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Introduction

The father of the conception of the social self, Herbert Mead, considered that “ A multiple personality is in a certain sense normal” (Mead & Morris, 1967). Mead’s conception of the societal self is based on the core reasoning that a general idea of self is a consequence of social influence. This societal concept of personal self implies a presence of a set of individual selves that are the results of social reciprocal actions, which were not originally there from the birth, but emerged in the process of societal interactions and activities (Blumer & Morrione, 2004). This paper is going to prove the statement that an individual has to have a set of social roles to function effectively in a variety of different life circumstances, as well as such set of social roles changes in the course of life and highly depends on social surroundings.

Pursuant to Mead, three activities through which the self can be developed are: game, play and language. In the game, people have to adopt the roles of other game players and apprehend the game rules. In other words, social experience shaped the the part of me that was affected in the interaction. In the course of role-playing, people pretend to be somebody else in order to meet expectations or get the respect of others. The variety of these roles which people play, represent the process of development of the self. Finally, language provides people with ability to respond and express their attitude (Blumer & Morrione, 2004). People are the social creatures, so they need an external expression in interaction and communication with other social creatures. There is a variety of relationships between different people. With one person there is relationship of friendship, and with another one there is a

guardianship, and there can be hostility in relation to the others. People play some set of social roles at work and another at home; people can have an additional set of roles for friends and one more set of roles for enemies. Of course, there is some part of “ I” that exists exclusively for itself. Nobody except me can know this part of my “ self”. Moreover, people have various “ self” for each of their friends and acquaintances. People are comfortable with one friend to discuss politics, with another to have fun and with other one to play sports. Therefore, the person can have not one but set of subsidiary personalities (Mead & Morris, 1967).

Mead also has conception of the “ generalized other” that is characterized by influence of a social group. The key argument of the theory of “ generalized other” is that the persons’ behavior is shaped by the summarized attitude of the social group with which they interact. People are viewed through the attitude of the “ generalized other”, they can see, hear, sense or feel these attitude both consciously and subconsciously. Therefore, people behave in response of this generalized attitude and due to this response the role-playing is changing (Mead & Morris, 1967).

The following conception of Herbert Mead is known as the theory of “ I” and the “ me”. Mead asserts that the self can be divided into the “ me” and the “ I”, where the “ me” is an objective idea and perceive the expectations of the “ generalized other”, whereas the “ I” is a subjunctive idea and represents the person’s individuality. In other words, the “ me” is a manifestation of the social control; it is controlled by a set of rules and standards through which the society traditionally and historically controls their members; whereas, the “ I” is a manifestation of “ wild, uncivilized self”. Therefore, the “ me” is <https://assignbuster.com/george-herbert-mead/>

what should I do or what I should not do or what I must do or what I must not do; however, the “ I” is “ what I want to do” (Blumer & Morrione, 2004).

All theories listed above have the direct relation to people’s personality development from childhood to adulthood. Therefore, George Mead’s theories are extremely useful and important in relation to my life goal, which is becoming an elementary school teacher. Social interactions, role playing and self-perception are the essential elements of children’s development. Moreover, it is crucial for the child’s social development to be done correctly and competently, because the roots of antisocial behavior of adults lie in childhood (Mead, 1959).

Hence, according to Mead’s theory, in the childhood the developing of consciousness undergoes three stages: the “ role playing”, “ multi-playing” and influence of “ generalized other”. At first, the child imitates the role of his parents; this role is realized by children through game with dolls or each other in “ the daughters and mothers”. Then child begins to imitate a variety of roles; at some extent this process of imitation will never stop. In childhood, the imitation is manifested in sports and different outdoor games. In those games, children learn to foresee the actions of others, as well as calculate the next steps and take responsibility for their actions. For example, if a football player passes a ball to another player, he must consider not only the position of the ball, but the position of other football players in order not to lose the ball. Similar situations take place in real life. Child has to consider his/her actions and simultaneously understand actions of other children and adults to meet the expectations (Mead, 1959). These considerations are accompanied with playing multiple roles, so children have

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to play their roles properly to “ win the game”. Children undergo the third stage of “ generalized other” at the same time that the second stage of multiple roles. In other words, “ generalized other” makes children see themselves from the outside; particularly “ generalized other” makes children concern about how they look, what they eat, with whom they should be friends and so on. Owing to “ generalized other”, children learn to control themselves, because they do not want to feel embarrassment for their socially unapproved actions (Mead, 1959).

Mead is absolutely correct by asserting that proper self-awareness of a person is impossible without social interaction and communication. Indeed, the society is what that makes people the representatives of Homo sapiens in a traditional meaning. In fact, the human society is responsible for variety of social roles for an individual and simultaneously the human society is for whom an individual needs this variety of roles.