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Facing the Future: Perspectives on Identity, the Workforce, and the Impact of Innovative Technological Communications

“With daily living swirling about at unprecedented speed, some say that the postmodern self is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere.”

- Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein

The emergence of unprecedented communicative technology is changing interaction and social networking in the professional and personal spectrums, in turn making identity a multiplicity of “selves” that are amorphous and continually reinvented. The array of social networks have diversified and expanded dramatically to encompass international and non-physical relationships that in turn, signal a radical shift in the way we perceive ourselves and others, shifting and strengthening the possibilities provided for by the micro-relationships that we engage in on a daily basis. These “micro” or personal relationships are strengthened by electronic communication possibilities that transcend time and space- that is, these relationships are allowed to flourish without the interference of traditional social boundaries (i.e. creed, class, time, physical location, etc.).

Lesson for Students

Different today is the type of education and skills considered rare and valuable. Today, it is the education and skills possessed by the "symbolic analysts," the individuals with all the muscle above, not below, their shoulders, and who can function as national and transnational strategic brokers in today's global economy. This takes a very high level of written, oral, and quantitative communication skills in whatever profession one chooses, and a high level of creativity and cultural capital. Higher education does not guarantee this, but without higher education, one is almost assured of not moving into the comfortable symbolic analyst position.

Who am I? What skills do I need to succeed in the workplace of the 21st century? What opportunities and challenges lie ahead? Professors offer insights to these questions and aim to enlighten the college graduate hoping to enter the working world.

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