

“CALL ME MALCOLM” A TRUE DESIGN OF LOOKING GLASS SELF-THEORY IN WESTERN CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is an attempt to explore difficulties of the transgendered people as portrayed in the Holly wood documentary “Call Me Malcolm” with special reference to the Charles Horton Cooley’s looking glass self-theory. The direction and Production are given by Joseph Parlagreco in 2004 and released in March, 2007 in USA. The communal behavior with transgendered people, due to their gender identity is highlighted in Western society. The “role of society” is the major component of looking glass design that creates pessimistic environment in the life of Malcolm, who suffers a lot in life. Various aspects of the theory are carefully chosen to observe the height of difficulties faced by transgender people in the selected documentary and are analyzed within the framework of Qualitative methodology. Transgender are poorly treated as it is portrayed in the context of western society. They are not accepted in the society. To elucidate the problems of transgender, discriminatory behaviors adopted by the society due to odd physical condition towards Malcolm (a transgender child), on other transgender community and audience is discussed in this paper. By analyzing the dialogues from original text call me Malcolm it is concluded that Malcolm is struggling for existence; He fights and ultimately able to survive Although his culture and ethics are strong, but struggle for survival was a perplexing task to bridge the gap between transgender and a common man in the western world.

Key Words: - Malcolm, society, Western, call, transgender, struggle.

Introduction

Gender identity is the main issue specifically indicated in the documentary *Call Me Malcolm* by Malcolm Himschoot. He is a 25 year-age transgender religious seminary learner. In *Call Me Malcolm*, *Malcolm* encounters with loss in belief, trust and gender singularity. Malcolm was born in 1977 a son in a daughter’s figure. He was unable to win a trust and certainty as a complete boy after passing so many years at home and in school and even in the face of society. The boy looking Malcolm learned that he was a Transgender, and just few years back he decided to take some significant steps outwardly and start living into the sex he had always been from the internally. It is a biographic movie about the social order and its part in the lifetime of third gender that is forced to adapt transformation.

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The *looking-glass self*-theory is a social psychosomatic theory, and C.H Cooley produced it in 1902 which give out the idea that the personality of any singular person is cultivate of behavior and social exchange of each other bearing in any culture. Notion of 'Looking Glass Self' is an impression grounded on communal and mental aspect. C.H. Cooley released this concept in the year of 1902 through which he elaborates his notion by throwing light on how the self of an individual grows? He concluded that the identity of anybody develops out of reflection and observation of other people.

The concept of Cooley mechanism tells that any one interprets and mirrors of himself or herself with the judgments and views of general public in the society and likewise on this formation of the awareness so these people start recognizing himself or herself in view of that consideration. 'So in this regard we acquire ourselves as others see us, and our individuality or personality is generated' (Yeung & Martin, 2003). The development of Looking Glass Self initiates at an initial stage and lasts all over the life of an individual because till the end of public dealings a person will never halt building his or herself.

For the persons of this kind Fatima (2008) figures Doctor as: "a transsexual is a male or female who has lifelong feelings of being trapped in the wrong body" (pp.135-136).

Gender is an old term that determines whether a person is male, female, or neuter. The task faced by the lay man was the advancement of the model of self-recognition. The main challenge to the Psychologists was from the new age group of societal and interactive experts, who defied the power of the therapeutic public.

The researchers Whittle, Turner, and Al Alami who worked on the difficulties of third gender living in western culture through a research scheme and they reported in the commission of the Equalities Review. Basically their focus was on the biased attitude of the Western community towards the transgender people. In this report the practices of ill-treatment and marginalized behavior of the people with them is specially indicated. On the other hand it also encourages the treatment and the reasons of this marginalized behavior .As the report highlights: "It is the Trans phobic response of other members of society that results in Trans people experiencing in equality or discrimination" (Stephen, 2007, p.7)

In the "*Journal of International Academic Research*" Emad determines the impression that all of us hold on the features in our personalities that we perceive out of the judgments of other people in the society. He added more that in what way social tags as well as groups can distress conducts, approaches and dogmas of neglected people of society. In its chronological framework and the firmness of the major structures of character, looking glass self has arisen as the evidence of the self-perception and the automated outlook of self-perception had gradually developed more evident. In a critique of societal discipline linking the breach Isakson exposes about this theory that "the concept of the looking glass-self theory constitutes the cornerstone of the sociological theory of socialization".

In the context of gender identity it is examined that as soon as you utter the word third gender and public will really be acquainted with what you're speaking about. General public emulate what they consider other person consider for them. It is almost not possible to conduct physically in a changed manner from how one person is reflecting him or her is enduringly supposed by other general public. Cooley clarifies that the social order is an interworking and interweaving of collected egos.

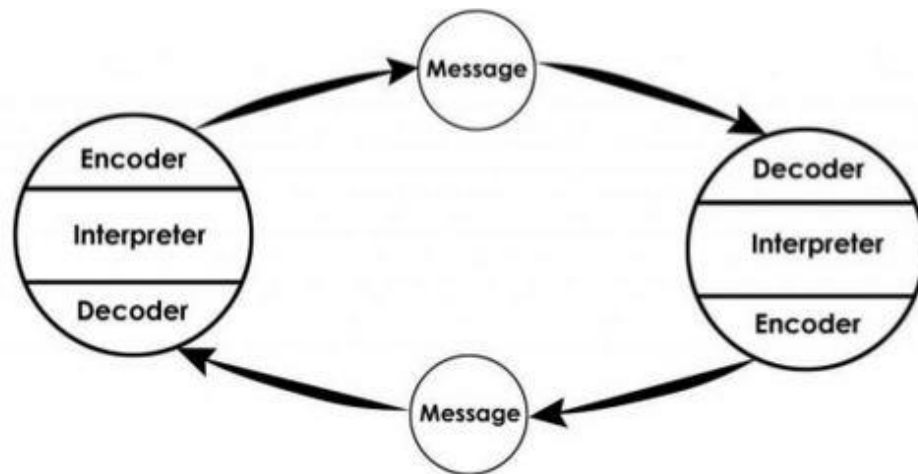
Rationale of the study:

Call Me Malcolm is the real depiction of the Trans group of the West. It is a bibliographic account, but more than a life film. It is a trip of detection. Malcolm is the youngster of much esteemed parentages and is familiarized as a depressed and miserable faced emergent youth. Third gender people face discrimination in the West; the genetic error of transgender causes great sufferings throughout the life. They face biased behavior from society. Their grief journey starts from home and it reaches to the streets, bazars schools and in the whole society wherever they go.

This documentary concentrates on Respected Malcolm Himschoot, a 25 year-old transgendered theological college student. He is jobless, undefined for future, unaccepted as a masculine Malcolm by his family relation and deprived of love in his lifetime. (Schuenemeyer) mentions the lifespan of Malcolm in the movie as: As Malcolm shares his own story in the documentary Call Me Malcolm which suggests us a preview in to the actual transgender people. But it is only a sight. The life of Malcolm in boyhood was very unhappy. Malcolm as a Miriam had two comrades, and general public thought him the fellow sister of his brothers but here he was powerless to disrupt them thinking him as a girl. "He certainly not consider himself a sister, other than a brother but other people supposed him a feminine gender here he says he "didn't really correct them." (Rev, Amos Lassen "Call Me Malcolm"—making peace with oneself).

He further adds, "It made me feel like I wasn't there". Confusion and uncertainty entered in his life as a vital portion of his emerging procedure and he also considers abnormal himself ever since his self-perception did not compete with the judgment of others" (Rev, Amos Lassen "Call Me Malcolm"—making peace with oneself).

Cooley used the theory of 'Looking Glass Self' in his book "*Human Nature and the Social Order*" in 1902. The idea of the looking glass-self clarifies that individuals in our adjacent environment contribute as the "mirrors" that make a replicate imageries of ourselves. According to Cooley, The self is not firsthand singular and then communal; it ascends dialectically through statements. A person's perception of himself is the reflection of the thinking that he adopts the traits interpreting to the other thoughts; therefore, there are no separate identities. "There is no logic of 'I' without its relative logic of you, or him, or them." (Cooley, 1902). Thus presenting the look and appearance of identity in the form of I, Cooley associated it to a looking glass. He claimed that society has very deep impacts on the person's behavior. So, we can understand that a man is the purely product of his environment in which he lives.



Social Theory Looking Glass Self

As Cooley stood principal advocate of “looking glass-self” idea which relates that one’s personality grows on view of the public social collaborations and observations of others. It is roughly assessed in (1981) that nearly 50% of third gender have very less survival chances because of these troubles. The stress of the public that forces the third gender individual loss family but also remain without help in this world.

According to Cooley, the development of self-growth comprises three phases. Mainly, we see how we *give the impression* to the other individual. At times this elaboration is accurate, but can perhaps be mistaken as it is only created on our *beliefs*. Another point, we conceive what *conclusions* society create of us centered on our appearance. Finally, we *see* how the people sense ourselves, founded on the assessment prepared out of our guise

The first of these stages was adapting on his different label ‘Malcolm’. From this end ahead he starts on a passage of self-assurance. Starting in a small town outside of Denver, Malcolm returned to his past by visiting a former high school tutor whom he has not seen since he transitioned.

1. Miriam to Malcolm:

Basically the concept of Cooley’s model supports this hypothesis that our close persons serve as the “mirrors” that reproduce our descriptions. As per theory prescribed by Cooley the progression of a personality in the eyes of others contains three levels. “First we imagine how we look like to another person. Second, we imagine what judgments people make of us based on our outer physic. Which as we see, have significant influence on Call me Malcolm. This is the certain result of the struggle for successful existence of Noble Malcolm Himschoot in the western society. This survival fight is both inner and outer-specific; it could be a simple struggle against destiny or contrary difficult conditions of surroundings. Finally, we conceive that how an individual thinks around us, created on the judgments made of us. The final consequence is that we frequently adjust and amend our conduct centered on what we feel society identify us.” (p.152).

2. How we appear to another person:

At the beginning of the film, we see Malcolm is in sedentary position relaxing at the verge of the Majestic vale just like he is be seated at the brink of his upcoming time. His identity is unsure. He announces his different designation Malcolm. His paternities kept his name Miriam nevertheless soon after he gets matured he understood that it is not appropriate name which fits him on behalf of contrasting nature of his body and brain. This clearly shows that means he does not contain body as normal man have. And that is why he declares:

“My name is Malcolm. I am God’s creature. God is the creator.” (Scene, 1, Call Me Malcolm, 07)

The Editorial Reviews of Amazon, writer states that: “Malcolm describes his childhood like this: ‘I always thought of myself as one of the brothers. I have two brothers so that would have made me the third brother. But other people perceived me as a girl and I couldn’t really correct them. It made me feel like I wasn’t there.’ In this way the self-doubt and confusion develops in himself from early childhood. So he was surprised why his awareness of himself did not contest to that of surrounding people”. (Amazon.com movies TV) 52.

Malcolm describes his childhood experiences about gender identity in the life documented film. He undergoes so many bad incidents as a third gender kid. He tells about his childhood feelings that he reflects himself as a younger associate of his two elder comrades but community expect him a daughter. It means that his supposition for him is mistaken. These bad experiences realized him that he must have some abnormal in his gender and personality.

True design of Charles Horton Cooley “looking glass self-theory”

The concept of “looking glass-self” claims that one’s self develops on view of communal behavior and social exchange of each other bearing in a the social order. The view of the theory ‘Looking Glass Self’ is an impression created on communal and mental aspect. Cooley released the model in the start of twentieth century 1902 in which he elaborates his notion through throwing light on the question how the personality of person grows? It is concluded that the personality of anybody grows out of reflection and observation of other people.

At this juncture he gets confused about his inner identity. He decided to begin to explore his real “self”. He assumed this awareness out of gazes of public who think him is a daughter. Society treated him like a girl, so he was muddled about his behavior? Being a complete boy or a girl, it was in fact the social order that enforced him to perform like a girl because of the pressure of society because society is chiefly accountable for our personality build up. When he develops up he went for different collective events, because he ignored the people as much as possible. He feel odd one and alien among them. It is also significant that he is always disregarded.

3. Judgments of people:

Malcolm further exposed his bitter childhood experiences that during his boyhood time period most often it happened that people assumed him a girl and parents identify him with

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Miriam, on behalf of those specific judgments of the society which confirm his gender after analyzing him. Now his findings for himself were not correct, and the fact is this that his appearance is like a girl not a boy. He states: "When I was a kid, I used to think myself one of the brothers. I have two brothers. But people perceive me as a girl, but I could not correct them. It made me feel like that I was not there." (Malcolm, *Call Me Malcolm*, 2007). He feels so sad and unhappy on account of the other people's judgments and considers himself as helpless to modify their attitude and view about himself.

As Shaffer approves the model offered by C.H Cooley and pronounces that The Looking Glass Self theory is consist on three major components that are all outstanding and distinctive to diverse human beings. (Shaffer, 2005). The final part of the article supports the idea that we adjust our conduct established on account of our feelings how close people and society recognize us.

After realizing a hard and tough life ahead Malcolm decided to change his life. So he left the name Miriam (given by his parents at the time of birth) and became Malcolm. This key help him to get accept himself and took admission at Church in Religious studies School and now he decided for the gender treatment process to transform his personality. When the movie jerks, Malcolm was at the final year of study in the theological college. A crucial year for him. He was yet jobless and devoid of family and friends love and support. To test the water, he made a road trip during his senior year, and came to know that it was most difficult journey of discovery of self and ultimately he began to find some of the answers to his most difficult questions and went through a long, difficult but successful transition process.

Conclusion

Looking Glass Self articulates that a person is reflected to the public and thinks of himself or herself through the eyes and perceptions of others and on account the public awareness a person recognize him so the actions and behavior of a person are designed by the social interaction and reaction. As a product of the concept in which we learn to see ourselves as others do, identity or self is generated (Yeung & Martin, 2003). The process of identification of one's self jerks at an early age and continues throughout the life of a person because till the termination of social interaction one would never stop constructing his or herself. We can say that it is in fact looking glass process which made a person conscious for self-identity. Butler (1980) promoted the information about gender that every act of a person does not only depend upon the gender of that individual but it is also influenced by the outlook and notions of the society towards that individual. By applying Cooley's concept of self-*Call Me Malcolm* of Joseph Parlagreco is purely the work of looking glass-self.

It has been studied all over the world that almost 50 percent of transgender do not survived due to hard conditions of life and face deaths before going to thirty years of age. Communal pressure in the world of a transgender enforce him to be the part of transgender community and be alien at home. Malcolm also faced all miseries of life and ultimately fighting with these hard conditions he decided to go through gender transition. After a long time gender

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transition he got the chance to be Malcolm, Who is still working in Church as a theological teacher. It proved that west has better survival conditions as compared to east. Malcolm documented his long journey of self in the form of a film Call Me Malcolm.

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