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Learning to Love, Work, and Live Your Best Life:

Mentoring in Emerging Adulthood Predicts Later Flourishing and Subjective Well-being

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Abstract

Mentors that guide young people in their transition to adulthood provide support in a variety of domains that set the stage for happier adult lives. While mentoring during emerging adulthood is associated with shorter-term social and professional success—less is known about whether mentoring for career and committed relationships, specifically, are linked to downstream well-being. This study uses nationally representative data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics ($N = 6,197$) to examine whether receiving mentoring in emerging adulthood is linked to later flourishing and subjective well-being. Structural Equation Models indicate that people with career mentors in emerging adulthood reported higher levels of flourishing and subjective well-being and those with committed relationship mentors reported more flourishing in later life. Findings suggest that emerging adults who receive career supports may have better chances of experiencing well-being downstream.

keywords: developmental relationships, career support, PSID, happiness, positive psychology

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What do you want to be when you grow up? Whom do you want to spend the rest of your life with? In industrialized societies worldwide, developing serious answers to these two fundamental life questions is a critical task of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adults, people between 18 and 29 who are transitioning from adolescence to adulthood (Arnett, 2016), are at their physical and cognitive peaks (Hochberg & Konner, 2020); however, most are just starting their foray into their working careers and serious romantic relationships (Arnett, 2000). This phase of life, which occurs in the space between adolescence and taking on a full adult role in society, is hallmarked by exploration and experimentation in work and love (Arnett, 2000; Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2014; Shulman, 2017), leading to pervasive feelings of instability and uncertainty—but also the potential for setting a trajectory towards a bright future (Hawkins et al., 2019; Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013).

Love, Work, and Well-being

Both Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson have been credited with saying that the two things that an adult must be able to do well are to love and to work (Elms, 2001; Erikson, 1985). Healthy romantic relationships and career success are integrally tied to our happiness, and the exploration of these identities in emerging adulthood is critical to downstream well-being (Shulman & Nurmi, 2010). Subjective well-being, or “happiness” more colloquially, is a general sense of being satisfied with one’s life and experiencing more positive than negative emotions (Diener, 2009). Subjective well-being can be thought of as “feeling good,” and captures the affective and cognitive evaluations of the conditions of one’s life (Diener et al., 2002). Because adults spend the majority of their time either at work or at home with a spouse or romantic

partner (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020), our day-to-day affective experiences are tied to these contexts. As such, relationship and career satisfaction are associated with overall life-satisfaction (e.g., Allan et al., 2019; Bowling et al., 2010; Judge & Watanabe, 1993; Kang et al., 2003; Lounsbury et al., 2004).

Beyond their impact on our subjective well-being, love and work are also critical components of who we are and our ability to flourish. They are the contexts in which many adults distill meaning and contribute not just their ability to find happiness through “feeling good” but also “doing good” (Allan et al., 2019; Rothausen & Henderson, 2019) making exploration of these domains central to meaning-making in emerging adulthood (Mayseless & Keren, 2014). Flourishing is defined by optimal functioning and eudemonic well-being, or an experience of happiness that includes a sense of meaning, purpose, and connection (Diener et al., 2010). Broadly, flourishing happens when emotional, social, and psychological states align with engagement in meaningful contexts and personal growth (for review, see Huta, 2015). Successful relationships and fulfilling work can provide the meaningful contexts in which flourishing occurs (Keyes, 2002; Pierce et al., 2016; Schnettler et al., 2020; Wissing et al., 2019).

Mentoring in Emerging Adulthood

Because of the centrality of relationships and individual contribution to the world through work, both love and work and may be critical components to a good life that can be supported by mentorship early on to lead to flourishing downstream. Just as psychotherapy during this time can improve capabilities around love and work (Atzil-Slonim et al., 2016) guidance from more experienced adults during emerging adulthood may do the same.

Mentoring occurs when a more experienced individual takes an active role in supporting the personal or professional development of a less experienced person in the context of a

reciprocal relationship (Eby et al., 2007; Kram, 1985; Thomson et al., 2014). Mentoring received during emerging adulthood is associated with many downstream benefits, such as more educational attainment, greater romantic relationship satisfaction, and higher psychological well-being (e.g., optimism, self-efficacy, and less depressive symptoms; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Miranda-Chan et al., 2016). Although the majority of empirical findings suggest that mentoring is linked to experiencing better mental health outcomes in the short-term (e.g., Allen et al., 2004; Chang et al., 2010; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Eby et al., 2008), the long-term association between mentoring in emerging adulthood and well-being later in life remains underexamined (Hagler & Rhodes, 2018; McDonald & Lambert, 2014; Miranda Chan et al., 2016). However, it can be assumed that good mentorships offer a protégé guidance and instruction in constructing pathways to flourishing (Devenish et al., 2012; Nakamura et al., 2009; Schein, 1999). The pragmatic behaviors that mentors provide to support their protégés—or mentoring functions—foster protégés' career, socioemotional, cognitive, and identity development (Kram, 1985; Miranda-Chan et al., 2016; Rhodes et al., 2006).

One of the most commonly occurring and studied types of mentors are career mentors. Now more than ever, people in their 20s are exploring a range of possible jobs before they settle on a career, making emerging adulthood a key period for career exploration (Côté, 2006; Manning et al., 2011). During these years of exploration, mentors can help their emerging adult protégés navigate the difficult task of identifying a satisfying long-term career (Miranda-Chan et al., 2015; Rhodes et al., 2006). Kram (1985) states that career mentoring does not solely include actions that help the protégé's career, but also their psychosocial development. Through role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship, mentoring for work can benefit one's overall well-being. Mentors can also encourage identity development, helping their

protégés explore possibilities and commit to a vocation (Miranda-Chan et al., 2016; Rhodes et al., 2006). This is valuable because emerging adults who do not have an achieved vocational identity status report a worse working experience, leading to low engagement and high burnout (Luyckx et al., 2010). Together, receiving mentoring for work during the uncertainty of emerging adulthood is suggested to be linked to positive mental health outcomes; however, very few empirical works have explored this direct association.

In addition to being a phase of development for establishing a career trajectory, emerging adulthood is often a training ground for meaningful romantic relationships (Norona et al., 2017; Shulman & Connolly, 2013). The mutuality, trust, and empathy fostered between the mentor and protégé (Rhodes, 2005) provides an opportunity to develop intimacy and general interpersonal skills that can generalize to other relationships (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). These skills are extremely useful as emerging adults engage in more social and dating behaviors as they look for a long-term romantic partner (Norona et al., 2017; Shulman, 2017; Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Mentors also provide their protégés with opportunities to develop positive models of responding to a variety of social situations as well as emotion regulation (Rhodes et al., 2006), both of which are associated with relationship satisfaction in adulthood (Bradbury & Scaffer, 2012; Malouff et al., 2014).

The development of interpersonal skills and relational maturity that promote successful and satisfying intimate relationships have a demonstrable link to well-being (Sharon, 2016). Satisfying romantic relationships are consistently associated with well-being (Gomez-Lopez et al., 2019; Kang et al., 2003)—as positive relationships are considered a cornerstone of healthy development throughout the lifespan (Fuller-Iglesias, 2015). Thus, committed relationship mentoring may promote overall well-being and flourishing later in life by guiding emotional

development. However, there is a paucity of targeted mentoring research that directly examines the connection between mentoring for committed relationships and well-being in later life.

The Current Study

With love and work being central to well-being, mentoring in these domains during emerging adulthood is hypothesized to be positively associated with overall well-being later in life. In more detail, we analyze the link between being mentored in career and/or committed relationship life domains during emerging adulthood on downstream flourishing and subjective well-being in mid- to later-life. The interaction effect of career and committed relationship mentoring is also examined to test additive or multiplicative effects between receiving no mentoring, only one form of mentoring, or both forms of mentoring during emerging adulthood on well-being in adulthood.

Subsequently, the current study examines three hypotheses:

H1: Mentoring for career and committed relationships will each be significantly related to flourishing. Specifically, those who had a career mentor, and those who had a committed relationship mentor, will have significantly higher flourishing than individuals who did not have such mentors.

H2: Mentoring for career and committed relationships will each be significantly related to subjective well-being. Those who had a career mentor, and those who had a committed relationship mentor, will have significantly higher subjective well-being than individuals who did not have such mentors.

H3: There will be a significant interaction between career and committed relationships mentoring such that those who had both career and committed relationship mentors will report higher flourishing and subjective well-being than those mentored in one domain.

Methods

Participants

The current study uses data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID, 2019) conducted by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center. The PSID is one of the longest running nationally representative surveys of the United States. The original study began in 1968 with a sample of 18,000 adults within 5,000 families. The study has followed participants and their descendants annually until 1996 and biannually after 1997. The current study uses data from two supplementary surveys: the childhood retrospective circumstances study (CRCS; 2013) and the well-being in daily life supplement (WB; 2016). The CRCS sample consists of 12,985 adults from the 2013 panel study. Adult PSID participants aged 19 years or older who were either the head of the household or a spouse/partner of the head and who completed their core 2013 PSID interview in English were eligible to participate. The WB supplement sample consists of 10,689 adults from the 2015 panel study. Participants aged 30 years or older who were the household head or spouse/partner at the time of data collection and who completed their core 2015 PSID interview in English were eligible to participate. Combining eligible participants from both supplementary surveys, the current sample consists of 6,197 adults who were on average 51 years of age ($SD = 14.56$ years), with slightly more females (57.5%) than males. Detailed sample characteristics can be found in Table 1.

[insert Table 1 here]

Measures

Mentoring for Committed Relationships

Committed relationship mentoring was assessed with two items, asking respondents whether between the ages of 17 and 30 a family member (other than someone who raised them)

or a non-family member “provided [them] with positive support or mentoring that helped [them] succeed in [their] interpersonal relationships, such as marriage or a marriage-like relationship” (Beier et al., 2000). No specific definition of mentoring was provided to participants beyond the language in this question. Individuals were coded as having a committed relationship mentor if they indicated that either or both a relative and non-relative provided mentoring.

Mentoring for Career

Career mentoring was assessed with two items, asking respondents whether between the ages of 17 and 30 a family member (other than someone who raised them) or a non-family member “provided [them] with positive support or mentoring that helped [them] succeed in [their] work life” (Beier et al., 2000). Again, no specific definition of mentoring was provided to participants. Individuals who received career mentoring from either or both a relative and non-relative were coded as having a career mentor.

Flourishing

Flourishing was measured with the Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al., 2010). The scale consists of eight questions, one for each aspect of psychological well-being: meaning and purpose, supportive and rewarding relationships, engagement and interest, contribution to the well-being of others, competency, self-acceptance, optimism, and being respected. Each item was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*). Sample items include, “I lead a purposeful and meaningful life” and “I am optimistic about my future.” The validated scale, which uses a 7-point Likert, has been shown to have a one factor structure ($\alpha=.86$) and demonstrate acceptable temporal stability over one month ($\alpha=.71$; Diener et al., 2010). It demonstrates construct validity with various other measures of well-being and self-

determination (Diener et al., 2010; Hone et al., 2014) and discriminant validity with the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (Hone et al., 2014).

Subjective Well-being

Subjective well-being was measured with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985), and Mroczek and Kolarz' Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998) which measured affect experienced across the previous 30 days from when the interview was conducted. Combining satisfaction with life with positive and negative affect has been established as the primary method of assessing subjective well-being (Diener, 1984).

Items on the SWLS were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Sample items include, "My life is close to ideal" and "I am satisfied with my life." This version of the scale shows good convergent and discriminant validity with measures of meaning in life, self-determination, affect, and other measures of life satisfaction and good internal consistency ($\alpha=.89$; Kobau et al., 2010). The SWLS is generally administered on a 7-point Likert scale and this version shows good internal consistency (Diener et al., 1985; $\alpha=.87$) and temporal stability over two months ($\alpha=.82$; Diener et al., 1985) as well as five years (Fujita & Diener, 2005). It also shows discriminant validity from depression and distress measures (Arrindell et al., 1991; Diener et al., 1985; cf., Pavot & Diener, 2009), construct validity with other measures of overall well-being and esteem (Diener et al., 1985) and convergent validity with other-report measures of well-being (Schneider & Schimmack, 2010). The mean SWLS score in this sample was 3.81, which is somewhat higher than means reported in other adult samples when measured on a 5-point scale (cf. Kobau et al., 2010).

The 12-item PANAS uses a 5-point scale where responses ranged from 1 (None of the time) to 5 (All of the time). Sample positive emotions include "cheerful," "satisfied," "calm," and

negative emotions were “nervous,” “hopeless,” and “worthless.” The PANAS demonstrates a two-factor structure with positive emotions ($\alpha=.91$) and negative emotions ($\alpha=.85$) loading onto separate factors (Joshani, 2017; Kobayashi et al., 2010). The scales correlate with life satisfaction, neuroticism, extraversion, esteem, and life-satisfaction in the expected directions (Joshani, 2017). Mean positive affect score for this sample (3.63) was slightly higher and the mean negative affect score for this sample was slightly lower (1.73) than in other samples of US adults (cf. Kobayashi et al., 2010).

Covariates. Age, ethnicity, race, gender, and total household income, were included in analyses to control for factors associated with subjective well-being and flourishing.

Results

Due to the large data set, each variable was first inspected for data entry mistakes—none were found. Next, missingness was assessed and was found to be low, with the largest amount of missing data coming from the mentoring variables (9%). Univariate outliers were found for both age (2) and income (56); however, none were beyond possible values found in the population—thus, they were all retained. Lastly, multivariate outliers were addressed via the estimators used by the structural equation models described below.

Descriptive analyses of our sample demonstrated that about half (52.0%) of the 5687 participants who responded to the mentoring items had both a career and committed relationship mentor. Another 30.6% had no mentor, and 13.1% and 4.4%, respectively had only a career mentor or only a committed relationship mentor. Overall, younger, female participants and participants of color were more likely to report having both a career and relationship mentor. Specifically, adults aged 30-49 (in 2015) were significantly less likely to report having no mentors (27.6%) in emerging adulthood than those aged 50-69 (33.0%) or over 70 (33.4%), and

were significantly more likely to have both career and relationship mentors in emerging adulthood (56.3%) than 50-69 or over 70-year-olds (49.1% and 45.1% respectively; $\chi^2(6, N = 5687) = 42.717, p < .001$). Females were more likely to report having only a relationship mentor (5.0%) than males (3.6%), but were also more likely to have both a relationship and career mentor (54.7% vs. 48.5% for males). However, males were more likely to have only a career mentor (16.4% vs. 10.5% for females; $\chi^2(3, N = 5687) = 54.556, p < .001$). Furthermore, participants of color (POC) were significantly more likely to have both a relationship and career mentor (64.0%) than white participants (46.9%), who were overall more likely to have only a career mentor (14.6% vs. 9.3% of POC), only a relationship mentor (4.9% vs. 3.0% of POC), or no mentor at all (33.5% vs. 23.7% of POC). The mean flourishing score for the entire sample was 4.23 (SD = .60) on a 7-point scale, and the mean score for subjective well-being was 3.01 (SD = .39) on a 5-point scale.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

All data were analyzed in the open-source statistical program R (version 3.5.2) via the Lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012). For each model, a robust maximum likelihood estimator was utilized and missing data was handled through a full information maximum likelihood estimation. The following criteria were used to assess the model fit of each analysis (e.g., Hu & Bentler, 1999; MacCallum et al., 1996): comparative fit index (CFI) > .90, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) < .05, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) < .08.

Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted to assess the fit of modeling the endogenous variables, with flourishing and subjective well-being as latent variables. Adequate model fit was found for modeling flourishing as a latent construct: CFI= .95, RMSEA= .06, 90%

CI [.06, .07], and SRMR= .03 (see Figure 1). Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha indicated that the flourishing factor had high reliability ($\alpha=.89$). Subjective well-being was modeled as a second order latent factor with the first order factors of positive affect, negative affect, and satisfaction with life loading onto a higher order factor. This method was used to account for the independence between the constructs that make up subjective well-being. Again, adequate fit was found for the subjective well-being model: CFI= .94, RMSEA= .07, 90% CI [.06, .07], and SRMR= .04. All items significantly loaded onto the first order factors, and all first order factors significantly loaded onto the high-order factor of subjective well-being (see Figure 2). Each first order factor ($PA\alpha=.93$; $NA\alpha=.88$; $SWLS\alpha=.89$) and the second order factor ($\alpha=.70$) were found to be reliable.

[insert Figures 1 & 2 here]

Hybrid Structural Equation Models

The same estimator, method of handling missing data, and criteria for adequate model fit that was used for the CFAs were employed for the hybrid structural equation models.

Additionally, age and income were transformed to have a more equal variance with the other exogenous variables. Specifically, age was divided by 10 and income by a million to achieve model convergence.

First, the flourishing latent factor was regressed onto the observed variables representing whether individuals were mentored for work and committed relationships. Sufficient model fit was found: CFI= .93, RMSEA= .06, 90% CI [.06, .06], and SRMR= .03. On average, those who had a committed relationship mentor experienced significantly greater flourishing than those without one ($\beta=.04$, $p=.041$; see Table 2). Similarly, having a career mentor during emerging adulthood was associated with significantly higher levels of flourishing ($\beta=.09$, $p<.001$).

Second, we investigated the relationship between mentoring for career and committed relationships during emerging adulthood and subjective well-being in adulthood. The model adequately fit the data: CFI= .92, RMSEA= .07, 90% CI [.06, .07], and SRMR= .04. On average, having a committed relationship mentor during emerging adulthood was not associated with more downstream subjective well-being compared to not having such a mentor ($\beta=.01, p=.589$). However, those with a career mentor experienced significantly more subjective well-being compared to those without one ($\beta=.06, p=.002$).

[insert Table 2 here]

To address the third hypothesis of whether the types of mentoring relationships have compounding effects on well-being, we added an interaction between both forms of mentoring to the previous models. Modeling the effects of both forms of mentoring and their interaction on flourishing adequately fit the data: CFI= .92, RMSEA= .06, 90% CI [.06, .06], and SRMR= .03. The interaction between the mentoring variables was not significantly related to flourishing ($\beta=.08, p=.076$; See Table 3).

The interaction model with subjective well-being as the endogenous variable sufficiently fit the data: CFI= .92, RMSEA= .06, 90% CI [.06, .06], and SRMR= .04. Again, the interaction between the two forms of mentoring did not significantly affect subjective well-being ($\beta=.06, p=.138$; See Table 3).

[insert Table 3 here]

Discussion

Emerging adulthood is a pivotal period of development that sets the foundation for one's love and work trajectories. Leveraging data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), one of the longest and largest cohort projects, the current study demonstrates that mentoring

received in emerging adulthood for developing a career and committed romantic relationship is positively associated with flourishing, and that career mentoring predicts subjective well-being in mid- to later-life. While effect sizes are relatively small, overall results suggest that receiving mentoring in emerging adulthood in career and committed relationships is positively associated with well-being. As young people establish themselves in careers and committed relationships they are uniquely ripe for mentorship in these domains. Emerging adults may not only benefit from guidance in the short term as they navigate new developmental challenges as novices, but mentoring can also lay the groundwork and develop skills for sustaining healthy relationship and work lives through adulthood.

Our findings suggest that having a mentor to support career development in emerging adulthood may predict somewhat more flourishing and subjective well-being downstream. Although effects were small, these findings are in line with meta-analyses showing early career mentoring predicts both objective career success (e.g., better compensation and promotions) and subjective career success (e.g., work and career satisfaction; Allen et al., 2004; Eby et al., 2008). Job satisfaction is believed to be a central part of one's overall subjective well-being (Lent & Brown, 2008), as it is associated with happiness, positive affect, and the absence of negative affect (Bowling et al., 2010). As low work engagement and burnout are linked to cynicism, depression, and exhaustion (Koutsimani et al., 2019), mentors may curb such issues and allow an emerging adult to flourish in their work instead of flounder. By avoiding the ill-effects of a poor working experience, and gaining psychological resources from doing work that is meaningful and engaging, mentors may help protégés foster a positive work-life spillover which promotes well-being (Pierce et al., 2016; Sirgy et al., 2019). While our results do not allow us to investigate the specific mentoring functions provided by career mentors, they build upon existing

literature demonstrating that workplace mentoring predicts career satisfaction (Allen et al., 2004) and well-being (Wen et al., 2017), revealing the potentially broad reach of career mentoring for flourishing. That is, emerging adults complete their education and enter the workforce they may be well positioned to receive career mentoring that not only helps them to develop professional skills in a new work environment, but also develop a set of professional values and practices to promote longer-term happiness. Career mentoring in emerging adulthood may be a unique developmental opportunity to form a foundation on which to build a sustainable career.

Previous research substantiates that the benefits of mentoring extend beyond career satisfaction and into future relationship satisfaction and psychosocial well-being (e.g., Miranda-Chan et al., 2016). Our finding that mentoring for committed romantic relationships during emerging adulthood is linked to flourishing later in life provides a more direct link between mentoring and future well-being. As emerging adults enter into their first committed adult relationships, guidance from more experienced adults may help young people to establish mature interpersonal skills to manage their relationships that will serve them throughout their adult lives. Again, this effect was small, suggesting that those with relationship mentors scored just .04 of a standard deviation higher than those without relationship mentors on a measure of flourishing in later life. However, this effect should be interpreted in the context of the vastness of flourishing as a construct and countless factors contributing to it and relative to other predictors. For instance, gender and household income had relatively small effects as well. Therefore, while the contribution of relationship mentoring in emerging adulthood to downstream flourishing may be small, it is worth considering as just one potential mechanism to promote well-being—namely when it occurs in tandem with career mentoring.

These findings suggest a need for additional research into the differences in the functions, duration, and extension of mentoring provided by career mentors compared to committed relationship mentors. The benefits that stem from career mentoring may extend past the career context and include increased self-management (i.e., positive cognitions, self-set goals, and behavioral self-observation strategies; Murphy & Enshre, 2001) and personal learning (i.e., knowledge and skills that develop self-reflection, self-disclosure, active listening, empathy, and feedback; Lankau & Scandura, 2002). Thus, the support and positive outcomes from career mentors may transfer over to a romantic context—career mentors may in part serve as committed relationship mentors even if they do not directly provide guidance in that domain. Furthermore, career mentoring relationships often progress and change over the span of a career, as protégés develop from early career professionals into peer colleagues to their mentors (Kram, 1983). The friendships that stem from the natural outgrowth of a career mentoring relationship may provide opportunities for continued intergenerational communication and reciprocal sharing of life experiences that may center around experiences outside of work as well as at work (Clark et al., 2000; Young et al., 2004). However, far less is known about the functions, extension, and development of mentoring specifically for committed romantic relationships, particularly in emerging adulthood. Clearly, more research on committed relationship mentors is needed to understand how the support they give protégés is related to such outcomes.

Career mentoring may also be more predictive of flourishing than committed romantic relationship mentoring during emerging adulthood in part because of the timing of career development and the development of marriage like relationships in the United States. Increasingly, young people are encouraged to establish themselves professionally before marrying, using the emerging adult years to explore vocational identities and focus on the self

before committing to another person (Ranta et al., 2014). Furthermore, emerging adults consider not only their own professional and financial stability but also weigh these characteristics in potential romantic partners (Manning et al., 2011; Sneed et al., 2007)—creating an expectation that a desirable romantic partner has already set a course towards career success before making a romantic commitment. It is also potentially tied to cultural expectations and economic conditions that may make it more adaptive to prioritize professional development and postpone serious romantic relationships until after establishing a career to maximize flexibility and earning potential (Ranta et al., 2014; Shulman, 2017). While these cultural expectations were less marked prior to the 1960's when the average age of first marriage began to steadily increase in the US (Cohn et al., 2011), this may help to explain our findings overall. Emerging adults who received mentorship only in the domain of romantic relationships may have been more focused on relationships during these years and forgone career development, which may contribute to their relatively lower levels of flourishing downstream.

All of these findings require the consideration of potential cohort differences in our results. Our descriptive results showed that older cohorts were less likely to have been mentored than people in their thirties and forties at the time of this study, suggesting that mentoring in love and work may be growing increasingly common. Further, the relative propensity for males to receive only career mentoring and females to receive only relationship mentoring may speak partially to cohort-related gender norms around the importance of romantic relationships versus career identity. As norms around career and relationship exploration in emerging adulthood continue to change, there is a continued need to explore and understand how mentoring impacts these domains and contributes to quality of life downstream. However, these findings speak to the potential benefit of mentorship for today's emerging adults, particularly as they enter the

workforce. As young people navigate a difficult and rapidly changing job market, guidance from the supportive adults in their lives may be more important than ever in helping them to manage uncertainty and establish a professional identity.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this paper is one of the first to utilize the PSID data to understand mentoring (cf., Gowdy et al., 2020), limitations of the data set and methodology pose some potential issues for the interpretation and generalizability of these findings. For instance, Spanish speaking PSID participants were not invited to participate in the Childhood Retrospective Survey or Well-being supplement, which contributes to selection bias. Furthermore, survey research of this nature is susceptible to common-method bias, as participants may fatigue or be inclined to acquiesce or give socially desirable responses on a long, retrospective-report survey (Podsakoff et al., 2012). To mitigate the effects of common-method bias, there were three years of temporal separation between the measurement of mentoring and well-being, and our measurement model accounts for measurement error.

More broadly, bi-directionality should be considered in interpreting our findings. Adolescents and emerging adults with more social resources and more positive self-images are more likely to be mentored (Erickson et al., 2009), suggesting that resourced emerging adults may elicit more mentoring from the people around them. Therefore, our results may have occurred in part because happier emerging adults were both more likely to have mentors and to grow into flourishing adults. Furthermore, the question of whether one had a mentor or not during emerging adulthood was assessed retrospectively, meaning one's memory of their past could bias their response. Happy adults are generally more grateful (Unanue et al., 2018; Witvliet et al., 2019) and may be better able to recognize, in retrospect, the supportive people in

their lives who mentored them. Similarly, adults who perceive themselves as successful, may be more likely to see the contributions of the people who helped them to accomplish their goals.

Future research that uses a longitudinal, rather than retrospective, approach to capturing mentoring experiences in emerging adulthood to consider the downstream benefits of mentoring is needed.

An additional limitation of this dataset is in the limited nature of the information reported about the mentoring relationship. Although we can speculate about potential mentoring functions provided by career and relationship mentors based on existing theory and research, we cannot know for certain the specific mechanisms by which mentoring predicts well-being. Moreover, it was not possible to determine whether individual's mentors were formally assigned or naturally occurring. Though research has shown that naturally occurring mentors are generally more common and provide more mentoring functions than formal mentors (Ragins & Cotton, 1999), this lack of detail around specific characteristics of the mentoring relationship limits our ability to draw conclusions about the mentoring goals and characteristics most aligned with flourishing.

Relatedly, participants were not given a chance to indicate whether their love and work mentor were the same individual. This means that one individual may serve as both a career and committed relationship mentor but be captured twice in our results. For instance, we found that people of color were more likely to report having both a career and relationship mentor, whereas white participants were more likely to report having just one or the other. This may highlight cultural differences in the value of interdependence that make more sources of support available to young people of color transitioning into adulthood, or may be a result of participants of color having a mentor who provided more wholistic support for both career and relationships being reported twice. Therefore, all results must be interpreted as the link between the number of

different *types* of mentoring received rather than the number of mentors. Further research using a network analytic approach is needed to disentangle the number of mentors one has versus the number of mentor functions received, on well-being.

Conclusions

While our results demonstrate a very modest difference in downstream flourishing and subjective well-being among those who were mentored in emerging adulthood, these results contribute to a growing body of work suggesting that mentoring early in life pays long-term dividends. A greater understanding of how mentoring in the domains of work and love during emerging adulthood has notable implications for a large portion of the global population coming of age today. Generation Z, those born between 1997-2012, comprise approximately 22% of the US population (Duffin, 2020), and may face the added challenge of entering adulthood during a time of economic downturn (World Bank, 2020) and social isolation (Sander, 2020). These current and future emerging adults are at a particularly critical transitional period, as instability and uncertainty incline the group towards susceptibility to various risk behaviors that may be detrimental to a successful transition into adulthood (Beier et al., 2000; Claxon & van Dulmen, 2013). Providing social support in the form of mentoring may influence emerging adults' prosperous transition to healthy aging, workforce productivity, and successful parenting, shaping the stability and progress of society at large (Bonnie et al., 2015). Moreover, developing a stronger understanding of the social supports necessary for the well-being of emerging adults may help increase equal opportunity by revealing disparities in access to mentoring among various population subgroups (Bonnie et al., 2015). Mentoring may serve a crucial role in tipping the scales towards a favorable transition, rendering it a potential mechanism to overcome environmental risk factors impacting their development (Ahrens et al., 2008; Beier et al., 2000;

Dang et al., 2014; Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005). The current study extends previous work by linking love and work mentoring in emerging adulthood to subjective well-being and flourishing in later life, demonstrating that love and work mentoring during this period of instability may provide a foundation that allows for happiness and flourishing downstream.

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Table 1*Participant Characteristics (N=6197)*

Characteristic	%	Mean (SD)
Age		51.59 (14.56)
Female	42.54	
Race/Ethnicity		
White	68.93	
Black	27.70	
Other Race & Multiracial	1.41	
Asian	1.33	
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.54	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.08	
Hispanic	3.80	
Total Family Income		92,416 (111,811)
Mentor Type		
Committed Relationship Mentor Only	4.36	
Work Mentor Only	13.08	
No Mentor	30.56	
Both Types of Mentor	52.00	
Outcomes		
Flourishing		31.24 (3.94)
Satisfaction with Life		3.81 (0.88)
Positive Affect		3.63 (0.72)
Negative Affect		1.74 (0.72)

Note. Mentor type responses were collected in the 2013 Childhood Retrospective Circumstances Study. Demographics, flourishing, and subjective well-being data came from the 2015 Well-Being supplemental survey

Table 2*Main Effects of Committed Relationship and Work Mentoring on Flourishing and Subjective**Well-being*

Outcome Variable	R ²	Predictor Variable	Standardized Estimate	Standard Error	<i>p</i>
Flourishing Model	.04	Committed Relationship	.04	.03	.041
		Mentoring			
		Work Mentoring	.09	.03	< .001
		Age	-.02	.01	.090
		Sex	.06	.02	< .001
		Race	.01	.02	.604
		Hispanic ethnicity	.00	.05	.981
Subjective Well-being Model	.03	Total Family Income	.13	.29	.006
		Committed Relationship	.01	.03	.589
		Mentoring			
		Work Mentoring	.06	.03	.002
		Age	.07	.01	< .001
		Sex	-.01	.02	.448
		Race	-.02	.03	.276
Hispanic ethnicity	-.00	.05	.757		
		Total Family Income	.14	.32	.005

Note. Age and total family income were transformed to create more equal variance compared to the other variables. Age and total family income were divided by ten and a million, respectively.

Table 3

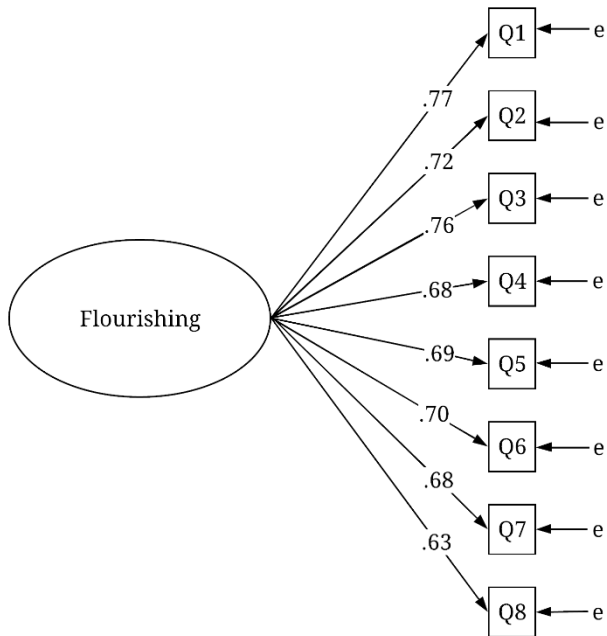
Moderation Effects of Committed Relationship and Work Mentoring on Flourishing and Subjective Well-being

Outcome Variable	R ²	Predictor Variable	Standardized Estimate	Standard Error	<i>p</i>
Flourishing Model		Committed Relationship Mentoring (CRM)	-.02	.05	.643
		Work Mentoring (WM)	.06	.03	.007
		CRM x WM	.08	.06	.076
		Age	-.02	.01	.102
		Sex	.06	.02	< .001
		Race	.01	.02	.533
		Hispanic ethnicity	.00	.05	.974
		Total Family Income	.13	.29	.006
Subjective Well-being Model	.03	Committed Relationship Mentoring (CRM)	-.04	.05	.321
		Work Mentoring (WM)	.04	.04	.072
		CRM x WM	.06	.06	.138
		Age	.08	.01	< .001
		Sex	-.01	.02	.437
		Race	-.02	.03	.311
		Hispanic ethnicity	-.00	.05	.761
		Total Family Income	.14	.32	.005

Note. Age and total family income were transformed to create more equal variance compared to the other variables. Age and total family income were divided by ten and a million, respectively.

Figure 1

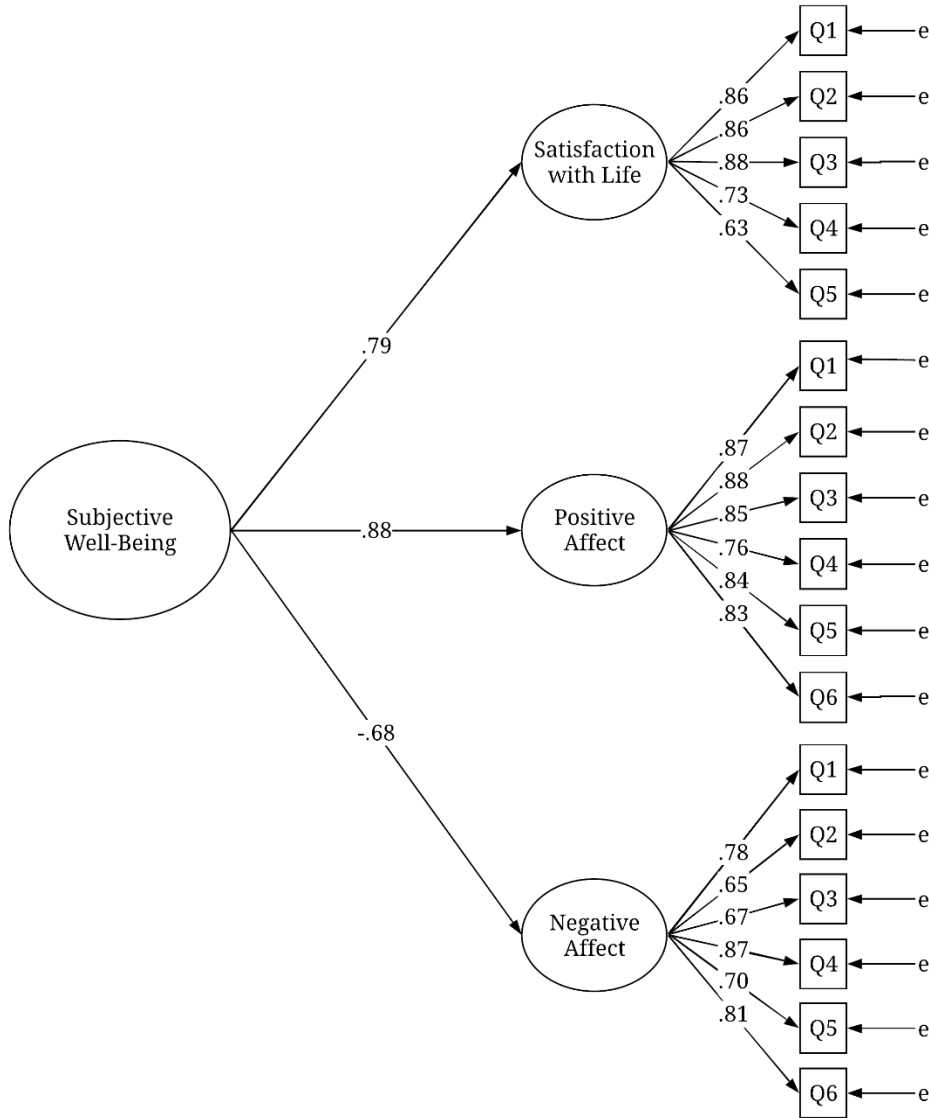
Illustration of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Flourishing Measure



Note. All coefficients are standardized and significant at $p < .001$.

Figure 2

Illustration of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Subjective Well-Being Measure



Note. All coefficients are standardized and significant at $p < .001$.