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Can the concept of self-multiplicity contribute to well-being in emerging adulthood?

Bachelor Thesis

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Content

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Abstract

The concept of emerging adulthood is up for debate whether it is a stand-alone developmental stage in developmental psychology. However, it is not disputed that emerging adulthood is an important transitional stage in the human lifespan and needs to be considered when considering the maturation of young adults. An inclusive and operational definition of well-being has also been up for debate for decades, with several authors trying to build a comprehensive framework of well-being to use in research. However, the hurdles to achieving this may not be easy to overcome when considering the multidimensional nature of well-being about class, culture and age. The literature on well-being shows that emerging adults have been suffering from decreased levels of well-being for over a decade, with no clear indication as to why. Evidence points to emerging adults who take longer to mature into functioning and flourishing adult experience greater decreased levels of well-being than emerging adults who enter adulthood through increased demand for maturity. The concept of self-multiplicity has been examined whether it can have a positive effect on well-being in emerging adulthood with studies producing mixed results.

Introduction

The concept of "well-being" and closely related terms such as "happiness", "mental health", and "life satisfaction" concerning late adolescence and young adults have been studied time and time again (Disabato et al., 2016; Gallagher et al., 2009; Ng et al., 2021). The literature positions well-being as a multidimensional concept and encompasses the other mentioned terms. The concept of well-being is ancient and has been revisited by sociologists, health professionals, philosophers, and psychologists for centuries. There is recognition that there are different types of well-being, however, it is still lacking a globally inclusive and operational definition (Disabato et al., 2016; Gallagher et al., 2009; Ryff, 1989). One of the main hurdles is the wide range and overlapping use of terminology to describe the different dimensions well-being. This makes it difficult to separate the different types of well-being. In addition, well-being is a subjective phenomenon, and most studies involve self-reporting tools to collect data and techniques which rely on the reconstruction of feelings and experience (Mackie & Stone, 2014) this makes it difficult to observe well-being objectively and with accuracy.

The reason well-being has been studied so often amongst late adolescents and early adulthood is that it happens indirectly. Unless otherwise required or stated, most psychological studies rely on university students as participants, this is due to the ease of recruitment, ease of administration and the low costs involved (Hanel & Vione, 2016). Except for a handful of mature students, people who attend university or other types of higher education mainly fall within the age range of late adolescence and young adulthood, more accurately described as emerging adulthood. Student samples usually also overlap with WEIRD samples (white (or Western), educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic). This includes industrialised cultures which have easier access to education and health services and come from better socioeconomic backgrounds.

Since many studies are based on these narrow groups of young people, it can raise questions about the validity of the findings when applied to a wider population and prove difficult to draw accurate conclusions about the well-being of less industrialised cultures and people who do not attend higher education. According to the American Psychology Association, WEIRD samples make up as much as 80% of participants, which only represents 12% of the population (Azar, 2010), implying that our understanding of human behaviour is likely distorted.

The literature surrounding well-being usually reports on a) the evidence for the lack of well-being, seen through elevated stress, depression and anxiety and b) the negative impact of the lack of well-being on life, such as relationships, education and work, health, and identity. The most recent findings indicate a general decrease in well-being amongst emerging adults for the last ten years and reported an even sharper decrease during the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the post-COVID-19 era (Barbayannis et al., 2022; Westerhof & Keyes, 2009). In a review by Westerhof & Keyes (2009) the disproportion in well-being can be seen through the comparison of mental disorder prevalence between age groups.

The findings also closely reflected results from the MIDUS survey and NEMESIS study. Both studies showed that emerging adults were more vulnerable to experiencing lower well-being than their more mature counterparts. The MIDUS survey is a United States of America longitudinal research project which reports on well-being and other related facets of life (Radler, 2014), while The NEMESIS study is the Netherlands equivalent of MIDUS (de Graaf et al., 2010).

The updated NEMESIS study (ten Have et al., 2023) showed an increase of 8.7% (17.4% to 26.1%) prevalence of mental disorders among emerging adults. In comparison, mature adults fell by 1% (26.7% to 25.7%) prevalence of mental disorders. This could indicate that mature adults coped better with by-products of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as

uncertainty, instability, and isolation, in comparison to emerging adults. ten Have and colleagues (2023) argue that the COVID-19 pandemic is not the sole explaining factor for the sharp decline of well-being seen in emerging adults. As they show an increasing prevalence of mental disorders in emerging adults since its inception in 1996, implying there are other factors at play which manipulates well-being among emerging adults.

Hochberg & Konner (2020) proposed that a recent evolution in developmental psychology should include the stage of emerging adulthood. It is considered a period of deep exploration of the environment, relationships, commitments, and of the self and self-identity. It is a time for the laying down of the foundations which will govern the rest of a person's life. This deviates from well-known lifespan developmental theories, such as Erikson's Theory, which takes adolescence straight into adulthood (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2019). Hochberg & Konner (2020) argue that this abrupt launch into adulthood is not justified because a person at the end of adolescence cannot be considered a fully developed adult. Moreover, this transitional period is also a very impressionable stage and vulnerable to outside influence as emerging adults are known to be impulsive as well as susceptible to psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety, just to name a few.

The key question that arises is, during a time when young people are the most prone to developing psychological disorders, what could help emerging adults maintain a healthy level of well-being throughout one of the most vulnerable and turbulent periods of exploration and change?

Within industrialised cultures, entering adulthood is not a fixed moment in time, and it can therefore be daunting to choose which facets of the self to solidify and which to shed. Self-awareness becomes an important element of development and growth, which is where the concept of self-multiplicity could be useful. The construct of self-multiplicity is part of the study which is about the cognitive structures of the self. This means the subjective

knowledge of the self, the importance placed on the knowledge of the self and utilisation of self-knowledge. The study of the self has not been an easy one since it has been labelled in the past as too elusive and difficult to observe objectively or measure reliably and accurately (Rafaeli-Mor & Steinberg, 2002). The concept of self-multiplicity is a subjective phenomenon and studies suggests that self-multiplicity can positively contribute to well-being by potentially safeguarding emerging adults from depression and other stress-related illnesses (Lineville, 1987).

The original ancient thought was that well-being, or happiness, could only be viewed in retrospect, in the modern day there is an understanding that well-being is a key element of daily life, without which a person cannot flourish emotionally, mentally, and physically in their environment or within themselves. This paper aims to discuss if the concept self-multiplicity can contribute to the multidimensional concept of well-being in emerging adulthood. This will be achieved by identifying the importance of emerging adulthood, identifying the different types of well-being, and reviewing different models of self-multiplicity.

The Importance of Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood encompasses the late teens through to the mid or even late twenties (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2019; Martorell, 2022). Some authors argue that emerging adulthood is an important stand-alone developmental stage in the human lifespan, while other authors disagree, calling it a flaw in the developmental theory (Côté, 2014). However, there is no dispute that emerging adulthood is an in-between stage which, depending on culture, can be narrow and defined or ambiguous, subjective.

Emerging adulthood is an important time of trial and error and the development of relationships, intimacy, beliefs, commitments, and self-identity in different contexts. The habits and beliefs that are formed at this stage tend to become deeply rooted in a person’s life

story, which initially emerges in adolescence (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2019). Life stories develop and gain more coherence in emerging adulthood, which helps to solidify identity and is reflected through actions (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2019). This means emerging adulthood is a ripe time for setting what kind of stories emerging adults will tell themselves and what stories they will believe. This leads to the assumption that if emerging adults experience a good level of well-being, then their life stories will be more positive and vice versa.

Within industrialised cultures, there are several milestones which emerging adults encounter that allow them to mature into functioning and flourishing adults. These encounters pivot upon "role transitions" which are associated with assuming more responsibility over a period. However, in the present day, there is no consecutive order in which role assumption happens. In the past, there were more concrete guidelines for when certain roles should be assumed or when certain goals should be accomplished, which were even related to gender. However, over time, the order in which things happen as well as the guidelines have become blurred and ambiguous. For example, sometime in the 1950s, a man was expected to finish his education, become employed, marry, purchase a house, have children, and retire. On the other hand, a woman was expected to get some sort of education (usually practical for homemaking), marry, have children and be a stay-at-home wife. In the present day, it is far more common for adults to live with their parents for a variety of reasons, such as to save money, and to still be in education when they already have children. Industrialised cultures have developed a concept of individualism and a need for self-realisation while developing cultures continue to harbour a more collectivist approach (Halfon et al., 2018). This explains why developing cultures still have more clearly mapped out rites of passage into adulthood (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2019), while industrialised cultures have far more blurred lines and a personal take on responsibilities.

The time it takes to mature into an adult is still expanding, with people in Western countries assuming responsibilities much later in life than in the past (Halfon et al., 2018; Kail & Cavanaugh, 2019; Martorell, 2022). Martorell (2022) also goes further to discuss that even in developed cultures, lower socioeconomic classes spend a shorter period in the "in-between stage" before entering adulthood in comparison to their wealthier counterparts. This is likely linked to hardships and challenges in childhood, which demand a greater degree of maturity from an earlier age. This underlines that emerging adulthood is an element of human development that is hugely dependent upon cultural and socioeconomic context. This is why authors such as Côté (2014) dismiss emerging adulthood as a stand-alone lifespan developmental stage.

In juxtaposition to Côté's argument, there are subtle, but very important, physical, and psychological changes that occur during emerging adulthood. The centres in the brain that are responsible for processing emotions and reasoning, known as "high-level" thinking and emotional intelligence, continue to grow and only mature in the mid-twenties (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2019). This could serve as evidence for a person developing and maturing into an adult. While this sounds positive, on the other end of the spectrum, emerging adults are prone to more impulsive and risky behaviour which can distort their thought process, decisions, and actions (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2019; Martorell, 2022). This can have undesirable consequences and ultimately influence the quality of well-being.

Emerging adulthood and well-being

Emerging adulthood is an impressionable and vulnerable stage because emerging adults are highly prone to developing depression and other psychological disorders. This is seen in lifespan studies that report emerging adults (18 to 25) displaying far higher tendencies of depression than older people (25 to 65) (Westerhof & Keyes, 2009). Therefore, it is

important to understand which factors can influence the development of depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders.

Consumption of alcohol and smoking, which usually comes with peer pressure, is one of the most common activities emerging adults engage in. Additionally, bad habits such as bad nutrition and lack of exercise usually stem from a lack of knowledge and ignorance. These factors all affect cognition, and the functioning of the body, which contributes to the dis-balance of essential chemicals in the brain and body, which contribute to lower overall well-being physically, emotionally, and psychologically. However, since these actions may be performed among their peers, emerging adult social well-being could compensate the overall sense of well-being for a length of time.

There are some factors which affect well-being outside their control. The idea of endless potential is a daunting one and can leave emerging adults feeling overwhelmed by trying to grab too many goals and ambitions, at once. This can be seen through the concept of the “possible selves” (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2019). When used correctly and within reason, the concept of possible selves can help emerging adults envision whom they want to be, what they want to achieve, and where they want to go in life. However, when there are too many possibilities and some that conflict or collide, it can leave emerging adults confused, anxious, and even in a frozen state.

The most common factor that impacts well-being among emerging adults is study, and or work. Most students report high levels of stress from study load pressure (Barbayannis et al., 2022) which impacts well-being directly, and if left unmanaged, can develop into more serious issues. Barbayannis (2022) found a correlation between academic stress and poor well-being. In many cases, students work to support themselves through education if they are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The combination and juggling of these responsibilities can negatively impact physical, emotional, and mental well-being. The load

can be too strenuous, however, for many, this type of juggling will be one of the first experiencing of this type of pressure and demand to commit, endure and perform.

Since emerging adults have the largest social groups, social wellbeing rightfully plays an important role in emerging adulthood. In industrialised cultures, one of the key milestones of emerging adulthood is attending university or beginning full time employment. This promotes emerging adults to assume more responsibility and act like adults through the development of intelligence, and social and personal identity, which is influenced through social interaction (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2019). Social interactions can either help promote the development of self-identity and well-being or, unfortunately, inhabit it. As people mature and age their social circles become narrower and more selective, which if at the stage of emerging adulthood was not cultivated, could have a negative impact on social wellbeing in the long run. Emerging adulthood in many ways is at the peak of performance, which begins to decline slowly but surely for the rest of their lives. This is because intelligence becomes crystalised (what they know) and change becomes more difficult to accept or make (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2019). As crystalised intelligence improves and fluid intelligence decreases with age, emerging adulthood becomes the last stage in which, with self-awareness, a person can make easier changes to identity, and self-perception.

Defining Well-being

The exploration of well-being began in ancient philosophy with Plato and, his student, Aristotle where well-being was defined as “living a good life” or eudaimonia which was translated as “happiness” (Aristotle, ca. 350 B.C.E./1999). Aristotle referred to eudaimonia as more of an activity, and not that of the body but that of the soul (Aristotle, ca. 350 B.C.E./1999), meaning it was about fulfilling one’s true potential. Aristotle also believed eudaimonia can only be reached at the end of your life (Aristotle, ca. 350 B.C.E./1999), which indicates a retrospective view of well-being, rather than an ongoing element of daily life.

Aristotle also differentiated what the common man and a refined man take happiness to mean. The former takes wealth, pleasure, and honour to encompass happiness, which holds measurable and tangible aspects, while the latter develops a level of complexity and views happiness as living by true virtue and according to nature (Aristotle, ca. 350 B.C.E./1999).

The concept of well-being has been conceptualised, discussed, measured, and reviewed multiple times over the last few decades, and to date, there is still no international consensus on its definition. Well-being, emotional, physical, and psychological, is an important aspect of everyday life because it acts as a benchmark to measure whether people are functioning well in their lives (WHO, 2021). Several authors (Disabato et al., 2016; Ryff, 1989; Simons & Baldwin, 2021) agree there is a need for an inclusive and globally functioning definition to be able to grasp the multidimensional concept of well-being. This arises from the need to be able to, reliably and effectively, measure and compare well-being across domains such as psychology, sociology, and economics.

Over the years, several authors have attempted to provide a coherent and inclusive definition of well-being, as well as aimed to improve the tools used (questionnaires and scales) to measure it. The different types of well-being identified include hedonic well-being (pleasure or emotional well-being) (Diener, 1984), eudaimonic well-being (meaningfulness or psychological well-being) (Ryff, 1989), and social well-being (community) (Keyes, 1998). Some authors (Gallagher et al., 2009; Seligman 2018) attempted to integrate the existing models of well-being and explore the potential of a hierarchy within well-being.

One of the dominating reasons that the definition of well-being lacks international consensus is that much of the prior literature has little basis in theoretical rationale (Ryff, 1989). Additionally, several terms such as health, life satisfaction, quality of life and happiness have been used interchangeably to describe well-being (Kiefer, 2008). The interchangeable use of these terms to represent well-being yields inconsistency, misleading

information, and confusion about the concept of well-being and its components, making it difficult to make reliable comparisons. Furthermore, the concept of well-being is a complex one as it can relate not only to psychological mental health but also to physical health and even spirituality. Westerhof & Keyes (2009) also note that most studies focused on emotional well-being as a basis for research which does not cover the multidimensional nature of well-being. The use of various scales to measure well-being may fail to capture its complexity beyond happiness or a lack of physical ailments (Kiefer, 2008).

Well-being describes a positive state of being with an absence of negative experience or pathology, however, this is the bare minimum outcome. The World Health Organisation underlines that well-being should not only be viewed as an absence of physical or mental ailments (WHO, 2021). In fact, WHO goes on to elaborate that well-being is a state in "which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (WHO, 2021). This definition speaks about people flourishing and touches upon three crucial elements of a) realisation of abilities (subjective well-being), b) effective functioning (meaningfulness) and c) effective function with society or community (social well-being).

Hedonic well-being

Hedonic well-being, used interchangeably with subjective well-being or emotional well-being (Westerhof & Keyes, 2009), encompasses components of well-being linked to pleasure and the satisfaction of immediate needs or desires (Disabato et al., 2016). Pleasure and immediate desire include human experiences such as eating food, procreation or being excited about new experiences, as well as attaining personal success and having an interest in life. Hedonic well-being is also linked to life satisfaction through the presence of positive affect and an absence of negative affect (Diener, 1984; Martela & Sheldon, 2019). Martela

and Sheldon (2019) go on to discuss that hedonic well-being is more about "feeling good" rather than "doing well" which is linked to eudaimonic well-being and meaningfulness.

Therefore, considering the factor of "feeling good", hedonic well-being could potentially give someone the illusion of well-being. This could happen through addiction and indulgence material success and belongings, but is it true well-being? And could hedonic well-being potentially cause harm? This could pose questions of what true well-being is and what is true hedonism.

Eudaimonic well-being

Ryff (1989) considered the model of hedonic well-being to be too narrow to encompass the complex meaning of living "a good life" or "happiness", as identified by Aristotle. Eudaimonic well-being, also referred to as psychological well-being (Westerhof & Keyes, 2009), draws upon the idea of a meaningful life, however within the realm of the constructs of a society or a community (Simons & Baldwin, 2021). Ryff (1989) proposed the eudaimonic well-being model, noting that previous concepts of well-being lacked theoretical rationale. Ryff (1989) presented the six facets of eudaimonic well-being model as stand-alone components encompassing the dimensions of self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth.

Self-acceptance, and a positive view of the self, seem to play a central role in experiencing positive psychological well-being. This makes sense because holding a heavily critical view of the self would make it impossibly difficult to feel satisfied with anything. Positive relations with others, according to Ryff (1989) refer to holding deeper affection and empathy for other people and indicates a level of maturity in human development. This could be touching on emotional intelligence, which depends upon empathy and maturity. Autonomy, on the other hand, refers to being separate from others and having an internal compass not influenced by others to act independently (Ryff, 1989). Environmental mastery is

effective participation outside of the self (Ryff, 1989), which means within society or community. As Ryff (1989) explains, there is a level of complexity introduced here as it contributes to maturity and how a person functions and manipulates their environment to suit their physical and psychological state. The facet of purpose in life is also important to well-being to give a feeling of meaning and direction, which provides stability for psychological well-being in the long term (Ryff, 1989). Lastly, personal growth builds upon the previous facet, in that continuous development is needed to keep up with purpose in life and alter it as and when required. According to Ryff (1989), personal growth is the closest facet to Aristotle's idea of living according to virtue and "doing good".

Social well-being

The model of social well-being is considered an extension of Ryff's (1989) eudaimonic well-being because it tends to build upon the eudaimonic component of positive relations with others (Gallagher et al., 2009). Keyes (1998) acknowledges that, although Ryff (1989) and Denier (1984) emphasise the private and individual nature of well-being, the individual is still "*embedded in social structures and communities and face countless social tasks and challenges*" (Côté, 2014, p 122). The model of social well-being is the evaluation of an individual within society, and encompasses the components of social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social actualisation, and social coherence.

Social integration refers to the quality of an individual's relationship with society (Keyes, 1998). It refers to an individual sense of belonging in their community, however, on the flip side, social isolation refers to the breakdown of an individual's relationships that would otherwise provide meaning and support (Keyes, 1998). Social acceptance refers to the level at which an individual is trusting of human nature or feels at ease with other people (Keyes,1998). This means, to what extent does an individual hold a positive view of other people to be kind, courteous and civil with each other. Additionally, Keyes (1998) proposes

that social acceptance is the social counterpart of self-acceptance, which means the more an individual believes themselves to be productive or good, the more this may reflect in his views of others. Social contribution, on the other hand, evaluates an individual's social value, meaning that an individual is considered a vital part of society and has something worthwhile to share with the world (Keyes, 1998). It ties in with social responsibility and the belief that an individual's contribution is for the common good of society (Keyes, 1998) which echoes Aristotle's philosophy of committing to doing good for the greater good, indicating the community within which a person operates. There is a sense that society can control or influence its destiny through its citizens. Finally, social coherence is compared to a meaningful life, through the idea that social coherence reflects the quality and organisation of the social world (Keyes, 1998). Keyes (1998) states that social coherence is not only about an individual caring about the type of world they live in, but also the striving to understand what is happening, and those who are socially coherent aim to maintain coherence in the event of adverse or unpredictable events.

Self-Multiplicity

The concept of self-multiplicity is a dynamic yet subjective phenomenon, meaning it is about the ongoing and continuous nature in how an individual views and organises themselves internally. Several authors and philosophers (such as Plato) have attempted to explain and capture the essence of this self- multiplicity, through models and theories such as the Self-Complexity model (Lineville, 1985), the Dialogical Self theory (Hermans, 2012) and Subpersonalities (Rowan, 2013). There are overlaps and similarities between the different models and theories, however, the main theme is that there several versions or characters and aspects of a person within their mind.

Self-complexity

The model of Self Complexity presented by Linville in 1985, and again in 1987, discusses how people perceive, organise and structure themselves internally through what are described as self-aspects or personal constructs. These self-aspects cover a wide range of states and being, including roles such as “I as a mother”, as well as ambitions such as “I as a marathon winner”, and goals such as “I as saving 10,000 Euro”. The idea is that these self-aspects lay within a network and interact with each other when activated through context. It is a subjective phenomenon as Linville’s participants mainly took part in self-report questionnaires over the period of several weeks. Linville (1985) proposed the spectrum of high self-complexity, which has several distinct self-aspects, and low self-complexity, which has fewer and more overlapping self-aspects. The reason this is important is that Linville (1985) argued that people with higher self-complexity tend to be more resilient to adverse change, while people with lower self-complexity may struggle to adapt to change and adverse events. In 1987 Linville went further to suggest that the self-complexity model can even go as far as being a buffer for stress and depression.

Dialogical self

Hubert Hermans (2012) proposed a concept of the Dialogical Self which involves a network of multiple selves or characters which continuously interact with each other through dialogue, an even in a hierarchical manner, within the “society of the mind”. Hermans (2012) implies that there is no defined headquarters of this society which could resemble something like a democracy. The multiple selves are referred to as “I” positions or perspectives that represent different facets of a person’s identity. Hermans (2012) explained that the different “I” positions are influenced by several factors and are in continuous negotiation with each other to continuously construct and deconstruct the self. This means that while some “I” positions may agree with each other, other “I” positions may disagree and have a total

breakdown of communication. This can lead to different parts of the self to ignore each other potentially. Factors which influence the different "I" positions include social, cultural, and personal. The typical type of dialogue that we would expect to experience is through different experiences, beliefs, values as well as emotions. This is why Hermans (2012) divides the concept of the dialogical self into the following categories, the personal dimension, the social dimension, the cultural dimension, and the temporal dimension.

The personal dimension represents a person's unique experiences and characteristics. The social dimension represents the social group and family influences as well as relationships. The cultural dimension represents the impacts of cultural norms and values, which resonates with some similarities to the social dimension. Lastly, the temporal dimension represents how the self may change over time and within a certain context. Most importantly the concept of the dialogical self-highlights that a person is not confined to one single self or identity and can hold several selves at the same time with even conflicting views (Hermans, 2012).

Subpersonalities

The concept of Subpersonalities echoes Jungian Archetype psychology which Rowan (2013) often references. Subpersonalities, originally proposed by John Rowan in the late 1980s, discussed the concept of *"semi-permanent and semi-autonomous regions of the personality capable of acting as a whole person"* (Rowan, 2013, p79). This is what Jungian architypes are thought to do, they act almost as an autonomous person within the self, and it can be noted in moments when a person claims they do not know "*what came over*" them (Rowan, 2013, p4). While it can refer to a negative experience, it does not always have to be so, however, it is a good illustration of how a person changes under certain circumstances highlighting that personality is not a constant and steady element of a person. Rowan (2013) argues that the acceptance of a person being a group of personalities could be a relief in day-

to-day life as opposed to something abnormal, which can cause stress. This is due to the ability to rely on different subpersonalities for different functions such as the “telephone voice” that people display. Rowan (2013) notes that a person usually may have between four and nine subpersonalities and varies from person to person.

Rowan (2013) implies that as people age, they develop more complexity, and their personalities develop separate functions which are isolated from one another yet are related. This is seen through behavioural patterns that people display according to situation and within context, which are based upon previous experience. These isolated yet related subpersonalities may even become part of scripts (Rowan, 2013). The scripts are explained as strings of conversation between different ego states or architypes within the person, for example deliberating whether to indulge in a treat. Rowan (2013) also implies that people might not like or feel comfortable with all of their different subpersonalities, but observation is key to acceptance which ideally leads to co-ordination of the subpersonalities for the greater good. This co-ordination of cohabitation of subpersonalities would therefore ultimately lead to a person experiencing the sense of well-being.

Self-Multiplicity and Well-being

In a review of self-complexity and well-being, 49 studies were selected to be examined for evidence to self-complexity being a positive influence on well-being, mood and self-evaluation or act as a buffering effect for depression (Rafaeli-Mor & Steinberg, 2002). The concept of self-complexity offered little evidence as an efficient buffer against depression. However, several studies documented a negative impact on well-being, mood, and self-evaluation, while multiple other studies presented marginally positive or positive effects on well-being. This means the concept of self-complexity has equal credibility for both for and against as an effective tool to improve low mood, and increase the sense of well-being, and self-evaluation. The review found that the studies which showed negative interaction

between self-complexity and well-being, were due to the baseline depression being rather high, to begin with (Rafaeli-Mor & Steinberg, 2002). This raises the question of at what level of depression baseline is the concept of self-complexity effective to positively impact well-being?

Ng and colleagues (2021) also examined among university students whether having multiple identities was beneficial. They found that identifying with multiple selves resulted in higher life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing which indicates that hedonic, eudaimonic well-being as well as social well-being could benefit from emerging adults having multiple selves to lean upon.

Limitations of self-multiplicity

While self-multiplicity can have a positive contribution towards well-being in emerging adulthood, it is important to note that it is not for everyone. Some authors (Koch & Shepperd, 2004) question the suitability of the concept of self-multiplicity concerning well-being altogether. Koch & Shepperd (2004) disapprove of the model of self-complexity and argue it can be detrimental to the overall experience of well-being. Koch & Shepperd (2004) argue that lower self-complexity is a more desired state because it allows people to feel more deeply, hence be more connected to their environment, emotions, and experiences.

When self-multiplicity becomes overwhelming, self-authenticity could be one of the first aspects to suffer. This can lead to feelings of confusion, disorientation, and a lack of direction as it can be burdensome to cope with the idea of several selves daily. The different selves may have conflicting beliefs, values, and goals. This can create internal tension and difficulty in making decisions (Koch & Shepperd, 2004) and therefore cause difficulty in forming a strong identity and a clear understanding of who they are.

Self-multiplicity can also pose difficulties with intimacy. The idea of multiple selves can make it difficult to truly open up completely to a partner and feel accepted, which can

create distance and forming deep connections which is so key to emerging adults developing connections and relationships.

Discussion

It may not be possible to fully address in this paper whether emerging adulthood deserves its own standalone stage in the human lifespan theory, we can highlight the importance of the development of the brain structure. It is important evidence for an adolescent maturing into an adult. This maturation has a profound impact on the way emotions are processed and therefore impacts behaviour, perception, and decision making. This can directly influence well-being and its multidimensional nature.

While it is possible to identify the different facets of well-being, due to its multidimensional nature and perceived importance, well-being is difficult to inclusively define across culture and socioeconomic background. Well-being can carry different levels of importance and have different meaning in different cultures, different classes and even at different ages. An example of this is cultures which are more collectivist, which do not place as great an importance on individual well-being, may not fully grasp the idea of eudaimonic well-being.

The different concepts of self-multiplicity can contribute toward well-being in emerging adults by allowing them to lean on different aspects of the self and therefore cope and display resilience in moments of adversity and vulnerability. This can further be promoted through exploring their beliefs and ideas to form or dismantle self-aspects that do not serve them, as and when required. However, it should be noted that self-multiplicity has its limitations such as the ability to increase the potential for psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression because emerging adults may feel inauthentic.

Evidence points towards an interesting conclusion, emerging adults who experience lower well-being tend to come from better socioeconomic backgrounds in industrialised

cultures and usually enter adulthood at a much later stage than their lower socioeconomic counterparts. Emerging adults who experience lower well-being mainly come from industrialised cultures rather than developing cultures, where the rules for entering adulthood are much clearer. This could be due to how much time it takes to enter adulthood, which has become more subjective and personalised in developed cultures where individualism is the norm, as opposed to developing cultures where collectivism and rites of passage are set events at certain ages.

If we accept the studies such as Lineville's which lean towards self-multiplicity to be a positive contribution to the wellbeing, then this could be good news for emerging adults looking to improve their well-being and cope better with stress and depression. The ability to grasp the benefits of self-multiplicity, and apply it practically, could have a meaningful impact on psychological and emotional domains. This can promote self-acceptance and reduce self-criticism, build resilience and flexibility, all of which improves the sense of well-being. The concept of self-multiplicity could serve as a template for how to direct personal development to improve the foundation upon which emerging adults build their lives.

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