



The Pursuit of Attention: Power and Ego in Everyday Life

Charles Derber

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"Enough about me," goes the old saying, "what about you? What do you think about me?" Hence the pursuit of attention is alive and well. Even the *Oxford English Dictionary* reveals a modern coinage to reflect the chase in our technological age: "ego-surfing"--searching the Internet for occurrences of your own name. What is the cause of this obsessive need for others' recognition? This useful and popular volume, now in a second edition that features major new introductory and concluding essays, entertainingly ponders this question. Derber argues that there is a general lack of social support in today's America, one which causes people to vie hungrily for attention, and he shows how individuals will often employ numerous techniques to turn the course of a conversation towards themselves. Illustrating this "conversational narcissism" with sample dialogues that will seem disturbingly familiar to all readers, this book analyzes the pursuit of attention in conversation--as well as in politics and celebrity culture--and demonstrates the ultimate importance of gender, class, and racial differences in competing for attention. Derber shows how changes in the economy and culture--such as the advent of the Internet--have intensified the rampant individualism and egotism of today. And finally, in a new afterword, he focuses on solutions: how to restructure the economy and culture to humanize ourselves and increase the capacity for community, empathy, and attention-giving.

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