



كلية : الآداب

القسم او الفرع : علم الاجتماع

المرحلة: الماجستير

أستاذ المادة : الأستاذ الدكتور معاذ احمد حسن

اسم المادة باللغة العربية : التغير الاجتماعي

اسم المادة باللغة الإنكليزية : social change

اسم المحاضرة الخامسة باللغة العربية: مجتمع المخاطر 2

اسم المحاضرة الخامسة باللغة الإنكليزية 2 *The risk society*

There is little doubt in our minds that radical social changes have occurred, yet we are extremely sceptical of the validity of post modernist theories and suspicious of a tendency among fellow social scientists to exaggerate change. Modernity has always involved differentiation, a plurality of lifeworlds (Berger et al. 1974), a weakening of communal regulation (Elias 1978) and a sense of uncertainty (Durkheim 1947): indeed, the weakening of traditional ties, the depersonalization of relations and the growing obscurity of factors which structure patterns of exploitation in advanced capitalism were identified by the founding fathers of sociology. While structures appear to have fragmented, changed their form and become increasingly obscure, we suggest that life chances and experiences can still largely be predicted using knowledge of individuals' locations within social structures: despite arguments to the contrary, class and gender divisions remain central to an understanding of life experiences.

At the same time, we recognize that traditional ways of conceptualizing class are not well suited to the analysis and understanding of the distribution of life chances in late modernity. Employment relationships, which serve as a cornerstone for conventional class analysis, and the occupations that serve as proxies for class, have changed significantly. There is evidence that, for many, employment relationships have become more precarious and that individuals' skill in managing risk should be regarded as a significant resource. In the flexible workplace, having the resources to manage risk (and here we refer not just to financial resources but to capital in a broad social sense) underpins labour market security and the reproduction of advantage. Increasingly models of class must take account of agency.

Despite these reservations, in this book we provide empirical evidence to support the argument that concepts (such as social class) which have long been central to sociological analysis still provide a foundation on which we can develop an understanding of processes of social reproduction in the

modern world. Nevertheless, we argue that some of these concepts need to be respecified in ways suited to modern conditions. In this context, we suggest that writers such as Beck (1992, 2000), Giddens (1991), Sennett (1998) and Bauman (2001) have been successful in identifying processes of individualization and risk which characterize late modernity and which have implications for lived experiences and for the ways in which we represent social divisions.

While we accept the main thrust of their arguments about individualization, we suggest that life in late modernity revolves around an epistemological fallacy: although social structures, such as class, continue to shape life chances, these structures tend to become increasingly obscure as collectivist traditions weaken and individualist values intensify. As a consequence of these changes, people come to regard the social world as unpredictable and filled with risks which can only be negotiated on an individual level, even though chains of human interdependence (Elias 1978, 1982) remain intact.

In many respects, the study of young people's lives provides an ideal opportunity to examine the relevance of new social theories: if the social order has changed and if social structures have weakened, we would expect to find evidence of these changes among young people who are at the crossroads of the process of social reproduction.

One of the key aims of this book is to uncover evidence of the changing impact of social structures through the study of youth and young adults in modern societies. The central questions we seek to answer relate first to whether the traditional

parameters which were previously understood as structuring the life chances and experiences of young people are still relevant.

Second, we will examine the extent to which the terms 'individualization' and 'risk' convey an accurate picture of the changing life contexts of the young.

We accept that the experiences of young people have changed quite radically over the last three decades, yet suggest that in the age of 'high modernity' life chances and processes of social reproduction remain highly structured. We also agree that there has been a breakdown in 'ontological security' (Giddens 1991) which validates the claim that modernity, as traditionally understood, is changing.² It is possible to draw on a number of theorists within the 'late modernist' tradition to understand these changes (such as Sennett 1998 and Bauman 2001), but in our opinion, the ideas of Ulrich Beck put forward in his book *Risk Society* (1992) (and elaborated in *The Brave New World of Work*, 2000) and those of Anthony Giddens in *Modernity and Self Identity* (1991) provide clear statements about the nature of these changes and therefore a good base for the study of young people in the late modern age. We begin this chapter with a summary of the relevant ideas of Beck and Giddens and then start to identify some of the ways in which they can be applied to an understanding of young people in modern societies.