

Transformations: Identity Construction in Contemporary Culture

Grant David McCracken



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Self reinvention has become a preoccupation of contemporary culture. In the last decade, Hollywood made a 500-million-dollar bet on this idea with movies such as Multiplicity, Fight Club, eXistenZ, and Catch Me If You Can. Self reinvention marks the careers of Madonna, Ani DiFranco, Martha Stewart, and Robin Williams. The Nike ads of LeBron James, the experiments of New Age spirituality, the mores of contemporary teen culture, and the obsession with "extreme makeovers" are all examples of our culture's fixation with change. In a time marked by plenitude, transformation is one of the few things these parties have in common.

Although transformation is widely acknowledged as a defining characteristic of our culture, we have almost no studies on what it is or how it works. Transformations offers the first comprehensive and systematic view. It is an ethnography of the contemporary world.

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