

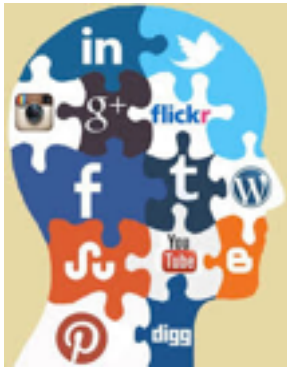
DAVID GAUNTLETT



David Gauntlett - Identity & Media



- Media has always been interested in **representations of identity**.
- Traditionally, these representations were **imposed** by media professionals, in order to communicate a particular message or opinion.
- With newer forms of media, **self-representation** is more common. Groups and individuals can now represent themselves more easily; they have the opportunity to talk back and take the initiative.
- Groups that were previously **marginalized** (e.g. disabled, black, LGBT, gay) gain a voice and become **normalized** (part of the mainstream).
- However, with this freedom to self-represent, comes the freedom to **experiment** with identity, to create and try out new identities like clothes. Invention, extreme representations and fakery can become the norm.
- Media allows representations of **multiple and fluid identities** to flourish.
- This is part of the **postmodern trend** of blurring and distorting traditional boundaries, **breaking down barriers between binary opposites** (which tended to be stereotyped and simplistic).
- UGT (Uses & Gratifications Theory, Blumler and Katz) has the 'personal identity', 'self-surveillance' strand. People may **experiment with identities, inventing, constructing and projecting an online persona**.



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Blumler & Katz in their Uses & Gratifications model way back in the 1970s were aware that we use media as a way of **exploring and defining our personal identity**.

This also links to the ever-useful Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Media often seems to promise a **dream of self-actualization** – for example in celebrity culture, fashion and lifestyle features, YouTube influencers and advertising.

Many music videos provide examples of artists **experimenting with and exploring identity**. See for example Childish Gambino's 'This is America'



Mrs Fisher <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTRk3Y6BnqA&t=1s>

TRC Media <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0bfJVBodnM>



- 1) Do you think social media encourages users to experiment with different personas, to try on identities like clothes? What about gaming? Fandom?
- 2) Find examples of how media encourages less fixed ideas about identity, gender etc, promoting representations of more **fluid, multiple identities**.