

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA**  
**SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS AND EXTENSION**

<b>GROUP MEMBERS: RUTH MFUNE</b>	<b>13197622</b>
<b>ALFRED MWABA</b>	<b>14146355</b>
<b>CHRISTABEL MBUZI</b>	<b>20007469</b>
<b>DANSTAN MUCHIMBA</b>	<b>14146631</b>
<b>MICHAEL PHIRI</b>	<b>13072358</b>

**GROUP: PLANT SCIENCE B**

**COURSE: AGS 3811-RURAL SOCIOLOGY**

**TASK: ASSIGNMENT 1**

**LECTURER: Ms DIANA J. BANDA**

**QUESTION: Charles Horton's the 'looking-glass self.' And George Herbert Mead's concept of 'generalized other' mirrors the understanding of personality development. Examine the two theories implication on the development of personality.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Charles Horton's the "looking-glass self" theory and George Mead's concept of "generalized other" mirrors the understanding of personality development.

Personality is the organization of biological, psychological and sociological factors which underlie the individual's behavior. It consists of all those habits, attitudes and characteristics, whatever their sources, according to which one individual behaves differently from another. It is simply another way of saying that each individual has unique and variant personality and that even social experiences and social relations are products of differences between individuals within groups.

Development is the stage of growth and advancement.

The biological inheritance and the physical environment in which one lives and works, culture and group and individual experiences are all factors in the development of personality. In large part, human personality develops as a product of an individual's experiences within a group, values, norms, attitudes and beliefs all contribute to the shaping of personality. Without this group experience, personality will not develop.

Generally humans, who seek acceptance and what to be well thought of, shape their social actions according to the signals they get from the social mirror into which they are always looking and this is what Charles Cooley explains in his 'looking glass self' theory. An individual examines him/herself as they were another person according to George Mead's 'generalized other'.

In this perspective we are looking at how the two scholar's views shows the understanding of personality development depending on 'the looking glass self' and 'the generalized other' theories.

## **Charles Horton Cooley- 'The looking-glass self'**

The **looking-glass self** is a social psychological concept, created by **Charles Horton Cooley** in 1902, stating that a person's self grows out of society's interpersonal interactions and the perceptions of others. The term refers to people shaping their self-concepts based on their understanding of how others perceive them. Cooley clarified that society is an interweaving and inter-working of mental selves.

Cooley is one of the founders of the interactionist perspective, which seeks to explain society by looking at the everyday forms of interaction between individuals. Cooley's theory of self is one in which we learn who we are through our interactions with others. This is known as the looking glass self. This basically means that our self-image comes from our own self-reflection and from what others think of us. Cooley believed that it is through these interactions that one begins to develop an idea of who they are; therefore, the self is a product of our social interactions. To explain the social interaction, three main components of the looking glass self were used and these are:

- ✓ We imagine how we must appear to others. We imagine how our personality and appearance will look to other people.
- ✓ We imagine and react to what we feel their judgment of that appearance must be. We imagine how other people judge the appearance and personality we think we represent.
- ✓ We develop our self through the judgments of others. We develop a self-concept. Our self-concept is either enhanced or diminished.

The 'self,' then, emerges from one's individual imagination of what we think others think of us. One critical element to this is that we may perceive someone's impression of us incorrectly. For example: a parent criticizes something their child does; the child then feels that the parent thinks they are stupid, and thus, the child then begins to believe, 'I am stupid.'

Using the 'social mirror' as a measurement of ourselves, a positive reaction from someone creates a positive self-concept; a negative reaction, a negative self-concept. Similarly, when we meet another person, we readily image ourselves as mirrored in that person's mind in relation to our appearance, manner, aims, deeds, character and so on. Cooley states that this is a never-ending process, for we are always meeting new people and re-evaluating ourselves based upon our impression of what they think of us.

In hypothesizing the framework for the looking glass self, Cooley said, "the mind is mental" because "the human mind is social." Beginning as children, humans begin to define themselves within the context of their socializations. The child learns that the symbol of his/her crying will elicit a response from his/her parents, not only when they are in need of necessities such as food, but also as a symbol to receive their attention. This development is itself a necessary prerequisite

for the child's ability to adopt the perspectives of other participants in social relationships and, thus, for the child's capacity to develop a social self."

"Looking Glass Self" is a model for the self-reflexive nature of human development. "The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process"

Using the 'social mirror' as a measurement of ourselves, a positive reaction from someone creates a positive self-concept; a negative reaction, a negative self-concept.

It has a positive as well as a negative implication on the development of personality.

### **George Herbert Mead's concept of "generalized other"**

"**The generalized other**", is one of the main concepts Mead proposes for understanding the emergence of the (social) self in human beings. "The generalized other" can be thought of as understanding the given activity and the actors' place within the activity from the perspective of all the others engaged in the activity. Through understanding "the generalized other" the individual understands what kind of behavior is expected, appropriate and so on, in different social settings.

Mead's "generalized other" forms out of the complete set of roles that an individual plays in their developmental history. When the individual can take on a view of her/himself from the perspective of that generalized other, self-consciousness is attained.

The generalized other is the final stage in the childhood development process, in which children are able to not only take on the roles of others, but also take into account the attitudes and perspectives of others in their social group. The emergence of the generalized other requires the presence of some type of organized community or social system, e.g. an organized family system.

The generalized other gives people a sense of self and helps them to view themselves in relation to the groups to which they belong. Through understanding the generalized other, they are able to predict the consequences of their behaviors and how they will affect others. They also can anticipate the actions of others.

This Mead's generalized other concept refers to the ability to understand and take into account the attitudes and viewpoints of those in our society, as well as our expected roles within society. Generalized other is the final stage in the development of the self. Through understanding the generalized other, we are able to predict the consequences of our behaviors and how they will affect others, as well as anticipate the actions of those around us.

Generalized others also refers to the awareness of the demands of the society as a whole. People understand their own positions and those around them and become concerned about the expectations and demands of others (society). Thus, Mead's generalized other concept has an implication on the development of personality.

## CONCLUSION

Having examined Cooley's "Looking-glass self" and Mead's "generalized other" theories, it can be concluded that these sociologists had a lot of things in common regarding an individual and society in the development of personality.

Cooley is found to have contributed to the development of the interactionist perspective and for the development of the importance of society in forming the individual or self and the importance of primary groups. His organic link between society and self remains one of crucial contributions to the area of modern-day psychology and sociology. He believed that the influence of groups and other people within society has a strong impact to personality development.

According to Mead, on the basis of social relations and interactions of an individual, only by means of his experiential transactions with other individuals in an organized social environment that self-consciousness result from the reflexive turn where the individual takes the perspective of valued others toward himself.

Mead argues that through interaction with others, we begin to develop an identity about who we are, as well as empathy for others. Mead believed that the key to self-development is to understand the role of the other.

Like Mead, Charles Horton believed that we form our self-images through interaction with other people. He was particularly interested in how significant others shape us as individuals.

Cooley and Mead explain how one's self-concept and self-image develop and both theories clearly outline the implications that they have on the development of personality.

Personality development is a never ending process for we are always meeting new people and reevaluating ourselves based upon our impression of what they think of us.

## REFERENCES

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