

SELF-AWARENESS AND THE LOOKING GLASS SELF

Preliminary: Personal & Social Identity

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Syllabus Content

The nature of the development of personal and social identity

Students will develop knowledge and understanding of the nature of the development of personal and social identity through the study of:

- the development of personality, self-awareness and self-concept
- the development of identity and the social self

Syllabus Outcomes

P1 identifies and applies social and cultural concepts

P2 describes personal, social and cultural identity

Related concepts

Persons, Identity, the Self & Self-Concept

Rationale

The following activity explores Cooley's theory of the Looking Glass Self as an cognitive and sociocultural explanation for how individuals develop self-awareness and a sense of self. The theory is simple but often resonates with students currently developing a sense of self through a heightened sense of self awareness. It can be used as a standalone activity or alongside other materials, resources or tasks to develop a deeper understanding of the development of the self.

The Looking Glass Self is a theory by sociologist Charles Horton Cooley in 1902, examining the process by which individuals understand themselves through social interaction. At its core, it suggests that perceptions of the self, and indeed the development of self-awareness stems from a conscious perception of how one might be seen or perceived by others. Our perception of how others see us, while entirely subjective and likely inaccurate is still a powerful process of self-awareness which depicts society and social interactions as a 'mirror' from which we judge ourselves. His theory is interesting because it accounts for the role of others and society within the cognitive development of the self. While some might consider this theory to be somewhat 'outdated', students can challenge themselves to apply this theory to the development of self and self-awareness online and through Social Media.

Have students view the YouTube Clip from the Khan Academy about Cooley's Theory Linked here and complete the summary table on the theory linked below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bU0BQUa11ek>

They also might like to extend themselves through the following additional readings and examples:

<https://lesley.edu/article/perception-is-reality-the-looking-glass-self>

[https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Sociology/Book%3A_Sociology_\(Boundless\)/04%3A_The_Role_of_Socialization/4.03%3A_Theories_of_Socialization/4.3B%3A_Cooley](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Sociology/Book%3A_Sociology_(Boundless)/04%3A_The_Role_of_Socialization/4.03%3A_Theories_of_Socialization/4.3B%3A_Cooley)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/de-stressing-disability/201901/through-the-looking-glass>

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List the key features of Cooley's Theory	
According to this theory, how do we become self-aware?	
What are the problems with how people form a sense of self awareness? Give an example.	
In what ways might we consider identity and our sense of self to be a <i>social construct</i> ?	
Does Self Awareness become more accurate over time? Why or why not?	
Apply this theory to explain the development of self-awareness online through Social Media	
Does this theory explain your progression to self-awareness? Why or why not?	

Practice Question (5 marks)

Explain the process by which individuals develop a sense of self awareness
