


You Mean the World to Me: The Role of Residential Mobility in Centrality of Romantic Relationships

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Abstract

Integrating the suffocation model of marriage with research on residential mobility, the current studies examined for the first time whether long-term romantic relationships are more central for residentially mobile (vs. stable) individuals (total N across three studies = 5,366; age range = 18–95). In Study 1, individuals who moved away from their place of birth (vs. not) were more likely to first confide in their spouse over other network members on important matters. In Study 2, history of frequent residential moves was associated with greater importance ascribed to romantic partners in the attachment hierarchy. In Study 3, the slope of perceived partner responsiveness predicting eudaimonic well-being got steeper as residential mobility increased. By showing the role of residential mobility in romantic relationships, our findings highlight the importance of studying socioecological factors to gain a deeper understanding of how relationship processes unfold.

Keywords

residential mobility, romantic relationships, marriage, suffocation model of marriage, perceived partner responsiveness, well-being

What makes a relationship central in our lives? Studies conducted in Western societies usually reveal that marriages or long-term romantic relationships are key to bolstering well-being (e.g., Jebb et al., 2020) and fulfilling attachment (e.g., Zeifman & Hazan, 2008) and esteem needs (e.g., Murray et al., 2003). However, there is increasing recognition that the primacy of romantic relationships is not a normative phenomenon but rather a product of historical trends (Finkel et al., 2014) and ecologies in which people are embedded (Adams et al., 2012; Oishi, 2014). In this article, we integrate the suffocation model of marriage (Finkel et al., 2014, 2015)—a historical analysis delineating how expectations from marriage changed over time—with research on residential mobility—a core socioecological factor shaping how humans experience relationships (e.g., Choi & Oishi, 2020; Oishi, 2010). The theoretical integration led us to the novel hypothesis that residential mobility would be associated with greater centrality of romantic relationships. We first elaborate on this hypothesis which we believe offers generative implications for relationship science and then present evidence from a preexisting nationally representative dataset and two new preregistered studies, each capturing a different indicator of centrality of romantic relationships.

The Suffocation Model

The suffocation model (Finkel et al., 2014, 2015) was proposed to explain changes in marital quality and the implications of these changes for personal well-being over time. The main premise of the model is that people's expectations from their marriages today are different than their counterparts' expectations in the past. Marriage is becoming increasingly less relevant for economic well-being, domestic production, personal safety, and societal acceptance as compared with the past, especially in the United States. Instead, in contemporary marriages, individuals expect their spouse to fulfill eudaimonic needs such as autonomy, purpose, growth, and self-actualization—culminating in spouses becoming psychologically more central in

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one another's life. This is reflected in individuals' tendency to turn more to their spouse to confide on important matters, to form a deep affectional tie, and to bolster personal well-being in recent decades than in the past. According to the model, increased centrality of spouses was accompanied by reduced access to non-marital close others over time.

The model acknowledges that this historically recent function of marriage sets a high bar for spouses. It requires spouses to possess a deep understanding of one another's needs and goals, validating their importance, and engaging in behaviors that support them—a process referred to as responsiveness (Reis & Gable, 2015). Thus, the model predicts that relationship processes like responsiveness are stronger predictors of personal well-being as compared with the past. The model also recognizes that although people expect their spouse to serve as their primary confidant, attachment figure, and catalyst of self-growth, they on average fail to devote the time and attention to serve as such for their spouse. Thus, increased centrality of spouses in one another's life is more evident in expectations from (rather than investment in) the relationship.

Although the suffocation model primarily focused on historical changes in American marriages, one implication of the model is that sociodemographic or socioecological factors that alter individuals' relational expectations may lead to similar changes in centrality of marriages or long-term romantic relationships.

Residential Mobility and Personal Relationships

A core socioecological factor shaping how humans experience relationships is residential mobility (for reviews, see Choi & Oishi, 2020; Oishi, 2010). Some people frequently move to a new place for reasons such as enrolling in a school, starting a new job, or improving their living circumstances, while others spend their entire life in the place they were born. Individual history of moves from one place to another is likely to shape the nature of personal relationships in a way promoting the centrality of long-term romantic partners.

The main reason behind this argument is that residential mobility restricts access to social network members other than one's partner. Frequent residential moves necessitate in most cases leaving behind relationships one is born into (Oishi et al., 2015). Residential mobility therefore makes living nearby, engaging in face-to-face contact, and exchanging support with kin less likely (Gruijters, 2017; Magdol & Bessel, 2003) and erodes feelings of obligation to kin (Levine & Thompson, 2004; Touré-Tillery & Fishbach, 2017). It also creates a sense of independence from kin relationships (Oishi, 2010; Oishi & Kisling, 2009), contributing to increasing reliance on relationships of choice—such as friends. However, forming strong friendships following a

residential move is no easy job, either. Frequent movers therefore prefer a diverse and casual friendship network over a small network with stronger ties and reciprocal obligations compared with their residentially stable counterparts (Oishi, 2010; Oishi et al., 2015)—possibly leaving one's romantic relationship as the primary relationship of choice that provides stable support and need fulfillment. These processes likely culminate in relative prioritization of romantic relationships in frequent movers' personal networks as compared with networks of residentially stable individuals.

The Present Research

To test whether residential mobility is linked with greater centrality of romantic partners, we examined processes that reflect heightened expectations from long-term relationships as outlined by the suffocation model—the partner's role as a confidant, as a source of deep affectional bond, and as a predictor of well-being (Finkel et al., 2014). We reasoned that if these processes are sensitive to historical trends that led individuals to ask more of their marriages, they might also be sensitive to residential mobility as a core socioecological factor that might increase the centrality of long-term romantic relationships.

We report three studies (total $N = 5,366$) with adults residing in Turkey, where people have traditionally been highly dependent on their environmentally afforded social connections (Kagitcibasi, 1985, 1996; Sunar & Fisek, 2005). For instance, adult children are expected to frequently visit, provide help, live with, or in close proximity to (De Valk & Schans, 2008; Durgel et al., 2009), and financially support their aged parents (Sunar, 2002). At the same time, many people have been increasingly adopting a residentially mobile lifestyle due to social, political, or economic reasons (Coban, 2013; Gedik, 1997; Gokhan & Filiztekin, 2008; Icduygu, 2009), reshaping these instrumental obligations (Kagitcibasi, 2007). The changing structure of social relationships and lifestyle makes Turkey an ideal context to study how residential mobility is linked with relationship priorities.

Study 1 examined the role of romantic partners as confidants. Research shows that the centrality of partners as confidants historically increased (at least in the United States), with a greater proportion of individuals considering their spouse as a core confidant than in the past (McPherson et al., 2006), possibly due to reduced access to other social relationships. As reviewed above, reduced contact with personal network members, particularly extended family (Georgas et al., 2001; Gruijters, 2017), is consistently observed among frequent movers too. Thus, we expected that residentially mobile participants would be more likely to pick their partner than other network members as their primary confidant to discuss important personal matters.

Study 2 focused on the role of romantic partners as a source of deep affectional bonds. According to attachment theory, we maintain such bonds with people around whom we organize our lives, to whom we turn to in times of need, from whom we receive courage to pursue life goals, and to whose loss we react with profound psychological and physical dysregulation (Bowlby, 1982; Sbarra & Hazan, 2008; Zayas et al., 2015). These attachment figures are hierarchically organized with some network members assuming a more important role in fulfilling attachment needs than others (e.g., Doherty & Feeney, 2004; Fraley & Davis, 1997). We hypothesized that residential mobility would be associated with greater prioritization of romantic partners in the attachment hierarchy.

Finally, Study 3 focused on the role of romantic partners in personal well-being. One implication of the suffocation model is that maintaining a relationship with a responsive partner would bolster while that with an unresponsive partner would undermine well-being more strongly when historical or socioecological factors (such as high residential mobility) force partners to rely more on one another to meet their psychological needs. Accordingly, we tested whether residential mobility would be associated with a steeper slope of perceived partner responsiveness predicting well-being. Prior research typically conceptualized well-being in terms of hedonia—that is, the extent to which one is satisfied with life and experiences positive affect—or eudaimonia—that is, the extent to which one finds meaning and purpose in life (Diener et al., 2018; Ryff, 1989). Factor analytic studies showed that diverse indicators of well-being are hierarchically summarized under these two positively correlated but empirically distinguishable dimensions (e.g., Gallagher et al., 2009; Keyes et al., 2002). The extant literature did not offer a clear hypothesis as to which form of well-being would evince stronger links with perceived partner responsiveness for residentially mobile (vs. stable) individuals. Our preregistered hypothesis that perceived partner responsiveness would more strongly predict both forms of well-being for residentially mobile (vs. stable) individuals was motivated by a prior cross-country study (Tasfiliz et al., 2018). This study showed that the slopes of perceived partner responsiveness predicting hedonic and eudaimonic well-being were stronger in the United States than in Japan. One of the numerous sociodemographic differences across the two countries is residential mobility, with the United States having higher mobility rates. Thus, we expected that perceived partner responsiveness would more strongly predict both forms of well-being for residentially mobile (vs. stable) individuals. However, there is also reason to think that this moderation would be specific to only eudaimonic well-being. First, in the same cross-country study, the differences in slopes across the United States and Japan were greater for eudaimonic than hedonic

well-being (Tasfiliz et al., 2018). Moreover, frequent movers ascribe greater importance on the personal self (e.g., personal achievements) and feelings of autonomy (Kashima et al., 1995; Oishi, 2010; Oishi et al., 2007; Oishi & Kisling, 2009), both of which are seen as aspects of eudaimonia. Taken together, these findings suggest that perceived partner responsiveness might be a particularly stronger predictor of eudaimonic well-being for frequent movers.

To test our hypotheses, we used archival data (Study 1) and conducted preregistered surveys (Studies 2 and 3).¹ Study 1 data and materials are available on request from the Statistics Institute of Turkey (Turkstat). Across Studies 2 and 3, materials and data analytic strategies to test the confirmatory hypotheses were preregistered and are available along with the data and code at https://osf.io/kfbc/?view_only=765957fbd54740388c29c9c973043205. In these studies, the first author checked survey completion rates regularly and stopped data collection when respondents with complete data on measures of interest to the confirmatory analyses exceeded the planned sample size.² Analyses were conducted after data collection was completed.

In addition to confirmatory analyses testing our predictions, we also performed exploratory analyses to check if the main findings are robust against controlling for third variables that are linked to both residential mobility and centrality of romantic partners. Prior research on residential mobility commonly controlled for age, gender, and education (as an indicator of socioeconomic status; Jokela, 2020; Oishi & Schimmack, 2010; Viry, 2012; Wang et al., 2021). We controlled for these factors in all three studies. We used age as a covariate given age differences in both residential mobility (e.g., Coulter & Scott, 2015) and social network size and structure (e.g., Wrzus et al., 2013). We also controlled for gender given prior work documenting gender differences in confidant preferences (Dindia & Allen, 1992) and in residential mobility frequency (Oishi & Schimmack, 2010). Finally, we controlled for education as it is a reliable index of socioeconomic status and a prime reason for inter-city mobility in Turkey (Işık, 2009), and a meaningful predictor of differences in romantic relationship processes (Karney, 2021). Moreover, Study 1 data allowed controlling for less frequently employed but still theoretically plausible correlates of residential mobility and centrality of partners, including location of residence (urban vs. rural; Tucker & Taylor, 1989; Viry, 2012), perceived importance of work (Coulter & Scott, 2015; Ranta et al., 2014), and employment status (Jokela, 2020; Larson, 1984), whereas Study 2 and 3 data allowed controlling for marital status (Zhao et al., 2021). Finally, Study 3 allowed controlling for one form of well-being while predicting the other to examine whether the interaction between perceived

Table 1. Eligibility Criteria and Participant Characteristics.

	Study 1 (N = 4,047)	Study 2 (N = 439)	Study 3 (N = 880)
Preregistered eligibility criteria	NA (archival data)	Being at least 25 years old and in an exclusive romantic relationship for at least 1 year	Being at least 25 years old and being married or cohabiting
Gender, <i>n</i> (%)			
Female	2,080 (51%)	363 (83%)	577 (65.6%)
Male	1,967 (49%)	76 (17%)	219 (24.9%)
Not indicated			84 (9.5%)
Age (years)			
<i>M</i>	42.71 (13.49)	31.43 (7.61)	37.175 (10.047)
Range	18–95	23–64	20–72
Relationship status, <i>n</i> (%)			
Married	4,047 (100%)	229 (52%)	753 (86%)
Cohabiting		47 (11%)	127 (14%)
Engaged		41 (9%)	
Dating		122 (28%)	
Relationship duration (months)			
<i>M</i>	Not measured	79.32 (78.45)	133.771 (116.242)
Range		12–456	1.5–588
Education			
College or more	311 (8%)	420 (96%)	618 (70%)
High school or less	2,955 (73%)	19 (4%)	168 (19%)
Not indicated	781 (19%)		94 (11%)
Employment status, <i>n</i> (%)			
Employed	1,700 (42%)	Not measured	Not measured
Not employed	2,343 (57.9%)		
Not indicated	4 (0.1%)		
Location of residence, <i>n</i> (%)			
Urban	2,759 (68.2%)	Not measured	Not measured
Rural	1,288 (31.8%)		

Note. For continuous variables, standard deviations appear in parentheses. In Study 1, an extreme response in age (5.7 SD above the mean) was winsorized to 95. In Studies 2 and 3, eligibility questions were presented at the beginning of the survey. Demographic data were obtained at the end. To comply with our preregistered eligibility criteria, we retained four participants in Study 2 and five participants in Study 3 who reported being older than 25 in response to the eligibility question at the beginning of the survey but reported being younger than 25 in response to the demographic questionnaire at the end. Results of the confirmatory analyses remained the same when we excluded these participants. NA = not applicable.

partner responsiveness and residential mobility explained unique variance in each well-being dimension.

Study 1: The Partner as a Confidant

Method

Participants

Study 1 used data from the Life Satisfaction Survey conducted by Turkish Statistical Institute (2019) annually since 2003. A representative sample of households was selected through a two-stage cluster sampling, and adults in each household were asked to complete a questionnaire. We used data from the first wave (2003)—the only wave including measures of both residential mobility and confidant preferences. As the response options of the latter measure included spouse, family, and friends (but not non-marital romantic partners), we used data of married individuals. Of the 5,304 individuals who completed the survey, 4,102 were married. Of these, 4,047 respondents (99%) had

data on residential mobility and confidant preference measures and constituted the final analytical sample.

Table 1 shows sample characteristics across all studies. Respondents were nested within 1,937 households. Nuclear family household is the most common type in Turkey; thus, 83% of households in the current sample included one or two married respondents. It is also not uncommon for married children to share the same household with their parents, and hence, the remaining 17% of households included three or more married respondents. Assuming one married couple in each household (the most frequent occurrence in the current sample) and a correlation of .5 between partners' responses, a sample of 4,047 respondents provides 95% power to detect a standardized association of .060 and 99% power to detect a standardized association of .075 (Kenny et al., 2006).

Measures

Residential Mobility. Participants reported whether they

Table 2. Regression Models Predicting Prioritization of Spouse as a Confidant.

Effects	Unadjusted model			Adjusted model		
	B	95% CI	p	B	95% CI	p
Intercept	0.811	[0.796, 0.827]	<.001	0.804	[0.764, 0.843]	<.001
Residential mobility	0.044	[0.025, 0.063]	<.001	0.024	[0.005, 0.044]	.015
Age				-0.00004	[-0.001, 0.001]	.910
Gender ^a				-0.062	[-0.073, -0.052]	<.001
Education ^b				0.018	[-0.016, 0.052]	.303
Importance of work				0.005	[-0.0001, 0.010]	.055
Employment ^c				-0.016	[-0.027, -0.005]	.005
Location of residence ^d				0.0008	[-0.010, 0.012]	.889

Note. Missing values in covariates in the adjusted model were multiply imputed (see the Online Supplemental Materials for details). CI = confidence interval.

^a-1 = female, 1 = male. ^b-1 = high school or less, 1 = some college or more. ^c-1 = unemployed, 1 = employed. ^d-1 = rural, 1 = urban.

lived in the same residential district since they were born. Participants who gave an affirmative response constituted the residentially stable group ($n = 1,509$) and those who gave a negative response constituted the residentially mobile group ($n = 2,538$), dummy-coded as 0 and 1, respectively.

Prioritization of Spouse as a Confidant. Participants reported the first confidant they would disclose to when they had a problem in each of the following domains: work, money, and health. For each domain, participants were asked to select one of the following: spouse, parents, parents-in-law, offspring, siblings, other relatives, or friends. We assigned participants who selected their spouse a score of 1 and those who selected other network members a score of 0 on each domain. We averaged these scores to calculate an index of prioritization of spouse as a confidant ($\alpha = .623$, $M = 0.837$, $SD = 0.293$).

Covariates. We used age, gender, education, employment status, location of residence (see Table 1), and perceived importance of work as covariates. To measure the latter, participants rank-ordered eight aspects of life (e.g., health, personal safety, career/work, income, home ownership) based on their importance. We used the reverse-scored rank for the career/work item to measure perceived importance of work (range = 1–8, $M = 3.240$, $SD = 1.786$).

Results

To account for dependency in responses due to participants being nested within households, we constructed a multilevel model with prioritization of spouse as the outcome and residential mobility as the predictor. The intercept was allowed to vary across households. Residentially mobile participants reported greater prioritization of spouse as a

confidant, $B = 0.044$, 95% confidence interval (CI) = [0.025, 0.063]. The finding held after adjusting for covariates, $B = 0.024$, 95% CI = [0.005, 0.044] (Table 2).

Study 2: The Partner as an Attachment Figure

Method

Participants. We aimed to have a high-powered design that could detect a standardized slope of .20 (an association close to the median average correlation of .19 in psychology studies; Stanley et al., 2018) in a simple regression analysis. The minimum sample size to detect this effect with 99% power was calculated with G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) as 443. The final sample included 575 respondents recruited through social media who had an exclusive romantic relationship. However, it became evident during coding of attachment figures that 136 respondents provided only network members' names but not the type of relationship, making it impossible to identify their romantic partner, thus reducing the final analytic sample to 439. The sample included residents of 50 (out of 81) cities of Turkey, with more than half of the sample (58%) residing in one of the three major metropolitan areas (i.e., Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir).

Measures

Residential Mobility. Participants reported how many times they moved to a new neighborhood, city, or country in their lifetime (Oishi & Schimmack, 2010). Mean number of moves was 4.002 ($SD = 3.218$). The distribution of moves was positively skewed (skewness = 1.095) as in prior studies (Oishi et al., 2012; Oishi & Schimmack, 2010). Ninety-four percent of all moves were equal to or fewer than 10. To reduce the effect of extreme values on

Table 3. Regression Models Predicting Importance of Romantic Partner in the Attachment Network.

Effects	Unadjusted model			Adjusted model		
	B	95% CI	p	B	95% CI	p
Intercept	2.431	[2.267, 2.594]	<.001	2.747	[2.218, 3.277]	<.001
Residential mobility	0.042	[0.008, 0.076]	.016	0.040	[0.005, 0.074]	.023
Age				-0.012	[-0.026, 0.001]	.078
Gender ^a				-0.021	[-0.150, 0.109]	.755
Education ^b				0.065	[-0.177, 0.307]	.600
Marital status ^c				0.108	[0.006, 0.210]	.039

Note. Missing values in covariates in the adjusted model were multiply imputed (see the Online Supplemental Materials for details). CI = confidence interval.

^a-1 = female, 1 = male. ^b-1 = high school or less, 1 = some college or more. ^c-1 = not married, 1 = married.

regression coefficients (see Oishi et al., 2012; Oishi & Schimmack, 2010, for a similar approach), we winsorized outliers to 10, which reduced skewness (skewness = 0.579). (The findings remained the same using other transformation methods; see the Online Supplemental Materials [OSM] for details.)

Attachment Network. Using the WHOTO Scale (Hazan et al., 1991), participants listed people in their life who met attachment functions: proximity seeking (one item; for example, “Person[s] you make sure to see or talk to frequently”), safe haven (three items; for example, “Person[s] you immediately think of contacting when something bad happens”), secure base (three items; for example, “Person[s] you know will always be there for you”), and separation distress (three items; for example, “Person[s] you miss when they are away”). Each item asked participants to list up to four people, in order of significance, starting with the most significant one. Following prior work (Diamond & Hicks, 2005), for each item, a network member was assigned a score of 4 if listed the first, 3 if listed the second, 2 if listed the third, 1 if listed the fourth, and 0 if not listed. We averaged across the items to quantify the relative importance of the romantic partner in the attachment network ($M = 2.592$, $SD = 1.043$, $\alpha = .865$).

Results

The preregistered confirmatory analysis revealed that residential mobility predicted ascribing greater importance to the romantic partner in the attachment network, $B = 0.042$, 95% CI = [0.008, 0.076]. The findings held in exploratory analyses adjusting for covariates, $B = 0.040$, 95% CI = [0.005, 0.074] (Table 3).

Study 3: The Partner as a Source of Well-Being

Method

Participants. Given that interaction effects are typically small, we aimed to recruit a sufficiently large sample to

detect a small increase of .02 in R^2 as a result of adding the interaction term in a multiple regression model. Power analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) revealed that a sample size of 652 individuals would afford 95% power to detect this effect. The sample, recruited through social media, included residents of 59 (out of 81) cities of Turkey, with close to half of the sample (46%) residing in one of the three major metropolitan areas (i.e., Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir). Among 880 married or cohabiting respondents who completed both perceived partner responsiveness and residential mobility measures, 829 had eudaimonic well-being data and 877 had hedonic well-being data. These sample sizes provided 98% and 99% power, respectively, to detect an increase of .02 in R^2 from adding a two-way interaction term to a linear regression model including two main effects.

Measures

Residential Mobility. Residential mobility was measured with the same question used in Study 2. Mean number of moves was 3.732 ($SD = 4.757$). The distribution of moves was again positively skewed (skewness = 6.200). Ninety-five percent of responses were equal to or fewer than 10. We winsorized outliers to 10, which reduced skewness to 0.770.

Perceived Partner Responsiveness. Three items adapted from previous studies (e.g., Gunaydin et al., 2020; Maisel & Gable, 2009) were used to assess perceived responsiveness (e.g., “My partner makes me feel understood,” 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .906$, $M = 5.491$, $SD = 1.555$).

Hedonic Well-Being. We measured life satisfaction with a single item asking participants to rate their life overall (1 = *worst* to 7 = *best*). Participants also indicated their affective states during the past month on five items assessing positive affect and six items assessing negative affect adapted from prior studies (e.g., Selcuk et al., 2016). We averaged life satisfaction, positive affect, and reversed

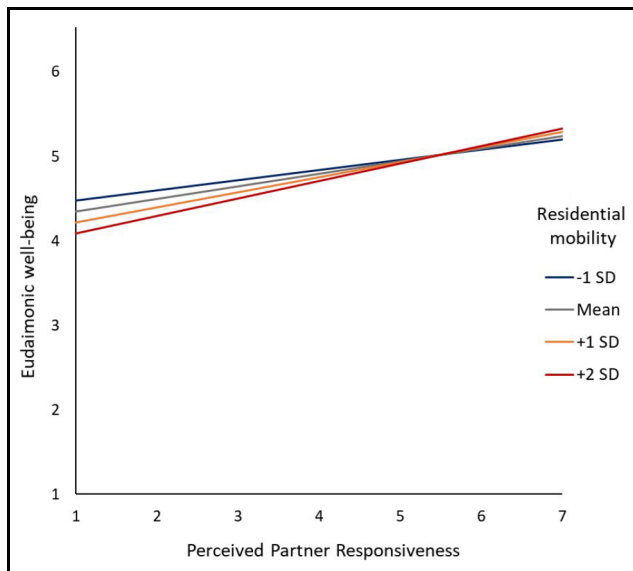


Figure 1. Eudaimonic Well-Being as a Function of Perceived Partner Responsiveness and Residential Mobility Note. The slopes of perceived partner responsiveness predicting eudaimonic well-being are plotted at different levels of residential mobility within the observed range in the data.

negative affect scales to compute a hedonic well-being score ($\alpha = .760, M = 4.856, SD = 1.138$).

Eudaimonic Well-Being. Participants completed five subscales from the short version of the Psychological Well-being Scale (Ryff, 1989): Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). We averaged the five subscales to compute a eudaimonic well-being score ($\alpha = .619, M = 5.026, SD = 0.692$).

Results

Replicating past work (Selcuk et al., 2016), simple regression analyses revealed that perceived partner responsiveness predicted both hedonic ($B = 0.252, 95\% CI = [0.207, 0.298]$) and eudaimonic ($B = 0.149, 95\% CI = [0.120, 0.179]$) well-being ($ps < .001$). To test whether the magnitudes of these slopes are linked with residential mobility, we constructed multiple regression models, as specified in our preregistered data analytic plan, with residential mobility, perceived partner responsiveness, and their interaction as predictors, and well-being dimensions as outcomes. Perceived partner responsiveness positively predicted eudaimonic well-being at all levels of residential mobility but as the significant interaction term ($B = 0.010, 95\% CI = [0.001, 0.019]$) indicated, the slope of perceived partner responsiveness predicting eudaimonic well-being got steeper as residential mobility increased (Figure 1). Exploratory analyses showed that this finding held after adjusting for hedonic well-being, covariates (age, gender, education, and marital status), and their two-way interactions with perceived partner responsiveness (Table 4). The preregistered confirmatory analysis revealed that perceived partner responsiveness did not interact with residential mobility in predicting hedonic well-being ($B = 0.009, p = .207, 95\% CI = [-0.005, 0.023]$).

Discussion

The present studies investigated, for the first time, the association between personal history of residential mobility and centrality of long-term romantic partners. Study 1 showed that individuals who moved away from their place of birth (vs. not) tended to first confide in their spouse rather than

Table 4. Regression Models Predicting Eudaimonic Well-Being.

Effects	Unadjusted model			Adjusted model		
	B	95% CI	p	B	95% CI	p
Intercept	5.018	[4.974, 5.063]	<.001	5.004	[4.928, 5.079]	<.001
Residential mobility	0.0009	[-0.015, 0.015]	.991	0.007	[-0.007, 0.022]	.337
PPR	0.149	[0.120, 0.178]	<.001	0.098	[0.044, 0.153]	<.001
PPR × Residential Mobility	0.010	[0.001, 0.019]	.031	0.010	[0.001, 0.019]	.029
Age				-0.003	[-0.007, 0.002]	.305
Gender ^a				-0.0004	[-0.050, 0.049]	.989
Education ^b				-0.008	[-0.062, 0.046]	.772
Marital status ^c				0.013	[-0.048, 0.075]	.670
Hedonic well-being				0.239	[0.199, 0.280]	<.001
PPR × Age				0.001	[-0.002, 0.004]	.632
PPR × Gender				-0.017	[-0.051, 0.017]	.336
PPR × Education				-0.003	[-0.036, 0.029]	.844
PPR × Marital Status				-0.019	[-0.065, 0.026]	.408
PPR × Hedonic Well-Being				0.016	[-0.008, 0.039]	.193

Note. All continuous variables were centered in the full data of 880 respondents. Missing values in covariates in the adjusted model were multiply imputed (see the Online Supplemental Materials for details). CI = confidence interval; PPR = Perceived Partner Responsiveness.

^a-1 = female, 1 = male. ^b-1 = high school or less, 1 = some college or more. ^c-1 = not married, 1 = married.

other network members on matters of work, money, and health. Study 2 demonstrated that residential mobility was associated with greater relative importance of long-term romantic partners for meeting attachment needs. Finally, Study 3 documented that the slope of perceived partner responsiveness predicting eudaimonic (but not hedonic) well-being got steeper as residential mobility increased. This finding is in line with the suffocation model (Finkel et al., 2014), which suggests that romantic relationships are particularly relevant for the eudaimonic aspect of well-being. Another possible explanation for the differential findings between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being concerns the time frame difference between our measures; whereas questions on positive and negative affect focused on the past month, questions on eudaimonia generally focused on a longer time frame.

These initial findings contribute to extant theoretical frameworks in the close relationships literature. Attachment theory considers long-term romantic bonds as the most central adult relationships (Zeifman & Hazan, 2008). Hence, individuals use these bonds to fulfill their fundamental attachment needs and go to great lengths to maintain these relationships (Finkel & Eastwick, 2015). According to the suffocation model, long-term romantic relationships have also assumed a key role in satisfying eudaimonic needs over time (Finkel et al., 2014). Our findings indicate that the contribution of long-term romantic relationships and marriages to fulfilling attachment and eudaimonic needs might depend on residential mobility, highlighting the importance of studying how socioecological factors shape centrality of these relationships.

The present findings should be considered in light of their limitations. Our data were correlational so they do not allow us to establish causality from residential mobility to centrality of romantic relationships. Although we demonstrated the robustness of the findings against a wide range of theoretically relevant third variables including age, gender, education, location of residence, employment status, marital status, and perceived importance of work, stronger inferences about directionality would only be possible through a longitudinal study. Such a study would enable researchers to examine within-person associations between residential mobility and centrality of partners as well as the potential mechanisms (e.g., reduced access and obligations to non-romantic social network members) underlying these associations. We should note that this would be a challenging design to implement given that residential moves do not occur frequently. For instance, in nationally representative samples from Turkey, individuals who moved to a new location within a year ranged from 6.8% to 7.9% during 2013–2017 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2019). In addition, residential mobility during childhood and adolescence years seems to have an important role in adult psychological outcomes (Mok et al., 2016; Oishi & Schimmack, 2010; Webb et al., 2016). Taken together, these findings suggest that a longitudinal study

tackling the same question as in the present article will need to follow individuals for many years. This is probably one reason why most studies on residential mobility in social psychology relied on cross-sectional designs (see Choi & Oishi, 2020, for a review). There is evidence in geographical sciences that cross-sectional vs. longitudinal models on residential mobility produce similar results (Clark, 1992; Clark & Huang, 2003), but whether this conclusion would generalize to studies linking residential mobility to social-psychological processes—and specifically to centrality of romantic partners—is, of course, an open empirical question. We sincerely hope that the novel findings reported in this article encourage researchers to incorporate measures of residential mobility and centrality of relationships into their ongoing (or upcoming) long-term longitudinal studies.

A second limitation is that all studies were conducted in the same country. Samples from Turkey afforded the advantage of capturing variability in residential mobility and centrality of partners due to changing patterns of lifestyle and allowed us to study a novel question for relationship research in a non-WEIRD country underrepresented in social psychology (Thalmayer et al., 2021). Nevertheless, replications in different geographical regions would further strengthen the case for the role of residential mobility in centrality of romantic partners.

The current research examined three processes that the suffocation model identified as reflecting heightened expectations from long-term relationships—that is, turning to the partner to confide on important matters, to maintain a deep affectional tie, and to bolster personal well-being. The model also argues that individuals increasingly expect deep sexual fulfillment from their spouse than in past decades (Finkel et al., 2014). This suggests that passion and sexual fulfillment in long-term romantic relationships might be a stronger predictor of relationship quality for residentially mobile (vs. stable) individuals, indicating an interesting direction for future work.

Another direction for future work is to investigate how residential mobility might shape mate selection. Given greater centrality of romantic relationships for frequent movers, these individuals might show maximizing tendencies when choosing a mate such as considering many alternatives before settling on one person (Yang & Chiou, 2010) or being less satisfied with their relationship when the current partner's qualities are worse than ideal (French & Meltzer, 2019). They might also be less amenable to biases that make individuals stick with existing relationships (Gunaydin et al., 2018). Finally, frequent movers might be more sensitive to signals indicating lack of future responsiveness from their partner in early phases of the relationship—such as relationship transgressions—and might be less likely to engage in relationship maintenance behaviors until they are fully committed (Finkel & Eastwick, 2015; Ogolsky et al., 2017).

To sum, using diverse conceptualizations of centrality of romantic relationships across three studies with life span samples (total $N = 5,366$, age range = 18–95), the current investigation demonstrated for the first time that residential mobility predicts greater preference to rely on long-term romantic partners as confidants and attachment figures, and it moderates the association between perceived partner responsiveness and eudaimonic well-being. These findings pave the way for exciting future research avenues that promise to further integrate the study of socioecological factors with close relationship processes.


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Supplemental Material

The supplemental material is available in the online version of the article.

Notes

1. We ran an additional study within this research program which fell outside the scope of suffocation model predictions. A full report of this study is available in the Online Supplemental Materials (OSM), and materials, data, and code are available on the project Open Science Framework webpage.
2. In exploratory analyses testing robustness of findings, missing values in covariates were handled using multiple imputation (see the OSM for details).

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