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# The Formation Of Self Identity Through Society And Profession

## The Self in the Social World

Who a person is, including influences from their environments, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs, helps to form the concept the self. It is the small and unique interactions with others in the social world that helps a person to define his or her self (Fiske, 2014). Social influences contribute to the development of people from early on in life, and help to influence such attitudes and both personal and professional identities. One interaction during childhood may affect future social perceptions. According to Kaiser, Oerke, and Bogner (2007) through the developmental stages, social interactions and behaviors influence a person's attitude, perception and social reactions within their environment ultimately affecting individual's self-identity and how one places themselves within a social group.

According to Fiske (2014), a person's identity affects development in all aspects of life: school, family, work, and friends. These interactions and experiences help to define the role everyone plays in each aspect of life. how one see's themselves or their cognitive representation of one's self within a group, comparing themselves to others social failures and successes, cultures and opinions will affect one's development in school, work, family, and friends.

## My Radius

The importance of the environmental identity in predicting pro-environmental behaviors has already been demonstrated by studies showing that this concept predicts recycling of self-perceptual concepts throughout developmental stages (Bertoldo & Castro, 2016. p.2). It is during a child's earliest stages of development in which a child's parents or primary care givers provide the most significant development to the self. For as long as I can remember, I have always been a daddy's girl. I grew up in a very different environment. My parents owned their own business, so we struggled in all aspects of the word: financially, distance from schools, routines, etc. My parents worked extremely hard for what we had, and they let us know it. I understood the value of a dollar at a young age, and have grown up to appreciate those life lessons. My mother dealt with all of the customers and the accounts, whereas my father did most of the grunt work. When he was younger, my father lost the majority of his hearing because of an illness. Being a member of a family of a person who is hearing impaired is difficult. It creates a sense of attachment that others may not understand. My father, with all of his faults and failures, was my hero. It was his work ethic and sense of values which had the most profound impact on my life, even in my early childhood. My dad instilled a sense of independence and self-reliance in me that helped my self-esteem to increase.

Upon entering adolescence, the dynamic transferred to my mother becoming my primary influence. Understanding what I was going through during the hardest times in my life, created a relationship that helped to find my self-identity and further develop my concept of self. My mother provided a safe environment allowing the development of self-identity as a female. Erikson's theory of psychosocial developmental influences explains how bonding with my

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mother at a pivotal age, affected a view of femininity development throughout life stages (Svetina, 2014). This being said, my mother wasn't perfect and was unable to offer the influence of independence or high self-esteem. As I grew older, I began to develop a low self-esteem, which ultimately affected every aspect of my life. Relationships with friends and men, choices I made, everything developed because of my lack of self-esteem.

To seek outside influence on development, it became necessary to reach out to others outside of my general family circle. Adolescence became harder, and a difficult fight to develop the desired self-perception emerged. The perception I had of others and the expectations they had for me and I had for them, really caused an internal uproar. With a father who believed in tough love, and a mother who was oddly always happy on the outside and willing to give a person anything, there was a constant tug between both sides of my parents and the overall influence they had on my development. At this point in my life, the feelings of not being accepted by anyone where I laid my head, the outside influences were easily accessible and helped to define certain concepts of the self. According to Svetina (2014), development is influenced by driving forces of internal conflict influenced by the external environmental factors. During this time, the effects of childhood became a distant memory, and the influence of friends and other outside influences became primary to development of adolescent years.

In my case, I chose the influence of what would soon become my two oldest children's father. A very unstable person with unstable beliefs, values, and morals – I chose to follow him and his influences to round out my adolescence. With verbal and physical abuse within the relationship, my self-esteem plummeted and the concept of the self that I had worked so hard to achieve, was diminished rapidly.

## Verbal Messages

The internal or dispositional traits versus external or situational attributes vary minute to minute throughout life. Individuals take previous experiences to determine how others attributes will hinder or help one's path of success or failure (Reeder, Vonk, Ronk, Ham & Lawrence, 2004). A person's self-concept can definitely be affected by verbal messages presented throughout life. I have been called so many names by so many people, that have considerably affected my self-esteem negatively. Hearing, "Oh, she's just a screw up!" or "That's just Liz for you," has the ability to tear a person down and create a decreases sense of self. But in the same time, it can also create a sense of fight and strength for a person to push on and prove everyone wrong. And eventually in my life, that is what I did. I got to the point where I knew, deep down I knew, that I was not the person that people assumed I was. One day, I decided I wanted to go back to school. With three children, I started back at a community college, just to get my feet wet. I realized that my passion was nursing, so I quickly joined the CNA program. After three months, I was a Certified Nurse's Assistant, working at a long-term/short-term facility. I fought back. I decided that I had to stop letting others influence my development, I had to stop letting others influence my self-esteem. I had to stop letting others create me, when I was capable of creating myself. By this point, the people who mattered the most had nothing but positive messages, praising me for the person I was becoming.

A person can develop any self-esteem they deem necessary when faced with negative and positive remarks. Fortunately, because environmental influences are constantly evolving, this self-esteem is temporary. As I chose my reaction to negative comments, I chose to fight the

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words and prove them wrong, knowing that I was in control, and I could break the cycle. The resilience developed from situational experiences becomes a dispositional trait over time strengthening the fighter inside and solidifying the positive perception of self (Reeder et al., 2004).

## **Attitude Development**

In psychology, an attitude refers to a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors toward a particular object, person, thing, or event (Gans, 2017). Attitudes are often the result of a person's experiences or the impact of early influences in his or her life. It is the attitude that can have a powerful influence on a person's behavior and actions. According to Kaiser, Oerke, and Bogner (2007), environmental interactions causing reactions at an early age, allowed parental figures and care givers to instill the correct perception of what is culturally acceptable beliefs and behaviors.

Being raised with a high respect the older generation has continued throughout life. Holding doors for people, jumping out of the car to help an elderly person cross the street – these are all natural responses due to the parental and authority-type influences during my early developmental stages. With older generational customers constantly coming in to the store, I was taught phrases such as “yes ma'am” and “no sir” in response to questions. Talking to account holders on the phone when they called to talk to my father (who remember, is hard of hearing), taught me to understand my audience when I spoke to them. I was taught that it was the older generation who provided for us, so it was our turn to provide for them. This idea also encouraged a very close relationship with my grandmother, especially as I grew older.

According to Fiske (2014), utilizing social comparison to develop current attitudes in all aspects of life is imperative to social development. Comparing that of a seasoned, experienced person, to myself, helps me to work on becoming a better person.

## **My Professional Identity**

A professional identity differs from a personal identity in which individuals compare to others in their professional world. As we go through the social world we get to meet different people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse characters. Through such interactions we learn and develop within us certain virtues that will dictate our future. As the saying goes, we are the average of the people we spend most of our time with. As people around us fail or succeed, the perception of the role played, helps to define my professional identity. Where individuals place themselves on the hierarchy of professionals is influenced by the desires and aspirations of the young child and grows throughout adulthood (Bertoldo & Castro, 2016).

Individuals developed expectations professionally as well as set personal goals for professional acceptance. Watching family members, loved ones and people admired fail and succeed, influenced how one approaches professional situations as not to repeat the unsuccessful attempts by others, and learn from their mistakes. Professional identity continues to evolve as one experiences different interactions and search for the perfect fit in an ever-changing society where the social norms are continuously changing (Bertoldo & Castro, 2016).

A couple of years ago, my father became unable to work. My mother, who had lessened her

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role in the business, had to quit her nursing job in order to take care of my father. With mixed emotions, my parents sat me down and handed me over the business they had created, maintained, struggled with, was their blood, sweat, and tears, and had established as a reputable and honest company. I valued my parents beliefs and values as business owners, and utilized their influences during my childhood and adolescence years, to become a successful small business owner. My father's tough love as a child, helps me to be a strong, independent woman, especially when an account is late with a payment or is being difficult. My mother's giving and happy disposition allows me to build great professional relationships with my customers. It is their effects that have influenced my professional identity the most.

## **Conclusion**

The concept of self is something that initially becomes influenced before a person is even born and ends with the ending of a person's life. It is constantly being influenced by the surrounding world, the individuals one comes in contact with, the situations a person is thrown into, and the impact of the crashing when the individuals and the situations combine. Individuals come and go, but each person creates a lasting mark on a person's identity. External environmental interactions impact the internal focus of control and perceptions developed taking into consideration the situational and disposition attributes towards social influences (Bertoldo & Castro, 2016). As I further make my way through the developmental stages of life, who I was, who I am, and who I will be, will constantly evolve and change, affecting the concept of the self, the self-esteem, and further my self-identity.