



Consumer Culture, Identity and Well-Being: The Search for the 'Good Life' and the 'Body Perfect' (European Monographs in Social Psychology)

By Helga Dittmar

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Advertising, materialism and consumption are central aspects of contemporary Western culture. We are bombarded with idealised images of the perfect body, desirable consumer goods, and affluent lifestyles, yet psychology is only just beginning to take account of the profound influence these consumer culture ideals have on individuals' sense of identity and worth.

Consumer Culture, Identity, and Well-Being documents the negative psychological impact consumer culture can have on how individuals view themselves and on their emotional welfare. It looks at the social psychological dimensions of having, buying and wanting material goods, as well as the pursuit of media-hyped appearance ideals. In particular, it focuses on:

- the purchasing of material goods as a means of expressing and seeking identity, and the negative consequences of this
- psychological buying motivations in conventional buying environments and on the Internet
- the unrealistic socio-cultural beauty ideals embodied by idealized models.

Throughout, different approaches from social psychology are integrated, such as self-completion, self-discrepancy and value theory, to create a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the impact of internalising core consumer culture ideals on how individuals see themselves and the implications this has for their psychological and physical health.

This book is of interest to anybody who wants to find out more about the psychological effects of living in modern consumer societies on children, adolescents, and adults. More specifically, it will be of interest to students and researchers in social psychology, sociology, media studies, communication and other social sciences, as well as to psychologists, health workers, and practitioners interested in the topics of identity, consumption pathologies, body image, and body-related behaviours.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Dr. Dittmar has done us a great service by writing a book on the importance of 'consuming' to society and to individual identity and well-being that is both scholarly and accessible. The book tackles some tough questions regarding who and what people want to be, how they go about constructing their 'selves', and just what is it that people want from life and why. I wish more research psychologists were writing books like this." - **James E. Maddux, George Mason University, Washington, USA**

"Dittmar's book provides a valuable review of her ground-breaking psychological studies of consumer culture. In my mind, the book's strongest contribution is its explication of how identity-related processes help explain the damage that occurs when individuals take on the materialistic values and unhealthy body images encouraged in our contemporary world." - **Tim Kasser, Knox College, USA**

"Consumer Culture, Identity and Well-Being: The Search for the 'Good Life' and the 'Body Perfect' discusses an important and timely issue - the psychological impact of mass consumption that visibly pervades our consumer culture. ... The author makes a contribution by focusing on identity." - **Candice R. Hollenbeck & George M. Zinkhan, PsycCRITIQUES**

About the Author

Helga Dittmar, D.Phil, is Reader in Psychology at the University of Sussex in England, where she completed her undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications, after beginning her studies in psychology at the University of Frankfurt in Germany. Her research focuses on mass consumer society and how this has an impact on people's sense of who they are and their well-being. Her work has received strong media interest (TV, radio) and includes: psychological functions of material possessions, buying motivations, compulsive buying, materialism, as well as the influence of the mass media on the body image of girls, women and men.

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