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978-0-521-55052-9 - Identity, Ideology and Conflict: The Structuration of Politics in Northern Ireland

John Daniel Cash

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IDENTITY, IDEOLOGY AND CONFLICT

Ideologies and identities are central to the organisation of political life and political conflict, yet most empirical studies tend to obscure their significance. This failure to take the politics of identity seriously is no mere oversight; it arises from an absence of an adequate theory and method. This study draws on both social theory and psychological (especially psychoanalytic) theory in an attempt to overcome these lacunae. First, it develops a novel theory and method for the analysis of ideology and identity. It does so by addressing the structuration process through which unconscious rules integral to the organisation of political subjectivities and political and social relations are drawn upon in the making of political conflict. Second, it develops a detailed analysis of the politics of identity in Northern Ireland through focusing upon Unionist ideology and Unionist identities in crisis. The political conflict within Unionism is analysed through a consideration of the variety of unconscious rules drawn upon by political actors and citizens in the making of Northern Ireland's history of the present.

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This book is dedicated to my mother and in memory of my father

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Acknowledgements

This study was conceived in the United States while I was a graduate student at Yale University, its complexities were explored and experienced during eighteen months of fieldwork in Northern Ireland and, finally, it was written in Australia, where I currently work at the University of Melbourne and where, as an undergraduate, I first began to think about identity, ideology and politics and the integration of psychoanalysis and social theory. To spread out the conduct of such a study over three such disparate locations, as I have done, is to multiply one's reliance upon the assistance and encouragement of others by at least a factor of nine! It is these multiple others whom I wish to acknowledge here.

At the University of Melbourne, where I studied as an undergraduate and where I currently teach, I had the good fortune to first encounter the late Alan Davies in my undergraduate years. It is his example of commitment to originality and seriousness of thought which I have tried to follow in my subsequent work. As well, it is his special interest in psychoanalytic and psychosocial studies which helped establish my own interest in this field. In my final undergraduate year I studied with Graham Little and have continued to learn from him to this day. I wish to acknowledge the profound effect which the curious brilliance of his teaching has had upon me. Fran Hattam, Vicky Hattam, Graeme Garrett, Angus McIntyre and James Walter joined me in an exuberant exploration of all things psychoanalytic at around this time and I assure them that I still savour it all.

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