



## History of Private Life, Volume V: Riddles of Identity in Modern Times

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# History of Private Life, Volume V: Riddles of Identity in Modern Times

## History of Private Life, Volume V: Riddles of Identity in Modern Times

This fifth and final volume in an award-winning series charts the inner history of our times from the tumult of World War I to the 1990s. Nine historians present a picture of cultures in transition and in the process scrutinize a myriad of subjects - the sacrament of confession, volunteer hotlines, Nazi policies toward the family, the baby boom, evolving sexuality, the history of contraception, and ever-changing dress codes. They draw upon unexpected sources, including divorce hearing transcripts, personal ads, and little-known demographic and consumer data. Perhaps the most notable pattern to emerge is a polarizing of public and private realms. Productive labour shifts from the home to an impersonal public setting. Salaried or corporate employment replaces many independent, entrepreneurial jobs, and workers of all kinds aggressively pursue their leisure time. Zoning laws segregate industrial and commercial areas from residential neighbourhoods, which are no longer a supportive "theatre" of benign surveillance, gossip, and mutual concern, but an assemblage of aloof and anonymous individuals or families. Scattered with personal possessions and appliances, homes grow large by yesterday's standards and are marked by elaborate spatial subdivisions. Men and women are obsessed with health, fitness, diet and appearance as the body becomes the focal point of personal identity. In the search for sexual and individualistic fulfillment, romantic love becomes the foundation of marriage. Couples marry at an older age; families are smaller. The divorce rate rises, and with it the number of single-family households. Women, entering the work forces in unprecedented numbers, frequently function as both breadwinner and homemaker. The authors interrelate these patterns with the changing roles of state and religion in family matters, the socialization of education and elder care, the growth of feminism, the impact of media on private life, and the nature of secrecy. "Riddles of Identity in Modern Times" chronicles a period when the differentiation of life into public and private realms, once a luxury of the wealthy, gradually spread throughout the population. This final volume, differing from the French edition, portrays Italian, German and American family life in the 20th century. The authors, Chiara Saraceno, Ingeborg Weber-Kellerman and Elaine Tyler May enlarge the European and Atlantic canvas that depicts the modern identity.

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