

How we believe that others view us has a direct correlation on how we see ourselves. In fact, we need social interaction in order to form our identity. Cooley and Goffman give insightful evidence to this idea. Cooley and Goffman both examine how humans behave when we are aware that we are under surveillance. The “looking glass self” theory by Cooley, and the actors on a stage analogy by Goffman, both display proper evidence that we look at ourselves through the eyes of another.

In Cooley's concept of the “looking glass self” he explains that our idea of self image is based on how others view us. The “looking glass self” essentially states the ‘I am this because of others opinions.’ In society we assume how an individual sees us and then we form an opinion of our self worth based on that judgment. The process may look something like this: You are working on a group project and you share your ideas. If the other members in your group respond positively to the idea's, you will feel confident in your intelligence. If the group responds negatively, by disregarding it, it will cause you to question your intelligence.

Goffman's theory takes a very similar approach. He explains that humans are actors on a stage. We might behave differently when we are front stage. Front stage is places such as school, or work. Places where we must assess the situation and what role we are supposed to play. For example, we play the role of student, or teacher, when we are in a classroom. This is opposed to the back stage, where we can act more comfortably. This is places such as your bedroom, or when you are with your close friends. According to Goffman when a “role” is performed correctly, it leads the “audience” to impute a self to everyone involved in the interaction. As members of society we want to perform the roles correctly, because we are afraid of judgment if

involved in the interaction feeling uncomfortable.

These two concepts go hand in hand with one another. Both theories essentially state that we are looking at ourselves through the eyes of another. We form our identity, or our role, based on where we are and who we are with. We want to appear as a good student, so we look at ourselves through the eyes of our classmates and our professors. In order to do this we are engaged, with a pencil in hand and our eyes directed towards the front of the classroom. Our identity is then formed based on this front stage scenario. If we believe that our professor looks at us as good students then we then create our identity as a good student. If we play the role of employee correctly and believe that our boss sees us as a good employee, we believe that we are a good employee.

Both Goffman and Cooley's theories support the idea that we can alter our “self”, based on how we want others to perceive us. Based on Goffman's theory, we will change ourselves in order to fit the role we are supposed to be playing. Cooley's theory is similar. We might make certain adjustments in our personality or our appearance in hopes to gain a better reaction from others. This might mean that we dress up more in professional environments to fulfill a specific role as well as gain better reactions from others.

A good example of this is social media. We can alter our appearance by posting pictures on instagram, or facebook. This fakes the “backstage”. Social media gives us the opportunity to appear perfect, because we can control what we post. When people comment or like our pictures we gain a sense of confidence, creating a positive sense of self. However, if we don't get a surplus of likes and comments, we might feel a more negative sense of self.

differences. The looking glass self theory is how we view ourselves based on how we believe others will perceive us. The actors on a stage theory is centered around our fake self and our true self, who we are front stage versus back stage. While both theories incorporate the idea of who we are under surveillance, Goffman's theory is more centered around this idea. Goffman's ideas display how we act when we are under surveillance. However, even with these key differences there is still evidence to support that these two concepts both support the previous claim that we need social interaction to form identity.

In conclusion, both theories have key differences but still work together to give supporting evidence to the claim. A sense of self is formed based on the roles we play as well as our social interactions. Goffman and Cooley support this idea with their two theories.