

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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