

CHAPTER 2

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE SELF

Sociology, or the study of how human society is established, its structure and how it works, the people's interaction with each other and the effects they have to one another is an aspect in which we have to consider with regards to the development of a person. It is also important to understand that the establishment of the "Self" based on social structures could give us a better understanding of who we are and provide reasons how our interactions can affect us as a person.

George Herbert Mead and the Social Self

George Herbert Mead is an American Sociologist, he is considered as the Father of American pragmatism, and one of the pioneers in the field of social psychology because of his contributions on the development of the person relating to various social factors.

Mead rejected the idea of biological determination of the self which proposes that an individual already has an established self from the moment he is born. For him, the notion of a person with regards to who they are develops from one's social interaction with other people. He reiterated that the process of establishing the self is through the construction and reconstruction of the idea of who we are as a person during the process of social experience.

The "I" and the "Me"

Mead proposes that there are two components of the self which the person has, these components are the "I" and the "Me". The "Me" are the characteristics, behavior, and or actions done by a person that follows the "generalized others" that person interacts with, while the "I" is the reaction of the individual to the attitude of others, as well as the manifestation of the individuality of the person. Simply speaking, According to Mead the concept the "I" is one's response to the established attitude, and behavior that a person assumes in reference to their social interactions while the "Me" are the attitudes, and behavior of the person with reference to their social environment.

Mead's Three Role-playing Stages of Self Development

Mead proposed that there are three stages in which a person has to go through for one to develop one's self. These stages are the Preparation/Language Stage, Play stage, and Game stage.

1. The Preparatory Stage (Birth – 2 years Old) – According to Mead, during this stage the infant simply imitates the actions and behaviors of the people that the infant interacts with. Because the child is only mimicking what he or she observes from his or her environment their actions are only the reflection of what they can remember without any intention or meaning behind their actions or behavior.
2. The Play Stage (2 – 6 years old) – for the Play stage, it is the time where children begin to interact with others with which certain rules apply, these rules often times do not adhere to any set or standards but rather are rules that are set by the children themselves. Also, this is the stage where the child practices real life situations through pretend play and is the onset of self-consciousness. The development of the self in this stage occurs through the preliminary experiences that serve as practice for the child.
3. The Game Stage (6-9 years old) – The final stage of self-development according to Mead where they are characterized by the ability of the children to recognize the rules of the game and be able to identify their roles and the roles of the others that they are playing with them. With this, the children at this stage learn the implications of their actions as well as the understanding or taking into account how one can take into account the viewpoint of the society on the attitudes and actions.

With the idea of Mead with regards to the establishment of the sense of self, socialization is a lifetime endeavor, and the people one interacts with will change throughout a person's life, as such, considering the social environment one belongs to along with the changes on the person's development, may it be at school, home, or work, the interactions and experiences the person acquires from those people and situations helps define a more concrete identity and sense of self. That idea of "Self" may be based on the general attitudes and behaviors of other people or the individuality of the person that manifests as a response to those attitudes and behaviors of others.