Identity Troubles

An introduction

By Anthony Elliott

Director of the Hawke Research Institute and Executive Director of the Hawke EU Centre for Mobilities, Migrations and Cultural Transformations, where he is Research Professor of Sociology at the University of South Australia.

In our turbulent world of global flows and digital transformations pervasive identity crises and self-reinvention have become increasingly central to everyday life. In this fascinating book, Anthony Elliott shows how global transformations – the new electronic economy, digital worlds, biotechnologies and artificial intelligence - generates metamorphosis across the force-field of identities today.

Identity Troubles documents various contemporary mutations of identity – from robotics to biomedicine, from cosmetic surgery to digital lives – and considers their broader social, cultural and political consequences.

Elliott offers a synthesis of the key conceptual innovations in identity studies in the context of recent social theory. He critically examines accounts of "individualization", "reflexivity", "liquidization" and "new maladies of the soul" – situating these in wider social and historical contexts, and drawing out critical themes. He follows with a series of chapters looking at how what is truly new in contemporary life is having profound consequences for identities, both private and public. This book will be essential reading for undergraduate students in sociology, cultural studies, political science, and human geography. It offers the first comprehensive overview of identity studies in the interdisciplinary field of social theory.

A compelling and original analysis of the impact of the digital revolution upon everyday life, the self and the body.

- Lord Anthony Giddens, House of Lords and the London School of Economics, UK

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