



Experiencing Identity presents a critical and comprehensive examination of the relation of theory and identity, and discusses definitions of identity in classical social theory; modern social theory; and psychoanalysis. This is an authoritative exploration of the theories of identity.

The Introduction is a critique of existing sociological accounts of identity, arguing that these are incurably cognitive, treating the people that they study as incapable of experiencing an internal life or internal space. The book is then divided into parts and considers the implications of this in social theory and human practice.

Part 1 traces a Utopian notion of experience developed in Western Marxism, through its steady decline over the first half of the twentieth century to the understanding of ambivalence emphasized by modern psychoanalysis. Part 2 offers criticisms of 'grand theory' in sociology and of less grand forms of sociology, showing how their lack of concern with lived experience creates unrecognized theoretical and empirical problems. In Part 3 these issues are situated in the context of psychoanalysis, suggesting that psychoanalysis can add to our understanding of experience but shares the dangers of the other approaches.

The book concludes with a plea for developing the concept of internal psychic space as a sensitizing concept for sociologists and as a source of personal and political freedom that has to be protected against theories and practices which would neutralize it.

Incisive, compelling and timely, Craib's book will be of interest to students of sociology, social theory and psychoanalysis.

Ian Craib is at the Department of Sociology, University of Essex. He is the author of *Sociology and Existentialism* (1976); *Modern Social Theory* (1984); *Psychoanalysis and Social Theory* (1989); *Anthony Giddens* (1992); *The Importance of Disappointment* (1994) and *Classical Social Theory* (1997).

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