



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (Portland State University, 2010)

BA (Portland State University, 2008)

“Nation Dislocation: Hegemony and Nationalism”

Department of Sociology

Thursday, June 14, 2018

9:00 A.M.

Clearihue Building

Room B021

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Peyman Vahabzadeh, Department of Sociology, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Stephen Garlick, Department of Sociology, UVic (Member)

Dr. Oliver Schmidtke, Department of Political Science, UVic (Outside Member)

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Abstract

An examination of scholarly work on nationalism reveals that the nation is typically defined on the basis of positivistic understandings of human nature or society. Consequently, it is understood, not in terms of its own specificity, but in terms of an underlying referent that is thought to engender it. Since the unity of the nation is attributed to a “privileged” cause, the plurality of forms that co-constitute it are underemphasized. Positivist explanations have therefore obfuscated the extent to which “the nation” and “nationalism” come to be diversely imbricated in the social and political fabric, and how the nation comes to be totalized, in light of the plurality of its constitutive forms and subject positions. The present work deconstructs existing theories of nationalism, while seeking to generatively furnish a theory of nationalism that eliminates all reliance on positivism. Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of hegemony, which sees socio-political blocs as discursive terrains of multiple overdetermined forms and relations, is deployed in these efforts. Therefore, nationalism is understood, not in terms of privileged constituents, but as a variable set of overdetermined “family resemblances,” such as, “the nation,” “the state,” “the military,” “tradition,” etc., that come to represent the national communal totality. These “family resemblances” come to be dispersed variably and unevenly, as privileged nodes in the field of overdetermination, “binding” together differential identities. And since what governs any discursive formation is the uneven play of differences, it follows that a particular identity will have saturated, more than any other, the field of overdetermination and the content of nodal signifiers (e.g., “the nation”) with its narratives, thereby establishing its hegemony. “The nation” can thus be understood as a privileged signifier of historically variable content that, through its general and uneven dispersion, fuses but unevenly privileges, multiple identities into a socio-political bloc.