The E-self: Revisiting William James’ model of self in the age of the selfie.

Randal G. Tonks & Gira S. Bhatt

Paper Presentation at the Annual Convention of Canadian Psychological Association, Victoria, BC
June 11, 2016
• Historical Context: The importance of Self

• Self in James
  ◦ Into the stream “I” am holding on
  ◦ Five features of Self
    • * It is persona, located in one place and body
    • * It is changing and flowing like a stream;
    • * It is sensibly continuous amid apparent periods of unawareness (i.e., sleep & sedation),
    • * It is intentional, directed to object of thought
    • * It is selective or volitional, attending to some objects of thought and not others.
The subjective seat of self

- “[w]hatever the content of the ego may be, it is habitually felt with everything else by us humans, and must form a *liaison* between all the things of which we become successively aware.”
  
  (1890/1950, p. 242, italics original)

- “[t]he very Self or ego of the individual comes in this way to be viewed no longer as the pre-existing sources of the representations, but rather as their last and most complicated fruit”
  
  (1890/1950, p. 2, italics original)
“it is obvious that if things are to be thought in relation, they must be thought together, and in one something, be that something ego, psychosis, state of consciousness or whatever you please”

(1890/1950, p. 277, italics original).

“Whatever things are thought in relation are thought from the outset in a unity, in a single pulse of subjectivity, a single psychosis, feeling, or state of mind”

(1890/1950, p. 278, italics original).
Consciousness in physiology, brain

• “Mental Phenomena are not only conditioned *a parte ante* by bodily processes; but they lead to them *a parte poste*…. [where] no mental modification ever occurs which is not accompanied or followed by a bodily change”

(1890/1950, p. 5, italics original).
The self of experience or of "datum"
The Empirical or Objective self

Three Parts

I) Its constituents:
The material self, The social self, The spiritual self

II) The feelings and emotions they arouse - self-feelings

III) The actions to which they prompt - self-seeking and self-preservation

"a man's Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account"
(1890/1950, p. 291, italics original).
• The Material Self

• The Spiritual Self

that “[b]y the Spiritual Self, so far as it belongs to the Empirical Me, I mean a man’s inner subjective being, his psychic faculties or dispositions, taken concretely; not the bare principle of personal Unity, or ‘pure’ Ego”  (1890/1950, p. 296)
The Social Self

“A man’s Social Self is the recognition which he gets from his mates” (p. 293, italics original).

“Properly speaking, a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind. To wound any one of these his images is to wound him.” (p. 294, italics original)

“we may practically say that he has as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares.” (p. 294 italics original).
• **Self-Feelings**
  affections and acquaintance of selves

• **Self-Seeking and Self preservation (Actions)**
  “our desire to please and attract notice and admiration, our emulation and jealousy, our love of glory, influence, and power, and indirectly through whichever of the material self-seeking impulses prove serviceable as means to social ends” (p. 308)
The Emergence of e-Self

e-Self:
- A cumulative entity that exists in the virtual world of digital displays. *Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, Blogs* etc.
- Verbal and Visual features
- Formal and Informal presence
- Reflection of the multiple e-social mirrors
The Selfie
Selfie

- *Time* magazine
  - 2012, “selfie” one of the “Top 10 buzzwords" of the year

- The Oxford dictionary
  - “Selfie” as the word of the 2013.  
    Definition: “A photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media”

- Clearly Self has gone digital and viral
YouTube created in 2005.

- 2009: Every minute about 10 hours of video contents were uploaded on the YouTube
- 2016: 100 hrs of video uploaded per minute,
- 6 billion hours of video watched per month
- over a billion users
- 88 countries, 76 languages covering 95% of the internet population.

Instagram

- 20 billion photos have been uploaded
- 4 billion of these are selfies
Constantly expanding e-universe

Facebook arrived in 2004.

- Within 5 years (2009) - 175 million users
- March, 2016, 1.09 billion daily active users
- 86% users are outside the US and Canada
- 100 million are in India alone.
- 350 million photos uploaded each day.

Snapchat arrived in 2012

- 10 billion video views each day
Selfie: Not new?

- James’ self-portrait
- Other artists; e.g., Van Gogh
- However, these did not have nearly the viewers both known and strangers around the world.

- Hall (2016) – “self-writing” and “selfies” in light of Foucault’s (1978)
- “Confessional” “self-writing”
e-Self and James’ Self-as-Known

- Is the e-Self an **expansion** of James’ tripartite self-as-known?
  - *Physical, Social, Spiritual?*

**OR**

- Is the e-Self an **added, 4th constituent** of the Self-as-known?
  - *Physical, Social, Spiritual, **AND** e-Self?*
James’ Self in the Selfie

- Three Constituents
  - The e-Material Self
  - The e-Spiritual Self
  - The e-Social Self

- e-Feelings

- e-Action
Self-as-Known: e-Self in research?

An empirical variable?  
A theoretical Model?


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-presentation/ Self-disclosure</th>
<th>Social Presence/Media richness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Blogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Collaborative projects; e.g., wikipedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Social networking sites e.g., facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Content communities e.g., YouTube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Virtual social worlds; e.g., Second Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Virtual game worlds; e.g., world of warcraft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-as-Known
Integrating e-Self in psychological research

Example:
Objectification of self through social media (Lyu, 2015)
E-Self: The development and maintenance

- Svelander & Wiberg (2015) Selfie as a social practice


- Agger (2004): Social construction through participation in online communities

- Potential growth of narcissism OR self-expression?
Does the Internet Create a new Self?

- Hermans & Hermans-Konopka (2010) present a **dialogical theory of self** based upon the works of James, Mead and Bakhtin suggesting that a *post-modern multiple positioned self* has emerged.

- This stands in relation to the remaining portions of *Traditional* and *Modern* selves as have evolved in time.

- Multiple “I” positions in shared discourse.
Conclusion

- James’ Self is well and alive in the e-Self