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RUNNING HEAD: PERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT
        A model of personal intelligence is developed. Personal intelligence is defined as *the capacity to reason about personality and to use personality and personal information to enhance one's thoughts, plans, and life experience.* Approaches to related concepts such as intrapersonal intelligence and psychological-mindedness are reviewed. Next, a model of personal intelligence is proposed that emphasizes the capacity to (a) recognize personally-relevant information, (b) form accurate models of personality, (c) guide one's choices by using personality information, and (d) systematize one's goals, plans, and life stories. A discussion examines the possible contributions and limitations of the personal intelligence concept.

PERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

Intelligences can be divided into cool and hot groups. The cool group of intelligences includes verbal-comprehension and perceptual organizational intelligences. These are intelligences that focus on general and often impersonal information such as verbal meanings or visually-patterned information (e.g., Wechsler, 1997). Hot intelligences, by contrast, operate on information that is more personally relevant and therefore more emotionally-charged in nature, such as feelings and relationships (Abelson, 1963; Mayer & Mitchell, 1998). The hot group of intelligences includes the social, emotional, and practical intelligences (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008; Sternberg, 1985). Intelligences within both the cool and hot groups often are named for the specific area of information they operate upon: for example, verbal-comprehension intelligence operates on words and their meanings; emotional intelligence operates on emotions and emotional information.

Missing from the list of commonly-studied hot intelligences is a personal intelligence (PI), which might be defined initially as *the capacity to reason about personality and to use personality and personal information to enhance one's thoughts, plans, and life experience.* When we think of an individual, that person's distinct inner context and autobiographical self is salient: including the individual's unique emotional reactions, thoughts, plans, and autobiographical self-understanding (McAdams, 1996; Oatley & Jenkins, 1996). Such individuality, although fascinating, also presents an obstacle to the study of personal intelligence: given that self knowledge varies from person to person, can general standards of correctness for such beliefs be identified? Moreover, within a person, understanding one aspect of the self – one's emotions, say – might be quite different from understanding another aspect of the self such as one's mental abilities (Neisser, 1988). Despite such complications, universal markers of personal intelligence may exist and permit a solid footing for its understanding.

The motivation to study personal intelligence also might be unclear at first. Key studies on children's character in the early 20th century depicted personality as ephemeral and unpredictable; such studies influenced psychological thought through the 1980s (Cunningham, 2005; Mischel, 1968). As a consequence, the importance of personality often was minimized within psychology (Kenrick & Dantchik, 1983). Studies of related concepts such as self-knowledge also were limited over that period (Wilson & Dunn, 2004).

Cultural attitudes may have discouraged in-depth studies of personality and self-knowledge as well (cf. Kincaid, 2002; Nelson, 2002). For example, people who are self-focused often are characterized as "self-absorbed", "self-indulgent" – and even narcissistic (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Twenge & Campbell, 2003). To the extent that personal intelligence is associated with self-involvement or related cultural negatives such as the "culture of narcissism" or the "me generation" (Lasch, 1978; Twenge, 2006), some researchers might be dissuaded from its study.

Yet, a personal intelligence may be worth studying. Regarding the issue of personality and its influence, contemporary perspectives argue for the importance of personality, and, by extension, the importance of a personal intelligence. The revised view

of personality today is that it is a consequential, consistent, and persistent system with a slow but steady influence on an individual's development (Baumeister & Tice, 1996; Funder, 2001; Kenrick & Dantchik, 1983; Mayer, 2005; McAdams & Pals, 2006; Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, Caspi, & Goldberg, 2007). Moreover, the question, "Who am I?" – which any personal intelligence must address – is surely one of the most central and interesting questions in psychology and philosophy (Mayer, in press). In regard to possible concerns that a personal intelligence might lead to over-self-involvement, an intelligent view of oneself might as readily prevent such extreme self-involvement as promote it, as the concept's further development will clarify.

This article outlines a model of personal intelligence. The "Background" section examines research areas most relevant to the concept. Some obstacles to the study of personal intelligence are discussed in brief, and some solutions to those obstacles are proposed. The "Model of Personal Intelligence" describes a group of abilities that make up the intelligence. These abilities have been studied in diverse scientific literatures, ranging from research on person-judgments to research on self-monitoring, among others; the relevant research findings are drawn together here (e.g., Funder, 1999; Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; McCallum & Piper, 1997). The final "Discussion" section examines the implications of such a model for intelligence measurement and for better understanding hot intelligences. An initial picture of high and low skills in personal intelligence is developed. That section describes the sorts of predictions personal intelligence might make and concludes with recommendations for studying the concept.

Among the hot intelligences, personal intelligence may offer a way of viewing the self that leads to realistic self-understanding. As such, it may protect a person against undue self-involvement, on the one hand, and from equally deleterious self-avoidance, on the other, while it promotes self-knowledge and self-understanding (McCallum & Piper, 1997). The individual may seek personal intelligence as a path to well being, to manage his or her reputation, and ultimately, to make better life choices.

BACKGROUND

Prior Work Related to Personal Intelligence

The term "personal intelligence" was employed at least as early as the mid-19th century to describe an author's talent at capturing a person's character with a few lines of prose. Later, it became the title of magazine columns that reported on notable characters of the time (e.g., Anonymous, February 27, 1851; Guernsey, July 1857). In the 1890s, the Klondike gold rush brought prospectors to Alaska to seek their fortunes. Ten years later, the first intelligence tests were introduced, and brought on a kind of intellectual gold rush to identify new intelligences (Fancher, 1985).

By the turn of the 20th century, verbal and other cognitive intelligences had been distinguished from one another, and a social intelligence had been proposed (Spearman, 1927; Thorndike, 1921). Personal intelligence might have proven an attractive topic of study – yet the concept was largely ignored. Rather, the focus on such intelligences as verbal-comprehension and perceptual-organizational were followed during the 20th century by the further examination of social, practical, emotional, and even creative intelligences

(Mayer, DiPaolo, & Salovey, 1990; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Sternberg, 1985; Thorndike, 1920), as well as further refinements of cognitive intelligences (Wechsler, 1958, 1997). Although a small amount of work on an "intrapersonal" intelligence emerged (Gardner, 1983), the idea existed in a twilight of inattention.

Some relevant work did ensue, however, under other names. Researchers at the Menninger Clinic, who had embarked on early psychotherapy outcome studies, had introduced the term *psychological mindedness* to describe patients who they believed had benefited most from psychotherapy. Such psychologically-minded individuals were believed to be better able to learn about themselves and to change than others. Appelbaum (1973, p. 36) defined their capacities as including:

> A person's ability to see relationships among thoughts, feelings, and actions, with the goal of learning the meanings and causes of his experiences and behaviour (Appelbaum, 1973, p. 36).

The concept of psychological mindedness continued to be discussed, with the focus shifting mostly to attitudes and motivations such as a belief in discussing one's problems and an openness to change (e.g., Shill & Lumley, 2002). A few researchers, however, continued to pursue ability measures – examining, for example, how well people who viewed videotapes of psychotherapy could understand the patients' experiences (e.g., McCallum & Piper, 1990; McCallum, Piper, Ogrodniczuk, 2003).

Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences describes a pair of intelligences he refers to together as personal intelligences. The pair, termed "intrapersonal" and "interpersonal" are roughly parallel to personal and social intelligence, respectively (as the terms are used here). Gardner's intrapersonal intelligence is concerned with "the self as located in the individual," as well as with "the development of the internal aspects of a person." At one key point, he remarked that it involved chiefly, "*access to one's own feeling life*" (Gardner, 1993, pp. 238-239) – which today is probably better described as an emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2008; Salovey & Grewal, 2005; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Gardner acknowledged the uncertain nature of an intrapersonal intelligence, wondering, on the one hand, whether it might best be described by, "a self that is highly developed and fully differentiated from others…" or better by a "…collection of relatively diverse masks…each of which is simply called into service as needed…" (Gardner, 1993, p. 252). Gardner's overall description of an intrapersonal intelligence was a useful contribution, but remained diffuse, with key elements undecided (Hunt, 2001; Waterhouse, 2006).

A third relevant research area involved the study of self-knowledge. "Self-knowledge has not been a central, organizing topic in empirical psychology…," wrote Wilson & Dunn (2004, p. 494) in the *Annual Review of Psychology*, "There are few courses taught on the topic and few researchers who identify this as the major theme of their research." A recent textbook defines self-knowledge succinctly as, "the sets of beliefs about oneself" (Baumeister & Bushman, 2008, p. 71), but it is more relevant, here, to focus on those who have emphasized an accuracy component, e.g., "how closely tethered self-impressions of ability are to actual performance" (Dunning, 2005, p. 3). It is this difference between self-estimated attributes and some independent criterion of

performance, that recently has received considerable attention and fostered empirical research (Dunning, 2005; Vogt & Colvin, 2005). One central finding of the area of self-knowledge is that people often have limited self-understanding.

A related literature examines accuracy at understanding the personality of others. Funder and colleagues have described a *good judge* of personality as one who is able to "…make more accurate personality judgments of others due to his/her keen ability to perceive and to use available cues from the target person correctly". Such individuals are described as extraverts who amass experience about social settings and other people, and as a consequence, know more about how personality is revealed in behavior (Akert & Panter, 1988).

<div align="center">Obstacles and Opportunities in the Development of
Personal Intelligence</div>

Personal Intelligence as Small Discrepancies Between Self-Beliefs and Independent Criteria.

In the past, researchers sometimes have assessed how well an individual understands a specific aspect of him or herself in relation to an independent criterion. For example, a researcher might examine whether a person knows she is angry, by comparing her verbal report to physiological measures of her heart-rate, blood pressure, and the like (e.g., Weinberger, Schwartz, & Davidson, 1979). One appeal of this approach is that it supports our everyday perceptions that some people blatantly misperceive themselves, perhaps by over-estimating their talents (e.g., Brown, 2006; Dunning, 2005) or by believing they are evenhanded when, in fact, they behave in a prejudicial manner (Devine & Monteith, 1999). We readily notice others' self-misunderstandings – which may, depending upon the circumstance, strike us as annoying or amusing.

Recall that the self-knowledge literature sometimes compares a person's abilities against a criterion of accuracy. Studying a person's overall accuracy of self-perception, however, presents a number of obstacles. Although self-knowledge once was viewed as a single body of information, more recent theories have emphasized the multifaceted nature of the self, its multiple functions, abilities, and other characteristics (Bornholt, 2005; Lieberman, Jarcho, & Satpute, 2004; Neisser, 1988). Neisser, for example, suggested there were five kinds of selves to know, including the private (internal) self, the interpersonal self, and a conceptual self that helps integrate the others. With the potentially large number of areas and sub-areas of the self to understand (e.g., academic abilities: math ability, spelling ability, etc.), and with multiple potentially good criteria for some (e.g., defensiveness), the discrepancy approach to assessing personal intelligence is daunting.

Universality and Particularity in Relation to Personal Intelligence

There exists, however, an alternative to the self-discrepancy approach that has been relatively unstudied and yet is arguably more fundamental. That approach involves assessing people's general understanding of their own and others' personalities. An often repeated quote in personality psychology is that each person is:

like all other people,

like some other people, and

like no other people (Kluckhohn & Murray, 1953, p. 53).

One key to assessing personal intelligence may be, then, to focus on a person's understanding of the relevant general processes of personality (including one's own and others), and the regularities with which people vary from one another. To understand one's own uniqueness, after all, one also must know the average qualities of others. To understand such average qualities of personality, in turn, one must understand the universals of inner experience and external acts. Understanding a person's command of such general knowledge may be a relatively powerful means of conceptualizing personal intelligence. It allows both for a general theory of personal intelligence, and a possible pathway to its effective measurement.

A MODEL OF PERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

Describing Personality and Personal Intelligence

A number of integrative models of personality recently have been advanced. These models, for the most part, define personality similarly, view its functions similarly, and are in general agreement as to the central issues in the field (Buss, 2001; Funder, 2006; Mayer, 2005; McAdams & Pals, 2006; McCrae & Costa, 1999; Roberts et al., 2007). Several features of these integrations are relevant to the model of personal intelligence described here.

First, personality is viewed as an internal, psychological entity, emerging at the psychological level from the brain. Personality is internal – "behind the skin" – and understands the outside world from information that first is filtered through the person's senses. Personality coordinates a person's motives, feelings, self-concept and other mental systems. Its job is to govern and help determine an individual's activities, behaviors, and choices in the outside world (e.g., Buss, 2001; Freud, 1930/1961; Kelly, 1955; Maslow, 1970; Mayer, 2005; McAdams & Pals, 2006).

Second, each personality has certain customary operating characteristics, called traits. Some people prefer to be alone; others, to socialize. Some are emotional; others unemotional. Understanding these major dimensions helps people to predict their own and others' behavior, and to better fit themselves into the world (Buss, 2001; Kelly, 1955; Roberts et al., 2007).

Third, personality is self-observing. For example, an individual can observe her own internal personality processes, such as feeling excited, and also can observe her personal expressions in the world, such as choosing which painting to hang at home. Moreover, she can further observe others' reactions to her. There are, in other words, multiple information sources about personality – although they don't always agree. The same kinds of observation apply, as well, to learning about others' personalities (Funder, 1995, 1999; Mayer, 2004).

Fourth, from such information, each person constructs mental models of who they are, and of what the world is like (Higgins, 1987; Kelly, 1955; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Generally speaking, the more accurate a person's mental models are, the better. To pick up with the example of traits above: People who understand something about personality traits will understand their own and others' behavior better than people who do not recognize the

existence of such consistencies in an individual's psychology and action (Allport, 1937; Buss, 2001).

Finally, personality develops over time, and many people plan out their lives. Other things being equal, those who understand how personality develops and who possess good plans may fare better than people who do not understand its development and fail to plan (Cox & Klinger, 2004; Emmons & King, 1988; Mayer, 2007).

These points of convergence offer a context within which personal intelligence can be defined. Drawing on the above:

> Personal intelligence involves the abilities: (a) to recognize personally-relevant information from introspection and from observing oneself and others, (b) to form that information into accurate models of personality, (c) to guide one's choices by using personality information where relevant, and (d) to systematize one's goals, plans, and life stories for good outcomes.

Some of the skills involved in personal intelligence are depicted in Figure 1. The general division reflects the idea that intelligences must input information, construct mental models of the information (e.g., create a knowledge base), use such information and systematize it (Mayer & Mitchell, 1998). Each of these areas is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Figure 1. The model of personal intelligence is represented as a continuous cycle of learning, understanding, and changing that draws on four groups of abilities: the abilities to recognize personal information, to form it into models of one's own and others' personalities, to guide one's choices through using personality information, and to systematize one's life story. Through this learning-understanding-and-changing cycle individuals recognize and improve their personality-based knowledge and re-shape their life choices and life story.
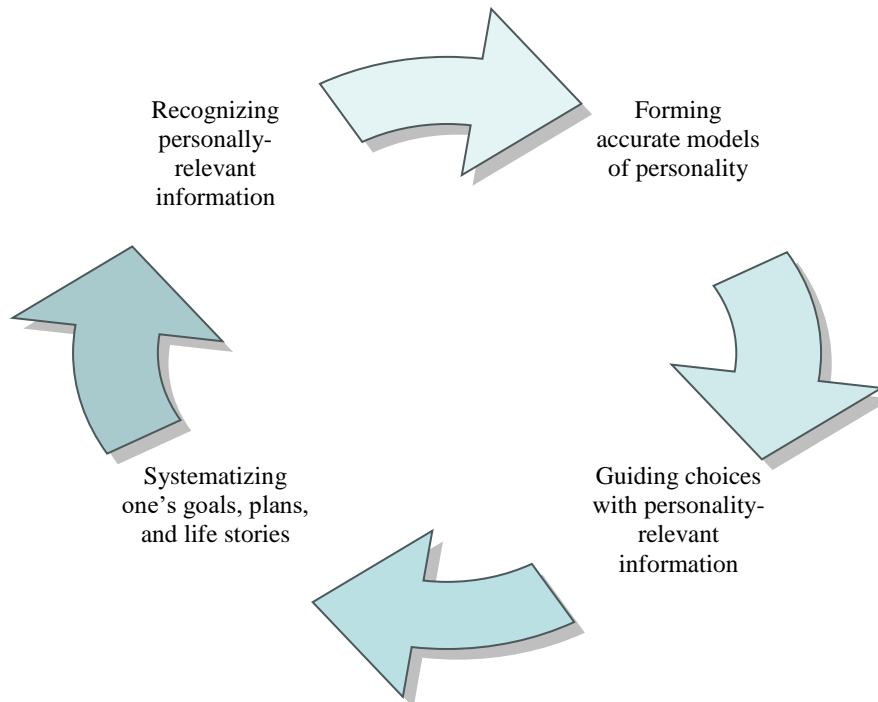
The Specific Areas of the Model
Recognizing Personally-Relevant Information

One area of PI involves the ability to *recognize personally-relevant information* -- information about one's own and others' personalities. There are multiple information sources about the individual relevant to forming judgments of oneself (and others).

Information from Introspection

A first source of personal information is from introspection – the capacity to "eavesdrop" on one's own personal images, feelings, and thoughts. Introspection is a "special method" – a person has direct access to the experiences and thoughts of his or her mental states that no one else has (Brenner, 2007; Gertler, 2003; Wilson & Nisbett, 1977; Wundt, 1897). People who have better access to their internal emotional life, as evidenced by their ability to recognize and describe emotional feelings, have generally higher well-being and better social relations (Mayer et al., 2008). The philosopher Sydney Shoemaker refers to the lack of such knowledge as self-blindness (1968; 1994).

Information from Self-Observation

A second key information source about oneself involves self-observation. When we self-observe, we witness our own external acts and, from the observations of our acts, draw conclusions as to who we are (Bem, 1967). Self-observation involves watching how we act in the outside world in contrast to introspection which monitors internal mental states. For example, a person might observe that he attends church services less and less and, from that, conclude he is losing interest in religion. In fact, people who engage in such self-monitoring generally develop greater consistency between their specific acts in the outside world and their internal beliefs (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Those higher in self-monitoring also may attempt to meet observable social standards, such as providing emotional help to others (Toegel, Anand, & Kilduff, 2007). Self-perception of our outside lives is central, too, to creating our autobiography (Bem, 1967; Robak, 2001).

Information from Informants

A third source of information about ourselves comes from others. According to "Looking Glass Self" theory, people imagine themselves as others see them, and gradually change their self-image according to others' perceptions – especially those who are higher in authority than they are (Cooley, 1902). So, a child may be told by his parents that he is stubborn, and gradually come to believe it himself. Such observer information begins with someone else's perception of us, the other person's expression of their observation, and our willingness to "take it in" so as to learn how others perceive us. Perhaps this occurs infrequently, however, because people often don't see themselves as others do. Self- and observer-perceptions typically correlate only modestly – in the $r = .00$ to $.30$ range (Yeung & Martin, 2003).

Normative Sources

A fourth information source concerns gathering normative information about others – also referred to as protocentric (as opposed to ego-centric) information (Karniol, 2003). Protocentric information involves perceptions of general personality – for example, general personality traits and average levels of motives. Also included in this category is the capacity to connect personalities to their expression in the outside world: for example, recognizing a person's carelessness from observing her messy room, or judging a person as

angry or depressed from the movies he watches or the books he reads (Gosling, Ko, & Mannarelli, 2002; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2007).

Some of this information may be observed directly by the individual; other information may be passed along as cultural knowledge. Knowing normative levels of traits and other characteristics provides a standard by which to evaluate one's own similarities and differences from others. The person high in personal intelligence should be able, more than others, to recognize and acquire information about personality.

It is worth mentioning that modern technologies have begun to uncover additional information sources about the self, including information from brain scans, medical records, psychological tests, psychotherapeutic observation, and organizational records (Mayer, 2004).

Forming Accurate Models of Personality

A second area of personal intelligence involves *forming accurate models of personality* – synthesizing earlier-recognized information about personality into models of oneself and others.

Forming Models of the Self

Children begin to form self-concepts – and concepts of others – from the personality-related information they have acquired. Given that even the simplest information about oneself may conflict this will be a challenging task. For example, a child who isn't speaking because he is sad might be labeled as stubborn by his father. How should the child piece together his sad feeling and his father's judgment that he is stubborn? Is he sad, or stubborn, or both (or neither?, e.g., Wrobel & Lachar, 1998). One of a child's first tasks – and an adult's continuing challenge – is to sift the good information from the bad and to integrate what is accurate.

For example, younger children believe that their own mothers know what they want for a birthday present better than they do themselves (Burton & Mitchell, 2003). As children develop, they begin to understand that they know best what they want for their birthdays. Some children, however, remain confused as to who knows their desires best. Even at 6 or 8-years-of-age, these children may think that even other children's mothers know what they want better than their own mothers or they themselves do! (Burton & Mitchell, 2003; Schoeneman, Tabor, & Nash, 1984).

Moreover, as children develop, for example, from age 5 to 8, they wonder who they are and who they might become – and they construct a group of increasingly realistic models of themselves (Marsh, Craven, & Debus, 1998). Later, as adults, they will continue to revise such models and form new ones (Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Forming Models of Others

Not only do people develop models of themselves, but they develop models of others' personalities as well. We create models of average personalities and notice the dimensions along which they vary. "Why is it…" wondered the ancient Greek, Theophrastus, "that while all of Greece lies under the same sky and all the Greeks are educated alike, it has befallen us to have characters variously constituted?" (Theophrastus, 372-287 B.C./1929).

People compare themselves and others along many dimensions; central among these are "Big Traits" (e.g., Goldberg, 1993). A big trait is a general trait made up of more specific, inter-correlated traits. The big trait of Extraversion, for example, is made up of such specifics as sociability, a lively temperament, and excitement-seeking (Goldberg & Rosolack, 1994). Buss (1991) has argued that understanding such traits – for example, identifying who was a skilled hunter or a good-natured mate – conveyed a crucial evolutionary advantage for those who could do so. Such selection would favor those with higher personal intelligence.

Guiding One's Choices with Personality-Relevant Information

A third area of personal intelligence involves *guiding choices with personality-relevant information* – using models of personality to guide oneself, predict the actions of others, and more generally understand and act in the world.

Models of the Self and Others as Guides

Self models include the actual self – the self we believe ourselves to be right now – and the ought self – the self we ought to be – and others such as the feared self and ideal self (Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986). These self models serve as guides to our development. For example, most children know they ought to be well-behaved, good students. So, as a teacher draws nearer, children stop whispering and instead poke their noses into their workbooks. Ideal selves, on the other hand, set out our own purposes and goals (Higgins, 1987). Feared possible selves – our selves as a drug addicted or poverty-stricken – tell us who to avoid becoming at all cost (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Self models are goal posts to approach or avoid.

Models of generic personality also communicate important information. Those who trade in character understanding and creation – politicians (who must craft a public personae that will appeal to voters), dramatists, filmmakers, and television-writers – use such information to create characters (Wilson, 2002). Such understanding and reasoning about character is part of personal intelligence as well. Recognizing basic types – and, for example, which characteristics go together to form big traits – may be a crucial part of PI.

Personality Models as Tools for Fitting-in

People further use trait and other personal information to fit into a situation, including fitting in with others. One way people do this is to match their traits with those of others. For example, when selecting housing, people tend to imagine the typical resident and then match themselves against such individuals, choosing the housing system with the closest match (Niedenthal, Cantor, & Kihlstrom, 1985). People looking for a marriage partner will match themselves to the partner on key variables such as religion, intelligence, friendliness, and anxiety (Kelly & Conley, 1987; McGue & Lykken, 1992). The more similar the couple, the easier the relationship may be. Having accurate models of ourselves, therefore, can be quite central to choosing relationships well.

People also match their traits to task demands. For example, traits such as creativity and open-mindedness could help a person meet the demands of being an artist. College students match their personal characteristics to the requirements of various academic programs in order to choose a major; later, they match their personal characteristics to occupations so as to choose a career (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994).

People with good self-models better choose the occupations that fit them, and decide on life directions more effectively than others (Fouad, Smith, & Zao, 2002; Lent et al., 1994).

Personality Models as Predictive Tools

People also employ their knowledge of others' traits to predict those peoples' behaviors. In one study, a group of children were asked to imagine that they were playing with blocks in their classroom when they were approached by another child (Rieffe, Villanueva, & Terwogt, 2005). In one story, the approaching child was described as cooperative; in a second story, the child was someone who caused problems with classmates. The children were asked what would happen next. Most children said they expected friendly play from the cooperative child, but expected the problem child might knock down their blocks. Some children, however, missed the distinction – they expected both the approaching children would be friendly. The children who best could make the distinction were rated by their teachers (who didn't know the children's answers) as better adjusted and more socially cooperative than others. The use of good personality models, in other words, assists even young children to strategize effectively about social relations. Children also have a good understanding of the importance of their own and others' reputations (e.g., Hill & Pillow, 2006).

Among adults, those who better understand their own preferences and can anticipate their future behavior will stand to gain in their future planning. In one study, students were asked whether their romantic relationships would last for another six months (Dunning, 2005, p. 132). Eighty-five percent predicted their romance would last for another six months – when the reality was 64% -- an overconfidence common to such tasks. Among the 15% who predicted their relationships would end, three quarters were correct – they were no longer in that relationship six months later. Although it may seem cold-hearted to put it this way, those students better able to make predictions could better allocate their resources by investing more in lasting relationships or less in soon-to-end relationships. By contrast, other students for whom the end of a relationship came out-of-the-blue might have over-invested in what was occurring – and would more likely be devastated as a result.

Systematizing One's Goals, Plans, and Life Stories

The final area of personal intelligence involves *systematizing one's goals, plans and life stories* so as to manage one's growth and others' well-being.

Managing Needs

Many of us reason about what we want, putting ideas together, and setting goals. Klinger and colleagues have defined *current concerns* as a person's thoughts and actions around pursuing a particular goal (e.g., Klinger, Barta, & Maxeiner, 1980). Emmons and King (1988) examined a variation of current concerns they call personal strivings. Examples of strivings include "Avoid letting anything upset me," and "Keep my dogs happy and healthy." Some people possess sets of strivings that are systematic in the sense of supporting each other (e.g., "Meet new people through my present friends," and "Accept others as they are."). Other people, however, possess strivings that conflict with one another such as: "to appear more intelligent than I am," and "to always present myself in an honest light." Understood through the lens of personal intelligence, it seems likely that some individuals systematize strivings to work together, whereas others do not or cannot –

glossing over such conflicts. People with better-systematized motives have higher well-being than others (Emmons & King, 1988).

More generally, understanding self-control strategies also may be key. Self-control helps the individual meet (or, when appropriate, abandon) goals (Cox & Klinger, 2004). Baumeister and colleagues have concluded that controlling oneself to a modest degree when attempting to meet a goal works better than exerting too much self-control, because self-control appears to be a limited-capacity system (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998), and a variety of more recent research elaborates these and related ideas (e.g., Baumeister & Vohs, 2004).

Narrating Constructive Life Stories

Goals – and obstacles to them – unfold over time, and people gradually form life stories from their experiences, using those stories to explain, direct, and motivate themselves over the long term (McAdams, 2001; Pillemer, 1998). The phenomena can be seen in how people narrate their own experiences in their autobiographies. Work by McAdams and colleagues indicates that some people approach their autobiographies in ways that are relatively constructive and inspiring whereas others develop autobiographies that are demoralizing and self-diminishing (McAdams, 2006). Often, to an independent observer, the same life events could be construed in either way. For example, a child raised in a poor but loving household might view himself as fortunate and privileged, see the poverty around him as a means of understanding the challenges many face, and hope to become well-off. Others may view a similar set of events as constituting a hard luck story (McAdams, 2006). Individuals with personal intelligence are more likely to construct stories that are realistic and yet motivating – and use such stories to motivate their own goals and to help others.

The implications of these and other capacities of the personally intelligent are described next.

DISCUSSION

What Do High PI Skills Look Like?

In this article, I have described several specific areas of personal intelligence: (a) to recognize personally-relevant information from introspection and from observing oneself and others, (b) to form that information into accurate models of personality, (c) to guide one's choices by using personality information where relevant, and (d) to systematize one's goals, plans, and life stories for good outcomes. Each of these areas has been illustrated with several specific abilities that high PI individuals can exhibit. For example, constructing goals requires attention to ensuring that one's objectives are consistent and (where desirable) sufficiently challenging (e.g., Cox & Klinger, 2004; Csikszentimihalyi, 1990).

The theory of personal intelligence described here, and informed by research on PI-related abilities, can be elaborated to form an initial description of how high- and low-personal-intelligence skills might be expressed. For example, at the low ability end of the spectrum, individuals will be relatively self-blind and lack a capacity to distinguish among their internal motivational and emotional states. They will fail to recognize differences among people, appearing as poor judges of character and often employing a "one size fits

all" approach to dealing with others. Others may feel "indiscriminated against" by them – that is, unappreciated for who they are. By contrast, high PI people may readily acquire personally-relevant information, know their motives, and distinguish themselves from the norm where appropriate.

Low PI individuals' social behavior also likely would suffer because of their inability to understand how people differ from each other, and their reliance, instead, on crude social cues. A low PI man in a singles bar may believe he is attractive to other women simply because he is there doing what the other men are doing – i.e., he is drinking in the right place at the right time – rather than being aware of his own level of attractiveness and interpersonal skills relative to others. He may further be insensitive to the differences in the women around him. On the positive side, the low PI individuals' inability to discriminate may lead them to be unerringly fair in treating others alike.

Higher levels of personal intelligence also will be related to lower levels of those mental disorders involving misapprehensions of the self. Understanding oneself accurately should buffer against tendencies toward narcissism, by adjusting views of oneself as special in a more modest direction. It also should buffer against other disorders such as those involving over-dependency, where individuals who lack self-knowledge depend on others to make decisions for them.

Given the high PI individual's ability to understand character, a disproportionately high number of them may be involved in story-telling occupations of one sort or another – writers who craft stories for television or movies, for example, or columnists who comment on personality and character. Another attribute is their capacity to narrate their autobiography in a positive fashion, telling a forward moving story that (usually) results in a positive outcome.

One significant plus of personal intelligence may be the capacity for self-mending: a resilience in response to a less-than-desirable social experience, through creative understandings of one's own life story. In fact, descriptive theories suggest that individuals with features of high PI may exhibit particularly high levels of resilience and hardiness in the face of threat (Almedom, 2005). Along these lines, McAdams (2006, pp. 93-95) reported a case report of a successful Hollywood script writer born to a suicidal mother and gambling father, who survived an orphanage to go on to a comfortable married life. When his first child was diagnosed with a serious mental disorder, he realized that the friends, nurses, and doctors assisting him were "angels on this earth…". He went on to describe the arc of his life story as one of redemption, and used it to motivate himself to help his family (McAdams, 2006, pp. 93-95).

If there is a negative side to high PI individuals, it may be a tendency to typecast themselves and others according to formulaic personality types (for example, the same writer described his father in stereotypically negative terms; McAdams, 2006, p. 98). On the positive side, these individuals are exquisitely sensitive to their own characteristics and those of others and treat others with a recognition of who they are – a key contribution to others' needs to have their true selves verified (e.g., Swann & Pelham, 2002).

The Status of Personal Intelligence Thus Far

The above description of high and low PI is tentative because the existence of personal intelligence remains a theoretical proposal at this time. This analysis does

suggest, however, what some potential strengths of the theory could be. The PI model developed here organizes psychological abilities that, collectively, are relevant to knowledge of the self and others. The model synthesizes diverse literatures in psychology and, by showing how they fit together, forms them into a newly-recognized, coherent whole.

One way to test the model of PI is to create measures of its relevant abilities, and to use those to test whether there exists a coherent, functional personal intelligence. To do so, there must be a group of measurable skills, such as the ones described here, that rise and fall together across people. That same group of skills must, as a group, be functionally useful to predict important outcomes of people's lives. The research studies discussed here suggest that, in fact, the skills of this proposed personal intelligence may well predict important outcomes for individuals. Children who predict their peers' behaviors from using trait information exhibit generally better relations with their peers. People with consistent, as opposed to conflicting, personal goals have better well-being (Emmons & King, 1988). And finally, good biographical management results in higher well-being as well (McAdams, 2006).

Is a Personal Intelligence Needed?

Too Many Intelligences?

Hedlund and Sternberg (2000) recently wondered whether there were "too many intelligences?" – a sentiment amusingly seconded by other psychologists who wondered if there were "*far* too many intelligences?" (italics added; Austin & Saklofske, 2005). Recent years have seen attention to social intelligence, systems intelligence, practical intelligence, and emotional intelligence (Hamalainen & Saarinen, 2007; Mayer et al., 1990; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Sternberg, 1985). How do these intelligences fit together? Are there indeed too many of them?

Relation to Other Intelligences

Conceptually, personal intelligence is distinct from both social and emotional intelligences – two other hot intelligences that are arguably the most closely related in their conceptualizations. Personal intelligence is broader than emotional intelligence: PI deals with a more general group of internal experiences than EI – addressing motives and self-concepts in addition to emotions; PI also deals with a more general group of effective behaviors – including those involving personal knowledge and implementing goals, rather than just emotional management. In this sense, personal intelligence is more similar in scope to social intelligence.

Yet personal intelligence also is distinct from social intelligence. Personal intelligence emphasizes the internal infrastructure of the individual – the capacity of the mental system to hold itself together in a coherent, functional, and meaningful fashion. Social intelligence, by contrast, is focused on social cognition, including social memory, the understanding of social influences and situations, and on social relationships.

Personal intelligence pertains to the social domain, as does social intelligence, but focuses on personality-related information there, such as how two or more people's traits (and other qualities) might fit together or clash. Social intelligence, by contrast, focuses on general interpersonal processes such as the ability to be persuasive, to exert situational

pressures, and to understand and manage interactions between two people, or among people in larger groups (and multiple groups), generally speaking.

The two intelligences, therefore, address different sorts of problems, although it is likely that people integrate the two types of reasoning (and reasoning from other intelligences as well) at some higher level. Ultimately, the relationships among personal, social, and emotional intelligences will be an empirical issue – but only after good operationalizations are developed of all their abilities in the form of psychological tests (Mayer et al., 2008).

<p style="text-align:center">*A Need for Personal Intelligence*</p>

As society grows more complex, fitting into society becomes more challenging. Perhaps one indication of the importance of self-knowledge comes from the longer time people require today for identity formation and for fitting in to society and its institutions. Writing in the mid-20th century, Erik Erikson described how people established their identities during their adolescence or shortly thereafter (Erikson, 1963). Many adults of the 1950s had settled into marriage and careers in their early 20s.

Psychologists now speak of an extended period of self-exploration and experimentation with roles and relationships, termed *emerging adulthood*, that extends through the decade of a person's 20s (Arnett, 2000). It is, in some ways, unsurprising that contemporary young people can use a full decade more to explore their options, relative to the adults of the 1950s. Maximizing one's strengths and fit becomes increasingly important in a now global economy, in which people compete against many others in order to make a living. Also in a global world, understanding people from different cultures becomes important and part of that involves better self-understanding as well.

The burgeoning area of self-help books and other self-help media further reflects people's search for help in choosing a direction (Greenberg, 1994; Kaminer, 1993). People increasingly recognize the potential benefit of scientifically-based assistance in self understanding, as they face an increasingly complex world (e.g., Hurme, 1997).

At the outset of this article, I noted that a personal intelligence might be associated with such qualities as being "self-absorbed", "self-centered", and "self-indulgent." I have argued that, rather, personal intelligence may mitigate such problematic tendencies. PI, I argued, was associated with people's capacities to guard themselves against mental disorders, to promote their own happiness, and to engage in better social relations. Some people might wonder, nonetheless, if personal intelligence could help a person meet individual goals without much benefit to society more generally. They might argue, for example, that high PI psychologists would become happy, high PI lawyers would become wealthy, and high PI executives powerful, but without necessarily benefitting the organizations or society around them more generally.

Although that is possible, it seems more likely that better personality functioning due to PI will lead a person to understand the interconnectedness of well-being across people, and that PI would endow people with more resources for helping others. The view developed here is that, given that each personality system is a member of a larger social system, as each person functions better, his or her potential contribution to the broader social world increases as well. Whether this view is correct or not will become clearer as personal intelligence is further studied and better understood.

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