

Charles cooley

Sociology



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Charles Cooley captured my interest when selecting a sociologist to research. After doing some research, I became intrigued with Cooley's theory of the Looking Glass Self, and how it effects our society. I understand his meaning behind his theory. He claims that in his childhood, he formed his identity through how he viewed himself through his father's mind, as well as others. I believe his theory is very interesting, because I experience it myself at times. Charles the Person In 1864, Charles Horton Cooley was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan. This same here Charles' father, Thomas Cooley, was elected to the Supreme Court of Michigan.

Thomas was very successful and became well-known nationally. Thomas was a hard-driving and success oriented person (Bolender 1998). Charles struggled living in the shadow of his famous father (Bolender 1998). Thomas alienated Charles throughout his childhood. This took a toll on Charles for a long period of time. Charles seemed to keep to himself. He became shy and developed a speech impediment (Bolender 1998). He did not have many friends to play with. Even at age 15, he seemed to just read and keep to himself. Charles thought that his father viewed him negatively.

Charles Cooley later attended college at the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor. Charles graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering after seven years of school. Many say he suffered from a psychosomatic illness during school, and this caused him to stay there longer (American Sociological Association n. d.) Though he had graduated with a great degree, Charles did not particularly like engineering (Bolender 1998). He loved his few courses in economics, philosophy, and history. After college, he

continued to read a lot. This drove him to another life career. In 1890, Charles went back to the University of Michigan.

He did graduate work in political economy and sociology. He wrote a dissertation called "The Theory of Transportation," a study in human ecology. Then in 1894, he acquired his Ph. D. He also married Elsie Jones, a daughter of a professor of medicine at the University of Michigan. They had three children. Charles began teaching at the University of Michigan. He quickly succeeded in the growth of a good professor (Bolender 1998). In eight years, he became a full-time professor. Undergraduate students didn't seem to like him. But graduate students admired his will to search new information (Bolender 1998).

Society in the 1800s During this time of Charles' life, society was re-shaping itself. Rapid technological advances and changes during this time brought a great number of people to work in factories. This definitely was a change in social life brought to the world, during this time. With so many people leaving their homes to find work in factories, cities grew tremendously and created many social problems. This led to the development of the sociological perspective. This led Comte, Marx, Ward, and many others to search out how these social changes affected the people.

One of the big events that sparked sociological advances in this time was the Industrial Revolution. Society back then involved rural farming. The industrial Revolution made it possible for many people all over the world to have an urban, industrial way of life. Problems grew in this though. People were forced to live in a back-to-back house with no gardens for food, or a backyard to hang clothes to dry. Health and poverty became an issue. Land

was hard to find. People, who made advances to living in an urban and industrial environment, were struggling with problems such as these.

But as this was going on, the higher ruling classes lived in nicer homes just outside the cities and towns. Here, they had land to enjoy at their leisure. Religion was also a big sociological topic of this time, especially Christianity, being it was the largest group (Sparks Editors 2006). Karl Marx based many of his sociological theories on the basis of religion in this time. He claimed that the people didn't understand society, so they follow their own culturally based ideas of gods and spirits (Smith 2005). He also thought that religion in this time, prohibited social change.

He believed that people who were religious, did not pay attention to problems and events of today, but rather in the future or after-life (Smith 2005). The Self and Society During Charles' time teaching; he became concerned with the different social problems and issues going on, just as Comte and Marx. But preoccupation with the "self" remained supreme to his focus (Bolender 1998). To me, it seems that Charles' experiences living under his father's shadow had an impact on his studies. The way he viewed himself in his father's mind, molded his identity and who he is as a self.

He knew that he was affected by his father growing up. He wanted to study the "self" and its effects on society (Bolender 1998). Charles used his children for his study of the growth of the self. Watching and studying his children helped him with his studies throughout his life. Charles is most famous in his sociological theory called "The Looking Glass Self." This was his most contributing theory to sociological perspectives. We all can

recognize what he means by this. We have all seen pictures online that shows how an individual thinks another individual views them.

That certain individual then has different reactions to how he/she thinks people view them, whether it is a colleague, family member, or a friend. Charles believed this is how a person forms his/her own identity. This is an example of the LGS. Charles once said: As we see our face, figure, and dress in the glass, and are interested in them because they are ours, and pleased or otherwise with them according as they do or do not answer to what we should like them to be, so in imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it.

Society is an interweaving and interworking of mental selves. I imagine your mind, and especially what your mind thinks about my mind, and what your mind thinks about what my mind thinks about your mind. I dress my mind before yours and expect that you will dress yours before mine. Whoever cannot or will not perform these feats is not properly in the game. (Cooley 1902) Cooley's theory on the LGS makes sense to me. We, as individuals, are always concerned how others view us. Our personality may change when being around a certain individual. This effect causes us to adjust our personality and identity.

The way I interpret Cooley's theory is that we are molded and influenced, by the way we see ourselves in another person's mind. We interpret reactions of others that we socialize with and bring these interpretations unto ourselves. I know when I get negative mannerisms about my looks/appearance, I feel less attractive and vice-versa. Another example of when I think of myself, is <https://assignbuster.com/charles-cooley/>

when I receive positive feedback from my politeness. I will become more prone to being polite to others, even more than I already do. Cooley talked about his theory in his book *Human Nature and the Social Order* in 1902.

To further explain his reasoning in the *Looking Glass Self*, he wrote another book *Social Organization* in 1909. When I think about Cooley's *Looking Glass Self*, I compare it to the sociological Interactionist Perspective theory. This theory means people attach meanings to symbols, and they act according to their interpretation of these symbols. In Cooley's case, these symbols are what an individual portrays themselves as, in another person's mind. Then they act on these interpretations, whether it be around that individual or in their everyday social life. I believe it's a perfect fit to the major Interactionist Perspective theory.

Comparisons So how does Cooley's sociological climate, differ from ours today? I talked earlier about the economy back then. Since the Industrial Revolution, the society became an urban and industrialized way of living. This was different than before, being that it was a farming environment. We are still living that way today. Our country runs on industries, and buying and selling goods with other countries. I believe our society acts the same way then, as it does now with Cooley's *Looking Glass Self*. I think we all are still affected by how we see ourselves in others minds.

I think now though, our identity isn't molded as much from others. Social status was of more importance in Cooley's time, and I think it stressed an individual to live up to a certain status, with a certain identity. Our lives now are so busy with other things and I think we get the majority of our identity from different self experiences. This country is sadly less religious now;

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therefore a person's religious self identity is less affected as well. But I do believe we all still mold ourselves somewhat by how we see ourselves in somebody else's mind. Then, we react to it, which may lead to changing our personality.