EXPLORING CONTRIBUTIONS OF RELATIONAL SELF TO MEN'S IDENTITY

ACHIEVEMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

Exploring Contributions of Relational Self to Men's Identity Achievement

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This study explores men's relational self and its relationship to identity achievement and life satisfaction. Psychologists are becoming more interested in the study of the self and identity in the context of relationships with others. This is different from the majority of theory and research focusing on selfhood in the context of autonomy and independence. After the determination that women place greater value on connection with others in relation to their identities and its development process (Miller, 1976; Gilligan, 1982; Surrey, 1985), we must wonder how relational connection may or may not play a role in men's identity development process. A sample of 186 males ranging in age from 17 to 35 filled out the following three items in either a paper or Internet survey format: a repertory grid (see Fransella & Bannister, 1977) as an index of Relational Self Orientation (RSO), the Interpersonal Scale of the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (EOMEIS-2; Adams, 1998), and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) as a measure of Life Satisfaction (LS). Three hypotheses were tested: (a) Identity Achievement (IA) is positively and significantly correlated with LS, (b) RSO is significantly correlated with IA, and (c) RSO is a mediating variable in the relationship between IA and LS. Results confirmed the first two hypotheses but the mediation hypothesis was unsupported for lack of a significant relationship between the mediating variable and the criterion. An index of Agentic Self Orientation (ASO) was derived for post-hoc analyses. ASO was significantly and positively related to RSO, confirming that men can be both autonomous and relational

concurrently. Use of the flexible repertory grid may be an overlooked resource in studies of relational self. Future research should continue to explore the dynamics of men's relational self and comparisons with women's identities in order to improve psychosocial development and counselling theories.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DEDICATION

Writing this thesis was a discipline that was supported and sustained by many people. My husband, Doug, provided an ear, a shoulder and a voice of reason necessary to keep me going, as well as the cooking skills necessary to feed the participants! Dr. Marvin "Mac" McDonald provided the critical reliability, discernment, patience and good humour necessary to see this project through from the beginning to the end. Dr. Gareth Schott took the risk of coming alongside a student in another continent that he had never met and had only e-mailed! His excellent insights as a second reader into my writing and the thesis structure were vital and always eagerly anticipated. Next, of course, the participants must be acknowledged, most especially those rare gentlemen who simply wanted to help and didn't need any food (a sure reminder that we were in Canada). Finally, Dr. Bruce Bailey, my family, friends (both on the east and west coast) and my colleagues must be thanked for their willingness to help obtain participants and otherwise provide great support and encouragement.

Most importantly, this work is dedicated to the life of Scot "Buck" McCallum (d. 2003), a man whose relational self preceded him, consumed him, and ultimately allows him to keep living among us.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This is a study that explores men's relational self and its contributions to identity achievement and life satisfaction. Traditionally, theorists in the field of identity development and self-concept have emphasized the outcomes of individuation, autonomy and detachment. The effects of scientific discourse on psychology have led to language that restricts our abilities to discuss relational meaning making and processes, and instead emphasizes individual processes and achievements as optimal and healthy (G. Schott, personal communication, May 7, 2003; see also Souvaine, Lahey & Kegan, 1990, p. 235). Feminist authors have challenged this seemingly Western emphasis on individuality by acknowledging the role of relationships and connection in women's development.

After reading these feminist contributions to the theory, I began to wonder if their ideas were applicable to men as well. Perhaps we were selling men short by overlooking their own needs for connection, mutuality and relationship? Although I am not the first to acknowledge these needs in men, there is an inadequate amount of research that specifically examines the role of what is called relational self (a derivative of the newer theories of women's development) in men's identity development (Schott & Russell, 2002). The following discussion clarifies key terms related to this study and elaborates on the rationale for this research.

Clarification of Self

Theories of the self are becoming increasingly varied and complicated (Schott & Bellin, 2001a). One cannot make assertions about the subject without facing four particular issues regarding (a) the stability or flexibility of the self-concept, (b) whether the self has many levels or is always unified at the core, (c) what self and behaviour have

to do with each other, and finally (d) "whether the self is a distorter" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 963). Some earlier theorists believed the self referred to the whole person or to their general collections of thoughts, wishes and dreams, while more recent descriptions reveal the incredible complexity of the self (Safyer, Brandell, & Atwood, 1997). Marcia (1994) describes self as the "deepest" part of the personality (p. 72); Safyer et al. see it as the "multidimensional construct which affords consistency and cohesiveness to human experience" (p. 137). One of the most helpful distinctions I have found is between the self-as-subject and the self-as-object, or the I and the Me respectively as explained by philosopher and psychologist William James (see McAdams, 1998; Westen, 1991). Put simply, the self-as-subject, or I, refers to the experiential process of becoming a self whereas the self-as-object, or Me, is the product of that process and one's "mental representation of the self" (Westen, 1991, p. 184).

The lay reader exploring research on the self has the difficult task of sorting the various labels for different types of "selves." For example, theorists discuss the relational self, the individual self, the collective self (see Prentice, 2001), the kaleidoscopic self (Deaux & Perkins, 2001), the unified self (Loewenstein, 1994) and the possible self (Markus & Nurius, 1986) to name a few. This list of selves shows the increasing value researchers are placing on examinations of the self-in-context of relationships or groups, as well as on the individual level. This interest may benefit from the modern emphasis on cross-cultural psychology (e.g., Kashima, Yamaguchi, Kim, Choi, Gelfand, & Yuki, 1995).

<u>Defining Relational Self</u>

Most crucial to the purposes of this study is a definition of relational self. Markus and Kitayama (1991) appear to be one of the first to develop this idea in their examination of self-construal among Japanese and American[1] people. What Markus and Kitayama called the "interdependent self-construal" (also identified as relational self) was the non-Western tendency to view oneself primarily in the context of one's connections and social relationships (¶15). This was in contrast to the Western self-construal centred more on the independent and autonomous individual. Schott and Bellin (2001b) emphasize the distinction between relational self and collectivism. Whereas collectivism refers more to similar identities in a group of people and their desires to be included in a given group, "the term relational self-concept…is used to describe a dynamic mental structure that assists individual functioning by mediating and regulating interpersonal behaviors and processes," (¶11). Sedikides and Brewer (2001) identify relational self as "those aspects of the self-concept that are shared with relationship partners and define the person's role or position within significant relationships" (p. 1).

The reader will notice slight variations in each of these definitions of the same term. In some cases relational self is referred to as a process, or as James' I, while in others it appears to be considered the object, or Me. I have come to perceive relational self as a type of "self-representation" according to Westen's (1991) definition of the word as "an organized knowledge structure or enduring pattern of processing information about the self" (p. 186). This is supported by Brewer and Gardner's (1996) argument that "…connectedness and belonging are not merely affiliations and alliances between the self and other but <u>entail fundamental differences in the way the self is construed</u> [italics

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[1] "American" is used here and subsequently in its variations, to refer to the United States of America.

added]" (p. 83). However, because relational self appears to interact with the way a

person views him or herself, <u>as well as</u> his or her values and behaviour choices (in a

manner that prioritizes relationships), it is important to recognize its extension beyond

self-processing and into behaviour outcomes. I also choose to de-emphasize it as an

"enduring pattern" because I believe relational self can vary in strength according to

lifetime developmental changes in a person's overall self. Prentice (2001) and I agree that

relational self is an idea that deserves more research and attention to clarify its

components. Notably, this deficit in research reflects the bias of published psychological

theory in favour of individualistic, Western, male-centred assumptions about healthy

human development and the value of independence.

<u>Identity (Does Not Equal Self)</u>

Erik Erikson, historically famous author and psychoanalyst, describes identity

simply as "a feeling of being at home in one's body, a sense of knowing where one is

going" (1980, p. 127). According to Erikson, there are two important observations that

accompany a personal identity: the first is the awareness of one's "selfsameness and

continuity in time," and the second is the perception "that others recognize one's

sameness and continuity" (p. 22). Another more recent theorist adds to this idea by

recognizing that identity is also about discontinuity (Marcia, 2001). When one reaches a

personal identity, not only is that person different (discontinuous) from others, but that

person is also different from whom he or she was up to this point. Marcia's research has

created the well-known identity status paradigm, which gives four labels for various

phases of identity. According to Marcia (1994), developmentally, identity is an

achievement; structurally, it is the foundation, most often laid at adolescence, that shapes

a person's self-view and his or her behaviour in the world. In sum, identity is the

reflection of knowledge of the self (Adams & Marshall, 1996).

To be sure, another definition of identity is useful. Abend (as cited in Grotevant,

Thorbecke, & Meyer, 1982, p. 34) gives this definition:

> …a loosely organized set of conscious and preconscious self-
>
> representations that serve to define the individual in a variety of social
>
> contexts. Included in this composition we would expect to find ideas
>
> regarding specific professional, social, and sexual roles and preferences,
>
> aspects of the person's political and religious ideology and other unique
>
> values and his more personal interests and avocations.

Similar to Abend, but less emphasized by Erikson, Ogilvie and Ashmore (1991) propose

that overall identity consists of multiple components that can each be described as a "self-

with-other" internal representation (p. 290). For example, over time we develop schemas

of our typical personality traits and feelings, etc. that are associated with ourselves in the

presence of another particular person. Eventually these schemas can be organized and

categorized according to the type of "other" person, and then collectively the schemas

create an overall "self-with-others structure" (p. 290). The authors admit that this is a

relatively under-studied hypothetical construct deserving further research to understand

the structure's composition and how it might vary among individuals.

Identity is a term that often comes up during a discussion of self without

acknowledgment of its distinct definition. Identity should not be confused with other

similar ideas like self-construct, or ego ideal (Marcia, 1994; Schwartz, 2001). Self-

construct is the internal part of us that understands our external role in society (Schwartz,

2001). The ego ideal is essentially the portion of the superego that contains future hopes

and ambitions, the contents of which contribute to the identity (Marcia, 1994). Most

relevant to this study is Marcia's observation that although a well developed self

contributes to identity, alone it is a necessary yet insufficient condition for identity (p.

72). For further understanding of the functions and components of identity, the reader is

encouraged to review Adams and Marshall (1996).

In Review, They All Relate

     To sum up the previous definitions, the self includes "everything about a person

both body and soul" (Westen, 1991, p. 184), and acts as part of the foundation for

identity. It is not the same thing as self-concept, self-construct, or any other hyphenated

combination of words with "self" (Westen, 1991). It is socially embedded and develops

according to a person's macro and micro contexts. Relational self, for the purposes of this

study, is a processing structure of the overall self emphasizing and valuing relationships

to varying degrees, and has previously been believed to be more dominant in women's

self development. Identity is the relatively consistent outward and inward representation

of self-knowledge including components of preferential ideology, values, and social

roles. My intention for this study is to extend the new relational trend in self psychology

and explore how the relational context contributes to men's identity. More importantly, I

would like to allow the abundance of research on women's relational selves to influence

the study of men's relational selves and identity. Baumeister and Sommer (1997) stress

the need for further research into men's psychology given the notable advancements we

have made in that of women's.

This study will specifically examine the roles of relational self and identity achievement as they contribute to overall life satisfaction in men. Note that instead of identifying healthy successful development by traditional criteria, the individual's life satisfaction is being used as the success marker. We know that identity cannot be developed or perceived without interaction with other people (e.g., Mead and Cooley as cited in Gergen, 1987). Gerald Adams (1998), one of the original authors of a common scale used to assess identity, insists, "…as humans, we are relationally embedded. Context is an essential feature of the self" (p. 8). The general consensus among traditional theorists like Freud, Erikson and Maslow is that healthy psychosocial development entails a separation-individuation from the caregiver initially so that independence and autonomy can be consistently achieved throughout life (Safyer, Brandell, & Atwood, 1997). Are these two observations about human development incompatible or have they perhaps been interpreted with a male bias as Kegan (1982) proposes? By examining the possibility that relational self orientation is a mediating process in the contribution of identity achievement to life satisfaction in men, this study considers the compatibility of relational and autonomous facets of male identity development.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, two distinct but related concepts will be discussed, those of relational self and identity status. The evolution of the concept of relational self is described as well as theory and research around it. Then theory and research of identity status is detailed to segue into the study's hypotheses.

Feminist Precursors of Relational Self

In 1976, Dr. Jean Baker Miller published what has become a pivotal work on the psychology of women. She was one of the first to recognize the differences in female development and the conflict that arises when women are expected to conform to the same developmental processes and goals as men. One of her chief premises was that, "women's sense of self become very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliations and relationships" (p. 83). Ironically she acknowledged that both men and women required affiliation as a basis for individual growth, but she concluded that men at the time of her writing were "not as prepared to know this" (p. 83, original emphasis). She further stated that, unlike women, men are rewarded for pursuing detachment from their mothers and are subsequently taught to suppress and condemn their actual desire for attachment. Miller's colleagues at the Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies at Wellesley College expanded on her observations in a series of papers on the Self-In-Relation theory (see Surrey, 1985). This appears to be the first formal and extensive description of what is today referred to as relational self. The theory has since been incorporated into many other studies both theoretical (Kaplan, 1986) and practical (Manhal-Baugus, 1998; Nelson, 1996).

Shortly after Miller's contributions, Carol Gilligan (1982) gave her own observations on the subject of female versus male development with an emphasis on morality. Like Miller, her studies revealed the tendency for women to describe themselves relationally and evaluate themselves on their abilities to care, while men used language of separation and independence. Although Gilligan did not emphasize it, some of the men did speak of wishing for "real contacts" and "deep emotions" (p. 161). Gilligan (1982) made this notable recommendation for the future success of life cycle theorists: "Only when [they] divide their attention and begin to live with women as they have lived with men will their vision encompass the experience of both sexes and their theories become correspondingly more fertile" (p. 23). Twenty-one years later, this present study is based on that very notion of the need for balanced attention between men and women.

Finally, in 1991, a male academic had something to say about relational self and men. Stephen Bergman, an affiliate of the Stone Center, instructor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, and husband of Surrey (mentioned above) has written about his own experiences and observations of male development-in-relationship (1991). Although Bergman never mentions his possible bias as Surrey's husband, he does recognize his limited perspective as a white, middle class, heterosexual, American male. Bergman suggests that, "for men as well as women, there is a primary desire for connection with others, and that it is less accurate and useful to think of self than to think of self-in-relation – or even better, movement in relationship – as process" (p. 4). Traditional theories such as Erickson's have disappointed Bergman as well as some of his male clients in that "they are quite superficial and fairly irrelevant to the deeper more whole

levels of [our] experience" (p. 3). Noting the irony that male theorists cannot seem to accurately capture the male experience, he wonders if men generally have trouble "perceiving, understanding, and being in the <u>process</u> of relationship. While it is easy for men to envision self, and even self and other, it seems less easy to envision the <u>relationship</u> between self and other, with a life of its own, in movement, as a process…" (p. 3, original emphasis).

Whereas Surrey's theory relies on the examination of the mother-daughter relationship, Bergman focuses not only on the mother-son, but also the father-son relationship. In short, boys differ from girls in that they are forced to begin to identify away from the relationship with the mother. Instead they must focus on the relationship with the – often missing in one way or another – father. This means that men lose out on the primary learning context for a mutually empathic relationship and the result is greater disconnection from others throughout life. Despite this difference, Bergman claims the following for both men and women, "Rather than identity before intimacy, relationship informs identity in a continuous, ongoing process, the more connected, the more powerful" (1991, p. 4).

Other researchers have argued for the primacy of interpersonal selfhood over intrapersonal selfhood (e.g., Tice & Baumeister, 2001). Believing that the self should not be viewed as having solely internal origination or as a set of strictly internal processes, Tice and Baumeister (2001) encourage researchers to re-examine components of the self previously believed to be a result of inward processing. The authors point out that self-esteem, personality change, guilt, self-deception and self-control are actually more dependent on interpersonal experiences than on intrapersonal experiences.

The feminist literature and the broader psychological literature continue to explore the significance of relational self constructs (e.g., Constantine & Brewer, 2001). Ongoing interaction between social constructionist authors and more traditional theoretical approaches in psychology help generate creative discussion in a dynamic literature.

A Note on Autonomy and Connectedness

So as not to misrepresent theories of human development as too narrowly focused on the isolated individual, I must acknowledge the field's recognition of the consistent developmental tensions between autonomy and connectedness, or individuation and attachment (see Safyer, Brandell, & Atwood, 1997). Virtually no theorist would deny that we need human relationships to grow; yet opinions vary concerning the optimal amounts and depths of these relationships. In a discussion about the development of the self, it is easy to overemphasize the value of autonomy versus connectedness depending on one's perspective. These discussions are more productive when we use terms that are mutually understood. For example, Ryan (1991) reminds us that autonomy and independence are not synonymous nor are they mutually exclusive of connectedness. One can have personal agency (autonomy) and yet still be dependent on (connected to) another for resources. I agree with Ryan when he says, "Once acknowledging that the overall direction of life is toward interdependence and synthesis, we can see that conceptions that overly reify the self run the risk of disembedding it from its nature as a set of organizational processes within and between persons" (p. 233). Likewise, this study is not intended to reify relational self. This conceptual caveat is important to bear in mind while reading the research literature on relational self.

Research on Relational Self

Recently, in an unpublished doctoral dissertation, Iskowitz (2000/2001) examined the relationships between two types of self-definition and various aspects of identity development. Previous empirical studies of Erickson's and Marcia's theories of identity development had resulted in gender-related inconsistencies and showed less relevance to women's paths of identity development. For example, Iskowitz reviews studies showing that women do not necessarily achieve identity later than men, contrary to what Erickson proposed. Similarly, one of Marcia's "lower" identity statuses actually correlated with better mental health for women. Taking her cue from models of women's development (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976) Iskowitz chose a different research approach. Instead of using gender as a predictor of identity development and status, she focused on the individual's mode of self-definition.

With a group of 109 North American adolescents ranging from 13 to 29 years old, Iskowitz began by analyzing an essay of self-definition written by each participant. The essay was coded into three categories based on its statements of a relational nature. "Connected," "separate/objective," or "balanced" types were the three possible categories but were also treated as continuous variables when necessary by using a ratio of connected to separate/objective statements. Iskowitz determined "relational identity" according to each person's score on the Ethic of Care Interview (Skoe & Marcia, 1991), "separational identity" according the outcome of the Erikson Psychosocial Stage Inventory (Rosenthal, Gurney, & Moore, 1981), "identity crisis" in both the ideological and interpersonal domains according to identity achievement and moratorium scores on

the EOMEIS-2 (see Adams, 1998), and finally "identity achievement" according to the corresponding scale of the Erikson Psychosocial Stage Inventory.

Iskowitz had four primary expectations: (a) connected people would score higher in relational identity and separate/objective people higher in separational identity, (b) older people would score higher in both relational and separational identity, (c) mode of self-definition would determine identity crisis (i.e., status in either identity achievement or moratorium), and (d) females would be more connected self-definers and males more separate/objective definers. Some of her findings were surprising. Regardless of gender, most participants defined themselves in the separate/objective manner. Women were equally as likely as men to define themselves separately/objectively. Men were more likely to be balanced self-definers than women, but less likely to be connected self-definers. Those who were connected self-definers or separate/objective self-definers were more likely to be achieved in relational identity or separational identity respectively. Notably, age and proportion of connected self-statements were positively correlated but only at a significant level for males. This implies that men eventually define themselves in a connected manner; it just takes longer for them than for women. Most interesting was the finding that, regardless of gender, connected self-definition was positively and significantly related to identity achievement. This is in contrast to the belief that gender determined identity achievement. Finally, note the surprising discovery that connected self-definition was significantly and positively related to separational identity scores, but only for the men (partialling out age made no difference). The mixed outcomes of this study certainly warrant further study of self-definition, gender, and identity.

The work of Kashima, Yamaguchi, Kim, Choi, Gelfand and Yuki (1995) has

firmly established that across cultures, relational self is a construct that exists separately

from those of the individual and collective self. The cultures examined in their research

were of mainland USA, Hawaii, Japan, Korea and Australia with university student

sample sizes of 134, 209, 256, 254, and 158 respectively. Four self-report scales

measured collectivism, emotional relatedness between people, allocentrism, self-other

similarity and cohesiveness among the participants' friends. Most relevant to my study

were the results on gender, culture and the relational self. Kashima et al. found that there

were significant main effects on their relatedness variable for both gender and culture.

Although the effect appears to be larger for culture, consideration of effect sizes and

degrees of freedom revealed that gender had the greater effect. In a comparison of the

means across gender and culture, relatedness scores went from highest to lowest in the

following order: mainland American women, Australian women, Korean women,

Hawaiian women, Korean men, Hawaiian men, Australian men, mainland American

men, Japanese women, and Japanese men. The gender difference was only at a significant

level for Australia, mainland America and Japan. Admittedly, the mainland American

gender differences do not support my study's assumptions about relational self and men,

however this extensive empirical study plays a crucial role in establishing the validity of

the construct of relational self, especially because of its cross-cultural component.

<u>Measurement Instruments of Relational Self</u>

As theory of relational self grows, the expected outcome is the derivation of

instruments to measure this quality within a person. Iskowitz's (2000/2001) study is

somewhat similar to the actual study for which Mellor (1989) created the Relational Self-

Definition Scale (RSDS). In an attempt to look at the "effects of differential male-female relational definitions of self on resolutions to the first six of Erikson's identity crises" (p. 361), Mellor administered the Erikson Psychosocial Stage Inventory (EPSI) and his RSDS to 388 male and female adolescents. The males and females had similar mean scores on the RSDS but a slightly higher percentage of males scored as "separate from others" than females. Nearly the same percentage of males as females scored as "connected." Yet Mellor did not find a significant correlation between gender and RSDS score. Connected participants also had significantly higher reports of successful resolution of the Eriksonian crises. Finally, connected males were more likely to have resolved the Intimacy crisis than separated males. Note, however, that the RSDS only showed moderate to good internal reliability (.65 to .75) and moderate convergent validity (.60 to .68).

Schott and Bellin (2001b) are interested in giving more research attention to the relational contexts in which one interacts as well as "the malleable and socially constructed components of the self, rather than its enduring features" (¶9). With this in mind, they have created the Relational Self-Concept Scale (RSCS). These researchers have taken what initially seems to be the typical approach to measuring self-concept, a self-report measure, but have modified item formats in order to help shift the test-taker's reflections into the context of various school relationships. Instead of having the students respond to declarative statements such as "I am a cheerful person," statements are presented about other adolescents like, "Some adolescents feel they do well in their school exams compared to others their age." The test-taker then considers how much or

how little he or she is similar to the quality described in the statement and responds

accordingly using a Likert scale.

After administrating the test to 978 students from a variety of high schools in

England, a series of factor analyses determined six significantly independent subscales of

the RSCS as being "social scholastic," "scholastic performance," "peers," "physical

appearance," "parents," and "possible selves" (Schott & Bellin, 2001a). Speaking of the

need for better measures of selfhood, the authors claim the following success for their

measure: "the situationalist challenge to modernist accounts of the self was met by

representing the reality of individuals' relatedness with psychometric techniques" (Schott

& Bellin, 2001b, ¶42).

Both the RSDS and the RSCS show promise in adapting questionnaire strategies

for assessing important features of relational self. The situationalist challenge addressed

by Schott and Bellin provides a fruitful strategy that highlights domain-specific

assessment. Similar instruments could readily be developed for use in settings other than

schools, for instance. The RSDS relies on more traditional individual differences

assumptions that presume stability of a person's relational self orientation and it also

assumes a uniformity to items that capture the central features of the construct. Other

assessment strategies for assessing relational self rely on qualitative methods or case

study approaches (e.g., Smith, 1999). Smith's case studies of the experience of

pregnancy for women also suggest another approach that can be readily adapted for

quantitative research: George Kelly's repertory grid technique (Fransella & Bannister,

1977). Grid methods allow investigators to incorporate both shared meanings and

personally relevant examples of those shared meanings. The preliminary status and

specificity of current measures of relational self constructs invites the application of

established strategies like repertory grid technique. Additional description of grid

procedures is provided below in the chapter on methods.

Relational self models are frequently discussed as alternatives or extensions of

mainstream psychological accounts of identity development. In the next section, a brief

introduction to identity status theory provides an account of a prominent theory and

research program that is broad enough to address important aspects of relational self

theory.

<u>Identity Status Theory</u>

For a thorough understanding of the lifelong process of identity development, one

should start by studying the works of Erik Erikson, but then move on to the empirical

studies of James Marcia. To both build upon and enhance Erikson's ideas (Marcia, 2001),

Marcia has led extensive testing of the Eriksonian principles of psychosocial

development and has determined "four ways in which a person in the period of later

adolescence might resolve the issue of identity and identity diffusion" (Marcia, 2002, p.

202). Described as "identity statuses," the four possibilities are: identity achievement,

moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. It is important to understand that each status

represents a point of intersection along the developmental continuums of <u>exploration</u> and

<u>commitment</u> (Marcia, 1994) and can be arranged to create Table 1.

Over 35 years of research on the identity status paradigm have found correlative

experiences and personality traits so that each status conjures up a different image

(Marcia, 1999). People of the foreclosure status have basically mimicked the identities of

their parents, or another major authority figure, have not gone through an exploration

process, and are committed to the point of being rigid (Schiedel & Marcia, 1985).

Developmentally, foreclosure is considered to be a less advanced status (Marcia, 1994).

Personality characteristics of a person with this status might be "organized, goal-directed,

neat, clean, and well behaved" (Marcia, 1994, p. 74), but relationships usually lack

psychological depth and are typically with people very similar to oneself (Marcia, 1994).

In contrast, the moratorium status is marked as a time of abundant exploration and

consideration of many different future alternatives for oneself with a view toward some

type of commitment (Stephen, Fraser & Marcia, 1992). Moratoriums can be described as

morally sensitive people who are "intense, sometimes active and lively—sometimes

internally preoccupied, struggling, engaging, and occasionally exhausting" (Marcia,

1994, p. 75).

Identity achievement occurs, usually (but not always) after a time of moratorium,

and when commitments have been made both ideologically and occupationally (Marcia,

1994). People of this status appear stable and can give reasons for their decisions yet are

not rigid in their beliefs. They usually have peaceful relations with family and are able to

have intimate relationships. Notably, individuals of identity achievement status are those

with the most ego strength; this quality makes them most vulnerable to further identity

crises because they are more able to consider alternatives and take risks in life (Marcia,

1994). Ironically, such crises usually trigger a re-engagement into the identity

development process, but this sort of re-cycling is considered healthy and normal

(Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992). Finally, the identity diffusion status refers to those

who are in a state of superficial exploration with no real expectation of commitment. In a

typical Identity Status Interview, this person has little to say (Marcia, 1994) and one

might nickname him or her the "apathetic wanderer." Marcia (2002) finds people of this status to be the "greatest therapeutic challenge" (p. 204).

Although identity is associated with continuity, and identity statuses are assumed to be a sort of global categorization for a person, it is also possible to measure identity within different content areas or domains (Schwartz, 2001). It is likely that one expresses his or her identity differently across and within domains as compared to his or her overall expression (Grotevant as cited in Schwartz, 2001). Erikson referred to ideological and occupational domains as being crucial areas for commitment within identity development. Marcia began his work in the 60s by retaining Erikson's occupational domain, but broke down the ideological domain into subcategories of religion and political ideology (Marcia, 1966). Later, after recognizing sex differences in adolescent identity, Grotevant, Thorbecke and Meyer (1982) added the three interpersonal domains of friendships, dating and sex roles in their extension of Marcia's theory. Although all of the content areas of identity are exciting and demand further research, this study will place more focus on the interpersonal domain.

Research on Identity Status

Marcia began his work on identity status and the development of what would eventually become the Identity Status Interview during his doctoral studies at the Ohio State University in the mid-sixties (Marcia, 1966). Although his sample was all male and his methods are somewhat ethically questionable (e.g., sending a mere postcard to identify and correct false information given to participants about their achievement abilities and their confidence levels), Marcia was still able to provide "the development, measurement, and partial validation of the identity statuses as individual styles of coping

with the psychosocial task of forming an ego identity" (p. 558). He laid an excellent

foundation for future studies and, impressively, thirty-five years of research on Marcia's

constructs show only a few major changes.

Six years after the administration of the Identity Status Interview to a group of

men in university between 1967 and 1968, Marcia (1976) performed a follow up study to

check on the stability of the statuses and to look for relationships between identity status,

intimacy status, lifestyle, and participation in the 1969-1970 campus demonstrations

around the United States (in response to the Vietnam War). Thirty of the former

participants agreed to be interviewed again. Over the six years, 47% of the participants'

statuses had changed, but most often in an expected manner. For the purposes of this

present study, it is most interesting to look at the relationship Marcia found between

intimacy and identity status. Although intimacy and relational self are not equal

constructs, they are obviously compatible. Marcia's (1976) findings were such that the

level of identity status (high or low) was consistent with the same level of intimacy; even

individuals who had a change in identity status over the six years made a change in their

intimacy status in the same direction. Marcia (1976) interprets the intimacy/identity

findings to show that identity "seems to be at least a concomitant and perhaps a precursor

to intimacy…" (p. 153).

Years later, Schiedel and Marcia (1985) conducted another study exploring

relationships between identity and intimacy status along with sex role orientation and

gender. The researchers acknowledged the proposition that women's identity

development path might be different from that of men's, and that women's identity issues

were more interpersonal rather than intrapersonal as were men's. Among others, they

explored hypotheses that (a) identity achievement would be higher for men than for women, (b) more females would be high in intimacy than men, and (c) there would be a positive relationship between identity and intimacy for both genders. Because intimacy and identity issues converged for women according to their literature review, an additional hypothesis was that women could be high in intimacy and low in identity as well as high in identity and low in intimacy. However, it was anticipated that men could not be high in intimacy without having achieved identity as well. With a sample of 40 male and 40 female undergraduate students, the first hypothesis was not confirmed in that there was no relationship between gender and identity status. They did find that women were more associated with high intimacy status and that for both genders identity and intimacy had a positive relationship, however the significance of the latter finding was slightly weaker for women. The authors recommended that the relationship between intimacy and females be taken with caution due to a possible methodological bias inherent in their design.

The reader is encouraged to review research by Craig-Bray, Adams and Dobson (1988) for interesting findings regarding the identity statuses, gender, intimacy and the quality and quantity of social relations among college students. Their conclusions do support the idea that identity and intimacy issues may be more integrated for women than for men. In the same year, Bilsker, Schiedel and Marcia (1988) published a study using Marcia's Identity Status Interview in which the interviewers were blind to the fact that sex differences were being examined. Dividing the Interview into the two areas of sexual-interpersonal and occupation/ideology, the authors looked for a difference in the way the 71 men and women rated the relevance of each area to how they defined themselves. As

predicted, men found the latter area more relevant while the women preferred the former. Additionally, the sexual-interpersonal area was more predictive of identity status for women while the ideology area was more predictive of men's status. (Occupation was not a significant predictor of identity status for either gender.)

Summary and Statement of Hypotheses

In her summary of Erickson's theory, Gilligan (1982) points out that Erickson (1968) closely foreshadows what would later be asserted as the unique pattern of women's identity development. His chapter on "Womanhood and the Inner Space" claims that a woman does not achieve identity until she first finds intimacy, that is, marries a man, in contrast to the claim that men must first achieve identity to in turn reach intimacy. Ironically, he is, in a sense, referring to the idea that connection and relationship is more essential to a woman's identity (albeit his focus was narrowly aimed at the heterosexual marriage relationship) and this is just one example of the relatively progressive insights in his theory. Erickson was writing at a time when men and women's roles were deeply embedded into two different life spheres which could simply be defined as outdoor and indoor respectively. Perhaps intimacy and identity are at least more concomitant for men than previously thought given that those traditional spheres have since been permeated.

The extensive work of Marcia and his colleagues has firmly established Identity Status Theory. The relatively recent attention given to the construct of relational self has also opened the door to an exciting new paradigm for research. This study uses correlational methods to examine identity status and relational self as they contribute to global life satisfaction. Identity status concerns can be assessed with Adam's Extended

Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (1998). Kelly's repertory grid technique is used

to construct an index of Relational Self Orientation. The purpose of this study is, then, to

examine the variables of Identity Achievement and Relational Self Orientation as they

contribute to Life Satisfaction. As well, Relational Self Orientation will be tested as a

possible mediating variable in the relationship between Identity Achievement and Life

Satisfaction. Men who report a relatively strong focus on relational self will presumably

have developed a stronger resolution of intimacy tasks while deepening their sense of

identity. And a relational self theory extension of identity status theory would suggest

that the overall benefits of identity achievement would be obtained, at least in part, by a

growing interpersonal orientation shaping their personal identity. Thus the hypotheses for

this study were:

H_1:   Identity Achievement (IA) is positively and significantly correlated with
Life Satisfaction (LS).

H_2:   Relational Self Orientation (RSO) is significantly correlated with IA.

H_3:   RSO is a mediating variable in the relationship between IA and LS.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

<u>Participants</u>

Through a variety of recruitment methods, a sample of 203 men was obtained for this survey research. A number of students at a local university participated by filling out the paper version of the questionnaire, while others contributed via an Internet presentation of the survey and others were approached at a public beach to complete the paper version. Examples of the public recruitment brochure and posters are in Appendix A. Recruitment notices for the on-line survey were sent via e-mail to a large number of family, friends, colleagues, and professors (see Appendix B for an example message). All were asked to forward the message and the survey's link to relevant others using the Bcc function of their e-mail program to maintain confidentiality. All participants were given the opportunity to enter their names into a drawing for two winners of $50. University students were offered pizza and soda; beach participants were offered a hot dog, soda and chips.

Inclusion criteria included being unmarried and between the ages of 18 and 30. In the final sample, two participants age 17, four between 30 and 35, and four married participants had filled out the questionnaires despite directions. These participants' responses were not excluded. Ethnicity was an optional and open-ended question for all participants. The paper version provided a space for "ethnic background" while the online version gave space to answer the question "How would you describe your ethnicity?" Responses were then categorized according to the 2001 Canadian census categories with additional categories for "Caucasian," "Black," "Mexican," "other," or "blank" for those with no response. Responses with more than one ethnic component

were categorized by the first component listed, e.g., if White Italian was written, the

chosen category was Caucasian.

<u>Instruments</u>

Three instruments were used: a measure of identity status, a measure of life

satisfaction, and an index of the individual's relational self orientation (RSO). The reader

is reminded of the relatively new status of the construct of relational self. Due to a lack of

reliable and valid measures of this variable, this study took advantage of the well-

established repertory grid technique's flexible design options to measure the third

variable (see further design details in description below and Appendix C). The repertory

grid technique is a tool for understanding an individual's ways of making sense of the

world. Based on George Kelly's Personal Construct Theory, it attempts "to stand in

others' shoes, to see their world as they see it, to understand their situation, their

concerns" (Fransella & Bannister, 1977, p. 5).

Repertory grid procedures have been employed in other assessments of actual

self, ideal self, and related constructs (Fransella & Bannister, 1977). As addressed in

personal construct theory, self processes are aspects of "core construing" in that they

reflect features of personality that are both developed early and psychologically central.

Core processes reflect preverbal construal of relationships with people as well as self

understandings and core beliefs and motives. As Fransella and Bannister point out, self is

inherently understood in personal construct psychology in the context of interpersonal

relations. Moreover, repertory grid technique, as an important assessment strategy

developed by personal construct psychologists, lends itself readily to the assessment of

actual-ideal discrepancies or people's construals of themselves-in-relation to others.

Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (version 2; EOMEIS-2).

(Adams, 1998). Since the development of its prototype in 1979, the OMEIS has been

repeatedly researched and revised to obtain the reliability and validity it holds today. The

64-item questionnaire requires Likert scale responses of agreement or disagreement (1 =

"strongly disagree" to 6 = "strongly agree") and its items cover both ideological

(occupation, religion and politics) and interpersonal (sex roles, friendship, recreation, and

dating) domains of identity status. As stated earlier, this research was aimed solely at the

interpersonal domain by using only the 32 interpersonal items (see Appendix D). The

interpersonal scale is considered to be most appropriate when used with unmarried

persons as many questions refer to the activity of dating.

In a study of the EOMEIS-2 using 418 students from grades 8-13 (O'Connor as

cited in Adams, 1998), moderate to high levels of internal consistency were found with

Cronbach alphas ranging from .65 to .83. Bennion and Adams (as cited in Adams, 1998)

performed several psychometric tests on the EOMEIS-2 with a sample of 106 college

students. Their study found adequate internal consistency with Cronbach alphas ranging

from .60 to .80, as well as significant relationships in expected directions between the

subscales and other measures of identity, intimacy and authoritarianism. However, factor

analyses produced three factors as opposed to the expected four (one for each status).

This limitation requires users to make tentative interpretations regarding moratorium and

diffusion statuses. Although Bennion and Adams did not find a correlation with social

desirability measures, Adams, Shea, & Fitch (as cited in Adams, 1998) did find

association between advanced identity status subscales (Achieved and Moratorium) and

social desirability measures. Notably, among eight different studies of the EOMEIS-2, no significant gender differences occurred among identity statuses.

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). This five-item measure of global life satisfaction (Appendix E) is popular because it is not focused on a specific domain, thus allowing the person to use his or her own overall judgment of life. Responses are chosen from a seven-item scale (1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree"). Through three different studies, the authors report strong psychometric properties for the SWLS (Diener, et al., 1985). In a study of two samples of undergraduates ($\underline{N}$ = 176 and $\underline{N}$ = 76), the test-retest correlation coefficient was .82 and the coefficient alpha was .87. Factor analysis revealed one factor, accounting for 66% of the variability. Moderately strong convergent validity was demonstrated with another sample of undergraduates ($\underline{n}$ = 163) and gave evidence that life satisfaction is associated with psychological well-being. This study also showed very low correlation with the Marlowe-Crowne measure of socially desirable responses.

Repertory Grid. Grids are paper and pencil instruments that ask the user to consider people that fill several specific roles in his or her life. The people who fill these various roles in the lives of respondents are called "elements." Then the user is asked to rate each person for each role based on a list of "constructs" or what could also be called bipolar descriptors. There are several possibilities for creating a repertory grid, each of which falls on a range of being based entirely on the user's input, in which case an interview is required, to the constructs and roles being provided for the user. The type of grid used is based on its purpose and the resources of the researcher. The results are then analysed according to a pattern of interrelationships that occurs between the way the

constructs are ranked or rated. In this sense the user does not provide correct or incorrect

answers, only a pattern of responses that must be analysed (Fransella & Bannister, 1977).

The current study used a repertory grid that supplies roles and constructs designed

to assess the strength of a person's relational orientation to self (see Appendix C). Before

defining the components of the Relational Self Orientation (RSO) index, it is important to

describe the entire repertory grid. Nine roles were provided, for which the user could not

use the same person twice (e.g. "Your favourite member of your family"). Two additional

roles required the user to consider himself today in general (e.g., "Me Today") and then

in the future as his best possible self (e.g., "Me Ideal"). Nine constructs (e.g., "has an

open communication style with others, e.g., will tell you when he or she is bothered by

something") were listed on a second page for which the user would rate each person and

himself on a 5-point scale (1 = "not at all true of this person" to 5 = "completely true of

this person"). The RSO index was created by averaging the six ratings of constructs A

("has an open communication style with others"), D ("is a caring person") and G ("is

empathic") for both the elements of "Me Today" and "Me Ideal" (highlighted in

Appendix C). The constructs that were selected for the RSO grid reflected the three most

theoretically relevant facets of a relational understanding/orientation to oneself (A, D, &

G). The remaining constructs can be identified as three agentic facets of self orientation

(C, E, & H), and three more relatively neutral items with respect to a direct orientation to

relational or agentic self understanding.

<u>Procedure</u>

The paper and Internet versions of the informed consent information were slightly

different and are in Appendices F and G respectively. Completion of the paper version of

the survey required an average of thirty minutes and the questionnaire packet was

arranged in a counterbalanced order. Although they were encouraged to do so, very few

participants asked questions regarding the procedure nor made comments or clarifications

in the margins of the pages. The Internet presentation consisted of nine different screens

(or pages) and was designed so that the user could not proceed to the next page if any

questions were left unanswered. The survey began with the introduction and informed

consent screen and moved to a demographics screen. The next screen was the SWLS

followed by two screens for the EOMEIS-2 Interpersonal Scale. Next the repertory grid

was represented in one screen followed by the screen to enter the cash drawing, a screen

describing the research team and a screen to give thanks for participation and provide the

option to withdraw all responses from inclusion in the study. Throughout the online

survey, many spaces were given for clarifications and/or comments, but a minority chose

to use them.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

<u>Descriptive Analyses</u>

A total of 203 participants agreed to participate in the study. Three sub-groups were identified as "University," "Online" and "Beach" to reflect the context in which the participants were recruited. The mean age of the entire sample was 23 years old (<u>SD</u> = 4.21) ranging from 17 to 35. The most commonly reported ethnicities were Caucasian (40%), Chinese (12%), Canadian (8%) and Other (8%). Some significant differences were found between the subgroups. The University group was significantly younger than the Online group by 2.3 years (<u>p</u> < .001), and included the only four married participants.

Missing data analyses showed that the Online group contained the largest proportion of missing data. Seventeen Online participants withdrew while filling out the questionnaires and were deleted from the sample. Three others withdrew partway through completing the EOMEIS-2 but were retained and group mean item responses were substituted for the remaining EOMEIS-2 questions. Participants in any subgroup with any missing repertory grid data were retained in the sample if they responded to all other scales. RSO scale items with missing data were given the group mean item response. No responses were missing for the SWLS across subgroups. The final sample size obtained for analysis was <u>N</u> = 186. The University subsample was <u>n</u> = 63, the Beach subsample, <u>n</u> = 33, and the Online subsample, <u>n</u> = 90.

Group comparability was explored by looking at mean differences and intercorrelations among the primary study variables (LS, IA and RSO). The Online group reported significantly lower LS scores than the other two groups, <u>F</u>(2, 183) = 5.16, <u>p</u> = .007, Student-Newman-Keuls homogeneous subsets. Across the subgroups, the

correlations were slightly stronger within the Online group between IA and LS, $\underline{r}$ (88) = .29, versus $\underline{r}$ (61) = .17 for University and $\underline{r}$ (31) = .13 for Beach. As well, the Online group had a somewhat stronger relationship between IA and RSO, $\underline{r}$ (88) = .22, versus $\underline{r}$(61) = .16 and $\underline{r}$(31) = - .06 for University and Beach respectively. In their review of the validity of survey and correlational research conducted on the Internet, Krantz and Dalal (2000) argue that web-based research is comparable to traditional paper and pencil methods for many purposes. The subgroups differences described here were considered small enough and unsystematic enough to combine subgroups for the study analyses. This combination helped broaden the diversity of participant backgrounds.

The alpha coefficients of the RSO index, LS and IA scales were .75, .78, and .54 respectively. A correlation matrix of these scales and age is available in Table 2. Age did not correlate with any of the scales but RSO and LS both correlated with IA. For RSO, the mean score was 4.13 ($\underline{SD}$ = .56). The mean score for LS was 4.12 ($\underline{SD}$ = 1.10). The mean score for IA was 3.82 ($\underline{SD}$ = .71).

Hypotheses

To test for a positive relationship between IA and LS (hypothesis one), a significant but weak Pearson product-moment correlation was calculated, $\underline{r}$ (184) = .18, r^2 = .03, $\underline{p}$ = .008 (one-tailed) and the hypothesis supported. The test of hypothesis two, the relationship between RSO and IA, also resulted in a significant yet weak Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, $\underline{r}$ (184) = .16, $\underline{r}^2$ = .03, $\underline{p}$ = .030 (two-tailed).

RSO was to be tested as a possible mediating variable in the relationship between IA and LS through a hierarchical test of regression (see Figure 1). Baron and Kenny (1986) recommend that one of the three logical prerequisites of a mediation test is a

significant relationship between the mediating variable and the criterion. For this data set, RSO and LS did not significantly correlate ($\underline{r}$ [184] = .02, $\underline{p}$ = .812, two-tailed), thus mediation analysis was not conducted.

<u>Post-hoc Analyses</u>

Given the premise that one can be both autonomous and interdependent at the same time, an index of Agentic Self Orientation (ASO) was computed and compared to the RSO index. Using both the "Me Today" and the "Me Ideal" elements, a total of six ratings on the constructs of "takes initiative," "is willing to take a stand," and "is persuasive" were averaged (highlighted in Appendix C) to create the ASO index. The index had good reliability with an alpha coefficient of .75. The mean ASO score was 4.02 ($\underline{SD}$ = .59). A relationship was found between RSO and ASO, $\underline{r}$ = .62, $\underline{r}^2$ = .38, $\underline{p}$ < .001, (two-tailed), and between ASO and IA, $\underline{r}$ = .24, $\underline{r}^2$ = .06, $\underline{p}$ < .001, (two-tailed).

Use of the RSO and ASO indices showed well the richness of the situational and personal contexts of the repertory grid constructs, but these group indexes left us wondering about what may have been hidden at the individual or idiographic level. In some ways, group statistics were still too "cold" and unfulfilling as a means for understanding relational self orientation for men. Thus, two men were chosen to further explore and expand on the meaning of these scores and the meaningful dimensions of the repertory grid at the personal, idiographic level. The men were chosen for their relatively high RSO indices and for their relatively high and relatively low IA scores respectively – criteria designed to further elucidate the interaction between relational self and identity. A principal components analysis (PCA, with varimax rotation) was performed on each of their grids to capture the personal nuances into which the indices were tapping.

Case 1 was a 27 year-old Online participant of Mexican ethnicity and was given the pseudonym, Joseph. As indicated by his EOMEIS-2 scores, Joseph was identity achieved and thus committed to, but not rigid in, his beliefs. He had the highest RSO index possible indicating that he considers himself to be high in the qualities of caring, empathy and open communication. His ASO index was high but not perfect showing that initiative, taking a stand, and persuasion were qualities perceived to be slightly less evident in his outlook.

The PCA of his repertory grid yielded two domains that were labelled as two types of impactful people. Domain one was identified as "The Politician" for its emphasis most heavily on persuasiveness, taking a stand, and initiative. Respectability, and being-fun-to-be-with also loaded heavily on this domain but contributed somewhat to the second domain as well. Domain two was "The Friendly Team-Player" with its core features for Joseph being empathic and caring, but also including open communication, enjoying sports/outdoors, and being-fun-to-be-with. Joseph's two domains best reflect his construal of agentic self and relational self respectively. Notably, the constructs contained in the ASO index contributed mostly to Joseph's more agentic domain, but the constructs of the RSO were slightly more spread between both the agentic and relational domains. For Joseph, sporting activities and being empathic were the most relevant to relational self.

Case 2 was a 25 year-old Online participant of Caucasian ethnicity dubbed Ben. Ben did not meet the cut-off for any of the identity statuses but was highest in IA (yet still lower than Joseph), implying he is still exploring alternative beliefs and values, but

knows the directions his preferences are headed. His RSO and ASO indices were nearly identical to Joseph's with a maximum RSO index and slightly lower ASO.

For Ben, the grid constructs elicited three domains, suggesting he makes additional distinctions to relational and agentic concerns. Domain one, "The Camp Counsellor," primarily emphasised taking initiative and persuasiveness with secondary contributions from respectability, being-fun-to-be-with, and enjoying sports/outdoors. Domain two primarily emphasised caring with further contributions from being empathic and open communication – all of the components of the RSO index and thus identified as "The Ideal Spouse." Finally, domain three primarily and uniquely emphasised taking a stand but also included open communication and sports/outdoors. This domain seems to reflect a value for authenticity or sincerity and could be called "The Advocate." Notably, for Ben, the agentic elements were held in dimensions one and two, while the relational elements contributed primarily, but not uniquely, to dimension two.-

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Gergen and Walter (1998) believe that the continued traditional focus on individual ideology helps to "rationalize societal patterns of narcissism" (p. 115). In contrast, relational theory intends to "generate an alternative mode of understanding human action" that is more likely to support a cooperative and less competitive society (p. 115). In the spirit of such scholarship, this study was designed to explore the relationships among life satisfaction, identity achievement and relational self in young adult men. Although much has been written about the existence and purpose of relational self in women, little emphasis has been placed on its role in the lives of men. Furthermore, few valid measurement instruments have been specifically devised to measure the construct in either gender. Possibly, this is the first time the repertory grid technique has been used to measure relational self in a study of men. In general terms, the first two of the three hypotheses were confirmed by the results, while the third and key hypothesis as related to the study's theoretical underpinnings was not supported. However, some group differences exist among the primary variables. These differences may imply that conclusions based on the entire sample should be made with caution.

Particularly surprising, given that identity achievement is generally associated with overall well being (Adams, 1998; Marcia, 1994), was the weak (but significant) relationship between Life Satisfaction and Identity Achievement. In this instance, the low reliability of the IA scale may have resulted in attenuation of the correlation. Additionally, the literature's association between identity achievement and well being is mostly on a theoretical level and refers to qualities of stability and internalized self-regulatory processes rather than well being specifically. Some research on the EOMEIS

exists in which groups of adolescents and young adults were examined for relationships

between identity status and various indirect measures of well being; none of this research

involved the SWLS specifically. Finally, Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985)

only associate their measure of life satisfaction with well being insofar as the measure is

convergent with measures of general adjustment and the lack of psychopathology.

Perhaps the weak relationship between LS and IA should give less concern than

originally thought.

Relational Self Orientation and Identity Achievement showed a significant

positive relationship, albeit not a strong one. Again, attenuation of correlation due to the

low IA reliability is in question. This may also reflect the need for a different set of

constructs and roles in the design of a relational self orientation repertory grid that is

more relevant to men's relational self.

Empirical support for the mediating influence of relational self on the influence of

identity achievement on life satisfaction remains elusive because the association of

Relational Self Orientation to Life Satisfaction was very small in this sample. The lack of

positive correlation between Relational Self Orientation and Life Satisfaction does not fit

with Bergman's (1991) clinical observations of the positive relationship between men's

connections with others and their quality of life. The men in this sample were asked to

report on their personal levels of caring, empathy and openness in communication, all of

which are qualities that facilitate a satisfying relationship. Yet, the people reporting high

levels of these qualities reported similar ratings on satisfaction with life as those men who

reported lower levels of these qualities. Perhaps the SWLS is too global of a measure and

may underestimate the importance of relational self for psychological well being.

Additionally, perhaps this is indication that relational self truly has a much different role in men's lives than in women's for whom healthy interdependence and relational mutuality enhances life (Kaplan, 1986; Manhal-Baugus, 1998; Surrey, 1985).

Repertory grid technique may become a preferred alternative to the standard self-report measure, possibly as a multidimensional strategy that explores different facets of relationships & identity. Furthermore, there is a demand for measures of self to be better situated within the relevant contexts in which a person finds him or herself (Schott & Russell, 2002). The repertory grid is useful for its flexibility and use as an individually tailored assessment. These qualities allow for the evaluation of the relevance of particular relationships and roles to the individual's perception of his or her identity development, similarly to the goals of Bilsker, Schiedel and Marcia (1988) and as suggested by Kroger (2000).

The post-hoc development and findings about the index of Agentic Self Orientation provides unexpected findings for the study. The strength of the positive relationship between ASO and RSO suggests that these men can be both autonomous (agentic) and relational at the same time. Notably, individuals higher on the ASO index were also significantly more likely to be higher in identity achievement. Furthermore, the ASO-IA relationship is even stronger than the RSO-IA relationship. The results for this set of individuals seems to support the notion that male identity achievement is somewhat more related to autonomy than relationality, but not at the expense of the latter quality's loss. Furthermore, the post-hoc case profile analyses indicate that this particular set of grid constructs could be perceived beyond the simple dichotomy of relational self and agentic self.

Nelson (1996) warns counsellors working with women of the potentially paradoxical message they may send whereby they are teaching the client to take care of herself before becoming too concerned about giving care to others. She places this in contrast to the Self-in-Relation theory implying that such a lesson may be inaccurate; instead, "a more feminist position would be that a woman learns about her own self-care through the caring attention of others and that there is nothing wrong with needing that kind of attention to develop a strong sense of self" (¶25). Similarly, because we know that relational self does exist in some way for men, counsellors must be careful not to overlook men's needs for deep, satisfying interdependent relationships and their roles in healing.

Much as Iskowitz (2000/2001) observed in her sample of adolescents, higher levels of identity achievement correspond with higher levels of relational self in young adult men. We know that identity statuses change in varying degrees throughout an individual's life as the person oscillates between crises, exploration and commitment (Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992). Once a good measure of men's relational self is created, it would be ideal to study changes in relational self over time as they compare to changes in identity status. Yet given the stronger relationship between the agentic self and level of identity achievement, we should not underestimate the concurrent role of this element in the process of identity achievement.

Limitations and Future Research

The use of a subgroup obtained through Internet research is both innovative and challenging. There is always a risk of Internet participants "playing" with the survey, e.g. answering questions with input from another person in the room or giving thoughtless

responses (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002). Although a clear advantage of Internet research is the absence of the experimenter's coercive presence, this is also its biggest drawback in terms of full participation and an opportunity for participant feedback (Nosek et al., 2002). As well, sampling bias inevitably occurs due to methods of advertisement and the accessibility of the survey to anyone who finds the website.

Use of the EOMEIS-2 Interpersonal subscale may have presented the largest confound in the study. Primarily, it would have been preferable to use the entire EOMEIS-2 instead of solely the interpersonal scale so that results would be more comparable to previous research on the EOMEIS-2. Little research examines the interpersonal area of the measure alone. Also, some participants were studying English as a second language, some were possibly homosexual, and still others were certainly raised in non-North American settings. This scale was authored by a North American, tested on mostly North Americans and was designed for English speaking heterosexuals (implicit in some of the dating and marriage questions).

Future research needs to explore relational self's unique occurrence in men and the value it may or may not have to men. The development of the Self-in-Relation theory spawned numerous theoretical and empirical research studies (e.g., a search of the term on PsycINFO yields 78 results) even expanding beyond feminist psychology to affect the general realms of counselling and psychology. However, very few of these studies have applied the theory to men. Men could benefit as well from a better understanding of why they do or do not process relationships in the context of self-development as women do. Such research may help to both legitimize the value of relationships, both friendly and romantic, for men, and increase the satisfaction men feel from them.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Previous research calls into question traditional notions of connected and separate relational orientations between men and women respectively, yet few researchers have examined the role of relational self in men. In part, research is scarce due to the lack of a consistent and operationalizable definition of relational self for either gender. The results of this unique study inspire further research into men's relational self by highlighting the presence of both a relational and agentic self-orientation, and begs a better understanding of men's relational self and life satisfaction. The study also brings attention to the repertory grid as a potential measurement instrument of men's relational self or perhaps as a tool in the development of such an instrument. Finally the study has created a more clear delineation between identity and self, and has added to our understanding of relational self as a varying pattern of processing information about oneself with emphasis on relationships in such a way that affects behaviour as well.

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Table 1

<u>Identity Status Categories</u>

	High(er) Commitment	Low(er) Commitment
High(er) Exploration	Identity Achievement	Moratorium
Low(er) Exploration	Foreclosure	Diffusion

Table 2

Correlation Matrix of Age and Scales

Scale/Variable	1	2	3	4
1. IA	--			
2. LS	.18**	--		
3. RSO	.16†	.02	--	
4. AGE	.12	-.09	.08	--

Note: IA = Identity achievement; LS = Life Satisfaction; RSO = Relational self orientation
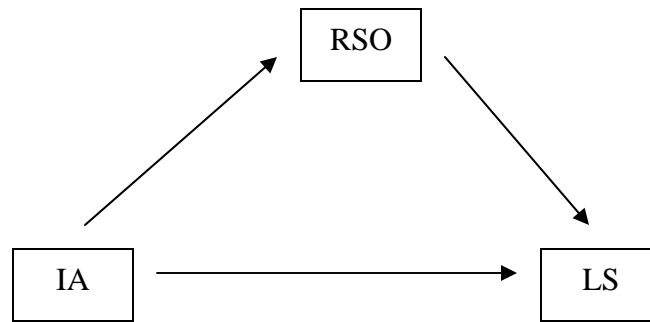†p < .01 (one-tailed), **p < .05 (two-tailed)

Figure 1. Hypothesised Path of Mediation: Relational self orientation between identity

achievement and life satisfaction

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT BROCHURE AND POSTER

"Men In Context"

A RESEARCH PROJECT ON IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN MEN

Conducted by: Brandi Rubel, M.A. (Candidate), Counselling Psychology

More research is needed to understand the role of relationships in the development of male identity. As a master's student in counselling psychology at Trinity Western University, I am exploring questions in this area in a project entitled, "The Identity of Men in Context." If you or a friend are male, between the ages of 18 and 30, and have about 30 minutes of time to fill out my survey, then:

- you get to **help** a woman finish her master's degree in counselling psychololgy
- you can enter to win **$50**
- you get a chance to **learn** more about yourself
- you get **free** pizza and pop (when available)
- you get to **help** a woman finish her master's degree in counselling psychology ☺

Thank you very much *for your support!*

If you have further questions and/or would like to participate in this study, please contact the researcher via e-mail at: menincontext@yahoo.com or in person (if you are reading this at my table).

The researcher's supervisor, Dr. Marvin McDonald can be reached via e-mail at mcdonald@twu.ca or by phone at 604-513-2121, ext. 3223.

Please recycle this brochure when you are finished.

FREE PIZZA AND POP!

FOR *GUYS* WHO FILL OUT MY SURVEY ON LIFE AND FRIENDSHIP

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE ONLINE RECRUITMENT MESSAGE

Would you like to help someone finish her master's degree at the same time that you increase your self-awareness? Would you like to contribute to exciting new research designed to better understand identity development in men? What if you could do all this AND enter to win $50? If any of these things sound appealing to you and you are an unmarried man between the ages of 18-30, then please visit my website at:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=68835181579

If you don't personally meet the above requirements but know someone who does, PLEASE forward this link to him.*

Your help is greatly appreciated and all participants can enter to win $50 (cdn)!

Sincerely,

Brandi Rubel
menincontext@yahoo.com

*If you forward the link to more than one person, please respect confidentiality by using the Bcc function.

APPENDIX C: REPERTORY GRID
Survey of Self and Others

Directions for Step No. 1:

Please list in the blanks below, the names or initials of some people you know. For example, if your answer to number 1 happened to be "Tom", then you can write "Tom" or "T" – *whichever is easiest for you to keep in mind*. Please be sure that you don't list the same person more than once. **Questions 3 and 4 have already been labelled for you**.

1.   Your favourite member of your family: _____

2.   Your spouse, partner, or closest friend: _____

3.   You today, as you are now, today: _____Me (T)*

4.   The person you want to become, your best possible self: _____Me (I)**

5.   The friend of yours who is most self-reliant and competent: _____

6.   Someone you know who is best able to provide leadership: _____

7.   The friend you have who is best able to maintain close

        and deep relationships with others: _____

8.   Someone you know who understands other people very well: _____

9.   The best teacher you've ever had: _____

10.   The most intelligent person you know personally: _____

11.   The most artistic person you know personally: _____

*T = Today
**I = Ideal

Please check your list of names to make sure you have not listed the same person more than once.

To Go On to Step No. 2: Please copy over the names/initials (whichever is easiest for you to remember) of each person from this list into the first column of the table on the next page. Copy them in the same order as they are on this page. **Again, 3 and 4 have been labelled for you.**

Directions for Step No. 2:
Next, we want to find out how you view each of these people. For each person listed in each row, please rate how true of that person the statements are in the columns using the rating scale below. For example, if the person in the first row is very respectable in your perspective, then place a "5" in the space under that column for the first row. An example row is given. **Again, 3 and 4 have been labelled for you.**

Rating Scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all true of this person	*A little true* of this person	*Somewhat true* of this person	*Fairly true* of this person	*Completely true* of this person

	A …**has an open communication style with others, e.g., will tell you when he or she is bothered by something**[2]
	B …is fun to be with, e.g., other people laugh with, and are energized by this person
	C …*takes initiative, e.g., is motivated to begin a project before others would*
COPY INITIALS/ NAMES IN THE SPACES BELOW	D …**is a caring person, e.g., is ready to talk when someone needs to**
	E …*is willing to take a stand for what he or she believes*
	F …enjoys sports or the outdoors
	G …**is empathic, e.g., notices when a friend is excited**
	H …*is persuasive, e.g., is able to "win people over" to a point of view*
	I …is respectable, e.g., shows integrity in his or her actions

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
ex: Tom	3	3	5	1	5	4	4	3	5
1									
2									
3 *Me (T)*[3]									
4 *Me (I)*									
5									
6									
7									

---

[2] For the thesis reader, constructs used for the RSO index are in boldface and constructs used for the ASO index are in italics.

[3] Ratings for rows 3 and 4, the elements "Me Today" and "Me Ideal" were used to calculate both the RSO and ASO index.

8									
9									
10									
11									

APPENDIX D: INTERPERSONAL IDENTITY SCALE OF EOMEIS-2

Questions About Life and Relationships

Directions: Read each item carefully. Be sure to respond to the total item and not just a certain part of it. Using the range of responses from strongly disagree to strongly agree, indicate to what degree it fits your own impressions about yourself. You may begin by thinking about whether you agree or disagree. Then you can decide how strongly you feel about it. Remember, we are interested in how these items either reflect or don't reflect how you perceive your own situations.

Rating Scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

1. My ideas about men's and women's roles are identical to my parents'. What has worked for them will obviously work for me.

2. There are a lot of different kinds of people. I'm still exploring the many possibilities to find the right kind of friends for me.

3. I sometimes join in recreational activities when asked, but I rarely try anything on my own.

4. I haven't really thought about a "dating style." I'm not too concerned whether I date or not.

5. There are so many ways to divide responsibilities in marriage, I'm trying to decide what will work for me.

6. There are many reasons for friendship, but I choose my close friends on the basis of certain values and similarities that I've personally decided on.

7. While I don't have one recreational activity I'm really committed to, I'm experiencing numerous leisure outlets to identify one I can truly enjoy.

8. Based on past experiences, I've chosen the type of dating relationship I want now.

9. I've never really seriously considered men's and women's roles in marriage. It just doesn't seem to concern me. ☐

10. My parents know what's best for me in terms of how to choose my friends. ☐

11. I've chosen one or more recreational activities to engage in regularly from lots of things and I'm satisfied with those choices. ☐

12. I don't think about dating much. I just kind of take it as it comes. ☐

13. My ideas about men's and women's roles have come right for my parents and family. I haven't seen any need to look further. ☐

14. I don't have any real close friends, and I don't think I'm looking for one right now. ☐

15. Sometimes I join in leisure activities, but I really don't see a need to look for a particular activity to do regularly. ☐

16. I'm trying out different types of dating relationships. I just haven't decided what is best for me. ☐

17. I've spent some time thinking about men's and women's roles in marriage and I've decided what will work best for me. ☐

18. I only pick friends my parent would approve of. ☐

19. I've always liked doing the same recreational activities my parents do and haven't ever seriously considered anything else. ☐

20. I only go out with the type of people my parents expect me to date. ☐

21. I've been thinking about the roles that husbands and wives play a lot these days, and I'm trying to make a final decision. ☐

22. I've had many different friendships and now I have a clear idea of what I look for in a friend.

23. After trying a lot of different recreational activities I've found one or more I really enjoy doing by myself or with friends.

24. My preferences about dating are still in the process of developing. I haven't fully decided yet.

25. There are many ways that married couples can divide up family responsibilities. I've thought about lots of ways, and I don't know exactly how I want it to happen for me.

26. I don't have any close friends. I just like to hang around with the crowd.

27. I've been experiencing a variety of recreational activities in hope of finding one or more I can really enjoy for some time to come.

28. I've dated different types of people and know exactly what my own "unwritten rules" for dating are and who I will date.

29. Opinions on men's and women's roles seem so varied that I don't think much about it.

30. I really don't know what kind of friend is best for me. I'm trying to figure out exactly what friendship means to me.

31. All of my recreational preferences I got from my parents and I haven't really tried anything else.

32. I date only people my parents would approve of.

(Bennion and Adams, 1986)

APPENDIX E: DEMOGRAPHIC ENQUIRIES AND SWLS

A little background information...

Your age: _____ years

Marital status (*check all that apply*):   Single _____   Engaged _____

Divorced _____   Currently married or cohabiting _____

Ethnic background: _____

Major or area of study here at Kwantlen (if applicable to you):_____

Your Satisfaction With Life

<u>Directions</u>: Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number in the box following that item. Please be open and honest in your responding. The seven point scale is:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

2. The conditions of my life are excellent.

3. I am satisfied with my life.

4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

(© Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985)

APPENDIX F: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A MEN'S IDENTITY PROJECT[4]

Brandi Rubel
menincontext@yahoo.com

More research is needed to understand the role of relationships in the development of male identity. As a master's student in counselling psychology at Trinity Western University, I am exploring questions in this area in a project entitled, "The Identity of Men in Context." As a research participant agreeing to contribute to this new and exciting area of psychological study, you will be completing some questionnaires requiring about 35 minutes of your time. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation in this research *at any time*, even after you've submitted your finished questionnaires. The questions ask about your views on yourself, your relationships and your satisfaction with life. All of your responses are completely confidential and will be kept in a locked cabinet, and all identifying information will be destroyed when the project is completed. An anonymous form of everyone's responses will be kept for future research use. *To ensure privacy, please do not write your name anywhere on any of the questionnaires themselves*.

Many people enjoy filling out the kinds of questionnaires used in this study. Keep in mind that your valued participation will help researchers and counsellors to better understand male identity development. As an added incentive, if you check the box below, your name will be placed in a drawing to become one of two winners of **$50**. Some people may find a few of the questions mildly uncomfortable or confusing; if it would be helpful, you may discuss this with the research leader once you have finished the questionnaires.

If you have any concerns at any time or any further questions, you may contact the research leader via e-mail at: menincontext@yahoo.com or the thesis research advisor, Dr. Marvin McDonald, at 604-513-2034 ext. 3223. He is also available via e-mail at mcdonald@twu.ca. If you have any questions about ethical issues involved in this project you may contact Sue Funk in the Research Office (at Trinity Western University) at 604-513-2142 or sue.funk@twu.ca. Additionally, the Kwantlen Office of Research & Scholarship may be contacted at 604-599-2373.

Please **detach the bottom portion** of this page and return it to the research leader. **Keep this top portion** for your future reference. If you would like to obtain your own scores on the questionnaires used in this study, please contact the research leader at: menincontext@yahoo.com.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELPFUL PARTICIPATION!
Please keep this top portion of page.

_____

I have read and understand the description of the study and I willingly consent to participate in this study.

---

[4] This informed consent document was presented as a single page.

Signature _____   Date _____
Printed Name _____
    ❐ I would like to enter the draw. My phone number is:
        _____

    ❐ I would like to receive a copy of the study summary. My e-mail address is:
        _____ [please print clearly]

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE ONLINE INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Men In Context

1. Invitation to Participate in a Men's Identity Project

Hi there! Thanks for checking this out…

My supervisor and I are exploring questions about men's identity development in a project called "The Identity of Men in Context." This project is part of my master's research in counselling psychology at Trinity Western University, Canada. If you are a male between the ages of 18-30, and unmarried, you are invited to join in by answering some questions about yourself and people in your life. This may take around 20-30 minutes, depending on your computer. Many people enjoy contributing to this type of research because it gives them a little bit of personal insight. (No matter how much you like it though, please don't fill it out more than once, of course.) Additionally, in this project you may enter your name in a random drawing for two winners of $50 (CDN). Details are provided at the end of the survey.

Of course, you may decide to stop answering these questions and exit the survey at any time. All of your responses are completely confidential and all identifying information will be separated from your responses to the questions. An anonymous form of everyone's responses will be kept for future research use.

More information on the research team is listed at the end of the survey. If you have any questions about ethical issues involved in this project you may contact Sue Funk in the Research Office (at Trinity Western University) at 604-513-2142 or sue.funk@twu.ca.

By going on to the next page, you are agreeing to join the project, and you assure me that you are an unmarried male between the ages of 18-30…

NEXT >>