

Title: Interpreting Identity

In life we have two faces, one for the cameras and the other backstage. The mystery of how one forms their identity has been a topic for ages. Erving Goffman's research and concepts of the "stage" and William James ideas and description of the "social self" presents contrasting viewpoints on these intricate occurrences. Goffman believes that individuals form their identities through performative acts on the social stage, while James suggests that our sense of self emerges from the reflections and interactions we have with others. This essay aims to delve into and compare these theories, which will explain the different analysis and how it allows us to perceive one's identity.

Goffman's metaphorical portrayal of society as a stage helps us understand how one develops an identity in a concise and more interesting way. Just as actors assume different roles and personas to suit their performance, individuals adjust the way they present themselves in different social situations. This perspective illustrates the performative nature of one's identity, emphasizing how individuals shape how they appear to make others perceive them in a social setting. Which contends that our identities are not constant but change based on where we are or who we are surrounded by. So people wear different "masks" depending on the surrounding so they can fit in and interact which will meet social expectations.

Conversely, James believes that our interactions with others has a huge role in how we see ourselves and who we see ourselves as. He thinks our relationships and the social situation we have been in shapes our identity. According to James, the understanding of one's self is not solely based on what we are thinking about but from the feedback and perceptions of others. He suggests that the social self develops through a process of reflection, based on how others see us and what they expect from us. In this view, identity is not about who we are but rather how persons influence how we are seen by others. James highlights that we affect others as much as they affect us they go hand in hand, which creates this never ending cycle of us thinking about ourselves based on what others think after which we adjust accordingly.

To illustrate these concepts, We will look at the scenario of a job interview. On Goffman's stage, the job applicant carefully curates their appearance, how they act, and responses to align with the expectations of what they believe is needed for the interview. Just as actors' performances align to the role they are playing, the applicant matches the perceived expectation and presents themselves as confident, competent, and someone who is best suited for the position. This example shows a performance which embodies Goffman's beliefs on impression management, where individuals work to allow others to perceive them in a way which allows them to achieve specific social goals. On the other hand, from James's perspective, the applicant's sense of self is made by the feedback and assessments they may receive during an interview. So if positive feedback is given from the interviewer and validation of their skills and qualifications it will then boost their self confidence and validate their identity as a capable candidate. But, criticism or negative feedback may deter the applicant who will then reassess their self image and make the necessary adjustments accordingly, which shows how identity changes over time and relies heavily on feedback.

biases which leads to flaws that need to be taken into consideration. Gottman focuses a lot more on how people act which overlooks how our feelings, beliefs and life experience essentially makes us who we are. While impression management plays an important role in how we portray ourselves awaiting feedback does not cover all the different things that go into making us who we are. Similarly, James' focus on social interactions but does not pay enough attention to how much influence or control we have over shaping our own identity because of the focus he has on how others shape our identity. While how we interact with each other affects our identity it's just part of what shapes us, part of the whole which includes thinking about ourselves and how we see ourselves. Moreover, both theories only focus solely on one aspect that makes up the identity which ignores all the things that make up who we are.

. While Goffman gives evidence of his theory on the performative aspects of identity and the role which impression management plays in shaping our social interactions, James focuses on the opposite which is the nature of social influence and the process of self reflection and adaptation. By examining real world scenarios through these concepts which allows us to gain a deeper understanding on how complex the human identity can be. However, it is important to know these theories have their limitations and making sense of who we are is very complicated. Ultimately, understanding how we act and how others perceive us gives insight into who we set out to be in society. It allows us to relate with both theories how we look at ourselves, our thoughts and feelings and also how others see us.

