

COOLEY'S THEORY OF THE 'LOOKING-GLASS SELF'

According to Charles Horton Cooley (1902), this concept of self develops through a gradual and complicated process which continues throughout life.. Looking-glass self simply means how we see ourselves through the eyes of other people. The idea of looking-glass seems to have been taken from Thackeray's book Vanity Fair in which it is said: "The world is a looking glass and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face."

According to Cooley, there are three steps in the process of formation of looking-glass self:

1. The imagination of our appearance of how we look to others.
2. The imagination of their judgment of how we look or how we think others judge our behaviour.
3. How we feel about their judgment, i.e., our feelings (self feeling) about their judgments.

We know that we exist, that we are beautiful or ugly, serious or funny, lively or dull etc., through the way other people think of us, of course, but we can imagine how we

... of despair over missed opportunities.

Theory of looking glass self:

1. C.H. Cooley

Charles Horton Cooley introduced the theory of *looking-glass self* (1902) to describe how a person's self of self grows out of interactions with others, and he proposed a threefold process for this development: 1) we see how others react to us, 2) we interpret that reaction (typically as positive or negative) and 3) we develop a sense of self based on those interpretations. "Looking-glass" is an archaic term for a mirror, so Cooley theorized that we "see" ourselves when we interact with others.



The Looking Glass Self — In view of Charles H. Cooley, personality is the tendency to adjust our conduct to the conduct of others towards us and he has named this phenomenon by the phrase "the looking-glass self".

"Each to each a looking glass Reflects the other that doth pass"

The idea in self here involves three basic elements: the imagination of our appearance to other person; the imagination of his judgment about that appearance; and self-feelings such as pride inferiority or superiority.

2. G.H. Mead

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) is considered a founder of symbolic interactionism, though he never published his work on this subject (LaRossa and Reitzes 1993). Mead's student, Herbert Blumer, actually coined the term "symbolic interactionism" and outlined these basic premises: humans interact with things based on meanings ascribed to those things; the ascribed meaning of things comes from our interactions with others and society; the meanings of things are interpreted by a person when dealing with things in specific circumstances (Blumer 1969). This sounds close to Cooley's looking-glass self, but Mead's contribution was really to the development of self, especially in childhood, which we'll discuss in more detail when we address theories of socialization. If you love books, for example, a symbolic interactionist might propose that you learned that books are good or important in the interactions you had with family, friends, school, or church; maybe your family had a special reading time each week, getting your library card was treated as a special event, or bedtime stories were associated with warmth and comfort.

Self ← Attitude to himself & towards one another

Theory of Self by G.H. Mead:

The Self as I — The rise of the self in the individual is the sum of his personality traits and the total activity of his traits assign him the concept "I". George H. Mead has mentioned two stages in full development of the self. In the first stage, the self of the individual is constituted by the organization of particular attitudes of other individuals towards himself and towards one another. At this stage, the self is also constituted by an organization of the social attitudes of the generalized other or social group or community to which he belongs. Mead holds that if one determines what his position in society is and feels himself as having certain functions and privileges, these are all defined with reference to an "I" but the "I" is not a "me" and cannot become a "me".

The "I" is the organized set of attitudes of others which one he assumes.

Self is a product of socialization in groups — According to Merrill, the self is a product of interaction in a number of group situations. Group situations hold various degrees of reference (importance) upon an individual. Members of the family, neighborhood, playmates, class-fellow, close relatives and friends may form a group by interaction. This group, if most important of all others, bears a lion's share in the emergence and development of his 'self'. Such people in the group, from whom his "self" is reflected, are members of his Reference Group. The individual takes the role of society as a whole towards himself and Mead calls this "taking the role of the generalized other". Generalized other includes the folkways, mores, values and other normative elements of culture. The child slowly becomes conscious of the expectations and begins to judge himself in these terms. Merrill calls a social self 'the core of personality'. Muhammad Fayyaz quotes from George H. Mead about self-system that it is a dynamic system shaping personality with the passage of time.

Self is the core of personality and develops during group life in society. It goes on changing according to the experiences in life. Self creates feelings of love and hatred which are result of human observation and experiences in social life. Therefore, self is a product of social life and emerges during socialization. The type of socialization an individual receives the same type of self he will develop.

Descriptive Questions

1. Define Socialization and explain its importance.
2. Write a note on Agents of Socialization.
3. Define Socialization, also explain process of socialization through the life course.
4. Write a note on theories of C.H. Cooley and G.H. Mead.