

Summary of
Kenneth Gergen: The Saturated Self (1992), New York
Chapter 0: Preface (pp. ix-xiv)

Topic

The preface of the book explains that the author's purpose in writing the book and the problems he faced in offering insight into current academic debates to those outside the ivory tower. What he tries to convey is the immense ferment in which virtually all the assumptions guiding reason and research are coming under sharp criticism.

Main Topic

This massive increment in social stimulation—moving toward a state of saturation—sets the stage both for radical changes in our daily experiences of self and others and for an unbridled relativism within the academic sphere. Beliefs in the true and the good depend on a reliable and homogeneous group of supporters, who define what is reliably “there,” plain and simple. With social saturation, the coherent circles of accord are demolished, and all beliefs are thrown into question by one's exposure to multiple points of view. This is no less true in academic matters of truth and objectivity than in our daily experiences of self.

Other conclusions

- 1) The technological achievements of the past century have produced a radical shift in our exposure to each other. As a result of advances in radio, telephone, transportation, television, satellite transmission, computers, and more, we are exposed to an enormous barrage of social stimulation.
- 2) Inconsistencies in period and personal lives militate against any possibility of making “accurate generalizations” about our past and present. Thus, it is most appropriate to view this book not as a picture of the world, but as a form of lens, a way of seeing things. Its value will thus depend on its intelligibility, what its particular juxtapositions and jostlings provide in the way of insight into self and social life, and how it resonates with or challenges the imagination.
- 3) In the last 100 years we have moved from a

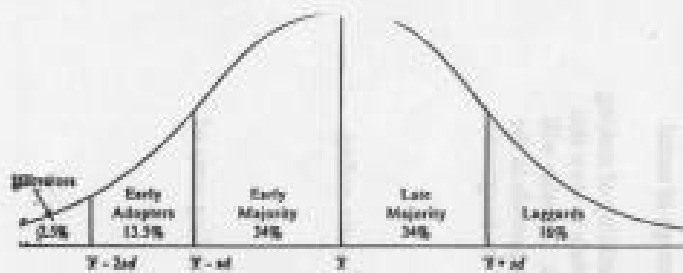
Romantic ® Modern® Postmodern sense of self.

Anecdotes/Observations

- 1) The book may seem like an increasing journey into Hell; but there is an optimistic ending.
- 2) Each chapter is structured to be an essay unto itself.
- 3) Uncomfortable with the term “postmodern.”

Problems/Implications for Use of Time

- 4) Small and enduring communities are being replaced by a vast and ever-expanding array of relationships.
- 5) There is little hope that the past can be recovered



ANTECEDENTS

Actor's Identity

1. Security-anxiety
2. Values
3. Mental ability and conceptual skill
4. Social status
5. Cosmopolitanness
6. Opinion leadership

Perceptions of the Situation

1. Social system norms on innovativeness
2. Economic constraints and incentives
3. Characteristics of the unit (farm, school, business)

PROCESS

Information Sources

1. Cosmopolitanness
2. Personal-impersonal

Awareness I Interest II Evaluation III Trial IV Adoption V

ADOPTION PROCESS

Perceived Characteristics of the Innovation

1. Relative advantage
2. Compatibility
3. Complexity
4. Divisibility
5. Communicability

RESULTS

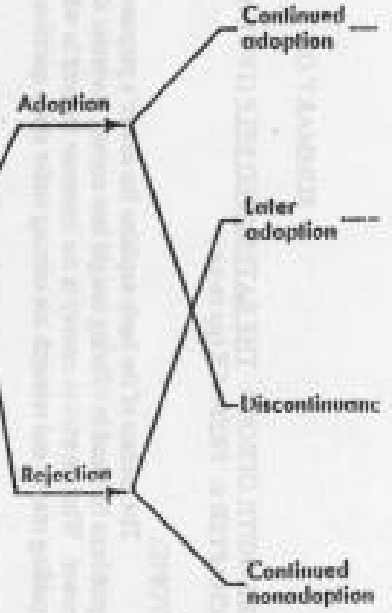


FIGURE 11-1. PARADIGM OF THE ADOPTION OF AN INNOVATION BY AN INDIVIDUAL WITHIN A SOCIAL SYSTEM

FROM: Robinson, Kestnbaum, Neustadt, and Alvarez, "Information Technologies, the Internet, and Time Displacement."

Figure 1. Pre-Internet Communication Media Typology

	<i>One-Way</i>	<i>Two-Way</i>
<i>Discriminate</i>	Soliloquy Pager	Conversation Mail Telegraph Telephone
<i>Indiscriminate</i>	Books Journals Newspapers Movies Radio Television	Ham Radio Citizens Band Radio

Figure 2. Post-Internet Communication Media Typology

