



Identity and Social Change

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Identity and Social Change examines the thorny problem of modern identity. Trenchant critiques have come from identity politics, focusing on the construction of difference and the solidarity of minorities, and from academic deconstructions of modern subjectivity. This volume places identity in a broader sociological context of destabilizing and reintegrating forces.

The contributors first explore identity in light of economic changes, consumerism, and globalization, then focus on the question of identity dissolution. Zygmunt Bauman examines the effects of consumerism and considers the constraints these place on the disadvantaged. Drawing together discourses of the body and globalization, David Harvey considers the growth of the wage labor system worldwide and its consequences for worker consciousness. Mike Featherstone outlines a rethinking of citizenship and identity formation in light of the realities of globalization and new information technologies.

Part two opens with Robert Dunn's examination of cultural commodification and the attenuation of social relations. He argues that the media and marketplace are part of a general destabilization of identity formation. Kenneth Gergen maintains that proliferating communications technologies undermine the traditional conceptions of self and community and suggest the need for a new base for building the moral society. In the final chapter, Harvie Ferguson argues that despite the contemporary infatuation with irony, the decline of the notion of the self as an inner depth effectively severs the long connection between irony and identity.

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