

Autistic spectrum disorder and the looking glass self.

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Autistic Spectrum Disorder and the Looking Glass Self.

Within this paper I will explore the theory of the looking glass self. It will explain the idea by George Herbert Mead of using social cues of others to form our own self and identity, it will also draw on the looking glass self-theory from Charles Cooley whose ideas ran alongside Mead and argued we use the non-verbal cues/replies from individuals to form who we think we are. The essay will then explain the symptoms and category of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in particular social difficulties which individuals may encounter, this intertwines with the idea of the looking glass self and how this can describe forming an identity when coupled with autism spectrum disorder. It will then follow on looking at social media presence and use from people with ASD and neurotypical individuals highlighting the presence of Charles Cooley and the looking glass self. Finally, the conclusion will summarise the key points of the essay.

George Mead (1934) thought individuals develop self-images through connections with individuals. He claimed the Self that is the fragment of a person's character containing self-awareness and self-image, could be a creation of social experience. Mead summarised and listed ideas in what way the self-advances:

The self improves and develops only from social experience, so Mead dismissed Freud's idea which one's behaviour is driven by biological energies. Social experience contains the interchange of signs and symbols Mead had highlighted predominantly human usage of linguistic uses and additional symbols to communicate. Mead suggested symbolic interaction

shapes people's behaviour and sense of self. Symbolic interaction is an idea that helps us see how society is created through collaborations between people. One's self develops through social interaction and this can depend on how someone can interpret symbols such language or actions. Is a handshake a warm welcome or a cold goodbye?

Sometimes symbols may change such as tattoos being a sign of rebellion or gang members however this is no longer the view.

Knowing individuals' purposes commands Imagining situations from other points of view. Mead theorised social experience differs on viewing ourselves like others do, or as Mead explained "taking the role of the other." (Topics and Other, 2018)

Understanding the role of the other outcomes in Self-Awareness. It was suggested there is the I self and objective me self. I self is functioning and introduces act. The me carries on, interjects or alters action dependent on responses. Mead said that the idea of self-development was comprehending the part of others.

Similar to Mead Charles Cooley(1922) theorised we invent self-images through communication and contact with individuals.

Socialisation describes the process that people learn the attitudes values and behaviours that are appropriate and expected by their cultural community.

Typically, it occurs from the interaction on the people that we are surrounded by this can include those who are close to us including our family friends and teachers, but it can also include everyone else in society. Doctors

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nurses and celebrities are just some individuals who can teach us how to act within our community. Socialisation also teaches us about our self-image of how we view ourselves sociologists such as Charles Cooley looked at his theory the looking glass self to describe this process, that the view of ourselves, is not only from our direct contemplation of our personal qualities but also from our perceptions of how we are being perceived by others. First, we imagine how we must appear to others such as family's friends or people on the street second, we imagine how they must evaluate us based on their observations e. g. do we come across as being intelligent or funny, third we develop feelings of ourselves based on the impressions of their evaluations and their observations.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) form a variety of comparable conditions that effect an person's social interaction: Recognising and/or understanding other peoples feelings and managing their own. Communication: using language (verbal and non-verbal) Interests: these may become obsessive and not varied. Social skills: the ability to understand people's intentions and behaviour, also to imagine situations not liked in with their routines. ASD is a neurodevelopmental disorder and is a lifetime illness, this term refers to a disorder of brain function that can affect learning, memory, self-control and emotions which come to light as the person grows older. ASD is a spectrum or umbrella disorder which means while people with autism have similar symptoms or difficulties no two people are the same and will affect them in different ways. Some conditions however will be more relatable than others and more often than not autism is accompanied with other learning disabilities.

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Individuals with ASD have symptoms typically during infancy and/or childhood then this develops a steady course without remission (Web.archive.org, 2010). ASD is most evident before three years though after an analysis and a range of tests, a diagnosis can be made following the age of three. It's estimated that about 1 in every 100 people in the UK has ASD. More boys are diagnosed with the condition than girls. (nhs.uk, 2016)

Modern culture could be to blame for missed diagnosis of many girls who have ASD due to behavioural social norms that have been constructed. Typically, girls are seen quieter and are expected to be less assertive than boys, femininity can be associated with being shy and withdrawn while a boy who displays the same behaviour can be considered atypical. Likewise, a girl who may come across as unengaged is often described to be day dreaming or dreamy although a boy with comparable behaviour could receive undesirable or bad attention. Girls who have obvious ASD symptoms such as extreme speech and communication difficulties, severe communication and social challenges, self-stimulating behaviour or severe cognitive challenges are more likely to reach diagnosis, but subtle symptoms or girls whose high intelligence levels mask symptoms could be diagnosed later in life.

It has been argued that Autistic Spectrum Disorder is a genetic abnormality and cases of autism has been known to run in families and changes in certain genes increase the risk that a child will develop autism. Some theories link to ASD as being onset from environmental factors such as being born premature (before 26weeks), alcohol consumption and or/being exposed to medication while in the womb, however no conclusive evidence has been found linking pollution or maternal influences in pregnancy with an

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increased risk of having ASD (Autism Speaks, 2018). Vaccines have also been blamed for the sudden rise in autism diagnosis however this could be due to the disorder becoming more understood, some dates of children receiving their vaccines are close to diagnosis thus suggesting the cause. Research suggests that autism is not linked to vaccines. (Gerber and Offit, 2009)

The public view of Autism can vary, many people see naughty children who can't behave or spoiled children if their routine is broken. In 2007 27% of the public who completed the survey were confused by the perception autism only affects children, only 39% was aware there is no cure and 10% thought it was not a disability. (Autistic Society, n. d.). Individuals may believe people with autism violent due to many publicised stories of people becoming agitated and violent however these individuals are usually violent towards themselves. There are many positive myths surrounding people with ASD, these can include the public believing autistic people are savants or gifted in maths or being physically strong. Darold A. Treffert, MD of the University of Wisconsin Medical School, Madison said ' ' *is a rare, but extraordinary, condition in which persons with serious mental disabilities, including autistic disorder, have some ' island of genius' which stands in marked, incongruous contrast to overall handicap.* " (Rudy, 2017). This gifted notion is somewhat true however not all individuals on the spectrum possess such gifts.

Many of the population buy or have an interest in things in order to fit in with typical society, be it be where you live, what your friends have or denied the guilty pleasure tv programme you watch. This could be interpreted within the

looking glass self as you are trying to be the person you think people will perceive you as however people on the autistic spectrum do not have this ability. They care about what matters to them and true shared interests or something that provides enjoyment such as liking Disney movies when you are a grown woman. ASD individuals are renowned for telling the truth, this is due to the theory of mind, autistic people can find it difficult to identify other people have their own thought feelings and opinions, many also believe other people know their own feelings and thoughts, this can make forming relationships difficult.

People with ASD can have problems founding and upholding relationships. Many individuals do not reply to some forms of non-verbal communications such as facial expressions, gestures, some body language and eye contact. This can make it difficult for other people to read and interoperate an individual with ASD which in turn causes confusion and not the usual social non-verbal cues. This theory fits with Charles Cooley, he believed that we are not being influenced by means of others but instead we are been influenced by what we imagine the opinions of other people maybe. According to this theory we may base our identities on correct or incorrect perceptions of others see us. This impairs their ability to share interests and activities with people. For this reason, they could seem distant and unsociable. As a result, they're typically delayed in their speech and struggle to form awareness of different non-verbal sorts of communication, they may depart into repetitive play or self-stimulation and behaviour to avoid interaction.

Demands of the modern technological world is changing how people are forming their identities. Social media can influence any part of an individual's identity by feeding photos, statements and emojis (symbols). People may find it hard to distinguish the meaning of something without face to face contact this is especially difficult for people with ASD as they can find it hard to interoperate emotion or social cues. Some people with ASD may be forever offended on social media or offending others in turn just because they have misinterpreted the tone of a conversation, but online they may be able to read something a number of times then look for the context alongside additional context around then respond. This is a way of interpreting meads theory of symbolic interactionism within modern society. As individuals can take on another identity when using social media, it would cause concern for media dependency more so in ASD people as they are more prone to addictive behaviours. (Finkenauer et. al. 2012) Social media use can make socialising in the 'real world' difficult thus pushing people to become more isolated, people could experience sanctuary in a world that seems harmless and gives people the chance to encounter and connect comfortably with people. As this is happening in the present day more diagnosis of ASD may become apparent as people may not chose to communicate socially but over media instead. Social cues or symbols may be lost and misinterpreted.

The looking glass theory can also be evident within the realms of social media and young people who are not on the autistic spectrum. They can create images and/or a "cyber" self, something that they can create to become someone else, this image is who they think will provide other online

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individuals with a picture of their physical form and material goods also a portrayal of a life people believe others have. This is where the quote “you don’t know what happens behind closed doors” is appropriate. This cyber identity is still “alive” even when offline so it is a permanent identity for the user. This can be damaging to people as these individuals can become fragmented and they can be so many different people on different platforms e. g. an artist on Instagram, casual twitter user or a professional on other platforms. This can make social media an obsession.

In conclusion individuals with ASD are predominately male however this can be due to mis diagnosis, such reasons could link with a feminist argument about female behaviour and assumptions of feebleness and being less assertive than boys. Individuals with autistic spectrum disorder find it difficult to communicate with others due to their misinterpretation of social cues or symbols, these individuals do not fit into the looking glass self-theory by Charles Cooley. ASD individuals need time to process the tone of a conversation or meaning in order to comprehend the reply rather than this being a second nature, as described by George Mead social experience is necessary to shape our identity however people who have autism do not understand social experiences as they cannot understand others have a different opinion or feelings apart from their own. Social media plays a big part in forming our identity and our views of what people think we/who we are (looking glass). This is becoming a problem in modern day society, people want what others have without knowing the true identity or self of people. I have gained knowledge of ASD from some literature sources and my personal accounts.

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Review of The Metamorphosis.

Alone in his room Gregor attempts to remake the self-character that he lost by existing for others e. g. his family and he disregards his own wants. He can't get away from a feeling of an obligation to help and look after his family, he keeps on acting just to serve his family by trying not to burden them. His remarks from his family's conduct are frequently blindsided with bitterness of how they treat him however he won't enable himself to perceive his sharpness.

Gregor figures out how to get away from his self-destroying feeling of obligation just in the last section, when he champions himself in

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understanding that his family has been dismissing him. Gregor's search for his character and identity appears to be miserable, be that as it may, in light of the fact that he never had an identity to begin with. He discovers his identity just toward the end when his sister helps Gregor to remember the affection for his family. This affection, combined with his opportunity, is the last fixing he needs to set up his personality.

At that time Gregor's sole desire was to do his utmost to help the family to forget as soon as possible the catastrophe that had overwhelmed the business and thrown them all into a state of complete despair.

As Gregor catches his dad clarifying the family's money related circumstance to Grete and the mother the disappointment of his dad's business five years previous basically made the relational intricacy that we see toward the start of the story and clarifies Gregor's fundamental job in the family. Since the family business failed his dad never works again and he seems discouraged and depressed. The early picture we get from Gregor's dad comes from Gregor who considers him lazy and resting for most of the day. In the meantime, Gregor feels in charge of the family's finances as it is their only revenue. This clarifies why his most prominent worry once he changes is whether he will get disciplined or let go for not going to work in spite of disliking his job. This plays a role in Gregor's feelings of alienation. In light of his job it necessitates that he travels often which stops him from creating relationships, thus he has no friends. This is reiterated as Gregor's mother explains to his boss he spends most nights in the house.

Did he really want the warm room, so cosily appointed with heirlooms, transformed into a lair, where he might, of course, be able to creep, unimpeded, in any direction, though forgetting his human past swiftly and totally?

When Grete and Gregor's mum get rid of Gregor's furniture from his bedroom Gregor finds it difficult to reunite himself with his humanistic memory while being in this new body and living his new life. Although Gregor's memory has not completely changed his feelings and thoughts change due to the physical demands of his new form, he also recognises he enjoys the dark place under the sofa this shows his mind is becoming comfortable with who he is, and his mind is altering to becoming an insect. However, he still has the feelings of helping his family, as a result he feels undecided whether he will stay in the insect form or if he wants the human side of himself. This reaches the climax whether he decides to empty the room of his belongings and furniture. He understands if there was no furniture his insect self will be able to move around more although if he abandons his belongings he loses the human side of himself. Gregor decides to save the picture of the woman with the fur boa as it is a reminder of his human self.

Lapsing into silence and communicating almost unconsciously with their eyes, they reflected that it was high time they found a decent husband for her. And it was like a confirmation of their new dreams and good intentions that at the end of their ride the daughter was the first to get up, stretching her young body.

The end of the story suggests there has been more than one metamorphosis as well as Gregor. The family have significantly changed towards the conclusion they have changed from despair and they now are looking after themselves now Gregor has gone as they have had no choice. It appears they have been once relying on Gregor because they knew he would provide for them.

Grete has transformed also, when Gregor becomes the insect she begins work and cares for Gregor which matures her psychologically. In the end of the story Grete stretches which could be a suggestion of her breaking free much like an insect.

In religious tradition the apple is the forbidden fruit and is looked at as an evil symbol. This is because Adam and Eve had taken the fruit that would give them knowledge that they had been forbidden to eat, because they sinned God has cast them out of the garden of Eden. In the Metamorphosis the apple is also a symbol that leads to unhappiness and ill feelings. When Gregor's mum faints due to his appearance as the beetle, his dad throws apples at him. The apple gets stuck in Gregor's back and starts to rot and cause him pain. Gregor then loses his interest in food and causes Grete to reject him. This could be interpreted as Gregor giving up on his identity as human after the rejection from his family.

In the story Gregor never discovers he has wings. He never has the will to find out or work on the insect identity he has morphed into, he accepts himself as the 'vermin' he is told he is rather than understanding his identity.