

# Identity

**To explore identity** means to inquire how we see ourselves and how others see us.

**Identity can be detected** through signs of taste, beliefs, attitudes and lifestyles.

**Identity is not a collection of traits** we possess; rather it is a mode of thinking about ourselves.

**Identity is not a fixed entity:** it is “an emotionally charged description of ourselves that is subject to change.”

(Barker: 220 – 228)

**Identity means** “continuity of the subject over and beyond variations in time and its adaptations to the environment ... the ability to recognize and to be recognized.” (Melucci, 1996, p. 30)

**Multiple identities:** “Identities are never either pure or fixed but formed at the intersections of age, class, gender, race and nation.” (Barker: 260)

## Identity and Culture

“a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’ ...[and] belongs to the future as much as to the past ... not something that already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture ... fixed in some essentialised past, [but] subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power.” (Hall; quoted in Campbell: 18)

- Made up by points of similarity as well as difference.
- Points of difference around which cultural identities could form: identifications of class, gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, nationality, political position, morality, religion.
- British identity, black British, black American, black African (Barker: 231)
- The locus of cultural identity:
  - sometimes national, sometimes regional, sometimes racially or ethnicity based, always lodged in some dynamics of social class organization;
  - regional cultures: “southern culture” varies from “New England culture,” and “downeast Mainers” (Johnson: 188 – 189).

Literature:

Barker, Chris. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. London: SAGE Publications, 2003. Second Edition.

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