisfaction in self-choice vs. arranged marriages have rarely tested their instruments for measurement invariance across genders and cultures. To our knowledge, only one paper (Imamoğlu et al., 2016), based on the Turkish data collected as part of the cross-cultural project reviewed in the present volume, utilized measures—three subscales from the Marriage and Relationship Questionnaire (MARQ; Russell & Wells, 1993)—that have been demonstrated to have strong measurement invariance across genders and cultures, to be measuring distinguishable aspects of relationship quality, and to be unrelated to social desirability (Lucas, Parkhill, Wendorf, Imamoğlu, Weisfeld, Weisfeld et al., 2008). These three subscales measure Love (e.g., “Does your relationship have a romantic side?”), Problems (e.g., “How often do you have a serious quarrel?”), and Partnership (e.g., “Does your spouse understand you?”).

This study found that the two types of marriages in Turkey differed in terms of romantic love. Both males and females in self-choice marriages reported greater Love as compared to their counterparts in arranged marriages (Imamoğlu et al., 2016), even after adjusting for marital duration which has been found to be negatively associated with romantic love across cultures (e.g., Wendorf et al., 2011). This finding is in congruity with those from other cultures (e.g., China; Pimentel, 2000) and indicates that being able to choose one's spouse is particularly associated with the infatuation or romantic love aspect of marital quality.

Interestingly, self-choice and arranged marriages did not differ in perceived marital problems. Of course, one needs to be very careful about interpreting a null finding as it may simply be due to a small sample size and low power. However, the study was based on a large sample with 150 couples in arranged and 300 couples in self-choice marriages, affording 86% power to detect even a difference of 0.3 standard deviations (Cohen's *d*) between the two marriage types. Thus, if there is any difference between arranged and self-choice marriages in perceived conflict, it is likely to be small, and smaller than that in romantic love. Taken together with the finding on romantic love, it seems that spouses in self-choice marriages are likely to experience more positive emotions relative to those in arranged marriages, but they also seem to have higher expectations from their marriages (hence, possibly more tendency to perceive Problems), and more likely to express resentment when those expectations are not met (Imamoğlu, 2000).

Finally, the two marriage types differed in Partnership but this difference was qualified by gender. Turkish wives in arranged marriages reported lower feelings of Partnership compared to not only their husbands but also to both husbands and wives in self-choice marriages, even after controlling for education and marital duration. This finding is an example of how cultural

grounding of gender may influence marital quality, to which we turn our attention next.

Gender Roles and Marital Quality

Gender differences across marital quality components were typically small but systematic to inform how the cultural understanding of traditional gender roles may influence marital well-being (Imamoğlu et al., 2016). For instance, the finding that wives in arranged marriages reported lower Partnership than their husbands as well as both husbands and wives in self-choice marriages reflects the asymmetric responsibility ascribed to wives in provision of support to the spouse and meeting relational obligations including kin-keeping (Imamoğlu & Yasak, 1997). Traditionally, the Turkish culture has higher expectations for women (vs. men) to be understanding, validating, and supportive of their partner's needs, resulting in higher perceptions of Partnership by husbands (vs. wives), especially in arranged marriages. However, the absence of such high expectations for husbands leads women to perceive not only lower levels of Partnership (Imamoğlu et al., 2016) but also feelings of living in somewhat different worlds from their husbands with little sharing of psychological worlds and validation by their spouses relative to their counterparts in self-selected marriages, and hence to report more loneliness (Demir & Fıfıloğlu, 1999; Imamoğlu, 1993, 2000). It also raises the possibility that Turkish wives in arranged marriages may be more likely to see close relationships other than their marriage (e.g., relationships with adult children, siblings, parents, or other family members) as the primary source of social support. Indeed, in a study of retired Turkish adults, women reported more frequent interactions (than their male counterparts) in their close social network of children and neighbors whereas men not only perceived themselves to be well cared for at home but also continued their ties with former colleagues and friends at places such as coffee houses (Imamoğlu et al., 1993). In line with these findings, husbands in arranged marriages may be likely to have marital schemas that emphasize the segregated gender-role and obligation-based aspects of marriages, and hence are less responsive to their wives' needs for emotional sharing.

Another important impact of the prevalent gender culture seems to be on women's generally subordinate role in society as well as in marriage. In spite of the general trend toward egalitarianism in Turkish marriages (Imamoğlu, 2000; Yucel, 2015), as in different parts of the world such as India (e.g., Prakash & Singh, 2014), traditional role differentiation based on male power is still quite prevalent (Imamoğlu, 2000; Yucel, 2015). Interestingly, with increases in household SES in Turkey, although wives seem to acquire more

power (particularly with increased professionalization and contribution to family budget), the husbands seem to show an opposite trend, and wield less power or authority, despite their higher resources relative to their lower SES counterparts (Imamoğlu, 2000). A similar pattern is observed in other Mediterranean countries with traditionally similar understandings of gender roles as in Turkey (Buric & Zacevic, 1967; Safilios-Rothschild, 1967). These trends are in contrast to findings from Western countries, such as the United States and France, where men's power seems to be based more strongly on their resources (e.g., Blood & Wolfe, 1960). In response to such cross-cultural differences, Rodman (1972) suggested that in cultures with a clear norm of power allocation in gender relations, the prevailing patriarchal norm (rather than personal resources) determines the basis of power allocation. However, although the prevailing norms seem to declare the authority of the husbands, in families characterized by more emancipation from the prevailing patriarchal norms, husbands seem more likely to consider equality norms independent of their resources. Still, it is important to note the relative nature of those differences because even in dual-career Western marriages "both partners seem to endorse some level of male dominance" (Steil, 1983, p. 53).

Interestingly, the trend toward gender equality in marriage does not seem to involve equal sharing of homemaking tasks. Apparently, norms of family functioning favoring gender role specialization are often so strong that women generally tend to be constrained not to disrupt them, as noted by Kandiyoti (1982, p. 117): "Even in the case of professional women the strains inherent in combining work and domestic responsibilities are seldom allowed to reflect on men who continue to be sheltered from new role demands." Accordingly, Turkish wives' reports of disagreement over division of labor were not found to be a significant predictor of marital conflict, unlike the American, British, Chinese and Russian spouses, and to some degree Turkish husbands (Dillon et al., 2015).

Scholars have concluded that the unequal division of power together with the inequitable division of household tasks and child care tends to be associated with women's lower marital satisfaction (e.g., Breznsnyak & Whisman, 2004). In a similar vein, Blood (1967), in an early study, explained the lower marital satisfaction of Japanese women (relative to men) in arranged marriages in terms of the strict servant-like roles expected from them. In line with the prevalent nature of the inequality-based gender roles, studies in various cultures generally reported that wives' marital satisfaction tends to be lower than that of husbands (e.g., Jackson, Miller, Oka, & Henry, 2014). For example, relative to their husbands, Turkish wives, independent of the arranged or self-choice nature of their marriage (Imamoğlu et al., 2016), were likely to perceive more marital problems and conflict, just like the American and

British wives (Dillon et al., 2015). Accordingly, women seem more likely to be dissatisfied with their partners' personal characteristics, viewing them as more embarrassing, argumentative, unnerving, nasty, and irritating, and hence reporting having a serious row more often. In a similar vein, Turkish, as well as American, British, Chinese, and Russian wives, were more likely than their husbands to state that they have considered divorcing their husbands while the husbands (with the exception of Americans) were more likely to consider themselves fortunate to have married their wives (Weisfeld, Dillon, Nowak, Mims, Weisfeld, Imamoğlu et al., 2011). These gender-related differences may have important implications for the functioning and well-being of individuals; for example, symptoms of depression, loneliness, and anxiety reported by American, Chinese, and Turkish couples were predicted particularly by the dissatisfaction of the wives (Weisfeld et al., 2000).

On the other hand, different lines of research have concluded that perceived equality tends to be beneficial for relationships (e.g., Aida & Falbo, 1991; Imamoğlu, 1995, 2000). For example, a simulative experimental study (Imamoğlu, 1995) indicated that in different types of relationships based on perceived equality (rather than inequality) and common (rather than conflicting) interests, American university students were more likely to interpret their partners' behaviors positively, express more liking for them, and expect to maintain open communication in their relationships.

This overall pattern is also echoed in marital relationships. Perceived marital equality is associated with more satisfaction, better communication, and being less likely to rely on manipulative and indirect influence tactics with one's spouse (Aida & Falbo, 1991; Imamoğlu, 2000). In Turkish marriages, couples who perceive their relationship as more egalitarian were more likely to report not only greater communication quality but also greater love and sexual satisfaction and lower likelihood of physical violence (Imamoğlu & Yasak, 1997). Thus, both women and men seem to benefit from egalitarian relationships; however, women, who are more likely to have lower power and lower marital satisfaction, seem to endorse egalitarian marital norms more than men (Imamoğlu, 2000).

SELF-CONSTRUAL INFLUENCES ON MARRIAGE

The popular understanding of cultural psychology emphasizes group differences across nations (e.g., differences in marital quality across countries) or across demographic groups within a nation (e.g., differences in marital quality across arranged vs. self-choice marriages). However, a cultural analysis of relationships should move beyond these group differences and also focus

on how cultural practices and institutions affect individuals' construction of the self and the social world (also see Adams et al., 2004). Perhaps the most well-known research program achieving this goal is Markus and Kitayama's (1991) work on independent vs. interdependent selfways. Based on their seminal conceptualization, the independent constructions of the self prototypically seen in the contemporary Western world vs. the interdependent constructions of the self prototypically seen in the Eastern world have been treated as two opposite or contrasting ways to construct the self and the social reality. Motivated by conceptualizations of healthy human development emphasizing both relationality and agency as well as the staggering trend in Turkey emphasizing independence while retaining values emphasizing interdependence, one of us (Imamoğlu, 2003) proposed that relatedness and individuation are not opposite but distinct and complementary orientations of a balanced, authentic self-system. Referred to as the Balanced Integration and Differentiation (BID) model, this perspective argues that agency and autonomous action coexist with embeddedness in (oftentimes inescapable) social relationships, and that satisfaction of one's needs for both individuation and relatedness is associated with optimal psychological functioning across contexts and time.

The BID model has important implications for marital functioning. For one, relationship creation is not seen as a product of only voluntary effort and personal choice vs. as a product of only environmental affordances beyond one's control, but rather an integration of the two. The finding that Turkish respondents do not tend to see their marriage initiation as solely self-choice or arranged but rather a result of their active engagement combined with family involvement (Turgut, 2011) supports this argument.

Second, the BID model proposes that individuals who meet both their individuation and relatedness needs would experience greater psychological well-being than those who lack either individuation or relatedness or both. This basic proposition of the model was supported in diverse samples including Turkish, American, German, and Canadian respondents (Imamoğlu, 2011). Specifically, individuals with balanced self-construals (i.e., individuals who score high on both individuation and relatedness) evidenced greater well-being on numerous psychological indicators including secure attachment and exploration (Imamoğlu & Imamoğlu, 2010) and authenticity (Imamoğlu, Gunaydin, & Selcuk, 2011), as well as hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Imamoğlu & Beydoğan, 2011).

This basic proposition of the model can also be extended to relationship well-being. In several studies with Turkish couples, balanced self-construal predicted greater marital satisfaction, even after controlling for marriage type (Altınçağ & Imamoğlu, 2016; Gündoğdu & Imamoğlu, 2008). Analyses

focusing on the specific aspects of balanced self-construal revealed that the relational self-orientation of spouses directly predicted both decision-making quality (measured by perceived equality in and satisfaction with decision-making) and marital quality (measured by marital satisfaction and adjustment), while the individuation orientation indirectly predicted marital quality through decision-making quality (Gündoğdu & Imamoğlu, 2008).

Individual differences in self-construal also influence orientation toward marital relationships. Harter and her associates (e.g., Neff & Harter, 2002) have proposed three different relationship styles: In the mutuality-based relationship style, individuals try to balance their own needs with those of their partners. In the self-focused autonomy style, individuals (feeling that they have the right to get what they want in their relationship) focus primarily on their own needs and wishes. Finally, in the other-focused connection style, individuals tend to give priority to the needs and decisions of their partners, often neglecting their own. Research involving American adults has indicated that the mutuality-based relationship style, which is linked to equality, is associated with positive relationship outcomes independent of gender, as compared to the self-focused autonomy orientation, which is linked to dominance as well as other-focused connectedness style which seems to be linked to subordination (e.g., Neff & Harter, 2002). Recent work involving Turkish adults (Altınçağ & Imamoğlu, 2016) painted a similar picture: Individuals with balanced self-construals were more likely to have a mutuality-based relationship style, and after controlling for age, marriage type, and education, self-construals and relationship styles both explained unique and significant variance in relationship quality (as measured by perceived validation by the partner, love, partnership, basic need satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and satisfaction with decision making).

Searching for Common Processes across Cultures: The Case of Partner Responsiveness

Throughout most of this chapter, we focused on a cultural analysis of marital quality in Turkey. The findings we reviewed show that in contrast to the contemporary conceptualization of marriage in the Western world emphasizing personal choice, marriage initiation in Turkey oftentimes involves varying degrees of family and spousal involvement or consent, falling between the prototypical arranged and self-choice marriage types. Romantic love also does not seem to be a characteristic of all marriages, with spouses in arranged marriages reporting lower levels of love than those in self-choice marriages. Notwithstanding these differences, are there any core processes in marriage that are common across cultures and different marriage types? For instance,

in our cross-cultural work, spousal humorousness was positively associated with love toward one's spouse in all five cultures studied (Weisfeld, Nowak, Lucas, Weisfeld, Imamoğlu, Butovskaya, et al., 2011). Furthermore, although romantic love seems to be an important differentiating variable between arranged and self-choice marriages in Turkey, the positive association between spousal humorousness and love did not differ in terms of marriage type. Such findings suggest that marital satisfaction may be likely to benefit from similar relational and psychological mechanisms across cultures, regardless of how marriages have been initiated.

Whether or not such core processes exist has been an issue of discussion for both cultural psychologists and relationship scientists. In an attempt to integrate major theories of close relationships, such as attachment theory, interdependence theory, and social support theory, Reis (2013) argued that partner responsiveness is a potential integrating principle in relationship science and a central predictor of relationship and personal well-being. Broadly, partner responsiveness refers to the extent to which individuals perceive that their partner or spouse understands, validates, and cares for them. In recent years, numerous studies investigated the role of partner responsiveness in marital and personal well-being. Studies involving North American participants showed that partner responsiveness promotes emotional intimacy and satisfaction in marriage (e.g., Fekete, Stephens, Mickelson, & Druley, 2007). Furthermore, a number of recent investigations in a national U.S. sample showed benefits of partner responsiveness for physical health as measured by subjective and objective sleep quality (Selcuk, Stanton, Slatcher, & Ong, 2017), diurnal cortisol profiles (Slatcher, Selcuk, & Ong, 2015), and risk for all-cause mortality (Selcuk & Ong, 2013). Finally, partner responsiveness predicts increased psychological well-being assessed in terms of both hedonia (life satisfaction, positive affect) and eudaimonia (meaning in life) (Selcuk, Gunaydin, Ong, & Almeida, 2016). Increasing evidence indicates that partner responsiveness exerts these beneficial effects on physical and psychological well-being by way of facilitating emotion regulation in response to stressful events (e.g., Selcuk et al., 2017). Recent work with non-Western samples indicated that partner responsiveness has relevance for well-being in other cultures as well. For instance, a cross-cultural investigation found that partner responsiveness positively predicted psychological well-being in Japan although the strength of the association was lower than that in a comparative U.S. sample (Tasfiliz, Selcuk, Gunaydin, Slatcher, Corriero, & Ong, 2016). A separate study involving Turkish respondents and using a slightly different version of the partner responsiveness measure (Tasfiliz, Sagel, & Selcuk, 2016) also revealed a positive link between partner responsiveness and well-being, with an effect size similar to that observed in the United States.

The cross-cultural investigation of marriage carried out by the contributors of the present chapter was launched before Reis conceptualized partner responsiveness. However, the partnership scale of the MARQ (e.g., "Does your spouse know what you really think and feel?," "Does your spouse support you in what you are trying to do?," "Does your spouse understand you?") conceptually maps nicely on the responsiveness construct. A subsequent study with a separate sample of Turkish adults (Altınçağ & Imamoğlu, 2016) showed that perceived Partnership (assessed with the MARQ) and validation of spouses positively predicted psychological well-being, providing further evidence for the central role of partner responsiveness in well-being among Turkish adults. Our cross-cultural study (Dillon et al., 2015) also indicated that perceived kindness of the partner (which is a part of the Partnership scale) seems to be the most consistent and powerful predictor of low marital conflict as reported by both wives and husbands from Turkey, Russia, China, Britain, and the United States, demonstrating the cross-cultural relevance of partner responsiveness for satisfactory marital functioning.

Altogether, our findings are in line with the idea that partner responsiveness may be a common basis for marital and personal well-being across cultures. However, a number of important issues are yet to be addressed. Do wives in arranged (vs. self-choice) marriages experience greater physical health problems or lower psychological well-being due to perceiving their husband as less responsive? Or, does their reliance on other social network members compensate for low partner responsiveness? What is the source of wives' low perceived partner responsiveness: receiving low emotional support in times of stress or perhaps receiving low practical support in kin-keeping? Addressing these cultural questions would feed back to research aiming at achieving a more generalizable conceptualization of partner responsiveness by identifying its critical features across contexts. For instance, whereas responsiveness to emotionally laden self-disclosures seems to be critical in North America (and possibly more so for women in general), responsiveness to relational obligations (e.g., providing assistance to in-laws when needed) may be more critical in cultures such as Turkey where the couple is seen as embedded in the relational network of both families rather than a relatively separate unit (see Adams et al., 2004 for a similar argument in the West African context). Such exciting questions still await empirical scrutiny.

CONCLUSION

The literature often gives the impression of culture as a homogeneous, trait-like property of social groups. However, not only is there variation in

cultural content, but also there often are variations in the degree to which inhabitants come to internalize that content (Imamoğlu, 2009; Imamoğlu & Karakitapoğlu-Aygün, 2006). Thus, there is need for a better understanding of both the exact role of culture in psychological functioning of people as well as processes associated with within-culture variations and between-cultures similarities. In line with this outlook, we have tried to consider the role of cultural and self-related influences on marital quality in Turkey, with an eye toward identifying both cross-cultural differences and similarities. Our analyses reveal that although there may be potentially common bases of marital functioning (as exemplified by balanced self-construal and partner responsiveness), there are also nontrivial differences in initiation of marriage, the role of (Western notions of) romantic love in relationship formation and development, the cultural roles ascribed to spouses, and the nature of relationships with kin following marriage, all of which exert powerful influences on marital functioning. If we would like to achieve an accurate description of what marriage is and how it functions for not only the 5% of the world population that typically constitutes the focus of mainstream psychology (Arnett, 2008) but also the majority 95%, we should take a balanced view of these similarities and differences.

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