ABSTRACT

This program of research presents evidence concerning young people’s efforts to maintain a sense of personal self-unity in the face of morally conflicted behaviours demonstrated in different social contexts. The work addresses the changing ways in which young people of different ages and different cultures differently warrant the conviction that, notwithstanding evidence of good and bad behaviours, selves can be understood as unified across the various roles and contexts that they occupy. Despite the historically agreed upon importance of such matters, very little is known about how persons—especially young persons—think about their own and others’ self-unity in the face of morally conflicted behaviours. Do they actually do work to maintain a synchronically unified conception of self in the face of morally conflicted evidence to the contrary? How do their efforts to solve this classic paradox vary as a function of age or culture of origin? Finally, why might it be that young people adopt one conception of self-unity over another? Canadian and Mauritian adolescents, as well as Canadian and Japanese young adults were asked to explain the apparent disunity of self implied by the good and bad behaviours manifested by the fictional character Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde, as well as their own good and bad behaviours and the behaviours of familiar others. Responses were coded into one of four self-unity categories representing increasingly singular and context-independent conceptions of selfhood. Age-graded variations were observed, with both culturally mainstream Canadian and Mauritian youth describing themselves as increasingly multi-voiced and context dependent as they grew older. Further evidence suggests that this developmental trajectory represents something akin to what Fromm characterized as a “flight from freedom” – an emerging desire to imagine
one’s good behaviours as internally motivated, and bad behaviours as externally provoked. Canadian young adults predominantly viewed themselves as multiplicitous, while Japanese young adults imagined themselves as multiplicitous and singular with equal frequency.
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Introduction

This program of research presents evidence concerning young people’s efforts to maintain a sense of personal self-unity. The work addresses the changing ways in which young people of different ages and different cultures differently warrant the conviction that, notwithstanding evidence of “good” and “bad” behaviours, selves can be understood as unified across the various roles and contexts that they occupy. Despite the historically agreed upon importance of such matters, very little is known about how persons—especially young persons—think about their own and others’ self-unity. Do they actually do work to maintain a synchronically unified conception of self in the face of morally conflicted “evidence to the contrary”? How do their efforts to solve this classic paradox vary as a function of age or culture of origin? Why might it be that young people adopt one conception of self-unity rather than another? These questions are addressed over the course of five studies.

In Study 1, 70 culturally mainstream Canadian adolescents were asked to explain the apparent disunity of self implied by the good and bad behaviours manifested by the fictional character Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde, as well as their own good and bad behaviours and the behaviours of familiar others. Responses were coded into one of four self-unity categories representing increasingly singular and context-independent conceptions of selfhood. In Study 2, these matters were put to 50 culturally mainstream Canadian young adults, and in Study 3 the focus turned to a culturally distinct and diverse sample of 40 adolescents from the island of Mauritius. Study 4 compares the self-unity warranting strategies generated by Japanese and Canadian young adults, and the results of this study have been previously published (Proulx & Chandler, 2007). Finally, Study 5 examines motivational factors that may underlie the choice of one self-unity warranting strategy over another.
The Problem of Self Unity

"...man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens." -Henry Jekyll

Here is how it (i.e., our standard-issue Euro-American, Judeo-Christian, Post-Enlightenment cultural narrative) ordinarily goes. Nobody likes a two face. Three faces and up are straight out. Rather, we are meant to be of one face, inside and out. That is, on pain of things otherwise unravelling, we are each meant to be a coherent self, continuous in time and unified across whatever contexts we find ourselves embedded. If we lend you a fiver at a restaurant, we do not want to hear, at home, about how you are not the same person who borrowed the money, and so do not owe us a dime. Or, if, to our face, you are acting like we are the best of friends, we do not want you whispering our weaknesses into the ears of our enemies when our back is turned. And we certainly do not ever want to stand before Kierkegaard’s Judge William and have him declare:

Do you not know that there comes a midnight hour when everyone has to throw off his mask? ... or can you think of anything more frightful than it might end with your nature being resolved into a multiplicity, that you really might become many, become, like those unhappy demoniacs, a legion, and thus you would have lost the inmost and holiest thing of all in man, the unifying power of self. (Kierkegaard, 1843/1983, p. 164)

At least, that is how, for a long time, most of us have imagined that things necessarily work.

Of late, however, this old and comfortable consensus appears to have given way. The midnight hour has arrived, the masks have been thrown down, and pinned in the glare of certain harsh contemporary Post-modern lights we are all revealed as belonging to just that legion of unhappy demoniacs whose holiest thing is held up as being the mere product of a group delusion meant to obscure our true multiplicitious nature. On this “post-everything” account, we, along with Kierkegaard and other assorted holdouts for coherence, are simply standing ankle-deep in
the same trickledown of the Enlightenment, and we should all be looking to loose the Locke and lighten up. Maybe, we are invited to imagine, those existentialists were a bit too strident—all their talk of *authenticity* and *choosing selves* and *creating selves* and *being* and *time*—maybe it was all a bunch of hokum generated by a group of surly navel-gazers, men who wrote of “freedom” and “possibility” from sickrooms and shabby offices. How do we know, or why would we think that our familiar preoccupation with self-coherence is not just another western European fetish, rendered moot by the rest of the world’s profound disinterest? If our “Post-modernly” inclined friends have shown us anything, it is that many of the philosophical chestnuts of the West have lain unattended to by other generations and other cultures who have managed to muddle through without our metaphysics, the riddle of self-unity included.

Fortunately, for the purposes of this research, I am not obliged to wade too deeply into the perpetually murky waters that surround the question of whether people are *actually* bounded subjects, unified across roles. Nor would I wish to discuss the metaphysical uncertainties that surround the matter of whether or not we can *ever be* properly considered bounded subjects, unified across roles. All of that I, as a psychologist, am generally happy to forfeit in favour of the more tractable questions of whether, left to their own devices, “real” people (i.e., philosophic amateurs), of differing ages, *actually* do maintain beliefs about their own and other’s synchronic unity, and, if they do, how they go about attempting to warrant such beliefs given all of the evidence seemingly to the contrary.

Some purchase on the solution strategies that young persons actually employ in thinking about the problem of self-unity can potentially be had by examining what their elders are currently saying about the same subject. Such available views roughly divide themselves into modern and post-modern accounts.
The Need for Self-Unity

There is a new chorus of generally contemporary theorists who are quick to point to a seemingly endless array of personal disunities, big and small, as proof that the truly unified self, envisioned by Enlightenment theorists, has never and will never exist. Many of these more-Postmodern-than-thou critics have made the still more provocative claim that, not only are we not unified, but that we should not really want to be unified to begin with. By design, such anti-modernist claims fly in the face of a few millennia of Western thought that proclaims just the opposite—the importance of obeying what Flanagan (1996, p. 52) calls the "one self per customer rule." It is not difficult to imagine why adherence to such a "rule" has so regularly been judged to be a good thing. It is difficult to image, for example, how a society could function if it didn't operate from the assumption—true or false—that each of us is fundamentally the same person across time and roles and contexts. In short, Enlightenment philosophers weren't preoccupied with the "subject" for no reason; they had Leviathans and Second Treatise of Governments to write, and you can not have laws without stable, bounded subjects to apply them to. To be a citizen within a nation, an economic subject, a legal and moral subject who can sensibly be held accountable for her or his actions, we seem to require some kind of stable individual, some kind of selfhood that does not undergo a complete transformation from one context to the next.

In addition to the pragmatic rationale behind presumptive self-unity, there is also a longstanding Western belief that being synchronically disunified simply feels bad. This general contention is shared by the existentialists, with Kierkegaard (1843/2000) making an especially strong case for the affective necessity of a unified self. You could try, of course, to get by without one, but, as Kierkegaard maintained, the anxiety could kill you. Later, Camus put forth the "nostalgia for unity" (Camus, 1955, p. 4)—especially unified selves—as a general psychological need that, if left unsatisfied, necessarily produces a great deal of suffering.
Psychologists, too, beginning with James (1891) and Freud (1930/1991), have also seemed eager to describe both the needs and consequences thought to surround the quest for both horizontal self-unity (i.e., self-coherence across external, situational contexts) and vertical self-unity (i.e., coherence within the individual psyche, between the conscious and unconscious minds). Later, Eric Erikson (1968) gave us the expression *Identity Crisis* which has since entered the pop-culture vernacular, and Epstein (1981) went a long way in militating for an innately human *Unity Principle* that, in addition to not being entirely dissimilar to Camus’ *Nostalgia for Unity*, is said to drive us to establish a unity within our psyche, and punishes us with misery if we sense that this unity has not been achieved.

**Modernism and the New Reality of Self-Disunity**

And yet, even as so many of the great figures of Modernism championed the importance of self-unity with regard to social pragmatics and psychological well-being, many of these same “boosters” of self-coherence acknowledged and explored the *incoherence* that also seemingly lies at the heart of selfhood. According to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, once we have obeyed the Socratic maxim *Know Thyself*, we make the unpleasant discovery that, for the most part, we aren’t really a self at all, at least not until we have obeyed Kierkegaard’s further commandment, “Choose thyself!” (Kierkegaard, 1843/2000, p. 65). Nietzsche (not surprisingly) issues a still more radical order, one that is later re-issued by Sartre (1957)—in the face of innate psychological disunity, we must *create* a self, moulding the disparate aspects of our psyche into a singular work of art, a work of aesthetic beauty. Nietzsche, for example, suggests that one should “give style to one’s character—a great and rare art! It is surveyed by all those who survey the strength and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as part and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye” (Nietzsche, 1887/1982, p. 44). As with the graduation to Kierkegaard’s *Ethical Sphere* (Kierkegaard, 1845/2000), both Nietzsche and Sartre see this newly minted subject as a self that can finally be held to account by
its peers, its newfound vertical and horizontal integration providing the required structural integrity to bear the burden of social responsibility.

Again, it must be pointed out that the need for such deliberate efforts to unify, choose, or create a self imply that such a self does not naturally or automatically exist. At the crest of Modernism’s highest wave, Freud (1930), for example, lays bare the vertical disunity that constitutes our being, both prior to and following the establishment of the superego’s high-command. According to Freud, if we but scuff the veneer of our rationality we expose the irrational, multiplicitous, and incoherent mass that constitutes the bulk of our mental lives. Freud eventually dissolved the self into the overlapping socio-cultural contexts that define it, seeing us less as puppets, which are none-the-less bounded entities, and more as Heidegger’s (1953) Da-sein—beings that are there, imbedded in a relational matrix that doesn’t so much control us as constitute us. We are “the they” (p. 13), yet even so, both theorists emphasize how unsatisfied we are with this incoherence, and even as Heidegger demands we heed “the call of conscience” (p. 45) and thereby regain a semblance of personal integrity (perhaps), while Freud sees us staring wishfully into Lacan’s (1977) mirror in order to re-unify ourselves—our ego demands that the id and superego kiss and make up.

Post-modernism and the Championing of Self-Disunity

Although there is considerable debate about when so-called post-modern thought got its first serious toehold in Western thought (Chandler, 1997), there is no serious room for doubt that, in the bloody aftermath of WWII, many social philosophers and social scientists had lost faith in all prospects for progress, and, in large numbers, sought solace in the cold comforts of nihilisms of various stripes. Such theorists seemed oddly motivated to accentuate disunity in all domains, to claim that self-unity was especially unattainable and, more often than not, that all of this was just as it should be. If Heidegger, in his later works, abandoned his previous attempts to establish some manner of bounded subjectivity, Derrida (1978), Foucault (1986), and Deleuze
(1994) carried this "death of the self" agenda one step further by enthusiastically dissolving the subject into a "plane of immanence" (Deleuze, p. 34), rendering us wholly contextual entities that, like text itself, possessed no grand narrative which would bestow internal coherence, or even differentiate us from other consciousnesses.

Sensing that they had perhaps gone too far, at least some of these post-modern theorists began reversing their field and to speak again of subjects, *bounded subjects* at that. Foucault, in particular, began to sound an awful lot like those Modernist theorists who preceded him. That is, after having ostensibly abandoned the "philosophy of the subject", Foucault in particular began to talk about "self-constitution" and "self-government" and "the technology of the self" (1986, p. 350). Whether or not your contemporary standard issue post-modern thinker has, like Foucault, drawn back from the most nihilistic edge of anti-modernist thought, what they have not done is recant their strong convictions against unities of all sorts, or given up on their abiding commitment to the abiding importance of context.

There you have it, the bald-faced, either-or dichotomy that recent intellectual history has put on offer as culturally sanctioned alternatives from which your persons are "free" to choose in working out their own beliefs about their own and others' self-unity. They can, like other high-modernist forebearers, share the conviction that nothing is worse than being a two-face, of dissolving into a "multiplicity," or, instead, they might, like their available Post-modern mentors, conclude that context is everything and self-unity a ploy developed on Madison Ave. to sell deodorant. Or they might conclude something else altogether different, and so the need for real empirical work.

So How Do Young People (Philosophic Novices) Think About Self-Unity?

To date, there has been only limited psychological research into the developmental course by means of which we come to whatever understanding we have about ourselves as coherent persons. In attempting to impose some order on this scattered literature, it is a matter of
special importance to keep distinct and well apart work that focuses on matters of diachronic continuity and other efforts that feature, as is done here, the more time-limited, cross-sectional matter of synchronic self-unity.

Chandler and his colleagues (2001, 2004, 2006) have focused earlier work exclusively on the temporally vectored problem of diachronic self-continuity, reporting both age-graded and cross-cultural variations in how young people work to resolve discrepancies between conceptions of their past and present selves. This work also demonstrates that failure to resolve such discontinuities can be linked to an increased risk for a variety of adaptational failures, including suicidal behaviours. While this research points to a desire to maintain self-continuity over time and details some of the possible costs of failing to achieve a sense of diachronic coherence, it does not address the present matter of synchronic self-unity, or the contradictions that arise when we compare our behaviours from one social context to the next.

Among those who have concerned themselves with self-unity, the work of Erikson (1950, 1968), along with Marcia (1966, 1980) is perhaps the most familiar. Erikson, in particular, characterized self-unity as the ability to bracket together all of one's diverse but simultaneously present features, much as did Kelly (1955) and Rogers (1959), who stressed the importance of achieving some cross-sectional sense of internal consistency, or unity of the self. Within the more contemporary clinical and developmental literatures, Grotevant, (1993, 1994), Harter (1986, 1992), and Fischer (1980, 1994), among others (Aboud, 1979; Broughton, 1978; Leahy & Kogan, 1989; Selman, 1980), to name a few, have all devoted attention to the problem of identifying age-graded changes in the ways that young persons attempt to link conflicting aspects of the self into some increasingly organized understanding.

Within the identity development literature, empirical studies focusing on young people's efforts to achieve a measure of synchronic unity are relatively thin on the ground. A rare and notable example of this work is Harter and Monsour's (1992) "Developmental Analysis of
Conflict Caused by Opposing Attributes in the Adolescent Self-Portrait.” As did Chandler, Lalond, Sokol and Hallet (2004), Harter and Monsour focused on adolescence — the developmental juncture at which the need for both a synchronically unified and diachronically continuous personal identity is widely imagined to be felt most keenly and is arguably the most difficult to achieve. According to Harter, adolescence is a time when we often experience ourselves as “numerous potentially contradictory selves clamouring for expression” (p. 258). Swimming against all but the most Post-modern of philosophical currents, Harter and Monsour present evidence said to indicate that the usual solution to this problem is to adopt a “more differentiated sense of self as we grow older”—a way that is said to be “associated with the varying social roles that the adolescent must come to adopt” (p. 256). Rather than seeking to achieve a wholly consistent sense of self-unity across roles, what adolescents typically do, according to Harter and Monsour, is to deal with the negative affect associated with such disunity by turning a potential vice into a virtue, by urging that it is both “understandable or desirable to act differently in different social situations” (p. 256).

Although Harter and Monsour’s program of research comes reasonably close to operationalizing conceptions of self-unity as they have been historically conceptualized, two central issues remain to be unsettled in their work. First, it is important to distinguish between:

(a) the perception of different attributes and behaviours manifested by a self across contexts; and

(b) the sense that there are, in some sense, different “selves” inhabiting the same body. While Harter and Monsour’s work elaborates the manner in which we may come to reconcile our often context-dependent ways of behaving, none of this may address directly what is arguably a more egregious form of disunity—the manifestation of desires or intentions that openly contradict one another. Second, the presence of contradictory desires and intentions is, we will argue, most egregious when such desires and intentions provide the impetus for both moral and immoral behaviours. After all, the social-pragmatic impetus underlying much of the centuries of hand
wringing over matters of self-unity instigated by Enlightenment thinkers was motivated by the need to have stable, unitary hearts and minds, as well as bodies, to which laws can be applied and to which they can be held accountable. Whatever Harter and Monsour might believe about the adaptive character of becoming a two-face, parents do not want to hear that you are not responsible for joy-riding in the neighbour’s pick-up because that was your other self, the one who likes to raise hell with his friends.

A Methodology In The Making

Simply asking anyone—especially young persons—to comment upon their “degree of self-unity” will hardly do; even thoughtful adults may not easily understand the question, or may not have declarative access to the knowledge that they need to explicitly frame a coherent account of how they ordinarily resolve the riddle of self-unity. Through a certain amount of trial and error, the procedure finally settled upon was to have young people consider and comment upon examples of potentially morally conflicted behaviours, behaviours that, on their face, can be seen to imply disunified desires and intentions on the part of the person enacting them. The key questions posed were: a) “Can this individual still be considered one in the same person, despite the good and bad behaviours they alternatively engage in?” and b) “If so, then how can one person behave so differently, and still be considered one and the same person?” (Inquiries were always framed with the somewhat ambiguous word “person” rather than “self”.

As a way of beginning with a common case, participants were first asked about the possible disunity not of themselves, but of a hypothetical case drawn from literature, before also asking about their own self-unity, and that of close acquaintances.

Jekyll & Hyde’s Selfhood

Robert Louis Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886/2003) was chosen to provide a common starting-point. This story has deeply imbedded itself within our popular culture because it presents such an admittedly extreme example of self-disunity, and
unlike many philosophical hypotheticals, its focus is those aspects of self-disunity that are the most compelling and immediately problematic. As is most often the case in “real life”, Jekyll & Hyde’s chief disunity lies not only within his seemingly contradictory intentions, but the degree to which these intentions possesses a moral valence; sometimes Jekyll wants to do good things, and other times Hyde wants to do bad things. Although Jekyll & Hyde is certainly an exaggerated example of seeming disunity, it was also sufficiently straight-forward to allow most young people to both recognize and engage the issue of personal unity.

Personal Selfhood

Of course, the primary matter of interest lay in how young people might react to potential disunity within their own selves. A discussion of Jekyll & Hyde’s self-disunity is meant to be a sort of metaphysical icebreaker encouraging young people to think about diverse comportments they might not normally consider in the course of declarative discourse about morally diverse behaviours. This accomplished attention was returned to the principal focus, young people’s own seemingly contradictory behaviours.

Since one can not pull out a dossier on each participant and confront them with their own moral contradictions, participants were instead asked to offer up their own examples. Perhaps against odds, even younger adolescents proved quick to offer up such anecdotes and to attest to their own morally conflicted nature. With these self-generated examples in hand, the structured interview procedure employed with Jekyll & Hyde was followed. That is, despite sometimes seeming like a good person and at others like a bad person, participants were asked whether they, nonetheless, consider themselves to be one in the same person? And if so, how so?

Other Selfhood

In addition to inquiring about the self-unity ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde and to themselves, participants were also asked about possible unities in the lives of friends and family. Are
adolescents cognizant of the morally discordant behaviours of other people they know, and do they come to understand the good and bad behaviours of Jekyll & Hyde, or themselves?

Three Questions

Because Modern and Post-modern theorists have both offered up contradictory claims about such matters, the studies presented in this dissertation are primarily exploratory in nature, with no firmly held hypotheses being tested. These studies do, however, ask specific and testable questions, and attempt to interpret the observed answers to these questions in relation to the relevant psychological and philosophical literature. Three specific questions will be addressed in Studies 1, 2, 3 and 4:

First, it seemed important to address the primary descriptive question of whether the ways that adolescents attempt to understand morally conflicted selves in ways that differ over the course of their teenage years. Harter’s work (1986, 1992) traces a developmental arc according to which older adolescents were found to more frequently allow contradictory attributes to remain at the core of their self-conception than do younger adolescents —a finding interpreted as suggesting a more differentiated self-conception manifesting with age. In contrast to Harter’s work, the focus of the present research is on the resolution of apparently contradictory intentions rather than attributes. It remained an open question as to whether strategies for resolving non-morally valenced attributes implicate cognitive processes and capacities that are different from those that underlie efforts to maintain or restore a sense of self-unity in the face of self-related contradictions.

Second, it will be determined whether adolescents tend to prefer one mode of self-conception rather than another when judging the self-unity of Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, and familiar others. If this the case, then the frequency of various self-conceptions—whatever form they may take— should not be distributed equally, but rather, should pile up in one category of self-understanding rather than another.
Third, it was also thought to be of interest whether adolescents tend to employ the same or different notions of unity in considering the morally relevant behaviours of Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, and familiar others.
Study 1: Canadian Adolescents

Method

Participants

The North American adolescent sample consisted of 70 high school students (Grades 8-12) from a private school in an urban metropolitan area. Data collection occurred in two waves with an initial sample of 25 followed by 45 additional participants 1 year later. All spoke English as their first language. Of these students, 40 were female and 30 were male. Ages ranged from 13 to 18 years, with: 14 13-year-olds, 19 14-year-olds, 11 15-year-olds, 12 16-year-olds, 11 17-year-olds, and 3 18-year-olds ($M = 14.94$, $SD = 1.51$ years). Participants were paid $15 for a one half-hour interview.

Materials and Procedure

Stimulus materials consisted of a comic book version of The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886/2003), one that was edited so that so that it would embody the key conceptual element of the story that participants were meant to consider, namely, the question of whether Jekyll & Hyde can be considered one in the same person in the face of his morally discordant behaviours. The focus of subsequent questioning was on how this evident discordance could be so. The comic-book version was as vague as possible regarding the motivation behind Jekyll & Hyde’s transformations, no magic potions and no diachronic physical transformations, thereby removing any easy answers that could account for the alternating good and bad behaviours on display.

One of two trained interviewers questioned participants using a standard interview protocol. Participants were asked to read the comic book The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and were then asked to recount the events of the story as a way of determining whether they were clear on the characters and events. Following this, participants were asked to separately describe Dr. Jekyll, as he behaved during the day, and Mr. Hyde, as he behaved at
night. It was then put to participants: Could Jekyll & Hyde be considered one-and-the-same person, given his good and bad behaviours? If they answered in the affirmative they were then asked to provide reasons in support of this conclusion.

Participants were then asked if it was ever the case that they themselves sometimes behaved like a bad person, and other times like a good person. If they consented to this possibility — again a prospect almost universally agreed to — they were then asked to provide examples of their behaving like a good and bad person. As was the case for Jekyll & Hyde, participants were asked whether, in spite of these seemingly contradictory behaviours, they nonetheless considered themselves to be one and the same person. If they answered in the affirmative, they were again asked to warrant this assertion.

Finally, participants were asked to give examples of good and bad behaviours displayed by their friends or family members, and were asked whether or not they thought these individuals could still be considered one in the same person, and if, to warrant this conclusion.

While all interviews began with questions concerning Jekyll & Hyde’s self-unity, questions concerning personal self-unity and the self-unity of others were counterbalanced across interviews.

Coding and Typology

Over the course of each half hour interview, all participants provided at least one account of their own or others’ good and bad behaviours that could be reliably coded into one or another of the categories detailed below. In fact, many participants presented more than one potentially codable account of self-unity over the course of their interview, often with various false starts and changed minds as the interviews progressed. While the number and nature of these false starts could not themselves be reliably coded, it was also the case that all of the participants eventually settled on one conception of selfhood that could be reliably coded. On those occasions where participants introduced more than one account of self-unity, the one coded was
the one that the participant had spent the balance of the interview discussing, and had developed in the most elaborate detail.

The following typology of self-unity warranting strategies constitute what are argued to be the "natural" categories into which young people’s responses fell over the course of the analysis. While some philosophical precedence is offered up for the categories eventually settled on, it should be noted that these categories were not generated a priori in order to meet some pre-existing theory. While the resulting typology consists of four categories, these are not meant to inherently constitute developmental categories of increasing conceptual sophistication. Rather, they represent what is argued to be a spectrum of self-unity warranting strategies that implicate two interdependent dimensions.

The first of these dimensions involves the number of impulses or volitions that were seen as underlying the apparently contradictory intentions manifested in different contexts. As will be shown, many young people imagined that different impulses or volitions separately underpinned the good and bad behaviours they described, while other participants imagined that a single volition was differently manifested in the contexts of the different behaviours. Consequently, protocols were dichotomously scored as having employed only one or more than one volitional explanation.

The second of these dimensions concerns the degree to which these impulses or volitions were described as being generally active or reactive in nature. Many young people described themselves as generally reacting to circumstance—responding to external or internal forces beyond their control that evoked their good and bad behaviours. Conversely, other participants imagined themselves or others as acting on circumstance—volitionally choosing to behave both well and badly, all in the service of some common goal. Still other responses fell somewhere in between these two extremes, with many young people imagining themselves as harbouring both volitions acting on circumstance, and impulses owed to circumstance.
As shown by Figure 1, these two dimensions combined to form what are described here as the “Multiplicitous Self”, “Hierarchical Self”, and “Singular Self” categories. The remaining category—“No Self-Unity”—comprised the responses of those that denied the presence of any self-unity whatsoever. A brief account of each of these scoring categories follows.

“No Self-Unity”. Responses scored in this category contained no attempt to assert that the individual in question possessed any semblance of self-unity. Most often, a mind/body distinction was evoked, whereby the individual in question could be considered to be the same person insofar as they possessed the same physical body, but two or more different people insofar as that body housed entirely different minds. Participants usually made reference to “multiple personalities”, or claimed that the individual was “schizophrenic”, suggesting that some form of insanity was responsible for their morally discordant behaviours.

A typical “No Self-Unity” response to the case of Jekyll & Hyde were elaborations of the following assertion made by one of the adolescents: “It is the same body in the day as in the night, but he’s got two different minds … it is like a split personality”. Similarly, of those young people who characterized other people they knew as being fundamentally disunified, the following adolescent exemplified this understanding by stating that:

Because like I said, I mean he doesn’t look different and he’s still the person that I know, I mean physically he’s the same person, even though personality wise he might be two different people, but I still see him as the same person because he still looks the same.

“Multiplicitous Self”. The “Multiplicitous Self” can be characterized as harbouring many impulses that arise as a consequence of passively reacting to changing circumstance. As distinct from the previous mode of responding, participants coded in this category begin by flatly asserting that the individual in question retains a unified self, even if what they go on to describe could initially be construed as belying this claim. These participants described themselves and others as no more than the common cause of their actions, referring to a self that is inhabited by
different desires or emotions that are evoked by changing circumstance, giving rise to the individual’s morally discordant behaviours. Unlike the remaining warranting strategies, however, these desires are always described as little more than emergent impulses, rather than conscious volitions.

Furthermore, for those employing this brand of self-unity, what brings one or another impulse to the fore is simply some matter of circumstance. More than any other self-unity warranting strategy, responses that fell into this category carefully detailed the interplay between external, situational factors and internal, affective factors that bring out, or elicit, good and bad behaviours at different times. The “Multiplicitous Self” is an essentially passive and reactionary entity, regarded simply as a "mechanical conveyors of animating ... forces" (Bandura, 1986, p. 12)—forces that reside in either the external environment or their own inaccessible internal emotional world—where the implication is that both of these sources of influence lie beyond the individual’s conscious, volitional control.

The following response typifies this category of response when judging Jekyll & Hyde’s self-unity:

Yeah, he’s the same person, but during the day his work brings out the good in him, and the night brings out the bad, I guess. It just goes back and forth.

When young people judged themselves as manifesting this form of self-unity, their responses were similar to the following:

Um, I think it is the situation, and I just respond to each situation differently, and that is got a lot to do with my personality which happens when I’m sad and when I’m happy. When I’m mellow and when I’m like, more angry, so, yeah, I think it is still my personality, it would affect both of them. It is not as though I’m a completely different person, it is just that the situation’s changed and so I just respond to it differently. But no,
I do not think … (laughing); I think I’m the same person and it is all come down to my feelings and how I respond to situations.

With regard to other people the participants knew, “Multiplicitous Self” accounts ran along the following lines:

but they’ve got a lot of different faces, I mean faces like, when they’re feeling sensitive and caring, all these faces, also anger and hypocrisy, and all of these make up the same person. It is like they describe it, the person.

“Hierarchical Self”. The “Hierarchical Self” can be characterized as one volition consciously acting on circumstance, and many impulses passively reacting to circumstance.

Many folk psychological accounts of self-unity rest on the often invoked Enlightenment distinction (Locke, 1961) between first order, conscious, controlled volitional actions, and second order, largely unconscious, untamed impulses (Frankfurt, 1971). Like the “Multiplicitous Self”, responses scored in this third category describe a self that houses more than one desire. However, in this case, one desire rises above the other and speaks louder that its fellow self-inhabitators. This desire is seen as actively directing good behavior most of the time, though it is occasionally overcome by building impulses that are evoked in certain circumstances, resulting in behaviours we often aren’t proud of. Therefore, unlike the “Multiplicitous Self”, “Hierarchical Self” responses suggest that the individual is more than the common cause of all their actions, insofar as the self is seen to remain under the influence of a single, conscious, active volition—at least most of the time. Generally, these responses evoke a kind of naïve-psychoanalytic stance, where conflict arises only when impulses and emotions, generally held in check, occasionally burst forth and give rise to actions that aren’t in keeping with the individual’s characteristic moral stance.

When Jekyll & Hyde was understood as a “Hierarchical Self”, participants typically sounded like the following adolescent:
He’s mostly a good person, but he has a lot of stress that builds up throughout the day at work and people do not think he has a bad bone in him but he does. He was trying to get rid of it but he could not and he had to let that urge out at night.

With regard to their own self-unity, participant responses scored as a “Hierarchical Self” ran along the following lines:

I mean, I think generally to everyone I am a kind person, and nice and stuff. But I think, I mean everyone knows that I have a mean part inside. If you are nice 24/7 it is just going to explode on you, like everyone gets angry. I can not control the anger sometimes, unfortunately.

The following youth further typifies “Hierarchical Self” responses as applied to other people:

Because even when they’re trying to be good, they can have a little bit of bad in them, and even when you are mostly bad, you can have some good in you as well. No one is ever totally one thing.

“Singular Self”. The “Singular Self” can be characterized as guided by one volition consciously acting on all circumstances. In this account, there is no mention of active, conscious volitions mingling, or competing with base impulses within a single self. Selves, as understood by those whose responses are scored as “Singular”, are, seen as seamless, fully active agents autonomously formulating their own actions in every circumstance. By this reckoning, the appearance of seemingly contradictory intentions represents nothing more than that: mere appearance. Like the Mafia don who cuts throats and cuddles his grandkids to bring about “what’s best for the family,” participants who scored in this category of self-understanding claimed that they were possessed by a single volition that, while it may manifest differently in different contexts, does not itself change from situation to situation. That is, while the structure of the self may well be understood to have its beginnings in society or various intra-psychic
turmoils, the volition that characterized selves of this sort is understood to be neither determined nor influenced by society or even their own mercurial physiology.

In this sense, the self becomes what Lakoff and Johnson (1999) have called an *embodied agent*—an individual agent who, while rooted, or situated, in a body and a society of people, employs a more autonomous framework of self-understanding (or what Bratman, 2007; Hart, 1968; and Malle, Moses, & Baldwin, 2001, call *responsible agency*), thereby relinquishing all passive or reactive conceptions of the mind in favor of a fully volitional understanding of mental life. Such young persons view themselves as actors or authors who plan, deliberate and reason about *all* of their actions. Such selves are consequently the owners of, and responsible agents for, all of their actions, never looking to influential contextual factors to absolve them of moral responsibility.

When participants saw Jekyll & Hyde as possessing a "Singular Self", they tended to describe it as this adolescent did:

I think he’s the same person, because during the day he helps people so people will not find out and he’d go to jail ... he’s always in control, he just seems different because it is an act during the day.

With regards to their own selves, "Singular Self" responses were typified by the following:

It is just the choices I make. I want to be good, I could be good. If I want to be bad, I can be bad, I guess. It is all the choices I make in life. I’m changing because it is my decision, and if I were to change myself then I’m the one who makes the change. But if I were to change myself I’m still the same person, like the change about myself is my stealing, my being nice at home; that’d be it.

Finally, when participants ascribed a "Singular Self" to other people they knew, their responses were exemplified by this adolescent:
Well, as I say, sometimes this person would seem to be kind, helpful, polite whatever, other times he would seem really callous, you know, one day he’s being friendly, the next day...(clears throat) basically I could see that he was nice to people when it suited him, or when he felt, there were times you could see, you know, he was trying to get something out of you and so he would behave nicely and other times he would just, you know, be cold when he didn’t want to bother or when you could not do anything in his favour and … hmmm … when I saw that, it is basically the idea “which will work best for me?” “If I’m nice to this person or if I’m cold to them”, you see, that is what made him one person.

Inter-rater Reliability

All participant responses were independently coded by two coders. Participant responses could be reliably scored into one category or another with 86% inter-rater agreement among coders (Cohen’s $\kappa = .82$). All disagreements were resolved through discussion.

Results

The following analyses were conducted to determine whether the self-unity categories North American adolescents ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, or familiar others varied in relation to the gender or age of participants. Analyses were also conducted to determine whether participating adolescents would ascribe some self-unity categories more frequently than others to the target person under consideration, as well as whether participants would ascribe the same self-unity categories across judgements made for these various target persons.

Gender and Self-Unity Category

A chi-square test of difference determined that there was no significant difference between the frequencies of self-unity categories ascribed by male and female participants to Jekyll & Hyde, $\chi^2(3, \ N = 70) = 1.12, \ p = .77$; themselves, $\chi^2(2, \ N = 70) = .86, \ p = .65$; or others, $\chi^2(2, \ N = 70) = .05, \ p = .98$. 
Age and Self-Unity Category

The mean age of participants who ascribed each category of self-unity for Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, and others was examined by means of a one-way ANOVA.

Jekyll & Hyde. There was no significant relationship between the age of the adolescent and the category of self-unity that they ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, $F(3, 66) = .44, p = .73$ (see Table 1).

Self. Unlike self-unity judgments made for Jekyll & Hyde, there was a significant relationship between the age of the adolescent and the category of self-unity they ascribed to themselves, $F(2, 67) = 15.02, p < .01, \eta^2 = .31$. Tukey post hoc analysis revealed a significant difference between the mean ages of adolescents who ascribed themselves a “Multiplicitous Self” ($M = 15.87$) and “Hierarchical Self” ($M = 14.43$) ($p < .01, d = 1.09$), and “Multiplicitous Self” ($M = 15.87$) and “Singular Self” ($M = 13.37$) ($p < .01, d = 1.9$) (see Table 1).

Other. There was no significant relationship between the age of the adolescent and the category of self-unity that they ascribed to familiar others, $F(2, 67) = 2.27, p = .11$ (see Table 1).

Person and Self-Unity Category

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was used to determine whether there were differences in the frequencies of self-unity categories participants ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, or familiar others. For descriptive purposes, the effect sizes of salient and theoretically relevant frequency differences were explored by means of the phi coefficient ($\varphi$).

Jekyll & Hyde. There was no significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories adolescents ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, $\chi^2(3, N = 70) = 3.94, p = .27$ (see Table 2).

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1 In instances where no participants chose a given category for a target person, (e.g., no participant chose “No Self-Unity” for themselves), a corresponding data point was entered to avoid a structural zero for that category and allow for an accurate chi square analysis. This is reflected in the degrees of freedom for the given chi square analysis, and is present in Studies 1 and 2.
Self. There was a significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories participants ascribed to themselves, \( \chi^2(3, N = 71) = 36.1, p < .01 \). No participants imagined themselves as possessing “No Self-Unity” \((\varphi = .97)\), and they more frequently attributed to themselves a generally differentiated self-construal (“Multiplicitous Self” or “Hierarchical Self”), rather than an undifferentiated “Singular Self” \((\varphi = .71)\) (see Table 2).

Other. There was a significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories adolescents ascribed to familiar others, \( \chi^2(3, N = 71) = 24.49, p < .01 \). As was the case with judgments offered about themselves, no participants imagined familiar others as possessing “No Self-Unity” \((\varphi = .97)\), and they more frequently ascribed to them a generally differentiated self-construal (“Multiplicitous Self” or “Hierarchical Self”), rather than an undifferentiated “Singular Self” \((\varphi = .48)\) (see Table 2).

Person vs. Person

To determine whether participants’ self-unity ascriptions for each target person were related to one another, a phi coefficient was calculated between participants’ category responses for Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, and familiar others. There was no significant relationship between the self-unity categories participants ascribed to fictional character Jekyll & Hyde and themselves \((\varphi = .37, p = .16)\), or Jekyll & Hyde and familiar others \((\varphi = .26, p = .57)\). There was, however, a significant relationship between the self-unity categories participants ascribed to familiar others and to themselves \((\varphi = .46, p < .01)\) (see Table 2).

Discussion

When comparing the self-unity conceptualizations produced for Jekyll & Hyde and for themselves (see Table 2), it is clear that the manner in which Canadian adolescents construe their own selfhood is importantly different, and unrelated to their approach to the disunity of Jekyll & Hyde. It seems that when considering the fictional, massively disjointed Jekyll & Hyde, a number of adolescents (roughly one in five) were happy to see him as a little more than a
singular body housing multiple selves ("No Self-Unity"). By contrast, none of the adolescents understood themselves in this utterly disunified fashion. Rather, most of these participants (six in seven) viewed themselves as unified, albeit in a differentiated manner (i.e., "Multiplicitous Self" or "Hierarchical Self"), with relatively few (one in seven) explaining their own morally contradictory behaviours as being owed to a volitional, context-independent "Singular Self". Finally, when it came to understanding the self-unity of familiar others, these same adolescents did so in a manner that was closely related to the manner in which they understood themselves. That is, they were generally unwilling to view others as psychologically disunified, and most often described them using the "Multiplicitous Self" and "Hierarchical Self" accounts that they favoured in response to their own manifest disunity.

Development, as it applies to employing one self-unity warranting strategy rather than another, only manifests itself when participants are warranting their own self-unity, in contrast to their accounts of Jekyll & Hyde’s self-unity, or even that of familiar others (see Table 1). Apparently, for a given age, just about any account will suffice when attempting to reconcile the moral failings of fictional characters or close acquaintances. When, by contrast, it comes to warranting their own self-unity in light of morally conflicted behaviours, these same young people seem disinclined to be quite so arbitrary, acting instead in ways that suggest that there is something uniquely at stake when trying the understand these moral contradictions in their own lives. As was the case with Harter and Monsour’s (1992) work involving conflicting attributes and behaviours, the older participants predominantly resolve their morally conflicting behaviours by recourse to imagined contextual influences, allowing that different impulses and volitions may be contained within their own self. While all of these participants flatly asserted that they were, in fact, the same psychological as well as physical entity, older adolescents increasingly presented themselves as passive or primarily reactive to local and changing circumstance, going on to describe a tangled array of desires and emotions that are merely triggered or provoked by
external events ("Multiplicitous Self"). Still, younger adolescents imagined themselves as acting from active volitions most of the time ("Hierarchical Self"), and those younger still saw themselves as driven by a singular, teleologically unified sense of personal agency ("Singular Self")—a set of "age-graded" relations that many might have intuited would run in exactly the opposite direction.

Following from these initial findings, three further questions arose which are addressed by Studies 2, 3, 4, and 5.

First, what will be found if the same questions are put to young adults? With three term papers due this week, a boyfriend they're happy with, another guy they really like, a boss they hate or even a child on the way, it may not be the case that they can so easily continue to imagine themselves as context dependent multiplicities. Or it may be case that they're more motivated than ever to imagine themselves in just this way.

Second, if adolescents belonging to other cultures are examined, will the same pattern of responses that characterizes the Canadian samples present itself? It may be the case that the desire to assert and justify claims of self-unity represents some peculiar Western European cultural artifact, rather than something approximating a psychological universal. It may also be the case that, even if young people from other cultures share a desire to perceive selves as somehow unified, they may favor different self-unity warranting strategies than the ones generated by Canadian adolescents. As well, the choice of which category of selfhood they apply to themselves may not change over time, or may not vary much among individuals.

Third, what is motivating North American adolescents' shift in their understanding of self-unity from singular and active to multiplicitous and reactive? While one might speculate on pragmatics of one form of self-construal or another, it remains to be worked out what, exactly, is at stake when we adopt a particular mode of self-understanding in the face of our sometimes irresolute moral behaviours. Harter and Monsour (1992) portray an analogous shift in self-
understanding as being motivated by an increasing awareness of the contextual factors that shape our behavior, and a general increase in cognitive sophistication that allows us to imagine ourselves as one person who possesses many conflicting attributes. If a general cognitive account (e.g., Piaget, 1960; Fischer, 1980) applies to resolving our morally conflicted behaviours, both “good” and “bad”, then one might have expected to see multiplicitous, context dependent self-conceptions increasingly applied to Jekyll & Hyde and others, in addition to themselves. Given that the proceeding study offers no support for this proposal, one is left to speculate.
Study 2: Canadian Young Adults

Following from the results of Study 1, one was left to wonder how the self-understandings generated by young people such as those who participated in Study 1 might change over the course of a lifetime, or at least over the next few years. If such adolescents describe themselves in an increasingly multiplicitous, context-dependent manner as they approach young adulthood, what understanding of self-unity will they implicitly adopt when confronted with moral failings that may differ in kind and severity from the youthful good and bad behaviours they previously attempted to reconcile?

In light of the foregoing, in Study 2 a self-administered questionnaire package was administered to a sample of university undergraduates with the aim of addressing the following three questions: First, will a “Multiplicitous Self” be favored by young adults in regards to their own self-unity, as was the case with older adolescents? Second, will there be any further age-graded differences between such university-age participants in how they understand their self-unity in the face of morally conflicted evidence to the contrary? Third, will such young adults continue to construe their self-unity in a manner that is unrelated to Jekyll & Hyde, and in a manner that is related to their construal of familiar others?

Method

Participants

The young adult participants were 50 undergraduates, all born and raised in North America. There were 23 males and 27 females; ages ranged from 18 to 25 years, with 8 18-year-olds, 9 19-year-olds, 9 20-year-olds, 11 21-year-olds, 6 22-year-olds, 4 23-year-olds, 2 24-year-olds and 1 25-year-old ($M = 20.46, SD = 1.79$ years).

Materials and Procedure

The Jekyll & Hyde stimulus materials were identical to those administered to participants in Study 1. However, participants in Study 2 were not interviewed and instead filled out a self-
administered questionnaire package that posed the same questions that were previously employed in the standardized interview protocol questions put to participants in Study 1. To ensure that answers generated during the Study 1 interview were comparable to answers generated for the Study 2 questionnaire, 15 participants filled out the questionnaire either before or after a Study 1 interview, and their responses were compared by two coders. Codings from the participants’ interview and self-administered worksheet were in agreement 87% of the time across all judgements for themselves, others, and Jekyll & Hyde (Cohen’s κ = .83).

Undergraduate participants were recruited in psychology courses, where they were offered $10 to pick up, complete, and return the self-administered questionnaire package. Only those packages from students born and raised in North America were included in the study.

Inter-rater Reliability

All participant responses were independently coded by two coders. The responses of participants could be reliably coded into one category or another, with 86% inter-rater agreement among coders (Cohen’s κ = .82). All disagreements were resolved through discussion.

Results

As was the case for Study 1, the following analyses were conducted to determine whether the self-unity categories young adults ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, or familiar others varied in relation to the gender or age of participants. Analyses were also conducted to determine whether these same participants would ascribe some self-unity categories more frequently than others to the various target persons under consideration, as well as whether participants would ascribe the same self-unity categories across judgements made for these target persons.

Gender and Self-Unity Category

A chi-square test of difference determined that there was no significant difference between the frequencies of self-unity categories ascribed by male and female participants to
Jekyll & Hyde, $\chi^2(3, N = 50) = 3.68, p = .29$; themselves, $\chi^2(2, N = 50) = 3.64, p = .16$; or others, $\chi^2(2, N = 50) = 4.49, p = .11$.

Age and Self-Unity Category

A one-way ANOVA determined that there was no significant relationship between the age of these young adults and the self-unity category they ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, $F(3,46) = 0.79, p = .51$; themselves, $F(2,47) = 0.19, p = .83$; or others, $F(2,47) = 1.01, p = .34$ (see Table 3).

Person and Self-Unity Category

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was used to determine whether there were differences in the frequencies of self-unity categories participants ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, or familiar others. Effect sizes of salient and theoretically relevant frequency differences are reported.

Jekyll & Hyde. There was a significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories participants ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, $\chi^2(3, N = 50) = 8.71, p = .03$, (see Table 8). They also imagined that Jekyll & Hyde possessed “No Self-Unity” more frequently than they ascribed him a “Multiplicitous Self’’ ($\varphi = .50$), “Hierarchical Self’’ ($\varphi = .27$) or “Singular Self’’ ($\varphi = .35$) (see Table 4).

Self. There was a significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories these participants ascribed to themselves, $\chi^2(3, N = 51) = 29.71, p < .01$. No participant imagined themselves as possessing “No Self-Unity” ($\varphi = .96$), and they more frequently ascribed themselves a largely differentiated “Multiplicitous Self”, rather than a less differentiated “Hierarchical Self” ($\varphi = .4$) or an undifferentiated “Singular Self” ($\varphi = .47$) (see Table 4).

Other. There was a significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories ascribed to familiar others, $\chi^2(3, N = 51) = 33.31, p < .01$. No participant imagined others as possessing “No Self-Unity” ($\varphi = .96$), and as was the case with judgments made for their own
selfhood, they more frequently ascribed others a largely differentiated “Multiplicitous Self”, rather than a less differentiated “Hierarchical Self” ($\phi = .57$) or an undifferentiated “Singular Self” ($\phi = .38$) (see Table 4).

Person vs. Person

There was no significant relationship between the self-unity categories young adults ascribed to fictional character Jekyll & Hyde and themselves ($\phi = .3, p = .63$), or Jekyll & Hyde and familiar others ($\phi = .23, p = .86$). There was, however, a significant relationship between the self-unity categories participants ascribed to themselves and familiar others ($\phi = .59, p < .01$) (see Table 4).

Discussion

Study 1 presented a developmental trajectory where the youngest of the participants were more likely to imagine themselves as perpetually in control, volitionally unified, and contextually autonomous. Of course, this might mean owning a few moral decisions of which they aren’t particularly proud of, but it was often judged to be a small price to pay for feeling that one is ultimately the author of his or her actions. Among late adolescents, however, a new image emerged: the self as fractured mirror, with individual shards of feeling and fleeting desire underlying a fickle nature. At most, the self is eventually construed as a common cause of action, a narrative center of gravity (Dennett, 1992) that allows them to explain and predict their behaviours, but one that lays blame at the feet of shifting circumstance. Crummy moods, bad influences, and regrettable situations make themselves and others behave in ways that they know they should not, but can not help.

So how do such young people imagine themselves as they enter university, get jobs, get dates, and have a few more responsibilities heaped on their shoulders? For the most part, just as they did where they left off in high-school—multiplicities reacting to circumstance, a skein of moods and momentary wants (see Table 4). Over half of the Canadian young adults produced
this mode of understanding for their own self-unity, as well as the self-unity of familiar others, with the remainder of participants divided between partially ("Hierarchical Self") and wholly ("Singular Self") undifferentiated and autonomous conceptions of self. While Jekyll & Hyde was generally relegated to non-self status ("No Self-Unity"), the young adults continued to avoid imagining themselves or familiar others as legion, though perhaps for different reasons (more on this shortly). Overall, the young adult participants appeared to actively avoid imagining themselves as singular in an exclusively physical sense ("No Self-Unity"), just as they seemed to shy away from counting themselves in the singular, agentive sense ("Singular Self")—just those alternatives that Existentialists and Enlightenment theorists alike have always been so keen about.

It should be also noted that, notwithstanding a century of psychodynamic theorizing, two centuries of industrial revolutionizing, and something like three of modernizing, very few (less than 25%) of the respondents actually ended up in the “Hierarchical Self” category. That is, the young adult participants didn’t commonly envision themselves or others to be composed of different orders of internality, or differently hierarchicalized bits of conscious or unconscious stuff. One might have supposed that, if not post-modern, then at least thoroughly modern young university students might have been quick to discount seeming evidence of disunity in self or others by imagining that more usual forms of self-expression sometimes yielded to occasional outcroppings from the “dark side”. As it was, however, more than three-quarters of the respondents steered away from such “depth” interpretations, perhaps owing to some realization that, while erecting complex intra-psychic structures may allow for a modicum of personal agency, a “Multiplicitous Self” construal remains the ultimate escape route from responsibility.

Finally, if the young people in Study 1 underwent fundamental changes in how they viewed themselves over the course of their adolescence, the predominantly chosen solution to the Duality of Man dilemma appears to remain constant, at least for the next few years. If the older Canadian adolescents generally settled on a “Multiplicitous Self” conception, they
generally retain this conception over the course of early young adulthood, with no apparent age-
graded shifts in self-conception when confronted with their own shifting moral character.

Whether this remains the case when young adults become “real” adults—with spouses and
children and angry bosses—is a matter for conjecture and future research.
Study 3: Mauritian Adolescents

Among North Americans, those who perceive themselves as behaviourally consistent across situations also tend to describe themselves as more Conscientious, Agreeable, and lower in Neuroticism than those who perceive themselves in a relatively less consistent manner (Donahue, Robins, Roberts, & John, 1993). Conversely, those who maintain a generally inconsistent self-conception tend to have lower self-esteem and are more frequently depressed (Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997). Even if it is granted that some people—Canadian adolescents, for example—are motivated by some uniform angst to maintain a sense of self-unity, is this due to a uniquely Western cultural preoccupation with the expectation of self-unity? If we can imagine cultures that place no particular emphasis on self-unity, or more realistically, place significantly less emphasis on self-unity, then perhaps the individuals that constitute this culture would be less troubled by examples of disunity in themselves and others. Perhaps such individuals, when they perceive themselves behaving in radically different and often contradictory ways, would not be troubled by this at all if they had not internalized cultural expectations of self-unity beforehand. Perhaps certain Post-modern theorists would be correct in assuming that the explicit desire for a consistent conception of self-unity is little more than a Western cultural artefact, and not a universal, psychological “fact of life,” as many Modernist theorists would suggest.

Emerging evidence in the cross-cultural literature suggests that North Americans do, in fact, behave more consistently across situations, attempt to maintain behavioural consistency to a greater degree, and associate behavioural consistency with personal well-being to a greater degree than individuals representing different cultural groups. For example, Kanagawa, Cross, and Markus (2001) had American and Japanese participants evaluate themselves in a variety of social contexts, be it alone, with peers, in a large group of strangers, or in close proximity to an authority figure. While the degree to which Japanese participants positively or negatively
evaluated themselves varied in relation to social context, self-evaluations by American participants remained uniform (and uniformly positive) regardless of these varied social contexts.

It also appears that North Americans will make a greater effort to make their current behaviours consistent with previous behaviours when compared to those who represent different cultural groups who differ on related dimensions of self-conception. For example, Cialdini, Wosinka, Barett, Butner, and Gornik-Durose (1999) found that Americans who maintain a relatively independent self-construal are more likely to donate to a charity if they are reminded that they have done so in the past. Conversely, Poles who maintain a relatively interdependent self-construal are more likely to donate to a charity if they are reminded that their peers have already done so.

In general, the expectation of behavioural consistency, both in oneself and for others, appears to be strongly associated with positive evaluations among North Americans, in contrast to those representing certain East Asian cultural groups. When Suh (2002) had Americans and Koreans rate how consistent they believed their behaviour was across situations, Americans reported greater behavioural consistency than did Koreans. Perhaps not surprisingly, Americans who viewed themselves as relatively consistent also reported higher levels of subjective well-being (SWB; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), and their ratings of others’ likeability positively correlated with their ratings of others’ behavioural consistency. Among Koreans, no such relationships were found. To compound matters, Kashima, Kashima, Farsides, Kim, Strack, Werh, and Yuki (2004) offer support for the notion that among Japanese, behavioural consistency remains important, though it refers to behavioural consistency within situations, rather than across situations.

It was with these findings in mind that Study 3 was begun. Given these marked variations in cultural expectations related to self-unity, is it reasonable to still imagine some universal
impulse to see one's self as unified in the face of morally conflicted behaviours? Are there age-
graded differences within such communities in how they conceptualize selfhood, if so, do these
differences vary in accordance with whose self-unity is brought into question? In short, will the
findings from Studies 1 and 2 be replicated in a culture removed from our own, or will a new
pattern of results emerge? To begin to answer these questions, attention was turned to the
especially remote island of Mauritius, which is located in the Indian Ocean off the eastern coast
of Madagascar. Mauritius' unique geographical locale places it at the nexus of several distinct
cultural (Hindi, Chinese, French, Creole) and religious (Hindu, Christian, Muslim) traditions—a
culture importantly different from our own Western Canadian, Euro-American, Judeo-Christian,
post-Enlightenment vision.

Method

Participants

The Mauritius sample was comprised of 40 high school students from three private
schools. All participants could read and write in English, though few spoke it as their first
language; most spoke French, Creole, Hindi, or Chinese as their first language, and most
participants were of Indian ancestry, with a minority of participants being of Chinese descent. Of
the participants, 22 were female and 18 were male. Ages ranged from 11 to 19 years of age, with
2 11-year-olds, 6 12-year-olds, 6 13-year-olds, 3 14-year-olds, 1 15-year-old, 8 16-year-olds, 5
17-year-olds, 5 18-year-olds and 4 19-year-olds ($M = 15.16, SD = 2.57$ years).

Materials and Procedure

The Jekyll & Hyde stimulus materials were identical to those administered to
participants in Study 1. One interviewer questioned Mauritian participants by means of the
standardized interview protocol used in Study 1 (see Appendix A). Each received the equivalent
of $10 Cdn at the conclusion of the one half-hour interview.
Inter-rater Reliability

The same four-category coding scheme was applied to the self-unity judgments made by the Mauritian participants. All participant responses were independently coded by two coders. There was 88% inter-rater agreement between coders (Cohen's $k = .85$). All disagreements were again resolved through discussion.

Results

The following analyses were conducted to determine whether the self-unity categories Mauritian adolescents ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, or familiar others varied in relation to the gender or age of participants. Analyses were also conducted to determine whether Mauritian participants would ascribe some self-unity categories more frequently than others to the target person under consideration, as well whether participants would ascribe the same self-unity categories across judgements made for these target persons.

Gender and Self-Unity Category

A chi-square test of difference determined that there was no significant difference between the frequencies of self-unity categories ascribed by male and female participants to Jekyll & Hyde, $\chi^2(3, N = 40) = 2.93, p = .40$, themselves, $\chi^2(2, N = 40) = 4.04, p = .13$, or others, $\chi^2(3, N = 40) = .98, p = .81$.

Age and Self-Unity Category

The mean age of Mauritian adolescents who ascribed each self-unity category to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, and others was examined by means of a one-way ANOVA. Jekyll & Hyde. There was no significant relationship between the ages of the Mauritian adolescents and the category of self-unity that they ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, $F(3,36) = .59, p = .62$ (see Table 5).

Self. Unlike self-unity judgments made for Jekyll & Hyde, there was a significant relationship between the age of the Mauritian adolescent and the category of self-unity they
ascribed to themselves, \( F(2, 37) = 6.59, \ p < .01, \ \eta^2 = .27 \). Tukey post hoc analysis revealed a significant difference between the mean ages of Mauritian adolescents who ascribed themselves a “Multiplicitous Self” (\( M = 16.53 \)) and “Hierarchical Self” (\( M = 14.11 \)) (\( p < .01, \ d = 1.2 \)), and a marginally significant difference between the mean ages of Mauritian adolescents who ascribed themselves a “Multiplicitous Self” (\( M = 16.53 \)) and a “Singular Self” (\( M = 13.33 \)) (\( p = .06, \ d = .95 \)) (see Table 5).

Other. There was no significant relationship between the age of the Mauritian adolescent and the category of self-unity that they ascribed to familiar others, \( F(3, 36) = .091, \ p = .97 \) (see Table 5).

Person and Self-Unity Category

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was used to determine whether there were differences in the frequencies of self-unity categories participants ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, or familiar others. Effect sizes of salient and theoretically relevant frequency differences are reported.

Jekyll & Hyde. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test determined that there was a significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories Mauritian adolescents ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, \( \chi^2(3, N = 40) = 12.2, \ p < .01 \) (see Table 6).

Self. There was a significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories Mauritian adolescents ascribed to themselves, \( \chi^2(3, N = 41) = 26.81, \ p < .01 \). No Mauritian participants imagined themselves as possessing “No Self-Unity” (\( \phi = .95 \)), and they more frequently ascribed themselves a generally differentiated self-construal (“Multiplicitous Self” or “Hierarchical Self”), rather than an undifferentiated “Singular Self” (\( \phi = .85 \)) (see Table 6).

Other. There was a significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories Mauritian adolescents ascribed to familiar others, \( \chi^2(3, N = 40) = 12.2, \ p < .01 \). While a minority of Mauritian participants imagined others they knew as entirely disunified, most Mauritian
participants did not imagine familiar others as possessing “No Self-Unity” \( (\varphi = .95) \), and they more frequently ascribed familiar others a generally differentiated self-construal (“Multiplicitous Self” or “Hierarchical Self”), rather than an undifferentiated “Singular Self” \( (\varphi = .83) \) (see Table 6).

Person vs. Person

To determine whether participant’s self-unity ascriptions for each target person were related to one another, a phi coefficient was calculated between Mauritian participants’ category responses for Jekyll & Hyde, themselves and familiar others. There was no significant relationship between the self-unity categories participants ascribed to fictional character Jekyll & Hyde and themselves \( (\varphi = .22, p = .93) \), or Jekyll & Hyde and familiar others \( (\varphi = .51, p = .34) \). There was, however, a significant relationship between the self-unity categories participants ascribed to themselves and familiar others \( (\varphi = .76, p < .01) \) (see Table 6).

Discussion

As it was for the Canadian adolescents in Study 1, only the self-unity categories describing Mauritian adolescents’ own selves were age-graded, and the categories of self-unity describing familiar others appeared to be as arbitrary as those applied to Jekyll & Hyde. For Mauritian adolescents, the developmental trajectory of self-unity warranting strategies moves in the same general direction evident among Canadian adolescents—that is, the older these young people become, the more they describe themselves as a “Hierarchical Self”, then a “Multiplicitous Self”, rather than a “Singular Self”. However, unlike Canadian adolescents, Mauritian young people were quicker to ascribe no semblance of self-unity to their friends and family.

In general, the sample of Mauritian adolescents provided a close replication of the findings obtained with Canadian adolescents. Participants generally resolved moral contradictions by describing themselves as increasingly multiplicitous and context dependent as
they grew older, and age-graded variations in these accounts were only present when reconciling their own good and bad behaviours.

Although it might be tempting to imagine that this twice observed strategy for dealing with *Duality of Man* may signal something approaching a cultural universal, it would be wise to withhold judgment until this procedure is applied to a group of adolescents still farther removed from any potential Western cultural taint. While Mauritius is geographically distant from the West, it should be noted that the sample was drawn from three private schools established by French colonials with a Western style curriculum and organizational structure. While it might have been expected the Mauritian adolescents to differ from Canadian adolescents in a variety of important ways, it may be that Western notions of self-construal and personal responsibility arrived with the European colonial powers, but didn't leave with them. With this in mind, attention was turned to participants from a distinct cultural group that is already known to be importantly different from the Western European heritage shared by the Canadian participants, particularly in aspects of self-understanding.
Study 4: Canadian and Japanese Young Adults

There is a sizeable body of evidence suggesting that Japanese and North American young people hold to different self-conceptions, as is manifested by differences over a wide array of self-related judgments. For example, the work of Hofstede (1991) has entrenched within the cross-cultural literature a distinction between individualistic and collectivistic cultures in the social sciences and, as a result, social psychologists have subsequently populated this cultural group with what is held out to be independent as opposed to interdependent selves (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). As this literature has demonstrated, the North American mode of understanding the self as a bounded entity, filled with stable traits that account for one’s behaviours (i.e., Essentialism; Chandler et al., 2004) wasn’t shared by everyone the world over. To the surprise of many, people from India, China, Korea, and, yes, Japan (Cousins, 1989) — people who represent more than half the population of the planet — responded very differently than did North Americans to the ubiquitous Twenty Statements Test (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954), a standardized measure that asks people to complete the sentence stem “I am ________.”

While your typical Western Essentialist might finish this phrase with a trait or ability (e.g., “I am tall.”), those from other, generally collectivist cultures would more often finish the phase with a statement that implied their connection to others (e.g., “I am an older sister.”). This relational mode of self-construal implied that fundamental differences may exist in how Japanese participants (among many others) may differ from North Americans in a variety of self-related judgments, including self-esteem (Heine, Lehman, & Markus, 1999), personal agency (Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984) and behavioural attributions (Norenzayan, Choi, & Nisbett, 1999).

Despite this sizeable literature concerning East and West differences, no research as yet exists that specifically deals with cross-cultural conceptions of self-unity as it pertains to the appearance of morally conflicted intentions. Given this information vacuum, two well-
researched interpretive accounts of the differences dividing Japanese and North American youth were thought to be particularly relevant to the task.

The first of these variations pertains to perceptions of personal control. According to Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder (1982), people maintain a general tendency to either “gain control by influencing existing realities, often via acts involving personal agency, dominance, or even aggression,” or by “attempting to align themselves with existing realities, leaving them unchanged but exerting control over their personal psychological impact” (p. 955). These opposing tendencies, termed primary control and secondary control, respectively, by Rothbaum et al. (1982) and others (e.g., Morling, 2000), are known to express themselves differently in North American and Japanese cultures—cultures that differ in their relative preference for exerting one or the other of these kinds of control in all aspects of life, from childrearing to socialization. These cultural distinctions, reflecting primary and secondary control, are also said to be found in the philosophical and religious literatures of these cultures (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001; Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984).

Given all of the above, it might be expected that North American and Japanese young adults would differ in their understanding of self-unity. If, for example, Japanese young people typically understand their behaviours as reactions to circumstance, this conception aligns most closely with the “Multiplicitous Self” self-unity category, a view that shares an emphasis on construing differing behaviours as reactions to circumstantial pressures, rather than as volitional actions aimed at altering circumstance. If, as already shown, this mode of self-understanding is also common with Canadian young adults (Study 2), then it would be expected to be equally present among Japanese young people. In short, these two cultural groups would not be expected to differ on this dimension.

It has also been found that East Asians, in general, may maintain a higher tolerance for contradiction that North Americans (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Across a variety of situations
(involving social, argumentative, and logical contradiction) it has been reported that North Americans tend to deal with contradictions by not resolving them at all. That is, they typically assert that contradictions imply differentiation, and by discounting the very possibility that the same individual or situations can manifest different, equally justifiable interpretations or understandings (Peng & Nisbett, 2000). Conversely, East Asian participants are more likely to imagine that individuals and situations need not be “split apart” in an effort to account for apparent contradictions. That is, it is broadly argued that these differing cultural proclivities find their origin in the respective philosophies (e.g., Buddhism vs. Aristotelianism) and religions (e.g., Taoism vs. Christianity) that characterize Eastern and Western cultures.

Given that the research presented here deals with the resolution of contradictory behaviours manifested by one and the same individual, cultural differences bearing on understandings of contradiction, if they exist, may be particularly relevant in understanding how one can be imagined to be one and the same person in the face of behavioural evidence to the contrary. In light of these proposed cultural differences, it might be expected that Japanese young adults would persist in claiming that a common, undifferentiated agent (“Singular Self”) continues to be responsible for the seemingly contradictory behaviours that they describe, while Canadian young people, as already described in Studies 1 and 2, increasingly imagine themselves as a differentiated “Multiplicitous Self”.

As a way of bringing evidence to bear on all of these questions, efforts were made to compare the responses of culturally mainstream Canadian students and a group Japanese undergraduate exchange students in terms of their understanding of matters of self-unity pertaining to morally conflicted intentions.
Method

Participants

Canadian participants were 46 undergraduates from the University of British Columbia, all born and raised in Canada, and all of Western European ancestry. There were 22 males and 24 females; ages ranged from 18 to 30 years ($M = 21.02, SD = 2.57$ years). The Japanese participants were 44 undergraduates on exchange from Kyoto, Japan, all born and raised in Japan, and all of Japanese ancestry. There were 22 males and 22 females; ages ranged from 20 to 24 years ($M = 21.11, SD = 1.42$ years). All of these Japanese participants had satisfied university admissions officers that they were sufficiently competent in English to pursue their undergraduate studies in English.

Materials and Procedure

The Jekyll & Hyde stimulus materials were identical to those administered to participants in Study 1. Canadian and Japanese participants were given the same self-administered version of the standardized interview protocol used in Study 2 (see Appendix B).

The Canadian undergraduate participants were recruited in undergraduate psychology courses, where they were offered a course credit to pick up, complete, and return a self-administered questionnaire. Only those packages from students born and raised in Canada and of Western European ancestry were included in the study. Undergraduates on exchange from Japan were recruited in a class required for their exchange program, and were offered $10 to pick up, complete, and return a self-administered questionnaire. Responses that did not evidently address the questions put to them, or that reflected a lack of English language skills sufficient to be reliably coded were dropped from the analysis. As well, some Japanese participants did not complete the portion of the questionnaire that dealt with familiar others. These factors resulted in 4 responses omitted for Jekyll & Hyde, 2 responses omitted for Self, and 15 missing or omitted for Other.
Inter-rater Reliability

All participant responses were independently coded by two coders. The responses of participants could be reliably coded into one category or another, with 83% inter-rater agreement between coders (Cohen's $\kappa = .77$). All disagreements were resolved through discussion.

Results

Japanese and Canadian responses were analysed to determine whether the self-unity categories young adults ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, or familiar others varied in relation to the gender or age of participants. Analyses were also conducted to determine whether Japanese or Canadian participants would ascribe some self-unity categories more frequently than others to the target person under consideration, as well as whether participants would ascribe the same self-unity categories across judgements made for these target persons. Finally, the responses of Japanese and Canadian participants regarding their own self-unity were compared to determine any salient cross-cultural differences.

Gender and Self-Unity Category

A chi square test of difference determined that there was no significant difference between the frequencies of self-unity categories ascribed by male and female Canadian participants to Jekyll & Hyde, $\chi^2(3, N = 45) = 4.42, p = .22$; themselves, $\chi^2(2, N = 42) = 4.42, p = .11$; or others, $\chi^2(3, N = 42) = 5.83, p = .12$. A similar chi square test of difference determined that there was no significant difference between the frequencies of self-unity categories ascribed by male and female Japanese participants to Jekyll & Hyde, $\chi^2(3, N = 40) = 2.72, p = .43$; themselves, $\chi^2(3, N = 42) = 4.67, p = .19$; or others, $\chi^2(3, N = 29) = 1.45, p = .69$.

Age and Self-Unity Category

A one-way ANOVA determined that there was no significant relationship between the age of the Canadian young adult and the self-unity category they ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, $F(3,41) = 2.0, p = .12$; themselves, $F(2,39) = 0.31, p = .74$; or others, $F(3,38) = 0.13, p = .94$. An
equivalent one-way ANOVA also determined that there was no significant relationship between the age of the Japanese young adult and the self-unity category they ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, $F(3,36) = 0.4, p = .75$; themselves, $F(3,38) = 0.95, p = .43$; or others, $F(3,25) = 1.5, p = .24$.

Person and Self-Unity Category: Canadian Participants

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was used to determine whether there were differences in the frequencies of self-unity categories participants ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, or familiar others. Effect sizes of salient and theoretically relevant frequency differences are reported.

Jekyll & Hyde. There was no significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories Canadian young adults ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, $\chi^2(3, N = 45) = 3.8, p = .28$ (see Table 7).

Self. There was a significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories young adults ascribed to themselves, $\chi^2(3, N = 43) = 23.04, p < .01$. No Canadian participants imagined themselves as possessing “No Self-Unity” ($\varphi = .96$), and they more frequently ascribed themselves a largely differentiated “Multiplicitous Self”, rather than a less differentiated “Hierarchical Self” ($\varphi = .43$) or an undifferentiated “Singular Self” ($\varphi = .39$) (see Table 7).

Other. There was a significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories young adults ascribed to familiar others, $\chi^2(3, N = 42) = 33.31, p < .01$. No participants imagined others as possessing “No Self-Unity” ($\varphi = .95$), and, as was the case with judgments made for their own selfhood, they more frequently ascribed others a largely differentiated “Multiplicitous Self”, rather than a less differentiated “Hierarchical Self” ($\varphi = .52$) or an undifferentiated “Singular Self” ($\varphi = .29$) (see Table 7).

Person vs. Person

There was no significant relationship between the self-unity categories Canadian young adults ascribed to fictional character Jekyll & Hyde and themselves ($\varphi = .12, p = .99$), or Jekyll
& Hyde and familiar others (φ = .53, p = .25). There was, however, a significant relationship
between the self-unity categories participants ascribed to themselves and familiar others (φ = .79,
p < .01) (see Table 7).

Person and Self-Unity Category: Japanese Participants

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was used to determine whether there were differences in
the frequencies of self-unity categories Japanese participants ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde,
themselves, or familiar others. Effect sizes of salient and theoretically relevant frequency
differences are reported.

Jekyll & Hyde. A chi square goodness-of-fit test determined that there was a significant
difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories Japanese young adults ascribed to
Jekyll & Hyde, χ²(3, N = 40) = 21.6, p < .01 (see Table 8).

Self. There was a marginally significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity
categories young adults ascribed to themselves, χ²(3, N = 42) = 7.71, p = .053. Few Japanese
participants imagined themselves as possessing “No Self-Unity” (φ = .72), and instead, more
frequently ascribed themselves a largely differentiated “Multiplicitous Self”, (φ = .43) or an
undifferentiated “Singular Self” (φ = .43) (see Table 8).

Other. There was no significant difference within the frequencies of self-unity categories
Japanese participants ascribed to familiar others, χ²(3, N = 29) = 3.69, p = .29. Person vs. Person

There was no significant relationship between the self-unity categories Japanese young
adults ascribed to fictional character Jekyll & Hyde and themselves (φ = .51, p = .37), Jekyll &
Hyde and familiar others (φ = .53, p = .60), or themselves and familiar others (φ = .77, p = .1)
(see Table 8).

Canadian vs. Japanese Participants

Canadian and Japanese participants were compared in their understanding of their own
self-unity and there was a significant difference between the self-unity categories that these two
groups of respondents employed, $\chi^2(3, N = 84) = 9.28, p = .03$. Japanese participants more frequently ascribed themselves as utterly disunified ("No Self-Unity") ($\varphi = .92$) and more frequently ascribed themselves as a "Singular Self", ($\varphi = .2$) than did Canadian participants. Japanese participants less frequently ascribed themselves a "Multiplicitous Self", ($\varphi = .21$), which was the modal response of Canadian participants.

**Discussion**

**Self-Unity Judgments Made by Canadian Participants**

As was the case in Study 2, it is clear that the manner in which Canadian young adult participants construe their own selfhood is markedly different from, and unrelated to, their approach to Jekyll & Hyde. It seems that when considering the fictional, massively disjointed Jekyll & Hyde, many Canadian participants (roughly one in three) were happy to see him as a little more than a singular body housing multiple selves. By contrast, *none* of the Canadian respondents understood themselves in this utterly disjointed fashion. Rather, they were most often inclined to view themselves as the "Multiplicitous Self". That is, while they all flatly asserted that they were, in fact, the same psychological as well as a self-same physical entity, most Canadian respondents presented themselves as being passive and primarily reactive to local and changing circumstance, and went on to describe an array of impulses that are all triggered or evoked by external events. If it was not the devil that made them do it, it was, at least, the good or bad company they had fallen in with that apparently deserved all of the blame. Fewer imagined themselves as acting from a primarily volitional stance ("Hierarchical Self"), or saw themselves as driven by a singular, teleologically univocal sense of personal agency ("Singular Self"). Finally, when it came to understanding the self-unity of familiar others, these same Canadian participants did so in a manner that was effectively identical to the manner in which they understood themselves. This is to say, they were generally loath to view others they knew as being psychologically disunified, but, instead, most often described them in the same
multiplicitous way ("Multiplicitous Self") they favoured in attempting to account for their own manifest moral contradictions.

Self-Unity Judgments Made by Japanese Participants

As was the case with their Canadian counterparts, Japanese participants, not surprisingly, view themselves quite differently than they viewed Jekyll & Hyde. Just like Canadian participants, the Japanese sample predominantly viewed Jekyll & Hyde as fundamentally disunified, a singular person only insofar as his two "personalities" shared a common body. More surprisingly, however, a small but significant portion (14%) of Japanese participants went no farther in describing their own selves, characterizing themselves in similarly scattered ways ("No Self-Unity"). Again, in ways that set them apart from their Canadian counterparts, many (35%) of the Japanese sample were scored as a "Singular Self", describing their own seemingly contradictory actions as always guided by a conscious volition, meant to serve some singular goal (usually some form of self-advancement), and explicitly claimed responsibility for all of their actions, both good and bad. When it came to understanding the self-unity of others, most Japanese participants shared the Canadian proclivity to see others in essentially the same manner that they saw themselves. That is, these participants were sometimes inclined to also view others as psychologically disunified ("No Self-Unity").

Self-Unity Judgments Made by Japanese and Canadians

As has already been touched upon, none of the Canadian participants construed themselves as unified in body only ("No Self-Unity"), yet a small but significant sub-set of Japanese participants did describe themselves in this manner. Nonetheless, Canadian participants were more likely than were their Japanese counterparts to pile up their responses in the reactionary "Multiplicitous Self" category. In turn, more Japanese than Canadian participants were likely to see themselves as singular and agentive ("Singular Self").
Among the potentially most salient points to be taken away from the foregoing analysis, two, in particular, stand out. First, however differentiated ("Multiplicitous Self") or unitary ("Singular Self") a case was eventually made, the vast majority of the participants from both of the cultures sampled were quick to insist that they, or their acquaintances, and occasionally even Jekyll & Hyde were to be understood as the same psychological being. Your usual post-modern theorist might, of course, take some cold comfort in the fact that when explaining "real" people (themselves and familiar others) some small number of responses (between 0 and 27%) actually fell into the "No Self-Unity" category. Most of these kinds of judgments were, however, reserved for the extravagant case of Jekyll & Hyde, and rarely applied to the self or acquaintances. Rather, the lion's share of participants from both cultures apparently felt compelled to instead make some better case for why things that didn't, at first blush, seem to belong together actually did. Lightness of being (bearable or unbearable), may well float in the rarefied atmosphere of certain halls of the Academy, but bounded identities still appear the fashion on both sides of the Pacific Rim.

Second, the responses of the Japanese participants did not strictly conform to the expectations which would have followed from either the primary versus secondary control or the tolerance for contradiction research literatures. This is to say, although there were more Japanese participants who understood themselves as a "Singular Self", their potentially elevated tolerance for contradiction, when compared with North Americans, did not prompt them to predominantly imagine themselves in this undifferentiated manner, and they shared the general North American proclivity to imagine at least one ("Hierarchical Self") or several ("Multiplicitous Self") elements of their self-system as separate, and reacting to circumstance. Conversely, the Japanese preference for secondary control construals did not lead them to overwhelmingly imagine themselves as a skein of different reactions to shifting circumstances ("Multiplicitous Self").
The reason for this may lie within the very definition of secondary control, and the empirical tools that are used to determine one's individual preference for secondary control. Within the general notion of a mode of control that does not change the environment (i.e., secondary control), there is the possibility that one is controlling oneself to optimally suit the environment, and the possibility that one is giving up all control and allowing the environment to dictate one's behaviours. As described by Morling and Evered (2006):

An important dimension along which research can be classified involves the mechanism by which secondary control works to help the individual. Some researchers interpret the construct in such a way that secondary control is an alternative pathway to conventional control (e.g., efficacy, competence for effective action, or power). Other researchers interpret the construct such that secondary control is about fitting in, going with the flow, and harmonizing with the environment. These two mechanisms can be traced to differently weighted interpretations of Rothbaum et al.'s (1982) original paper, which equivocated about whether secondary control is an act of control or an act of fit. (p. 271)

If Japanese participants are themselves construing secondary control as a matter of self-control, they may still be imagining themselves as a singular agency that is controlling their behaviour in all circumstances, and provide answers that align with the “Singular Self” category. Alternatively, if Japanese participants understand their conflicted behaviours as a matter of fit or accommodation of the environment, then they would have described a form of self-construal that would have aligned with the “Multiplicitous Self” category. As it turned out, an equal number of Japanese participants described themselves as a “Singular Self” and a “Multiplicitous Self” and, taken together, these were the most common self-understandings that they reported. As of yet, no test or measure reliably distinguishes these two understandings of secondary control (e.g., Primary-Secondary Control Questionnaire; Essau & Trommsdorf, 1996), to the extent that the
"fitting in" conceptualization of secondary control can be imagined as a mode of control, at all (Skinner, 2007).

Overall, these reported differences (while statistically significant) are, of course, only trends, and participants from both the cultural groups studied managed to draw upon all of the self-unity warranting strategies so far identified. Despite these qualifications, there is, in these data, strong evidence that representatives from both cultural groups take matters of self-unity with special seriousness and work diligently to discount the apparent instances of morally valenced disunity they encounter in their own and others' lives.

Attention is now turned to another question raised by the results of Study 1—a question that becomes more pressing when one considers the results of Studies 2, 3 and 4: Why might it be that young adolescents generally want to view themselves one way, and older adolescents/young adults generally want to view themselves another? Harkening back to the results of Studies 1 and 3, it was found that age-graded variations in self-conception are only apparent when young people are considering their own self-unity; when it comes to other people, both real and fictional, construals of self-unity become more standardized across all age groups. Once again, it is suggested that it is unlikely that this shift in self-concept arises solely as the result of adolescents acquiring more powerful mental structures (e.g., Fischer, 1980; Piaget, 1960)—as they appear unmotivated to apply such age-graded self-conceptions to themselves. What, then, is driving this unique, age-graded shift in self-understanding?
Study 5: Freedom and Responsibility

Work by Harter and Monsour (1992) exploring age-graded differences in self-construal found a similar age-graded shift in how adolescents viewed contradictory personality attributes. With advancing age, young people came to incorporate opposing attributes into their self-structure, and apparently did so with an increasing awareness of the role that changing circumstance can play in drawing out different aspects of our character. Harter and Monsour offer a compelling argument for why our self-concepts may change over the course of adolescent development, an argument that may be entirely correct when considering morally neutral personality attributes (i.e., shy vs. outgoing) rather than desires and behaviours with a strong moral valence. Harter and Monsour reason that as we grow older, we come to understand that someone may possess different attributes that lead them to behave differently in different situations (i.e., shy with strangers, outgoing with friends), and still be considered the same self from one situation to the next. With increased cognitive sophistication, they suggest, we can generate self-understandings that allow for a modicum of contradiction, without causing the entire self-system to unravel. When one attempts to apply such an explanation to the results of Study 1 and 3, however, it becomes apparent that this account doesn’t fit these data, and for the following reason that has already been alluded to: when considering moral contradictions in other people, adolescents demonstrate no age-graded, developmental progression in the self-unity conceptualization they ascribe.

As has been intimated over the course of this analysis, a “best guess” was formed as to why older adolescents might understand their morally conflicted selfhood in ways that are different than their younger peers. After having coded over 100 participant responses, it was suspected that the observed age-graded variations were less indicative of increased cognitive sophistication, and more indicative of the differing ways that adolescents and adults often deal with matters of freedom and responsibility. As has been previously described, “Multiplicitous
Self’ responses were the most popular conception of self-unity for older adolescents and young adults. While these responses are characterized by an assertion that conflicting behaviours correspond to conflicting impulses passively elicited by circumstance, the questions, inquiring as they did, into their good and bad behaviours, presented a slightly different story.

It was often the case that when young people provided us with examples of being a “good person”, the actions described were most often seen as wholly voluntary, without any mention of the corrupting presence of local circumstance. When, by contrast, these participants went on to describe themselves as sometimes acting like a “bad person”, the responsibility rapidly shifted to their lousy mood, their rowdy friends, or the weather that day. This difference seemed particularly apparent in older adolescents. Could it be that adolescents’ increasingly desire to retain an *internal attribution* for their “good” behaviours, and an *external attribution* for their “bad” behaviours? Could such an externalizing of their “bad” self underlie their general shift towards a multiplicitous, contextualized conception of their own selfhood?

Psychologists have long demonstrated people’s general claim that personal efforts are responsible for their successes, but often discount their failure as owed to a lack of “trying” (for a review, see Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995). Children as young as 9-years-old are able to causally attribute their own and others’ actions to both internal and external forces, and demonstrate a common bias towards imagining failures as owed to circumstances beyond their control personal control (Skinner, 1988). A meta-analysis conducted by Mezulis, Abramson, Hyde, and Hankin (2004) finds that this “Self-Serving Attributional Bias” diminishes somewhat by early adolescence (12-14 years), and increases again over the course of late adolescence (15-18 years). As of yet, there is no work that directly explores how such control strategies in adolescence may play a part in perceptions of self-unity.

Many existentialist theorists, including Sartre (1957) and Heidegger (1953/1996), wrote extensively on our gradual embracing of *inauthenticity*—denying the extent of our personal
freedom when confronted with our moral failings. A century earlier, Kierkegaard (1843/2000) first articulated the implied existential trade-off: the greater our perceived freedom, the more responsibility we must accept for our own actions. The more autonomous and singular our agency, the greater the burden of guilt we incur if our actions should have negative consequences. To avoid this guilt, we often convince ourselves that we are not free; both Sartre and Heidegger enumerate the strategies we employ to “cover over” our agency in an attempt to stifle the “call of conscience” (p. 45), hide from freedom and escape the guilt that it often imposes. We choose, they argue, to instead see ourselves as containing multiple desires, each a slave to uncontrollable forces that strike both from within and without, therefore allowing us to take only limited responsibility for our negative behaviours.

Eric Fromm (1941) hypothesized that individuals come to the gradual realization that if we view ourselves as unified and autonomous agents, they must accept responsibility for all of their actions, even those that have negative consequences. To avoid such culpability, we often choose to slip the leash on responsibility by imagining a separate part of ourselves that is “only following orders,” effectively giving up a measure freedom to avoid full responsibility for our actions. At least anecdotally, the discussions with young people so far seemed to mirror this proposed escape from freedom, which is similar to the moral disengagement observed in adolescent participants by Bandura and his colleagues (1996, 2001). Since the previous investigations had not been carried out with this specific account in mind, interviewers had not separately probed for young people’s internal or external attribution of moral agency when explaining their good and bad behaviours.

During a second wave of data collection, utilizing the sample that comprised Study 1, these same adolescents were asked to provide separate examples of behaviours of which they were proud, and behaviours of which they were not proud. These participants were then asked to separately explain why they believed that they demonstrated these behaviours, and their answers
were coded as expressing either an *internal* or *external* attribution. It was hypothesized that younger participants would predominantly express an internal attribution for *both* their good and bad behaviours, while older adolescents would express an internal attribution *only* for their good behaviours, while expressing an external attribution for their bad behaviours.

Such a pattern of results would suggest that the age-graded shift in self-understanding observed in Study 1 can not be entirely laid at the door of some general increase in cognitive sophistication. After all, if older adolescents primarily understand themselves as multi-voiced selves reacting to circumstance, and if they do so simply because they have gained the intellectual capacity necessary to appreciate the role of circumstance in their contradictory behaviours, then it would be expected that such older adolescents to equally evoke an external attribution for *both* their good and bad behaviours. Evidence that primarily only bad behaviours are being accounted for with reference to the impact of circumstance is suggestive that other factors are at play, including an impulse to *escape from freedom*.

Furthermore, if it is imagined that an increasing desire on the part of older adolescents to externally attribute negative behaviours actually underlies the choice of a multiplicitous, contextually bound conception of self-unity ("Multiplicitous Self"), then it would be expected that there would be an independent relationship between the category of self-unity applied to their own self and their own expressions of either an internal or external attribution for their bad behaviours. Specifically, it would be expected that the more unified and autonomous adolescents' conception of their own self-unity, the less likely they would be to externally attribute their negative behaviours.

**Method**

**Participants**

The sample of consisted of 45 high school students drawn from the second wave of data collection in Study 1. There were 17 males and 28 females; ages range from 13 to 17 years, with
Materials and Procedure

The study materials consisted of the same Jekyll & Hyde comic book stimulus materials, with a standardized interview protocol probing the degree to which participants held an internal or external attribution when explaining their and others' good and bad behaviours.

As was the case in Study 1, one of two interviewers asked participants to separately describe themselves behaving in ways of which they were proud, and ways in which were not proud (these questions were counterbalanced across conditions). For each good and bad behavioural anecdote that was offered up, participants in Study 5 were also asked to separately explain why they thought this event had taken place. Participant responses were subsequently coded as possessing a generally internal or external attribution for their good and bad behaviours. As a means of assessing general locus of control, with no specific emphasis on the moral domain, the Locus of Control Scale for Children\(^2\) (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973) was also administered.

Coding and Typology

Internal Attributions. Participant behaviours accorded an internal attribution put the weight of responsibility on their own desires, beliefs and choices, without laying emphasis on the pressures of the situation. A typical example of such an internal attribution for good behavior came from the following 15-year-old male, who told us about his volunteering to pick up trash around the school grounds:

Because I care about how the school looks, even if no one else does. And I hate seeing garbage everywhere.

\(^2\) A 40-item questionnaire using Likert scales to measure generalized expectancies for internal and external control of among children and adolescents. Internal split-half reliability for the relevant age range: Grades 9-11 \(r = .74\), Grade 12 \(r = .81\); test-retest reliability: \(r = .71\).
When providing an example of bad behaviours that were explained with an internal attribution, responses were similar to this 14-year-old female who had locked her sister out of the bathroom that morning:

I'm basically being selfish. I want to finish getting ready and I don’t care if my sister is waiting.

External Attributions. Alternatively, participants who explained their behaviours in a manner consistent with an external attribution of agency made no explicit reference to their own desires, beliefs or choices, instead placing a heavy emphasis on the influence of the situation. For example, one 15-year-old male offered up the following explanation for why he had helped his mom carry the groceries to her car the previous evening:

That is just what’s expected of me. It is how you’re supposed to behave. If I didn’t I’m sure I’d have paid for it later.

When describing behavior he wasn’t proud of, another 17-year-old told us of teasing a friend. When asked how this could happen, he replied that:

These other guys hate my friend, and when I’m around them, I feel like I have to say shitty things to him.

Inter-rater Reliability

All participant responses were independently coded by two coders. The responses of participants could be reliably coded into one category or another, with 91% inter-rater agreement among coders (Cohen’s κ = .80). All disagreements were resolved through discussion.

Results

The following analyses were conducted to determine whether participants more frequently provided internal or external attributions for their good and bad behaviours respectively. Additional analyses were conducted to determine whether older and younger
adolescents would more frequently externalize their bad behaviours. Finally, an analysis was conducted to determine whether participants who externalized their bad behaviours were those same persons who ascribed themselves a "Multiplicitous Self".

Gender and Attribution of Moral Agency

A chi-square test of difference determined that there was no significant relationship between the gender of the participant and the frequencies of their internal and external attributions for good behaviours, $\chi^2(1, N = 45) = 1.78, p = .28$, or bad behaviours, $\chi^2(1, N = 45) = 1.08, p = .29$.

Moral Valence and Attribution

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test determined that there was a significant difference between the frequencies of internal and external attributions for good behaviours, $\chi^2(1, N = 45) = 27.22, p < .01, \phi = .78$, with the overwhelming majority of participants describing themselves as the primary cause of behaviours of which they were proud. In contrast to their responses to questions about good behaviours, there was no significant difference between the frequencies of internal and external attributions for their bad behaviours, $\chi^2(1, N = 45) = .02, p = .88$, where internal and external attributions were roughly evenly split (see Table 9).

Age and Moral Attribution

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to determine any differences between the mean ages of adolescents who offered up an internal or external attribution for their good and bad behaviours. For descriptive purposes, a median split of participant ages in months was produced and chi square tests of difference were conducted to alternatively determine any differences between younger and older adolescents in the frequencies of internal and external attributions offered up for their good and bad behaviours.

Good behaviours. There was no significant difference between the mean ages of adolescents who offered up internal ($M = 14.75$) or external ($M = 14.0$) attributions for their
good behaviours, \( t(43) = 1.08, p = .28 \) (see Table 10), nor was there a significant difference between the frequencies of internal and external attributions offered by younger and older adolescents for their good behaviours, \( \chi^2(1, N = 45) = .18, p = .68 \) (see Table 11).

Bad behaviours. There was a significant difference between the mean ages of adolescents who offered up internal \((M = 13.74)\) or external \((M = 15.64)\) attributions for their good behaviours, \( t(43) = 5.72, p < .01, d = 1.69 \) (see Table 10). There was also a significant difference between the frequencies of internal and external attributions offered by younger and older adolescents for their bad behaviours, such that younger adolescents more frequently internalized their moral failings, \( \chi^2(1, N = 23) = 7.35, p < .01, \varphi = .57 \), and older adolescents more frequently externalized their moral failings, \( \chi^2(1, N = 22) = 6.55, p < .01, \varphi = .55 \) (see Table 11).

Self-Unity Category and Attribution of Moral Agency

A chi-square test of difference indicated that while no relationship existed between attribution and self-unity category when considering good behaviours, \( \chi^2(2, N = 45) = 1.97, p = .374 \), a relationship did exist, however, when considering bad behaviours, \( \chi^2(2, N = 45) = 7.38, p = .025, \varphi = .40 \). Participants who ascribed to themselves a “Multiplicitous Self” predominantly externalized their bad behaviours, and participants who ascribed to themselves a “Singular Self” predominantly retained an internal attribution for these bad behaviours (see Table 12).

Finally, while there were, on the one hand, strong differences in whether adolescents internally or externally attributed their behaviours, both with regard to age and moral valence, when, on the other hand, one looks to a general measure of locus of control, there are no variations in their overall beliefs concerning the perceptions of internal or external behavioural attributions. That is, there was no correlation between the age of participants and their score on the Locus of Control Scale for Children \( (r = -.09, p = .56) \), nor were there any significant differences between the mean scores of adolescents who were coded as ascribing internal \((M =\)
78.05) or external ($M = 84.8$) attributions for good behaviours, $t(43) = 1.14, p = .25$, and internal ($M = 78.43$) or external ($M = 79.18$) attributions for bad behaviours, $t(43) = 0.045, p = .89$.

Discussion

When the results of Study 5 are considered as a whole, four findings become especially salient.

First, both younger and older adolescents display a strong tendency to take full volitional credit for the good things that they do (see Table 9). Even older adolescents choose to describe themselves as volitional agents who provide the primary impetus for the behaviours in which they take pride; this, despite the fact that they subsequently demonstrate a clear capacity to generate contextualized behavioural accounts when explaining away the behaviours in which they take no pride whatsoever.

Second, older and younger adolescents differ significantly in how they make moral attributions about their bad behaviours. Younger adolescents retain an internal attributional bias when explaining their bad as well as their good behaviours, whereas older adolescents regularly externalize responsibility for their own negative behaviours (see Table 10 and Table 11). In general, the apparent desire of those on the cusp of adulthood to externalize their self-perceived moral failings is in keeping with similar findings in the social psychological literature, where adults imagine that desired outcomes result from their own conscious effort, while undesired outcomes are sloughed onto elements of the situation that lie well outside the purview of volitional control (e.g., Covington & Omelich, 1979); furthermore, the age-graded trajectory of the present data conforms with previous research demonstrating an increase in “Self-Serving Attributional Bias” over the course of adolescence (Mezulis, 2004). If it is the case that older adolescents seek to internalize their good behaviours and externalize their moral failures, this impetus is not uniformly present at all points in the course of our intellectual development.

Young adolescents, apparently, place a lesser premium on the ability to slip the leash on
responsibility—an ability that may grow in importance as we make our way into young adulthood.

Although young adolescents no doubt suffer undesirable consequences as a result of the transgressions they own up to, it may be the case that neither these quickly volunteered transgressions nor the resulting punishments they are likely to incur for them are sufficiently severe that such young persons are moved to build special compartments within their self-construal to house them. Sisters get locked out of bathrooms, friends get teased, and favourite TV shows are viewed well past bedtime, all without serious concerns about some impending judgment day. As we grow older, however, our mistakes—or the price we are asked to pay for them—may often become greater, the resulting setbacks more off-putting, the punishments more severe, and the guilt more palpable. Friends are abandoned and betrayed, and tests are cheated on along with the boyfriends they were partying with when they should have been studying. As our moral failings exact a greater pragmatic and emotional toll it would seem reasonable to imagine that we might increasingly seek to offset these costs by construing moral failings as somehow not our fault—even if in our “heart of hearts” we might not entirely believe it.

Such an account should sound familiar if one recalls the previously outlined existentialist perspectives. One should also remember that such “escape from freedom” accounts assert that freedom, in fact, is the original position. This belief is also supported by the data; if younger adolescents do not begin their intellectual lives externalizing responsibility for any of their behaviours, good or bad, it is easy to imagine that there must be something in it for them to do so. The pragmatic impetus to emphasize personal freedom may itself be motivated, some might hazard to speculate, by a relatively greater desire, early on in life, to feel that they are “in control”, particularly at a time in their lives when most important decisions are made for them by people much older than themselves. As we grow older, it may not only be the case that our desire to escape responsibility increases, but that our desire to emphasize freedom also decreases, as
(somewhat ironically) we actually gain more control over our lives. Eventually, we may come to have our existential cake and eat it too. Feeling free is fine, but we can always passively submit to the chains of circumstance, especially when the chains of responsibility begin to chafe.

Third, the age-graded attributional bias that manifests in relation to good and bad behaviours does not appear to be present when young people are explicitly expressing their general attributional stance. Scores on the Locus of Control Scale for Children did not vary in relation to the age of participants, though it should be noted that the items found in this scale are agnostic in terms of moral valence. That is, all items represent goals that children, in general, might want to achieve (i.e., choosing what they have for dinner, making friends, achieving in school, etc.).

Finally, and most centrally to the work at hand, there is a strong linear relationship between young people’s conception of personal self-unity and their moral attribution for bad behaviours; participants who generally view themselves as unified and autonomous (“Singular Self”) generally emphasize an internal attribution, even for their bad behaviours, whereas participants who generally view themselves as multiplicitous and contextualized (“Multiplicitous Self”) generally adopt an external attribution for these same behaviours (see Table 12). This finding is especially evocative in light of the existential backdrop that has been painted thus far—given that adolescence appears marked by a shift from “Singular Self” to “Multiplicitous Self” conceptions, and given that this same period of our lives is marked by an increasing desire to externalize our moral failings, it was thought reasonable to imagine that the two were somehow related, particularly when these findings fall in line with numerous theoretical frameworks that emphasize such a relationship. Nevertheless, if it turned out that there was no independent relationship between these two findings, then future efforts to spin a presumptive causal account would become moot; the fact that such a relationship does exist not only offers strong support for an “escape from freedom” account partially underlying adolescents’ changing
conceptions of their own self-unity, but offers more evidence that any strictly cognitive accounts may not apply to the observed shift in adolescent self-understanding.
General Discussion

Over the course of this account we have presented a series of studies that address young people’s understanding of their own and others’ self-unity. We chose to approach the broad topic of self-unity with a focus on morally conflicted behaviours, and we began this program of research with no clear expectations concerning how adolescents and young adults might differently understand their common capacities for “good and ill”. Consequently, these studies were primarily exploratory in nature. Not only was it the case that we were uncertain about how adolescents’ efforts to address the *Duality of Man* might vary with age, but we had no clear ideas about what kinds of answers these young people might generate. More generally, we were never unsure whether young people would view their morally conflicted natures as a problem to begin with.

The results obtained following Study 1 led to two questions whose provisional answers form the narrative arc of this manuscript. To summarize, the story we have attempted to elaborate runs as follows:

In Study 1, it was learned that Canadian adolescents understand their own and others’ self-unity in ways that could be construed as running along a continuum, ranging from differentiated and context-dependent, to unitary and context-independent. When determining the relative ages of adolescents who subscribe to one or the other of the four categories, it was determined that the youngest adolescents prefer to imagine that they are mostly, if not entirely, in control of their actions, their selfhood comprised of a single agency operating *on* the various circumstances in which they find themselves (“Singular Self”). Conversely, and some might think counter-intuitively, it was the oldest adolescents who came to predominantly view themselves as a loose bundle of many impulses acting *from* circumstance (“Multiplicitous Self”). While this age-graded trajectory was apparent when these adolescents judged their own self-unity, no such trajectory appeared when accounting for the morally conflicted behaviours of
other persons, be they real or fictional. This suggests that there is something uniquely at stake for young people when they attempt to resolve apparent disunities in their own morally haphazardous behaviours.

In Study 2, it was found that young adults pick up essentially where adolescents leave off; the university-aged sample also primarily understood themselves as multiplicitous and reacting to circumstance. For the time being, these young people would seem to have settled on this "Multiplicitous" mode of self-understanding and give no evidence of further age-graded variations in their application of self-unity warranting strategies.

Study 3 largely replicated the findings from Study 1 with a group of adolescents who reside, quite literally, on the opposite side of the globe from the Canadian sample. Although the island of Mauritius has no doubt been influenced by Western cultural traditions, these young people represent a radically diversified array of indigenous language groups, religions, and cultural practices. Nevertheless, when Mauritian adolescents were presented with the same materials as the Canadian sample, they generated the same kinds of answers, across the same range of ages, manifesting the same age-graded trajectory, and only did so when attempting to warrant their own self-unity.

Study 4 compared Canadian young adults with a culturally distinct sample of Japanese young adults. Differing aspects of Japanese and North American self-understanding have been repeatedly demonstrated in the social psychological literature, and it was expected that there would be differences in how Japanese young people understood their own self-unity when compared to similarly-aged Canadian young adults, even if there was little certainty as to the form these differences would take. The findings of Study 4 bore out these general expectations, as Japanese young adults drew from a wider array of self-unity categories when describing—and even denying ("No Self-Unity")—their own self-unity. In keeping with the Canadian sample, however, Japanese young adults overwhelmingly favoured accounts that offered more or less
differentiated and context-dependent accounts ("Hierarchical Self" and "Multiplicitous Self") when resolving their morally contradictory behaviours.

Study 5 explored the possibility that the age-graded trajectory evidenced among the young people in Study 1 and Study 2 might be motivated by a desire to outfit the self with multiple desires, some being "good" and volitional, while others are "bad" and evoked by circumstances. The findings of Study 5 bore out this conjecture, as older adolescents tended to maintain an internal attribution for their good behaviours, and a separate, external attributional system for their bad behaviours. By contrast, younger adolescents tended to maintain a single, internal attribution for all of their behaviours, regardless of their moral valence. Most tellingly, those older adolescents who maintained a generally multiplicitous, context-dependent mode of self-understanding were, by and large, the very same adolescents who externalized their moral failings.

In the age-graded samples of Studies 1 and 3, the developmental story is one of increased differentiation and context-dependent self-construals as one grows older. In the young adult samples of Studies 2 and 4, it was found that, regardless of North American or East Asian cultural influence, the predominant mode of self-construal in the face of morally conflicted behaviour involves "splitting off" at least one portion of the self and shackling it to circumstance. It is argued that this repeated "self-splitting" and the attendant flight from agency can be understood as motivated by an "escape from freedom" —a desire to downplay one's personal responsibility for morally questionable behaviours. Study 5 offers support for this hypothesis, though as has already been noted, much of the research on offer exploring similar elements of identity development have generated findings that ultimately diverge from the findings insofar as the "Multiplicitous Self" never seems to emerge. The reason for this divergence, it will be suggested, is twofold:
First, the methods historically employed by most identity development researchers have been informed primarily by identity theorists who are themselves informed by William James (1892, 1900, 1910) — the same William James who imagined a mature self-system as a dualistic hierarchy comprised of a singular, volitional "I", governing over a socially variable, objectified "me". Not only are the great bulk of such available studies informed by James' perspective, it is suggested that they are perhaps inadvertently designed such that their findings are more likely to conform to the Jamesian belief that one such split is enough for any mature self-conception.

Second, few prior studies present young people with behaviours that signal the sort of moral disjunct that may prompt alternative forms of "self-splitting" or the volitionally impoverished self-understanding presented by most of the older participants.

How Many Splits are Enough?

Blasi and Milton (1991) explore several interrelated facets of identity development, including the young persons' capacity for self-reflection, their relative awareness of interpersonal contradiction, their awareness of the impact of circumstance, and their understanding of public and private selves. Understandably, Blasi and Milton didn't stumble blindly into the tangled web on human self-understanding without having some idea of what they were looking for and what they expected to find. In the history of Western thought, explicit definitions of personhood, and the cultural expectations that follow from these definitions, go back millennia, where the threads of these various conceptions were eventually collected up by William James and woven into a template that has been followed scrupulously — too scrupulously, we will argue — by social scientists addressing personal identity on into the present.

When comparing the self-conceptions of students in Grades 6 and 12, Blasi and Milton find that young persons (a) attain a clear conception of their own personal agency in early adolescence, (b) increasingly reflect on their own agency and how this agency is influenced by circumstance, (c) increasingly note contradictions within their own agentic aims and behaviours
across circumstances, and (d) resolve these contradictions by means of a dualistic "public self versus private self" split, where the private "real" self houses a singular agency, and apparent contradictions are banished to the "public" self, or to unconscious depths that are beneath the reach of the "real" self's volitional control.

Perhaps reassuringly, Blasi and Milton's findings closely mirror parts of those presented in Studies 1 and 3. Much like Blasi and Milton's young people, the youngest adolescent participants in Studies 1 and 3 generated self-understandings that were saturated with centralized agency. When explicitly confronted with an apparent agentic and behavioural conflict relating to their own good and bad behaviours, the 11- to 13-year-old participants reported here were predominantly scored as a "Singular Self" insofar as they made exclusive reference to a unified will operating across contexts. Among older participants there was a more frequent use of "Hierarchical Self", a dualistic split almost identical in its conception to the public/private conceptualization observed by Blasi and Milton. As was the case with Blasi and Milton's participants, the present sample of young adolescents also demonstrated increasing awareness of the genuine tensions between their own contradictory desires and behaviours across circumstances, and dealt with this conflict by reorganizing themselves into a stable dualistic hierarchy where their "real" self is preserved as synchronically coherent.

It is at this midpoint in adolescent development, however, that the similarities between the adolescent participants in the present study sequence and Blasi' and Milton's young respondents apparently end. For Blasi and Milton, one split is enough to account for their data. In contrast, the young people who comprised the admittedly cross-sectional Studies 1 and 3—as well as the young adults in Studies 2 and 4—kept splitting. Although the older adolescent participants frequently maintained a "Hierarchical Self" when accounting for their morally conflicted behaviours, the developmental momentum evident in the age-graded samples presented here clearly lay with the emergence of increasingly multiplicitous, non-"Hierarchical
Self-construals favoured by the university-aged young adults. Given that this continued splitting was clearly and predominantly observed in the research presented here, why does Blasi and Milton’s similarly focused self-concept development work present, what is by comparison, a relatively truncated developmental arc where a dualistic “real” self-solution triumphs? A hint at the answer may be found in the interview protocol that Blasi and Milton employed with their participants:

Sometimes people say “This is the real me. This is my true self.” What do they mean? Are there certain parts of yourself that are more true and real? Can you give me some examples? Why would these parts be especially real? Who decides what is real and what is not? How does one go about deciding?

Given such a line of questioning, it is perhaps not so surprising that Blasi’s participants eventually construct (consent to?) a “real” self solution to the problem of interpersonal contradiction, and that participants aren’t motivated to move beyond this split and potentially provide answers indicative of the multiple “splits” that predominate within the older adolescent and young adult samples of Studies 1-4. The suggestion being militated for here is that Blasi and Milton’s interview procedure essentially begs the question, in that the solution to the problem of synchronic unity is explicitly stated in the presentation of the problem.

It is not likely the case that Blasi and Milton were deliberately angling for a specific developmental trajectory in their participants’ self-understanding. After all, the present research presents findings derived from adolescent responses categorized and coded following from an open-ended interview protocol, and this method generated some very similar results, whose research tracked a developmental course from the undivided agency of the “Singular Self” to the “real” self solution implied by the “Hierarchical Self”. To the extent that Blasi and Milton’s results differ from those presented in Study 1 and 3, this difference is arguably owed to the prior theoretical commitments that have tacitly shaped their methodology —commitments that are
rooted in the classic work of William James, and that are shared by the great bulk of contemporary researchers who have explored adolescent identity development.

As demonstrated by Chandler et al.’s (2004) work exploring construals of diachronic self-continuity, samples of Canadian adolescent participants most often express an “Essentialist” solution when confronted with their changing nature over time. When faced with the “paradox of sameness and change” (p. 13), our Western European cultural legacy prompts many participants to locate something that doesn’t change, and mark it as “real”. Without delving into the long intellectual history of western Essentialism, already summarized by Chandler et al. (2004), it would not be out of order to suggest that an Essentialist bias may not only inform lay solutions to problems of self-coherence employed by “Everyday Existentialists” (i.e., you and me), but also the social science theorists whose own tacit Essentialist commitments allow prescriptive expectations of “real” self solutions to bleed into their descriptions of how ordinary people understand their own self-coherence, either across time or across contexts.

The argument developed here is that William James’ solution to the paradox of sameness and change entrenched what amounts to an Essentialist dualistic hierarchy within the psychological literature from the outset. In The Principles of Psychology, Vol. 1 James writes:

I am often confronted by the necessity of standing by one of my empirical selves and relinquishing the rest. Not that I would not, if I could, be both handsome and fat and well dressed, and a great athlete, and make a million a year, be a wit, a bon-vivant, and a lady-killer, as well as a philosopher; a philanthropist, statesman, warrior, and African explorer, as well as a “tone-poet” and saint. But the thing is simply impossible. The millionaire's work would run counter to the saint's; the bon-vivant and the philanthropist would trip each other up; the philosopher and the lady-killer could not well keep house in the same tenement of clay. Such different characters may conceivably at the outset of life be alike possible to a man. But to make any one of
them actual, the rest must more or less be suppressed. So the seeker of his truest, strongest, deepest self must review the list carefully, and pick out the one on which to stake his salvation. All other selves thereupon become unreal, but the fortunes of this self are real. Its failures are real failures, its triumphs real triumphs, carrying shame and gladness with them. (James, 1890, Vol. I, pp. 309-310)

According to James, then, there is an “I” self—a unitary, consciously experienced sense of agency that binds the self over time and across contexts. There is also a “me” self, the self as object of contemplation, made up of different desires and attributes acquired and manifested over one’s life and across social interactions. On James’ account, some part of self is allowed to change, while another stays the same. More to the point, that part that stays the same is that part of the self which is in control, and the part that changes represents the “social selves” (p. 282) whose “active-feeling states” (1892, p. 181) are, at the best of times, under control.

Later in the century, the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1986)—writing in opposition to the unitary “I” position posited by James—would assign a controlling “I” to every social self, arguing that the self represented a polyphony of agencies rising and falling in different circumstances and occasionally working against one another. Prior to James, Kierkegaard had also imagined the self as such a nest of multiple social selves reacting to circumstance, though with no agentic “I” self at all. If James were to have considered either of these positions, he clearly would have rejected them, be it Bakhtin’s multiple “I”s, or Kierkegaard’s construal of the “I” as a nothing more than a comforting, post hoc confabulation.

James’ reasons for construing the self in classic Essentialist terms may have been both prescriptive and descriptive, and there is no doubt that he was informed by every prominent theorist to discuss self-concepts going back to Plato. There can be even less doubt that every prominent 20th century theorist and researcher addressing self-concept, the paradox of sameness and change, in particular, has been deeply influenced by William James’ arguments for the “I”
and “me” selves. Not only has this conception been reified by psychologists for a century, many
developmentalists have understood something like this division to be the end of history of
identity development, whether it is the young person’s active construction of this division, or
their explicit realization that this division has been in place all along.

When summarizing the identity development literature in the social sciences, Damon and
Hart (1982) assert that:

Virtually all researchers have found that, with development, adolescent self-
understanding shows an increasing use of psychological and social relational concepts
for describing the “me”, a more prominent belief in the “I”’s agency and volitional
power, and a tendency towards integrating disparate aspects of self into an internally
consistent construct system. (p. 885)

For example, Loevinger’s (1966) foundational theory of “ego development” operates from this
central premise and provides the theoretical underpinnings of Blasi and Miltons’ subsequent
empirical work. In Stage 4 of her model, older children begin where Kierkegaard imagines most
of us remain—a “pre-identity” state of “Social Role Identity” that is most easily imagined as a
conglomeration of Jamesian “me”’s reacting to changing circumstances without agency or choice.
As we approach adolescence, Loevinger argued, we enter an “Identity Observed” stage where a
nascent agency emerges, an “inner quasi substance” (Blasi & Milton, 1991, p. 220) that is
“recognized as real”. Later, this agency coalesces into an overarching set of “standards, ideals
for oneself and a philosophy of life” that constitutes a “Management of Identity” stage. As one
grows older, however, we become increasingly aware, according to Loevinger, of “inner
conflicts and dichotomies.” This realization ushers in an “Identity as Authenticity” stage where
the autonomous “real” self is split away from those parts of self that are tied to shifting
circumstance and immediate social surroundings. Clearly, anyone answering in these terms
would be reliably scored in the "Hierarchical Self" category—the category most commonly observed in the younger, rather than older participants.

Similarly, Selman’s (1980) outlines a program of research that tracks young people’s self-understanding from childhood to late adolescence. According to Selman, there is a growing belief on the part of adolescents that they possess a volitional core, an agentic “I” that allows for a degree of control over their thoughts and behaviours. However, the expanding capacities for self-awareness that coalesce this conscious volition also confront young people with an aspect of themselves that defies direct awareness—the impulses and emotions that are experienced primarily in terms of their behavioural consequences, and that lie beyond the immediate grasp of conscious introspection. Selman argues that young adolescents heal this self-schism by discounting one half of the divide, banishing these unknowable, uncontrollable aspects to an isolated, cordoned off part of their self-understanding. Later, as they move through adolescence, these non-volitional aspects are, according to Selman, integrated with their conscious volition insofar as the adolescent comes to understand that volition can be influenced by emotions and impulses, and that the triggering of these unconscious behavioural determinants aren’t entirely unpredictable.

For those participants in Studies 1-4 whose answers were coded as a "Multiplicitous Self", behavioural predictability may have been what they ultimately wish to retain after the “I” is jettisoned and the “me”’s multiply. The “me”’s, on such accounts, may be construed as largely beyond our control and inaccessible to introspection, but when and where they manifest can be tracked and schematized like any other series of observed regularities. The "Multiplicitous Self" is unitary insofar as it is predictable, and insofar as it is predictable, there is a structure that can be determined, and that can be imagined as constituting the self in the absence of a volitional core. In this sense, “Multiplicitous Self” responses to the problem of morally conflicted behaviours across contexts are similar to the “Topological Accounts” offered up by Chander et
al.'s (2004) young research participants when attempting to resolve their behavioural and psychological changes over time. These “Topological Accounts”:

begin by rejecting as inadequate all simpler claims to the effect that the self is no more than some transient collection of arbitrary parts, and substitute a better organized architecture according to which the self is envisioned as a kind of empty surface structure not unlike one of those hollow polyhedronic desk calendars that presents a different plastic face or facet for each month, and that lends itself to being differently viewed from different vantages. (p. 32)

Chandler goes on to describe the Topological Self as a shifting behavioural phenotype without a genotype to account for phenotypic regularities. Young people who offer up Topological Accounts of personal change tend to outgrow them by early adolescence—presumably, they acquire the insights that allow them to “fill in” the hollow polyhedron with a genotypic account, much in the same way that Loevinger’s pre-adolescents eventually organize the façade of situational “me”s around a central volitional “I”.

Given all that has been said by so many, it may seem remarkable, then, that when the young people examined in the studies reported here attempt to understand their morally conflicted behaviours across contexts, something like a “Topological Account” appears to arrive at the end of this developmental story instead of the beginning—rather than “filling in” their hollow behavioural polyhedron with a volitional “I”, these adolescents appear to have worked to empty out this superstructure of any agentic infrastructure. So what’s holding the self together?

One serious prospect is that soon young people are construing their phenotype as the genotype (Overton, 2008). In this mode of self-understanding, the self is imagined as somewhat like a solid brick building, where the self-infrastructure is their self-superstructure, and each brick is ones of Bakhtin’s (1986) polyphonic voices, or the dialogical selves described by Hermans, Kempen, and van Loon (1992). While this mode of self-understanding may become
available in late adolescence, it may not be called upon unless there are circumstances that make “I/me”—infrastructure/superstructure—construals less applicable or desirable. One of these circumstances may involve morally conflicted behaviours and the avoidance of those personal responsibility that an “I”-infrastructure necessarily imply.

Further evidence for this prospect comes from a unique study by Bernstein (1980). What makes Bernstein’s study unique is the theoretical perspective that underlies it. From the outset, Bernstein states that

The aim of this research was to determine the influence of cognitive development of one’s perception of oneself during adolescence. This study distinguishes between the self-system and the self-concept. The self-concept implies a unitary-self view, applicable in all settings. Research has shown how easily inconsistent behaviour can be elicited. The construct of the self-system allows greater flexibility and adaptiveness, while maintaining the unity of the person. One has multiple selves which are integrated into a system. (p. 231)

Rather than seeking to offer further validation for the Jamesian “I/me” mode of self-conception, Bernstein assumes the presence of “multiple selves” and a “self-system” that serves to unify these selves in place of some unitary element of self that is imagined as “applicable in all settings.” As is the case with the research reported here, Bernstein employs an open-ended interview protocol that probes for different behaviours across different circumstances:

(a) Everyone behaves differently in different circumstances…list the different ways that you act.

(b) You have just listed a number of different ways that you act. What does each of these tell you about yourself?

(c) Put all of this together in a statement about yourself. (p. 241)
Although Bernstein does not probe specifically for morally conflicted behaviours elicited by shifting social interactions, his interview allowed for such examples to be generated by his participants. (For example, Bernstein tells of one participant who at school was “always getting in trouble, but at home is very helpful.” p. 241) Across adolescence, Bernstein found that young people’s self-systems became at once more differentiated and more integrated. This is to say, young people conceded more and more varied behaviours across a variety of circumstance and social roles, and were better able to specify how and why these behaviours came to manifest themselves. Ultimately, the self-systems that were described by Bernstein’s 20-year-old participants were not unified by a volitional genotype, but by an explicit schematization of the phenotypic behaviours that rendered them predictable, rather than arbitrary. As described by Damon and Hart: (1982):

Bernstein shows how the young adolescent moves from a definition of the “me” in terms of transient actions and emotions to a definition of the “me” in terms of stable personality traits and social implications. (p. 857)

Although what is most notable about Bernstein’s conception is that the self-system is populated entirely by “me”s, whose phenotypic pattern of “me”/context interactions actually constitute the genotype.

While the focus of Bernstein’s research is the self-system, Bernstein at no point rejects the possibility that young people and adults also maintain a self-concept whose volitional core can be imagined as operating across contexts, therefore providing the basis for assigning moral responsibility to one’s behaviours. The problem may be this: when young people are made aware of their morally conflicted behaviours across contexts, they often jettison this mode of self-concept as a means of maintaining self-unity and switch to a self-system construal (“Multiplicitous Self”) that accounts for the “me”/context interaction that brought about their bad behaviours, without evoking an “I” to which one can assign guilt. As Study 5 suggests, this may
be why a *self-system* construal is evoked in the face of moral transgression, and may have been why Bernstein’s older participants evoked *self-system* construals after they had been given the opportunity to describe different behaviors in different circumstances, where many of these behaviors no doubt possessed a contradictory moral valence.

So where does this all leave us with regard to the assigning of moral responsibility?

### Self-Unity and Moral Responsibility

The December 3rd, 2006, edition of the *New York Times Magazine* contained a piece by columnist Jim Holt titled “The New Soft Paternalism.” In it, Holt writes about unusual state programs in Michigan and Missouri that aid individuals in marshalling one part of themselves to combat another part of themselves. These individuals are compulsive gamblers, people who have lost their families and livelihoods to roulette wheels and blackjack tables—people who are consumed with a desire to risk everything on games of chance, and who want nothing whatsoever to do with games of chance because they have lost everything. They are people who desperately want to avoid what they desperately want, and they have given up on one part of themselves trumping the other long enough to stave off further disaster. Now, with a little help from government, the better angels of their nature have manoeuvred an end-run around the little devil on their other shoulder; inveterate gamblers can submit their name and photo which is in turn disseminated to every casino in their respective state, barring them from entering the establishment, and barring them from collecting their winnings should they slip past the first line of defence (the article did not say if their losses would also be reimbursed). Under certain extreme circumstances, gamblers can even be arrested for breaching the conditions under which they placed themselves.

Holt (2006) describes a “self-binding scheme” where you are “restructuring the external world so that when future temptations arise, you will have no choice but to do what you’ve judged to be best for you” (p. 1). Predictably, some have objected to the lack of choice afforded
these gamblers in choosing to gamble or not, even if the gamblers freely chose to forgo the right to make the decision. For those who object to governmental intrusions on one’s personal life (i.e., libertarians), this arrangement reduces to paternalism, regardless of the gamblers complicity in the government’s enforcement of personal constraints. Ultimately, it is argued, these gamblers should have the right to choose to gamble, even if they have chosen not to gamble in the past, and may choose not to gamble in the future. One may presume that such libertarians have viewed this soft paternalism as a slippery slope which descends into a fascist nanny state where vices are outlawed for our own good, and a tyranny of the majority arbitrates virtue and vice.

Holt, however, suggests that a different pea is lying under the mattress that makes libertarians squirm:

What bothers them [libertarians] is the way soft paternalism relies for its justification on the notion that each of us contains multiple selves and that one of those selves is worth more than the others. (p. 1)

“Mr. Hyde” wants to gamble it all on a spin of the wheel, while “Dr. Jekyll” frets over what his children will be eating that week. Few would disagree that the aims of the one are more noble than the cravings of the other, and that Dr. Jekyll should trump the selfish urges embodied by Mr. Hyde. However, what is also implied by this split self is that one is not wholly responsible for their mistakes; perhaps it is the “me” self that causes one to lose their daughter’s college fund in a poker game, and the “I” self can hardly be held to account for these misdeeds.

The desire to slip the leash on responsibility may partially underlie the perception of these personal splits, as well as exploit them. No doubt, the same libertarians who object to the inter-psyche split underlying soft paternalism would also be unsettled by the present program of research which demonstrates the prevalence of such splitting and its increasing predominance with age. The “Hierarchical Self” exemplifies the strategy of splitting ourselves into portions of relative worth, and as we have shown, this conception of selfhood may be a popular choice for
the reason that the return of some repressed part of ourselves makes a convenient explanation for our misdeeds. What may be worse news for libertarians, however, is the prospect that the hierarchical duality represented by the “Hierarchical Self” does not appear to be the end of the developmental story, or the predominant answer for the majority of participants. When contemplating our good and bad behaviours, the hierarchy is increasingly done away with, and a “Multiplicitous Self” comes to predominate without the pretence of autonomous control or superordinate virtue.

Holt suggests that some psychologists address this possibility when they discuss the intra-psychic rivalry of the limbic system and the cortex:

Which part of your brain—the short-sighted emotional part or the far-sighted reasoning part—gets to be the decider? There may be no built-in hierarchy here, just two autonomous brain modules in competition. (p. 2)

While libertarians may fret over this conception of the psyche, the majority of participants in the research presented here would presumably embrace it, and as the results of Study 5 suggest, it may be for the very reasons that libertarians fear. A hierarchy implies that some part of the self is in control, and the absence of a hierarchy lays our misdeeds at the feet of impulse and circumstance. Free will, it seems, is easily abandoned when feelings of guilt threaten to overshadow the feelings of personal agency that we otherwise enjoy. As I have suggested, the findings would be of little surprise to Eric Fromm, or those 20th century Existentialists (e.g., Sartre, 1957) who experienced nausea when contemplating the implications of these “levelling” modes of self-understanding.

In a later New York Times article dealing with free will (Overbye, 2007), Michael Silberstein argues that “people are no more responsible for their actions than asteroids or planets” (p. D2). By his reckoning, free will is a post hoc confabulation that allows us to review our inscrutable behaviours and imagine them as the product of choice—when it suits us. The
reality is something quite different, where brain states and environmental factors dissolve into a uniformly flat causal nexus that leaves no room for free will, any more than it accommodates souls or heavenly muses. The author of the article, Dennis Overbye, presents a litany of other scientific theorists who seek to eliminate the apparent academic embarrassment that is "free will", pointing out that,

a bevy of experiments in recent years suggest that the conscious mind is like a monkey riding a tiger of subconscious decisions and actions in progress, frantically making up stories about being in control ... the decision to act is an illusion, the monkey making up a story about what the tiger has already done. (p. D1)

These experiments cited by Overbye are said to follow from the work of Benjamin Libet, who spent the 1970s demonstrating that parts of the brain responsible for consciousness "light up" only after a wide array of physical actions have already taken place. While these and other similar experiments do not extend to the domains of actions generally associated with free will—logical reasoning, for example—this hasn’t stopped cognitive scientists from proclaiming what scientists have been proclaiming since the dawn of the Enlightenment: everything you’ve been told by everyone else is a lie.

What is often lost on scientists—since the dawn of the Enlightenment—are the reasons we may have been told these things to begin with. Few would doubt that we would like to believe that we possess some manner of free will, whether it is construed as direct control over our environment, or the ability to control ourselves and adjust to circumstance. When confronted by a solemn-faced chorus of hard science spoilsports, we may find that the Nietzschean spectre of truth versus happiness rises into the foreground; once again, the truth may rob us of something that is required for our happiness. Dan Dennett evokes Nietzsche when he observes that,
When we consider whether free will is an illusion or reality, we are looking into an abyss. What seems to confront us is a plunge into nihilism and despair. (p. D4)

It is likely the case that efforts to avoid such despair prompted participants in Study 5 to predominantly cite personal choice when explaining the behaviours of which they were proud, even if they went on to describe their general self-conception as an agentively homogenous set of knee-jerk responses to their surroundings. While participants partially asserted free will when describing their good behaviours, they were happy to part ways with agency when explaining their moral failings. This potential evasion of moral responsibility is likely what prompted the they (i.e., culture) to attempt to close this free will loophole by asserting a cultural expectation of unified selfhood via unqualified agency. As Dennis Overbye reminds us,

Moral responsibility seems to be what everyone cares about. The death of free will, or its exposure as a convenient illusion, some worry, could wreak havoc on our sense of moral and legal responsibility. (p. D4)

And yet, civilization continues to function—generally—in spite of the fact that we routinely disavow free will to avoid personal and legal responsibility. How can this be?

In Moral Development and Reality (2003), Gibbs argues that antisocial adolescents—and the adults they soon become—engage in a variety of “ego-protective cognitive distortions” (p. 131) when they are asked to explain their negative behaviours. A common example of such a distortion is termed “Blaming Others”, and is defined by Gibbs as:

misattributing blame for one’s harmful actions to outside sources, especially to another person, a group, or a momentary aberration (one was drunk, high, in a bad mood etc.) or misattributing blame for one’s victimization or other misfortune to innocent others (p. 131)

Judging by the research presented here, it is not only “antisocial” adolescents who engage in this strategy, but also the preponderance of the samples examined here, those who were categorized
as a “Hierarchical Self” or “Multiplicitous Self”. These aren’t habitual car thieves, bullies, and substance abusers, but typical undergraduates and high-school students whose own “egos” are similarly disrupted by an awareness of their immoral actions—perhaps more so. And yet their own efforts to evade responsibility for their own (relatively trivial) transgressions do not appear to result in a rapid cascade of immorality, ending them up in a juvenile facility or prison.

Unlike a clinical sample of antisocial youths, the cognitive mechanisms that morally motivate most young people are intact and functioning. Presumably, the young people taking part in the studies presented here generally fall within a normal range of moral behaviours and are motivated by empathy (Hoffman, 2000) and the maintenance of a moral self-conception (Moshman, 1999) to behave in ways that are generally pro-social, most of the time. What we’re witnessing in these studies is not the advocation of immoral behaviour, or a claim that the reported bad behaviours are in any way morally acceptable. Rather, the bad behaviours generated by participants are behaviours that, by their own admission, of which they are not proud. Nevertheless, these sins have already been committed, and since there is no taking them back, it seems implicitly acceptable to indulge in the ego protective benefits afforded by efforts to pin responsibility on factors beyond their control. Also unlike a clinical sample of antisocial youths (Gibbs, 2003), the young people taking part in these studies never explicitly denied that they were responsible for their actions. Several times while interviewing adolescent participants, one of the interviewers, after hearing a typical “Multiplicitous Self” response, would ask the student who they felt was responsible for the misdeed. Without exception, the students replied that they themselves were responsible, in spite of their recently reported multiplicitous, non-volitional, context-bound self-understanding.

So this may be where we are left: a Kierkegaardian contradiction, a double reflection (1843/2000) that allows us to assert that we are, of course, responsible for our misdeeds, even as
we increasingly imagine ourselves in a way that sidesteps this responsibility. Perhaps this is the compromise we have reached between cultural obligation and personal guilt.

Limitations and Future Directions

The time-consuming nature of the open-ended interview procedure, combined with the limited amount of time we had with the high-school samples, meant that it was not feasible to have participants fill out a bevy of questionnaires and measures that would have allowed for a better understanding of how evolving conceptions of self-unity would bear on related matters of identity development, moral development, epistemic development, and personal agency. For example, how do Marcia’s (1966, 1980) stages of role commitment map on to the categories of self-unity understandings presented here? Do Hierarchical Selves and Multiplicitous Selves correspond to Marcia’s “Identity Achieved” and “Moratorium” stages, respectively? It might also be imagined that the present research would relate to existing stage theories involving moral development, Kohlberg’s (1984) work in particular. Is a “Multiplicitous Self” more likely to find itself at Kohlberg’s moral relativistic way-station, Stage 4½? And how do they make sense of the world? Does their “Multiplicitous Self”-understanding imply a “Relativistic” understanding of human knowledge and competing interpretation, or have they adopted a “Rationalist” (Chandler, Sokol, & Hallet, 2001) approach to mediating their contradictory behaviours in addition to others’ conflicting beliefs?

With non-Canadian participants, in particular, the present research would have benefited from a wide array of measures aimed at determining which cultural cognitive biases were responsible for the cultural differences in self-unity understandings observed when comparing Canadian and Japanese participants. Given the fact that Japanese participants in Study 4 were largely split between “Singular Self” and “Multiplicitous Self” modes of understanding their morally contradictory behaviours, one is left to speculate as to whether differences in primary versus secondary control (or differences within secondary control pertaining to fit and
accommodation) were partially responsible for either of these typical self-unity responses. When considering Mauritian sample in Study 3, which in truth is a cross-cultural grab bag of Eastern and Western cultural influences, we may find that measures exploring primary and secondary control (Morling, 2000), dialectical thinking (Peng & Nisbett, 1999), and independence-interdependence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) may reveal hidden variations within a sample which, at first blush, appears to generally replicate the findings with Canadian adolescents in Study 1.

Similarly, variations among Canadian young adult participants in their propensity towards primary or secondary control may bear on their own self-unity understandings, particularly when distinguishing between their good and bad behaviours. Given that the general developmental trajectory of Canadian adolescents was towards the externalization of moral failings, and that these same adolescents adopted a “Multiplicitous Self”-unity conception, we might expect that the university-aged Canadian participants would similarly slough their moral failings off onto circumstance, given their own “Multiplicitous Self”-system. An extended sample of university-aged Canadians questioned separately about their good and bad behaviours will determine whether the age-graded variations in agentic attribution witnessed in the adolescent sample persists into young adulthood.

Despite these limitations, I believe that this program of research constitutes an important first step in understanding how it is that young people resolve matters of personal self-unity in the face of morally valenced behavioural evidence to the contrary.
References


"No Self-Unity"  "Multiplicitous Self"  "Hierarchical Self"  "Singular Self"

Many impulses  Many impulses and volitions  One Volition
Reactive  Reactive and Active  Active

Least unified  Most unified

Degree of Self-Unity

*Figure 1. Spectrum of self-unity*
Table 1. Study 1 - Mean age and self-unity category ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves and others by Canadian adolescents

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Table 2. Study 1 - Self-unity categories ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves and others by Canadian adolescents

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<th>Self-Unity Category</th>
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<th>Jekyll &amp; Hyde %</th>
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Table 3. Study 2 - Mean age and self-unity category ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves and others by Canadian young adults

<table>
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<th>Self-unity category</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
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<td>20.6 20.76</td>
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Table 4. Study 2 - Self-unity categories ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves and others by Canadian young adults

| Self-Unity Category | Jekyll & Hyde | | | | | Self | | | | | Other | |
|---------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                     | Frequency | %   | Frequency | %   | Frequency | %   |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| No Self-Unity       | 21      | 42% | 0       |    | 0       |    |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Multiplicitous      | 7       | 14% | 28      | 56% | 29      | 59.2% |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Hierarchical        | 12      | 24% | 12      | 24% | 8       | 16.3% |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Singular            | 10      | 20% | 10      | 20% | 13      | 26.5% |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Total               | 50      |    | 50      |    | 50      |    |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
Table 5. Study 3 - Mean age and self-unity category ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves and others by Mauritian adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-unity category</th>
<th>Mean J&amp;H</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Standard Deviation J&amp;H</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Sample Size J&amp;H</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Other</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Self-Unity</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>15.67</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiplicitous</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>16.53</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>14.11</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>13.33</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Table 6. Study 3 - Self-unity categories ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves and others by Mauritian adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Unity Category</th>
<th>Jekyll &amp; Hyde</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Self-Unity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiplicitous</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

Total 40 40 40
Table 7. Study 4 - Self-unity categories ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, and others by Canadian participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Unity Category</th>
<th>Jekyll &amp; Hyde</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Self-Unity</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiplicitous</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8. Study 4 - Self-unity categories ascribed to Jekyll & Hyde, themselves, and others by Japanese participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Unity Category</th>
<th>Jekyll &amp; Hyde</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Self-Unity</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiplicitous</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9. Study 5 - Number of Canadian adolescents that ascribed internal and external attributions to their good and bad behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>INTERNAL</th>
<th>EXTERNAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOOD</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAD</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
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Table 10. Study 5 - Mean age and attribution of moral agency ascribed to good and bad behaviours by Canadian adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral attribution</th>
<th>Mean age</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good/Internal</td>
<td>14.75</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good/External</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad/Internal</td>
<td>13.74</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad/External</td>
<td>15.64</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>22</td>
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</table>
Table 11. Study 5 - Attribution ascribed to good and bad behaviors by older and younger Canadian adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GOOD BEHAVIOR</th>
<th></th>
<th>BAD BEHAVIOR</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INTERNAL</td>
<td>EXTERNAL</td>
<td>INTERNAL</td>
<td>EXTERNAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-15 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-18 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
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</table>
Table 12. Study 5 - Self-unity category and attribution ascribed to good and bad behaviors by Canadian adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOOD BEHAVIOR</th>
<th>BAD BEHAVIOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERNAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>EXTERNAL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiplicitous</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
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</table>
Appendix A

Structured Interview Protocol

1. Please summarize the story to make sure we’re clear on the details. Re-tell the story the story to me as if I’d never read it before.

2. Now let's focus on Dr. Jekyll. Tell me about how he behaves during the day.
   How would you describe him?

3. Now let’s focus on Mr. Hyde. Tell me about how he behaves at night.
   How would you describe him?

4. Ok, so you’ve described Dr. Jekyll behaving like this [ ] during the day. And you’ve described Mr. Hyde as behaving like this [ ] at night. Given the different ways that they behave at different times, can you think of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde as one and the same person?

   [If participant answers ‘yes’ to question 4, then ask question 5]

5. Given all of the important ways that Jekyll and Hyde behave differently, how is it that you can still think of them as one and the same person? How is it that one and the same person can behave in such different ways?
6. Ok, so what about you? Is it ever the case that sometimes you behave like a good person, and other times behave like a bad person?

7. Can you give us an example of yourself behaving like a good person?

8. Can you give us an example of yourself behaving like a bad person?

9. Despite your own good behaviours [ ] and bad behaviours [ ], do you still think of yourself as one and the same person?

   [If participant answers ‘yes’ to question 9 (14), then ask question 10 (15)]

10. How is it that you can still think of yourself as one and the same person? How can you behave in these different ways?

11. Ok, so what about other people you know, like friends or family? Is it ever the case that they sometimes behave like a good person, and at other times behave like a bad person?

12. Can you give us an example of someone you know behaving like a good person?

13. Can you give us an example of that same person behaving like a bad person?
14. Despite their own good behaviours [ ] and bad behaviours [ ], do you still think of them as one and the same person?

[If participant answers 'yes' to question 14 (9), then ask question 15 (10)]

15. How is it that you can still think of them as one and the same person? How can they behave in these different ways?
Appendix B

Jekyll & Hyde Questionnaire

1. Please summarize the story to make sure we’re clear on the details. Re-tell the story as if we’d never heard it before.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. Now let’s focus on Dr. Jekyll. Tell us about how he behaves during the day.

   How would you describe him?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
3. Now let’s focus on Mr. Hyde. Tell me about how he behaves at night.

   How would you describe him?


4. Ok, so you’ve described how Dr. Jekyll behaves during the day. And you’ve described how Mr. Hyde behaves at night. Given the different ways that they behave at different times, can you think of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde as one and the same person?
5. If you think that Jekyll and Hyde are still the same person, how is it that you can still think of them as one and the same person? How is it that one and the same person can behave in such different ways?
6. Ok, so what about you? Is it ever the case that sometimes you behave like a good person, and other times behave like a bad person?

7. Can you give us an example of yourself behaving like a good person?

8. Can you give us an example of yourself behaving like a bad person?
9. Despite your own good behaviours and bad behaviours, do you still think of yourself as one and the same person?


10. If you still think of yourself as one and the same person, how is it that you can still think of yourself as one and the same person? How can you behave in these different ways?
11. Ok, so what about other people you know, like friends or family? Is it ever the case that they sometimes behave like a good person, and at other times behave like a bad person?

12. Can you give us an example of someone you know behaving like a good person?

13. Can you give us an example of that same person behaving like a bad person?
14. Despite their own good behaviours and bad behaviours, do you still think of them as one and the same person?

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

15. If you still think of them as one and the same person, how is it that you can still think of them as one and the same person? How can they behave in these different ways?

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Appendix C

Structured Interview Protocol

1. Please summarize the story to make sure we’re clear on the details. Re-tell the story the story to me as if I’d never read it before.

2. Now let’s focus on Dr. Jekyll. Tell me about how he behaves during the day.
   How would you describe him?

3. Now let’s focus on Mr. Hyde. Tell me about how he behaves at night.
   How would you describes him?

4. Ok, so you’ve described Dr. Jekyll behaving like this [ ] during the day. And you’ve described Mr. Hyde as behaving like this [ ] at night. Given the different ways that they behave at different times, can you think of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde as one and the same person?

   [If participant answers ‘yes’ to question 4, then ask question 5]

5. Given all of the important ways that Jekyll and Hyde behave differently, how is it that you can still think of them as one and the same person? How is it that one and the same person can behave in such different ways?
6. Ok, so what about you? Is it ever the case that sometimes you behave like a good person, and other times behave like a bad person?

7. Can you give us an example of yourself behaving like a good person?

8. How did you come to behave this way? Why do you sometimes behave like a good person? [Probe for INTERNAL or EXTERNAL attribution]

9. Can you give us an example of yourself behaving like a bad person?

10. How did you come to behave this way? Why do you sometimes behave like a bad person? [Probe for INTERNAL or EXTERNAL attribution]

11. Despite your own good behaviours [ ] and bad behaviours [ ], do you still think of yourself as one and the same person?

   [If participant answers ‘yes’ to question 11 (16), then ask question 12 (17)]

12. How is it that you can still think of yourself as one and the same person? How can you behave in these different ways?
13. Ok, so what about other people you know, like friends or family? Is it ever the case that they sometimes behave like a good person, and at other times behave like a bad person?

14. Can you give us an example of someone you know behaving like a good person?

15. Can you give us an example of that same person behaving like a bad person?

16. Despite their own good behaviours [ ] and bad behaviours [ ], do you still think of them as one and the same person?

[If participant answers 'yes' to question 16 (11), then ask question 17 (12)]

17. How is it that you can still think of them as one and the same person? How can they behave in these different ways?
Appendix D

Certificate of Ethical Approval

The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL- MINIMAL RISK RENEWAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:</th>
<th>DEPARTMENT:</th>
<th>UBC BREB NUMBER:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael J. Chandler</td>
<td>UBC/Arts/Psychology, Department of</td>
<td>UBC BREB NUMBER:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H05-80332</td>
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INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UBC</td>
<td>Vancouver (excludes UBC Hospital)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other locations where the research will be conducted:

N/A

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):

Travis Proulx

SPONSORING AGENCIES:

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) - "Meaning Maintenance Model: Meaning and Judgement"
Unfunded Research - "Meaning Maintenance Model: Meaning and Judgement"

PROJECT TITLE:

Meaning Maintenance Model: Meaning and Judgement

EXPIRY DATE OF THIS APPROVAL: June 17, 2009

APPROVAL DATE: June 17, 2008

The Annual Renewal for Study have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board

Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair
Dr. Ken Craig, Chair
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair
Dr. Daniel Salhani, Associate Chair
Dr. Anita Ho, Associate Chair
Appendix E

Co-Authorship Statement

A portion of the results found in Study 4 of this dissertation were previously reported in Proulx and Chandler (2007), *Jekyll & Hyde in the east & west: Cross-cultural variations in conceptions of self-unity*. My contribution to that paper involved identifying the research problem and developing the research methodology. I also performed the research, analyzed the data, and interpreted the results. Michael Chandler contributed portions of the text found in Proulx and Chandler (2007), though all portions that re-appear in this dissertation constitute my unique contribution to that manuscript.