



Identity: Cultural Change and the Struggle for Self

Roy F. Baumeister

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What do we mean by "having an identity"? How has the process of establishing a personal identity changed over recent centuries? Is creating an identity harder today than in medieval times? Professor Baumeister explores these and other questions central to the understanding of the human personality and of deep personal concern to any individual. Drawing on a wealth of historical, cultural, literary, and philosophical evidence, the author describes the evolution of identity in the west over recent centuries--from the relatively simple and passive achievement of identity in feudal times to the more complex and uncertain process by which modern men and women must choose their identity. Out of this account and contemporary psychological research, the author delineates a theory of the nature and structure of identity. Along the way the reader is treated to fascinating discussions of how brainwashing works, how children learn who they are, the different kinds of identity crises, when and why the concept of a private or "hidden" self emerged, and how our view of love has changed from mild insanity to an ideal of fulfillment. Identity will be of interest to social, personality, and development psychologists, and their students. General readers will also find this book both stimulating and accessible.

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