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An Investigation of the Relationships Among Self-Construal, Emotional Intelligence, and Well-Being

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This study aims to further investigate the convergent validity of the recently-proposed metapersonal model and measure of self-construal, and to emphasize the discriminant validity of the metapersonal self-construal as a distinct construct, capturing a unique aspect of self-construal separate from either interdependent or independent aspects. The study looked at two questions: (1) Does the metapersonal self-construal predict higher emotional intelligence? (2) Do those who have higher metapersonal self-construal scores also report greater well-being? A group of 212 undergraduate students was assessed using a self-construal scale that includes the new measure of metapersonal self-construal, along with scales measuring emotional intelligence and well-being. The metapersonal self-construal predicted higher emotional intelligence scores and greater well-being than either the independent or interdependent self-construals.

Keywords: independent, interdependent, metapersonal self-construal, emotional intelligence

Self-construal refers to how an individual develops and defines information about one's relationship with the self, with others, and between one's self and others (DeCicco & Stroink, 2007; Hardin, Varghese, Tran & Carlson, 2006; Kashima et al., 1995; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). Early research on self-construal outlined two types: the independent and the interdependent self-construal, which arose from cross-cultural research. Markus and Kitayama (1991) found that Western, individualistic cultures tend to create an independent construal of the self, in which the individual values being unique, autonomous, stable, separate, and focuses on internal attributes. In contrast, Eastern, collectivist cultures tend to construe the self as interdependent, where relationships, group harmony, flexibility, belonging, and external features are important in establishing and maintaining the self.

However, drawing on Markus and Kitayama's (1991) two-dimensional definition of self-construal, later research found that these two types of self-construal do not encompass the self-view of every individual (DeCicco & Stroink, 2007), and that a multi-dimensional model of self-construal was necessary (Hardin, 2006). Individuals

that look beyond the personal and social aspects of existence to find meaning in their lives and define the self cannot be fully described by either the independent or interdependent self-construals. These individuals define a self that transcends the typical sense of identity where the self is not ego-centered but understands that the self is connected and influenced by things and beings that exist beyond the personal and relational (e.g., I am connected to all of humankind; I am part of a natural order). In other words, the self includes a feeling of connectedness to all things.

Thus, a third model and measure of self-construal, the metapersonal, was recently proposed (DeCicco & Stroink, 2007). The metapersonal self-construal "is defined as a sense of one's identity that extends beyond the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche, or the cosmos" (p. 84). The focus of an individual with this self-construal moves beyond personal and relational views of the self to a more universal view. In other words, the metapersonal self-construal is not simply defined by personal attributes or social relations, but instead defines the self as connected to all things. The metapersonal has

a universal focus that includes all life and nature into the concept of the self.

Now that a measure of this third self-construal has been developed, it is important that the validity of this construct is examined. More specifically, convergent validity with related constructs needs to be established, as well as divergent validity from the independent and interdependent self-construals. Related to these two goals, it is important to understand if holding this universal view of the self, in contrast to a relational or personal view of the self, can predict real-world benefits.

Self-Construal and Well-Being

There appears to be very little research linking self-construal and well-being, especially studies that involve the metapersonal self-construal. Well-being refers to a person's evaluation of his or her life as good or bad (Reid, 2004). Well-being is related to happiness, depression, health, personality, and size and quality of social networks (Chamorro-Premuzic, Bennett, & Furnham, 2007; Schutte, Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Bhullar, & Rooke, 2007). Assessment of well-being can come from either internal sources, such as self-esteem, self-consistency, and emotional states; or external sources, which include quality of relationships, fulfilling social obligations, and maintaining harmony within close relationships (Reid, 2004). Studies within cultures have found that internal sources of assessment are more important than external sources for well-being in individualistic cultures, whereas internal and external sources of assessment are equally important for well-being in collectivist cultures. Specifically, for individualistic cultures, well-being is based on positive self-evaluations. For collectivist cultures, well-being depends on the social context, as well as positive self-evaluations.

Marian and Kaushanskaya (2004) reported that individualism, which is associated with the independent self-construal, correlates positively with subjective well-being and negatively with depression. Research by Cross, Gore, and Morris (2003) showed that individuals with an independent self-construal typically have higher levels of well-being because these individuals are more consistent in their self-view. In contrast, a recent study by Hardie, Critchley, and Morris (2006) found that those with a strong individual orientation reported poorer social and psychological health.

According to a study by Reid (2004), both the independent and the interdependent self-construal can lead to greater well-being, but through different

mechanisms. Self-esteem leads to greater well-being in individuals with an independent self-construal, and relationship harmony leads to greater well-being in individuals with an interdependent self-construal.

Unpublished work linking metapersonal self-construal with well-being has also found a positive correlation. This research has also replicated findings relating life satisfaction with the independent self-construal. However, no relationship was found between life satisfaction and the interdependent self-construal. It appears that the metapersonal self-construal is associated with increased well-being, but through mechanisms distinct from either the independent or the interdependent self-construals. For example, mindfulness has been shown to increase well-being and is related to the metapersonal self-construal but not the independent or interdependent. However, variables common to both the metapersonal and interdependent self-construals, such as relationship harmony, can also lead to increased well-being. Related to these findings, a study by DeCicco and Stroink (2007) proposed that physical health and metapersonal self-construal could be related. Given that good physical health is related to increased well-being, this could be another mechanism whereby metapersonal self-construal leads to increased well-being. Finally, DeCicco and Stroink also found that individuals with higher metapersonal self-construal report lower anxiety and lower depression. It is well known that well-being is inversely related to depression and anxiety. This may be yet another way in which the metapersonal self-construal is related to increased well-being.

Although there has been previous research on the link between well-being and self-construal, the results are often contradictory, and there is no published research examining whether those with higher metapersonal self-construal have increased well-being over those with a more independent or interdependent self-construal. As such, the current study aims to replicate and clarify previous research on the relationship between well-being and independent and interdependent self-construals. Additionally, the current study attempts to understand whether having a metapersonal self-construal can lead to greater well-being than either of the other self-construals, as can only be indirectly implied from previous research.

Self-Construal and Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence can be defined as the adaptive perception, expression, regulation, and control of emotions in both the self and others (Brackett, Mayer,

& Warner, 2004; Mayer & Salovey, 1995; Schutte et al., 1998; Schutte et al., 2001). Emotional intelligence has been negatively linked to depression (Schutte et al., 1998) and positively linked to career-related success (Goleman, 1995), academic achievement (Parker et al., 2004), and well-being (Warwick & Nettelbeck, 2004). Trait models classify emotional intelligence in a broad sense, encompassing traits, characteristics, and dispositions, which can be assessed using self-report measures (Petrides & Furnham, 2001).

In a study on emotional intelligence, Van Rooy, Alonso, and Viswesvaran (2005) looked at ethnic group differences in emotional intelligence and found that minority groups (e.g., Hispanics, African Americans) scored higher on emotional intelligence tests than did majority groups (European Americans). They hypothesized that perhaps the collectivist nature of the Hispanic culture made them more attuned to their own emotions, more effective at using them in everyday situations, and more aware of others' emotions. Given that collectivist cultures tend to construe the self as interdependent, it is reasonable to expect that individuals with a more interdependent self-construal might be more emotionally intelligent than individuals with the independent Self-construal. Indeed, Cross and Madson (1997) suggested that an individual's self-construal will influence the experience, expression, and perception of emotions. In particular, this study found that individuals with higher interdependent self-construal were superior at decoding and expressing nonverbal cues of emotion than are individuals with higher independent self-construal.

The emotional information that is assessed by emotional intelligence measures tends to demonstrate a person's knowledge about their "relationships with the world" (Mayer & Salovey, 1995, p. 197). This notion can be directly linked with the previously described definitions of the metapersonal self-construal. The metapersonal self-construal can also be linked with emotional intelligence by looking at individuals who are high in artistic creativity or spirituality. Both of these groups of people have common attributes: for example, a greater consciousness of relationships with themselves, others, and the world around them, as well as an understanding of deeper emotions experienced in reaction to themselves, objects, the beliefs of others, and the essence of the universal (Mayer & Salovey, 1995). This has been referred to as a higher level of consciousness or a "meta-experience of emotion" (p. 203). It can be argued that people who tend to have higher metapersonal self-construal

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would be more likely to experience this meta-experience of emotion. If this is true, it would be reasonable to expect that those who have the metapersonal self-construal score higher on measures of emotional intelligence than those with either the interdependent self-construal or the independent self-construal.

The Study

Based on the previous literature, the current study hypothesized that individuals with high interdependent self-construal will score higher on emotional intelligence than individuals with high independent self-construal (Cross & Madson, 1997; Van Rooy et al., 2005), and individuals with higher metapersonal self-construal will score higher on emotional intelligence than both individuals with high scores on the independent and interdependent self-construals (Mayer & Salovey, 1995). Further, individuals with high scores on the Independent and the Metapersonal Self-Construals will have higher scores of well-being as measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) than individuals with high scores on the Interdependent Self-Construal (Cross et al., 2003; DeCicco & Stroink, 2007; Marian & Kaushanskaya, 2004; Reid, 2004).

Method

The study was conducted by recruiting undergraduate students to answer a package of questionnaires representing three separate scales.

Participants

Participants in the present study consisted of 219 undergraduate students who completed the questionnaire package via Trent University's online recruitment tool and individual classroom visits (with permission of the instructor). Participants received bonus marks for their participation as per their course outline. Of the 219 participants, seven were excluded from the analyses using list-wise deletion for missing data on the measures. The remaining 212 participants consisted of 183 females and 28 males. One participant did not report gender. Ninety-two percent of the participants were 25 years old or younger ($SD = 5.04$), with ages ranging from 18 to 50 years old. The mean age of the participants was 21 years old. Fifty-nine percent of the participants were in their first year of university ($N = 124$). This sample is consistent with the population in general for this particular liberal arts university.

Procedure

All questionnaires were included in the same package to be completed at the same time. Participants

gave their informed consent in accordance with Trent University's Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee. Upon completion of the questionnaire package, participants were given a debriefing summary of the study, and information regarding the goals of the study.

Measures

Participants were assessed using three scales designed to measure emotional intelligence, well-being, and self-construal, respectively.

Trait Meta Mood Scale (TMMS).

The Trait Meta Mood Scale (TMMS) is a 30 item self-report scale developed by Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey and Palfai in 1995. It is a widely used measure of emotional intelligence. The original scale contains 48 items. However, the authors strongly recommended the use of the shorter, 30-item version. Therefore, the shorter version was adopted in the current study (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2005; Schutte et al., 2007). The scale is a measure of perceived ability to regulate and manage emotions or, in other words, an individual's perception of their emotional competencies (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2005; Palmer, Donaldson, & Stough, 2002; Salovey et al., 1995). Participants rated their perceived ability on a five point Likert scale, 1 for strongly disagree, and 5 for strongly agree. The measure includes three subscales: Attention to Feelings, which refers to how aware one is of one's moods; Clarity of Feelings, which refers to the ability to differentiate mood states; and Mood Repair, which refers to the ability to maintain good moods and repair negative mood states (Thompson, Waltz, Croyle, & Pepper, 2007). Items from the scale include: "I often think about my feelings" (Attention to Feelings item), "I try to think good thoughts no matter how badly I feel" (Mood Repair item), and "I am rarely confused about how I feel" (Clarity of Feelings item). The original study reports an inter-item consistency (alpha) coefficient of .82 for the entire scale, and alphas of .86, .88 and .82 for the Attention, Clarity and Repair subscales, respectively (Palmer et al., 2002; Salovey et al., 1995; Schutte et al., 1998; Warwick & Nettelbeck, 2004). The current study obtained an alpha of .89 for the entire scale, and alphas of .86, .85, and .78 for the Attention, Clarity, and Repair subscales, respectively.

Research has found that scores on the TMMS correlate in the hypothesized manner with life satisfaction (O'Conner & Little, 2003; Palmer et al., 2002),

interpersonal functioning (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2005), and health (Schutte et al., 2007). More specifically, the Clarity and Repair subscales appear to significantly predict life satisfaction (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2005; O'Conner & Little, 2003; Palmer et al., 2002). In addition, Schutte et al. (1998) reported positive correlations between TMMS and another measure of emotional intelligence, the Assessing Emotions Scale. These results indicate that the TMMS is a valid and reliable measure of perceived emotional intelligence.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS).

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is a self-report questionnaire that was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffen (1985). There are five items that assess judgments about life satisfaction, which is a proxy for overall well-being. Participants rate their answers on a seven point Likert scale, 1 for strongly disagree to 7 for strongly agree. Scores can range from 5-35, with higher scores indicating higher life satisfaction. A sample item from this scale includes: "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing."

Diener et al. (1985) reported inter-item reliability coefficients (alpha) ranging from .79 to .89. Two-month test-retest reliability was .82. The current study obtained an alpha of .87. Support for the validity of this measure comes from reports of psychiatric patients, prisoners, and abused women reporting low SWLS scores (Diener et al., 1985; Schiaffino, 2003).

Self-Construal Scale (SCS).

The Self-Construal Scale (SCS) was developed in 1994 by Singelis to measure the independent and the interdependent self-construals and revised in 2007 by DeCicco and Stroink to add a measure of the metapersonal self-construal. The scale consists of 40 self-report items upon which participants rate their responses on a 7 point Likert scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 7 for strongly agree. The SCS includes 15 items measuring the Independent Self-Construal, 15 items measuring the Interdependent Self-Construal, and 10 items measuring the Metapersonal Self-Construal with inter-item reliability coefficients (alphas) of .79, .75, and .77 respectively (Arcknoy, Stroink, & DeCicco, 2007; DeCicco & Stroink, 2007; Singelis, 1994). Inter-item reliability (alphas) for the current study was .76, .75, and .83 for the Independent, Interdependent and Metapersonal Self-Construals respectively. Items from this scale include: "I do my own thing, regardless of

what others think” (Independent Self-Construal item), “I feel good when I cooperate with others” (Interdependent Self-Construal item), and “My sense of inner peace is one of the most important things to me” (Metapersonal Self-Construal item).

Results

There was missing data on only seven participants. Due to the fact that most of the participants completed the questionnaires online, a format in which

individuals were unable to leave questions blank, participants answered all questions in nearly all cases. For the few participants with missing data, it appeared to be accidental, and these participants were removed using list-wise deletion. For the participant who failed to provide gender, this information was not removed.

The mean, standard deviation, and the range values for the variables of interest are presented in Table 1. Males and females were recoded so that male = 1 and female = 2. A summary of the correlations among variables is presented in Table 2. Consistent with our hypotheses, higher scores on the Metapersonal Self-Construal are related to higher scores on the TMMS and the SWLS.

In order to test the hypothesis that the Metapersonal Self-Construal scale more strongly predicts higher emotional intelligence than either the Independent Self-Construal or the Interdependent Self-Construal, a multiple regression analysis was performed using each of the three self-construal subscales as predictors of total emotional intelligence as measured by the TMMS. This model was significant, $F(3, 208) = 11.567, p < .001$, with the three self-construals accounting for 14.3% of the overall variance in emotional intelligence scores on the TMMS. Specifically, a one unit increase in Independent Self-Construal significantly predicted a .241 increase in total TMMS scores ($p = .035$), a one unit increase in Metapersonal Self-Construal significant predicted a .429 increase in total TMMS scores ($p = .003$). However,

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for age, total TMMS, the three subscales of the TMMS (Attention, Clarity, Repair), the SWLS, the Independent self-construal, the Interdependent self-construal, and the Metapersonal self-construal (N = 212)

	Mean	SD	Range
Age	20.85	5.04	18 - 50
TMMS (total)	114.83	14.68	59 - 143
Repair	22.20	4.51	7 - 30
Attention	51.81	7.74	16 - 65
Clarity	40.82	7.13	20 - 55
SWLS	26.21	5.86	8 - 35
Independent SC	78.28	9.82	51 - 99
Interdependent SC	70.86	10.57	32 - 95
Metapersonal SC	48.59	8.74	21 - 69

Note. TMMS = Trait Meta Mode Scale; SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale; SC = self-construal.

Table 2

Intercorrelation matrix of TMMS, the three subscales of TMMS (Repair, Attention, Clarity), SWLS, Independent SC, Interdependent SC, and Metapersonal SC (N = 212).

	Repair	Attention	Clarity	SWLS	Ind SC	Inter SC	Meta SC
TMMS	.63**	.80**	.79**	.43**	.30**	.19*	.34**
Repair		.29**	.36**	.56**	.29**	.30**	.45**
Attention			.37*	.25*	.14*	.16*	.24**
Clarity				.25**	.28**	.03	.16*
SWLS					.25*	.31*	.38*
Ind SC						.17*	.53**
Inter SC							.48**

Note. TMMS = Trait Meta Mood Scale; SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale; Ind SC = Independent Self-Construal; Inter SC = Interdependent Self-Construal; Meta SC = Metapersonal Self-Construal.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

the Interdependent Self-Construal was not a significant predictor of emotional intelligence scores on the TMMS ($p = .709$). Independent Self-Construal uniquely accounts for 2.13% of the variance in emotional intelligence as measured by the TMMS above and beyond the other self-construals (i.e., the squared semi-partial correlation is .0213). Metapersonal Self-Construal uniquely accounts for 4.29% of the variance in TMMS scores above and beyond the other self-construals. Finally, the Interdependent Self-Construal only uniquely accounts for .07% of the variance in TMMS scores above and beyond the other self-construals. See Table 3 for a summary of the results.

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis with the total TMMS scores as the outcome and Independent, Interdependent and Metapersonal self-construals as the predictors.

	<i>b</i>	Std. Err.	<i>beta</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	<i>sr</i> ²
Intercept	72.466	9.183		7.891	<.001	
Ind SC	.241	.113	.161	2.126	.035	.0213
Inter SC	.037	.100	.027	.374	.709	.0001
Meta SC	.429	.140	.256	3.059	.003	.0429

Note. $F(3, 208) = 11.567$; $p < .001$; $R^2 = .143$; Ind SC = Independent Self-Construal; Inter = Interdependent Self-Construal; Meta = Metapersonal Self-Construal.

Given that the Metapersonal Self-Construal and the Independent Self-Construal are both significant predictors of overall emotional intelligence as indicated by scores on the TMMS, understanding which aspects of emotional intelligence (i.e., Attention to Feelings, Clarity of Feelings, or Mood Repair) were related to which self-construal was of interest. Thus, we conducted three separate multiple regressions. The first included Attention to Feelings as the outcome with the three self-construals as the predictors. This model was significant, $F(3, 208) = 4.606$, $p = .004$, with self-construal accounting for 6.5% of the overall variance in Attention to Feelings. Specifically, only the Metapersonal Self-Construal scores significantly predicted higher scores on the Attention to Feelings subscale ($b = .193$, $p = .013$). Neither the Independent ($b = .017$, $p = .786$) nor the Interdependent ($b = .028$, $p = .607$) Self-Construals were significant predictors of Attention to Feelings. The Metapersonal Self-Construal uniquely accounted for 2.82% of the variance in Attention to Feelings. See Table 4 for a summary of these results.

Table 4

Multiple Regression Analysis with the attention to feelings subscale as the outcome and Independent, Interdependent and Metapersonal self-construals as the predictors.

	<i>b</i>	Std. Err.	<i>beta</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	<i>sr</i> ²
Intercept	39.086	5.064		7.719	<.001	
Ind SC	.017	.063	.022	.272	.786	.0003
Inter SC	.028	.055	.039	.515	.607	.0012
Meta SC	.193	.077	.218	2.496	.013	.0282

Note. $F(3, 208) = 4.606$; $p = .004$; $R^2 = .062$; Ind SC = Independent Self-Construal; Inter = Interdependent Self-Construal; Meta = Metapersonal Self-Construal.

Next, Clarity of Feelings was modeled as the outcome, with the three self-construals as the predictors. Again, this model was significant, $F(3, 208) = 6.048$, $p = .001$, with self-construal accounting for 8% of the overall variance in the Clarity of Feelings subscale. However, in this case, only the Independent Self-Construal was a significant predictor of Clarity of Feelings ($b = .184$, $p = .001$). Neither the Interdependent ($p = .439$) nor the Metapersonal ($p = .465$) self-construals were significant predictors of Clarity of Feelings. See Table 5 for a summary.

Table 5

Multiple Regression Analysis with the clarity of feelings subscale as the outcome and Independent, Interdependent and Metapersonal self-construals as the predictors.

	<i>b</i>	Std. Err.	<i>beta</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	<i>sr</i> ²
Intercept	26.686	4.621		5.775	<.001	
Ind SC	.184	.057	.253	3.222	.001	.0458
Inter SC	-.039	.050	-.058	-.775	.439	.0027
Meta SC	.052	.071	.063	.733	.465	.0024

Note. $F(3, 208) = 6.048$; $p = .001$; $R^2 = .080$; Ind SC = Independent Self-Construal; Inter = Interdependent Self-Construal; Meta = Metapersonal Self-Construal.

Finally, the Mood Repair subscale of the TMMS was entered as the outcome with the three self-construals as predictors. This model was also significant, $F(3, 208) = 19.527$, $p < .001$, with self-construal accounting for 22% of the overall variance in Mood Repair. In this case, only the Metapersonal Self-Construal was a significant predictor of Mood Repair ($b = .184$, $p < .001$), uniquely

accounting for 7.5% of the variance in Mood Repair above and beyond the other self-construals. Neither the Independent nor the Interdependent Self-Construals were significant predictors of the Mood Repair subscale of the TMMS (see Table 6).

Table 6

Multiple Regression Analysis with the mood repair subscale as the outcome and Independent, Interdependent and Metapersonal self-construals as the predictors.

	<i>b</i>	Std. Err.	<i>beta</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	<i>sr</i> ²
Intercept	6.694	2.694		2.485	.014	
Ind SC	.040	.033	.088	1.210	.228	.0055
Inter SC	.048	.029	.112	1.638	.103	.0100
Meta SC	.184	.041	.357	4.480	<.001	.0750

Note. $F(3, 208) = 19.527$; $p < .001$; $R^2 = .220$; Ind SC = Independent Self-Construal; Inter = Interdependent Self-Construal; Meta = Metapersonal Self-Construal.

In order to test the hypothesis that the Metapersonal self-construal scale more strongly predicts higher well-being scores (as measured by the SWLS) than either the Independent or Interdependent self-construals, a multiple regression was performed with all three self-construals entered as predictors of scores on the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). This model

Table 7

Multiple Regression Analysis with SWLS scores as the outcome and Independent, Interdependent and Metapersonal self-construals as the predictors.

	<i>b</i>	Std. Err.	<i>beta</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	<i>sr</i> ²
Intercept	7.531	3.608		2.087	.038	
Ind SC	.047	.045	.079	1.058	.291	.0053
Inter SC	.086	.039	.155	2.185	.030	.0225
Meta SC	.183	.055	.273	3.326	.001	.0506

Note. $F(3, 208) = 14.153$; $p < .001$; $R^2 = .170$; Ind SC = Independent Self-Construal; Inter = Interdependent Self-Construal; Meta = Metapersonal Self-Construal.

was significant, $F = 14.153$, $p < .001$, with self-construal accounting for 17% of the overall variance in well-being scores. Specifically, a one unit increase in Interdependent self-construal significantly predicts a .086 increase in scores on the SWLS ($p = .03$), and a one unit increase in Metapersonal self-construal significantly predicts a .183

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increase in scores on the SWLS ($p = .001$). However, Independent self-construal was not a significant predictor of SWLS scores ($p = .291$). Interdependent self-construal uniquely accounts for 2.25% of the variance in SWLS scores, after controlling for the other self-construals and Metapersonal self-construal uniquely accounts for 5.06% of the variance in SWLS scores, above and beyond the other self-construals. Only .53% of the variance in SWLS scores can be uniquely accounted for by Independent self-construal, above and beyond the other self-construals. See Table 7 for a summary of the results.

Discussion

It was hypothesized that those with higher Interdependent Self-Construal would score higher on emotional intelligence measures than those with the Independent Self-Construal based on previous research (Cross & Madson, 1997; Van Rooy et al., 2005). However, this finding was not supported in the current study. It was found that those with higher Independent Self-Construal were more likely to have higher emotional intelligence scores than those with higher Interdependent Self-Construal.

Likewise, it was hypothesized that those with higher Independent Self-Construal would have greater well-being, as measured by the SWLS, than those with higher Interdependent Self-Construal (Cross et al., 2003; DeCicco & Stroink, 2007; Marian & Kaushanskaya, 2004; Reid, 2004). This finding was not supported in the current study as higher Interdependent Self-Construal predicted well-being scores. Also, although the Independent Self-Construal had a small positive correlation with the SWLS, it did not significantly predict well-being as measured by the SWLS in the regression analyses. This is not completely surprising as some studies (e.g., Hardie et al., 2006) reported that those with higher Independent Self-Construal score poorly on measures of well-being. Reid (2004) suggested that well-being is mediated by different variables in different self-construal constructs, and, thus, the SWLS may be tapping into aspects of well-being that are associated with the Interdependent Self-Construal.

The most relevant finding was in regard to the Metapersonal Self-Construal. Higher Metapersonal Self-Construal scores predicted higher emotional intelligence scores, as measured by the TMMS, than either the Independent Self-Construal or the Interdependent Self-Construal. Additionally, higher Metapersonal Self-

Construal scores alone predicted higher scores on two of the three subscales of the TMMS: Mood Repair and Attention to Feelings, whereas only the Independent Self-Construal predicted higher scores on the Clarity of Feelings subscale. The Metapersonal Self-Construal scale was also a stronger predictor of greater well-being, as measured by the SWLS, than either Interdependent Self-Construal or the Independent Self-Construal, which was not a significant predictor of the SWLS in this study. Thus, the Metapersonal Self-Construal was meaningfully differentiated from the independent and interdependent self-construals as a predictor of well-being and emotional intelligence scores.

Implications

It was hypothesized that higher Interdependent Self-Construal, rather than the Independent Self-Construal, would predict higher emotional intelligence scores. However, the opposite was found. This hypothesis was based on the assumption that emotional intelligence measures place a greater emphasis on the ability to understand others' emotions and how others perceive emotions, which, theoretically, is an aspect of the Interdependent Self-Construal (Cross & Madson, 1997). Instead, the tendency to define the self through unique attributes and inner experiences (the Independent Self-Construal) may enhance one's capacity to be aware of one's own internal emotions. This conceptual awareness of one's own emotional life may then reveal a positive association between Independent Self-Construal and emotional intelligence. Indeed, this interpretation is supported by the finding that the Independent Self-Construal uniquely predicted the Clarity of Feelings subscale of the TMMS. Defining the self on the basis of unique and distinguishing inner attributes, skills, and experiences may result in a greater conceptual familiarity, distinction, and clarity among inner emotional states. Perhaps the social aspect of emotional intelligence did not come across strongly enough in the present study to reveal a significant association between emotional intelligence and the Interdependent Self-Construal.

The finding that the Metapersonal Self-Construal significantly and uniquely predicted the Attention to Feelings and Mood Repair subscales of the TMMS was particularly interesting. While a focus on the self as separate may generate a conceptual clarity among inner emotional states, a definition of the self as connected with all of life seems to have unique implications for one's attention to feelings as sources of

information and on one's capacity to regulate and repair negative emotions. These findings are consistent with our understanding of the metapersonal self-construal as a more holistic view of the self inclusive of emotional states. It is also consistent with our previous findings of a relationship between metapersonal self-construal and mindfulness (Stroink & Dupuis, 2007). A mindful awareness of one's emotional life may either support the emergence of a metapersonal self-construal or be an outcome of this self-construal. Further research is required to examine the causal direction of this relationship. The positive association between the Metapersonal Self-Construal and the Mood Repair subscale of the TMMS also suggests one mechanism through which the metapersonal self-construal may affect overall well-being. Specifically, if defining oneself through connection with all of life supports the capacity to repair negative moods, perhaps by placing them in a broader perspective, it may ultimately underlie a deeper sense of well-being. Again, further research is required to better understand the mechanisms by which the metapersonal self-construal strengthens overall well-being.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There is much debate concerning emotional intelligence definitions and the use of self-report measures. It will be difficult to synthesize the information collected on emotional intelligence without a consensus on the appropriate measurement and the appropriate definition. The *trait* model and the *ability* model both seem to capture different aspects of emotional intelligence, but both constructs have been developed from the original Mayer and Salovey (1995) emotional intelligence model (Mayer, DiPaolo, & Salovey, 1990). The fact that they are operationally defined differently does not exactly delineate the features of either model. Thus, more research is necessary in order to clarify the nature of emotional intelligence.

The reliability of the Self-Construal Scale is another limitation. The inter-item reliability coefficients for the SCS found in the past, as well as in the current study, are fairly low (although still considered adequate). This would imply that perhaps the items need to be examined and revised to strengthen the reliability of this scale.

Additional limitations, specific to the current study, include the extremely uneven sample of men

versus women which prevented analyses of gender differences (although this is typically the case within liberal arts university populations). Also, the sample consisted of only young, undergraduate students. Studies with different populations may yield different results. Therefore, studies using community-based samples and older samples would be worthwhile.

Further, research that includes the metapersonal self-construal is needed in order to understand the significance of this particular self-construal in individual behavior. Most of the research on self-construal only takes the independent and the interdependent self-construals into consideration, though, as evidenced by the current study, the metapersonal self-construal is a significant factor influencing several of the constructs measured.

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