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AFRIKANER IDENTITY AFTER NATIONALISM

Young Afrikaners and the "new" South Africa

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, February 2007

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ABSTRACT

Towards the end of the twentieth century, Afrikaner nationalism has significantly declined – how can we explain that such a strong and dominant ethno-nationalist movement has become powerless? From a theoretical perspective, I argue that we have to analyze the formation and dissolution of identities. Modernist approaches to the study of Afrikaner nationalism and ethnicity focus on the state in shaping identities that were supportive of nationalist mobilization. While the state certainly matters, I want to suggest that we have to integrate these historical and political accounts closer with subjectivity. Subjective aspects of nationalism are best reflected in narratives of the self. These narratives are analyzed in four categories: reflecting on the apartheid past; living in an African society; language and culture; and relating to "black" South Africans. In narrating the self, young Afrikaners give us insights into processes of ethnic and nationalist mobilization. These narratives indicate that living in a consumer society in late modernity has contributed to the formation of identities that are multiple, contradictory and contingent and hence are not readily available for ethno-nationalist mobilization.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want first to thank Jon Hyslop for steering this project into meaningful directions. Ran Greenstein, Pieter Duvenage and Ursula Scheidegger read parts of the thesis and gave insightful criticism. Participants at the 'Ten Years of Democracy' conference at Queens' University in Kingston in 2003, at the South African Association of Political Studies Conference in Pietermaritzburg in 2005 and at the International Sociological Association Graduate Workshop in Durban 2006 listened with interest and gave helpful advice. I am grateful to all the young Afrikaners who volunteered to talk to me and offered their very personal views on sensitive issues. Annie Olivier helped with engaging discussion and enabled me to meet young Afrikaners. X-heid, the pioneering student group for transformation at Wits University, and Claudia Ford provided me with new perspectives on "race" relations and whiteness. Magda Gale made staying at the Political Studies Department even more enjoyable. Finally, I thank my parents, Ursula and Walter Blaser, for their love and support.

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