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Commentary: Intersectionality as family ideology and (banal) nationalism

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1. Finding common ground

In trying to find a common denominator between the papers in this special issue, I turn to Patricia Hill Collins' (2000) work on the family as a privileged exemplar of intersectionality in the United States. Despite the US focus of Collins' theorizing, I believe that her observations can be extended to other regional, national and, possibly, global contexts.

While some progress has been made in many places to challenge the hegemonic vision of the family, the traditional heteronormative ideal of the family is far from being displaced from its position of privilege. Thus, Collins argues that, in the United States, the ideology of the naturalized, "traditional" family household of a heterosexual, married couple with children is taken as a *matrix of domination* (Collins, 1990) in the organization and reproduction of inequality in race- and gender-based relations and social policies.

> The "family values" that underlie the traditional family ideal work to naturalize U.S. hierarchies of gender, age, and sexuality. For example, the traditional family ideal assumes a male headship that privileges and naturalizes masculinity as a source of authority. Similarly, parental control over dependent children reproduces age and seniority as fundamental principles of social organization. Moreover, gender and age mutually construct one another; mothers comply with fathers, sisters defer to brothers, all with the understanding that boys submit to maternal authority until they become men. Working in tandem with these mutually constructing age and gender hierarchies are comparable ideas concerning sexuality. Predicated on assumptions of heterosexism, the invisibility of gay, lesbian, and bisexual sexualities in the traditional family ideal obscures these sexualities and keeps them hidden. (Collins, 2000, p. 159)

The rhetoric of family relationships structures and justifies racial inequality, for example, through racial ideologies that treat black people as child-like and immature and, consequently, position white people as responsible adults in charge of the social order. Internally, racial groups are expected to espouse family-like values of shared interest in pursuit of a common good. By the same token, relations among racial groups are underpinned by their particular, typically divergent, often hostile and mutually exclusive interests (Collins, 2000, p. 160).

The apparent ideal of unity and solidarity attributed to family, as a foundation and model for the entire nation, runs across a gamut of political orientations and scale levels. It is invoked to advance the political agendas of the US conservative right and black nationalists alike (Collins, 2000, p. 157). The nation state is itself imagined as a national family in which the contribution of different groups to the overall national well-being is based on the standards used to assess the contributions of family members in traditional households.

> Naturalized hierarchies of the traditional family ideal influence understandings of constructions of first- and second-class citizenship. For example, using a logic of birth order elevates the importance of time of arrival in the country for citizenship entitlements. Claims that early-migrating, White Anglo-Saxon Protestants are entitled to more benefits than more recent arrivals resemble beliefs that "last hired, first fired" rules fairly discriminate among workers. Similarly, notions of naturalized gender hierarchies promulgated by the traditional family ideal – the differential treatment of girls and boys regarding economic autonomy and free-access to public space – parallel practices such as the sex-typing of occupations in the paid labor market and male domination in government, professional sports, the street, and other public spaces. (Collins, 2000, p. 160)

After a general overview of the papers in this special issue (Section 2), I link the papers to the national frameworks in which they are situated, as highlighted by the editors (Maegaard et al., 2019), across Brazil, Denmark, South Africa and Israel (Section 3). My aim will be to reflect on the contexts and consequences of the papers' orientation to the nation (and nation state) both thematically and methodologically. In Section 4, I will aim to tease out some of the papers' dominant themes in light of Collins' ideas linking intersectionality with family ideologies. Finally, in Section 5, I offer an example of my own to illustrate some of the issues raised in this Commentary and to align my own position *vis-à-vis* the papers in the special issue.

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2. Scope and methods

As is well known, the main impetus for the study of intersectionality came from the need to extend single-group studies to the lived experience of social groups discriminated and marginalized through multiple forms of inequality (Crenshaw, 1989). Since then, studies of inequality have become ever more complex, both in terms of the multiplication of social dimensions examined by researchers and their methods of analysis (McCall, 2005). The papers in this special issue extend the definition of intersectionality understood as multicategorical "accounts of the lived experiences of those who live more marginalised and precarious lives in multicultural societies" (Block & Corona, 2014: 39) to the study of mediatization, hence construction and reinforcement, of prejudice and privilege across national and global contexts, in part informed by coloniality (see below).

Traditionally, social scientific studies of intersectionality relied greatly on narrative analysis. A shift to mediatized data in this special issue has resulted in a collection of more varied, multimodal data sets – spoken interactions, music videos, combinations of written texts and images from print, broadcast and online sources, corpora, etc. This is not to say that narratives are absent from the data presented and discussed in the papers. For example, Burnett develops his analysis around the stories of land control in the Karoo, South Africa. Fabrício analyses an extract from a documentary in which Géssica, a young woman of colour, tells a personal story of losing her baby to microcephaly, providing a powerful counterpoint to the blunt, "biomedical authority model" (Briggs and Hallin, 2016) of mass mediating health issues. Mortensen and Maegaard analyse a Danish TV documentary where, in one interview, we hear Josef's story of his growing family (in Greenland). Then, in the music video examined by Levon and Gafter, the frontman of the Israeli queer band Arisa, Uriel Yekutiel, is seen on journeys through Tel Aviv.

Consequently, the papers offer a wide range of studies of mediatized identities, identity claims, and social inequality using intersectionality as an entry point to more nuanced analyses.

This orientation to mediatization allows the authors to broaden the scope of intersectional research by including data from relatively privileged groups. For example, while the stories of the anti-fracking landowners analysed by Burnett are controlled and narrated by a small group of powerful and wealthy people, the prejudicial and discriminatory incursions in their stories reveal something of the lived experience of the black majority in a way that reinforces their marginalization. Likewise, Levon and Gafter demonstrate how the hegemonic vision of Israel's nationhood is challenged by members of a largely disenfranchised Mizrahi ethnic group; however, by now the Arisa music band and its frontman seem to have established a successful career and a degree of financial security. These examples represent a welcome shift in dealing with social inequality by "studying up" (e.g. Jaworski & Thurlow, 2017).

My initial and, as it turned out, misguided impulse in writing this commentary was to overview the most dominant and the most idiosyncratic "takes" on intersectionality across the papers. After several attempts of doing so, including a failed effort at tabulating the social categories relevant in each of the studies, I decided that it was a near-impossible and pretty futile task. And that's because I realized that in our research we make different social categories manifest or relevant in many different ways. For example, Burnett's (most appropriate) title heralding "intersections of race and land" tempted me to add "land" to the list of social categories alongside, say, "race" and "gender". However, land is probably better understood here as a proxy for "class", that is, the class of landowners, as well as "race", given that land under apartheid in South Africa was divided and distributed based solely on the grounds of race (or racial ideology) (Thurlow, pc). Another pair of terms highlighted in one of the papers (Hunt and Jaworska) were "crime" and "sport", which the authors claim intersect in their data with "race". However, I came to the conclusion that crime and sport were areas of social life that provided the backdrop for discussions of intersectionality, in the same way that health does in Fabrício, entertainment in Levon and Gafter, and edutainment in Roux and Peck (2019). Besides, as reported by Hunt and Jaworska, race was a rather infrequent category in the newspaper reports about Oscar Pistorius (especially in the context of his murder trial), which the authors interpreted as a media attempt not to disrupt the dominant discourse of violence in South Africa being associated with black, rather than white, men. The question then arises of whether the most salient categories are those that appear in the data, or those that are conspicuous by their absence?

Another intriguing category is "disability", frequently oriented to by intersectionality scholars due to the disadvantaged position and frequent marginalization of disabled people. Interestingly, in the case of Oscar Pistorius (someone whose sporting career has enabled him to overcome a lot of the prejudice and disadvantage often associated with disability), press reports during the London Olympics foregrounded his "disability and (trans)national identity [...] in constructing him as a sports hero" (Hunt and Jaworska, 2019).

Borba and Milani (2019) invoke "body" as a key (intersectional) category in the context of the social construction of the "deviant" body (and, consequently, gender and sexuality) of a man taking on a traditionally feminine, professional role. There are certainly synergies to be explored between "disability" and "body" to be worked out as intersectional categories (cf. Coupland and Gwyn, 2003; see also Block and Corona's, 2014, discussion of the Latino "phenotype").

Some categories seem not to be flagged by any of the authors, most notably "age", which is absent here despite its popularity as a category across sociolinguistics, as in the study of intergenerational communication and ageism (e.g. Nussbaum and Coupland, 2004) or in the rich body of work on youth language that seems to have dominated sociolinguistics for the last twenty years (e.g. Williams and Thurlow, 2005). Having said that, even if not explicitly thematized, age is implied and salient in most of the studies, for example with regard to the predominantly young protagonists and target audience of the Arisa video (Levon and Gafter, 2019), the middle-aged Greenlanders portrayed in the "The Outermost Town" documentary (Mortensen and Maegaard, 2019), and in the case of Géssica, who we understand to be a young woman, probably even an adolescent, demonstrating great resolve and maturity while facing a personal tragedy (Fabrício, 2019).

For a collection of papers in a discourse/language-oriented journal, one would expect "language" to be a visible intersectional category. While it is not as prominent as race or gender, language does make an appearance in several papers. For example, Burnett mentions briefly an online parody of black South African English as a way of mocking its speakers (see below). Fabrício's paper considers, roughly speaking, two ideologies of communication in relation to the spread of the Zika virus – the aforementioned mass media "biomedical authority model" in contrast to individual accounts of illness that interpellate their audiences by affect. Roux and Peck raise the issue of the Vagina Varsity videos erasing any mention or use of African languages (as well as customs and traditions). Levon and Gafter explicitly address the issue of language variation and language ideologies in constructing national ideologies and illustrate how subtle acts of linguistic parody and stylization in the

Arisa song complicate the apparently unproblematic, homogenizing link between (standard) Hebrew and Israeli hegemonic national identity. For example, the use of the term of endearment *kapara*, the pronunciation of the word for God (*Elohim*) as *elokim*, and the use of the Arabic rather than Hebrew word for "face" all index Mizrahi identity, thus introducing elements of class, race and ethnic diversity to the hegemonic, Ashkenazy-dominated vision of Israeli nationhood. Likewise, Borba and Milani point to the subtleties of lexical choices in their data. For example, one of the online commenters expresses her disgust with Fábio Alves's body shape by asserting that his large buttocks are "good for whipping", her use of the Portuguese word *chibata*, "whip", carrying clear colonial connotations of disciplining racialized bodies and slavery.

Initial work on intersectionality brought together the unitary categories of race and gender. It is no wonder, then, that most of the papers in this issue focus on race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, by no means spread evenly across individual contributions. Furthermore, several studies closely orient to the notion of *coloniality* (Borba and Milani; Fabrício; Mortensen and Maegaard; indirectly Burnett, and even less overtly Roux and Peck). *Coloniality* is a useful concept for these scholars (see their papers for cross-references), as it allows them to critique social relations in contemporary, apparently post-colonial societies as structured and perpetuated by enduring colonial regimes of power, inequality, exclusion, discipline, punishment, and so on; or, as Borba and Milani refer to them, after Butler (1990), a colonial *matrix of domination* (cf. *matrix of intelligibility*, see Collins, 1990, cited above).

Finally, somewhat contrary to my expectations, all of the studies in the special issue thematize or orient in prominent ways to the "nation" as a key concept and an important dimension of intersectional interconnections. I comment on this "finding" below.

3. Intersections of themes and methods: Towards banal nationalism?

I return here to the apparent ubiquity of the "nation" as a social category in the papers. What I want to emphasize is that each paper situates its topic squarely within the context of a nation state, or nation states. This is particularly salient when the issue at hand hinges on the national politics which it aims to problematize or critique. Two of the most notable examples include Levon and Gafter, and Mortensen and Maegaard. The former examines a multimodal text that grapples with the complexities and tensions of national Israeli identity. The latter demonstrates how a Danish TV documentary manages the policing of the nation's "centre" and one of its "peripheries" (Greenland). Other papers might not tackle the "nation" as a central issue but do nevertheless situate their data and analyses in the political, geographical and historical contexts of nation states. Simplifying matters greatly, these include discourses on the white domination of land ownership in South Africa (Burnett); the communicability of health emergencies in the context of the Zika virus outbreak in Brazil (Fabrício); the representation of Oscar Pistorius during the 2012 London Olympics and his 2013 murder trial in the British and South African press (Hunt and Jaworska); and a transnational feminine hygiene campaign in South Africa (Roux and Peck).

Admittedly, Fabrício does mention other countries affected by the Zika virus, but it is Brazil that remains the key exemplar of the Global South posing a health threat to the Global North. Hunt and Jaworska choose to compare press reports on Pistorius from two countries (the UK and South Africa), and ask repeatedly whether his national identity has been made salient in these reports alongside other aspects of his identity. As has been mentioned, Borba and Milani situate their study firmly in the Brazilian context, though that only serves as a starting point for the discussion of coloniality more broadly, including the story of Portuguese imperialism.

No doubt, part of the national bias of these studies results from the choice of data sources, such as national print, broadcast and online media. The firm grip of nation states on the media may be surprising in what we consider to be the age of global, online communication. However, Facebook, the largest social media organization, is divided into national chapters, most powerful newspapers in the world are national newspapers, and even the largest global, 24-hour TV news networks are resolutely national. Thus, as researchers of media discourse, we are often left with no choice but to collect data that carries a national bias from the outset. And this is how academia manages to perpetuate the very ideologies that it gives names to and critiques.

None of this is meant as a criticism. At the time of writing, Hong Kong is in the twelfth week of ongoing pro-democracy demonstrations which are rebutted by the Chinese government as a threat to Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity. Despite some researchers (e.g. Heller et al., 2016) usefully pointing to the fractures in naturalized, territorially-bound, "banal" nationalism (Billig, 1995) as the dominant model by means of which all nations "exist", there is probably no getting away from the more traditional visions of the nation state and national thinking just yet.

I now move on to a brief discussion of my reading of the intersectional relations discussed in the papers through the prism of traditional family ideologies (Collins, 2000), as outlined in Section 1.

4. Intersectionality as family ideology

According to Collins (2000, p. 159), "racial ideologies that portray people of color as intellectually underdeveloped, uncivilized children require parallel ideas that construct Whites as intellectually mature, civilized adults". Indeed, as a number of examples cited below indicate, people of colour, indigenous people, and/or working class people are consistently positioned in the data as immature or even sub-human, to the point of implying lives not worth living. White landowners in South Africa refer on Facebook to black people as "childish" and "dishonest" (a sign of immaturity), imply that they look like monkeys, and mock their language as non-standard, hence subordinate to that of white speakers (Burnett, 2019). The circulation of normalizing images of Zika-infected, "'shrunken-brain babies born to poor black women in the Northeast part of Brazil" contrasts with the idea of "bodies at risk" portrayed by "a Caucasian-like male body and a stylized white pregnant woman", both in need of being protected (Fabrício, 2019). Voicing authority, whether expert or adversary, through *white* English voices in an otherwise black English, a sex education video series belittles and ultimately erases the experiences of black South African women from view (Roux and Peck, 2019). Usurping the right to evaluate an indigenous person's biography is just one of the Danish "celebrity" TV host's power grabs when he offers the following to his interviewee, a Greenlandic woman: "with all due respect [you had] quite a fucked up childhood"; "there's something robust about you" (Mortensen and Maegaard, 2019). Online commenters in Brazil debate whether an athletic man with a non-normative body shape should be likened to a pitbull (connoting hypermasculinity), Lassie (connoting femininity), or a poodle (connoting femininity in the Brazilian context) (Borba and Milani, 2019). In this last example, the discourse of the family does not reduce Fábio Alves' status to that of a child but to that of a family pet.

The understanding of family as foundational for social structure allows its rhetoric to transcend ideological boundaries of various

forms of organization and scale levels, permeating institutional and policy discourses. As a naturalized, biological entity, the family is considered to be an ideal model of belonging to different groups: "to geographically identifiable, racially segregated neighborhoods conceptualized as imagined families; to so-called racial families codified in science and law; and to the U.S. nation-state conceptualized as a national family" (Collins, 2000, p. 157). Relatedly, the many meanings of the concept of "home", from a family nest to one's native country, point to the notion of family as a template for an intersectional understanding of society. Populated by people perceived as the "same", homes are places that allow one to feel safe and settled (Collins, 2000, p. 161).

There are many echoes of the discourses of belonging and of home across several papers in the special issue. White landowners in the South African region of Karoo consider it their "spiritual heartland" and "soul country". They legitimate their land ownership by assuming an autochthonous First Nation positionality that situates its origins in a mythical past, presumably justifying continued transmission of their wealth to the next generations (cf. Collins, 2000, p, 167) (Burnett, 2019). Athletes and other visitors at the Rio Olympics are warned about the threat of carrying the Zika virus "back home" (Fabrício, 2019). During his murder trial, Pistorius is no longer referred to in South African newspapers as "South African" (Hunt and Jaworska, 2019), as those who bring shame on their nations (their homes) are rightfully punished for their actions and considered outcasts (Bishop and Jaworski, 2003). The two black presenters of the Vagina Varsity videos fail to address "the myths of virginity testing" prevalent in Zulu culture, ultimately overlooking "the real black female experience [and privileging] white female [sexual] experiences" (Roux and Peck, 2019). In this case, perhaps we can assume with Collins that within racial groups various forms of sexual harassment and violence are not discussed in public so as "not to 'air dirty laundry' about internal family problems" (Collins, 2000: 161)? Greenlan-

The researchers from Goldsmiths, University of London and King's College London found that, while Highgate's old elite took civic pride in its environment and architectural heritage, the uber-wealthy were not interested in the area's cachet or the period features of the local architecture. Their primary concern was to find a home of at least 6,000 sq ft, or one that could be remodelled to at least that size. Period features were ripped out in "often brutal structural conversions of older properties into state-of-the-art living spaces" and replaced with luxury brand fixtures and fittings and an inoffensive minimalist aesthetic. For those who cannot afford detached mansions, that can mean excavating huge basements under terraced or semi-detached town houses.

[...]

Michael Hammerson, a vice-president of the Highgate Society, said: "Highgate has always been a resort for the Super-Rich. But in the past the owners recognised that they were part of the local community. They had a sense of noblesse oblige. Now this is all lost. They want to be fenced off."

[...]

The old elite of Highgate has had some success in holding back the newcomers. In October, a high court judge ruled that Athlone House should not be demolished and replaced with an £80m eight-bedroom palace more than twice the size of the existing building, following a campaign backed by former Monty Python star Terry Gilliam. The proposed mansion, believed to have been for the multibillionaire Kuwaiti Kharafi family, was to include a ballroom, an indoor swimming pool and a car lift to an underground garage designed to hold four £260,000 Maybach limousines.

Extract 1. *The uber-wealthy in Highgate* (Source: David Batty, "Fenced off: how London's super-rich are destroying the soul of their community; Highgate is now a middle-class frontline against a billionaires' investment invasion". *The Observer*, December 6, 2015).

ders portrayed in "The Outermost Town" documentary are placed on the margins of the Danish nation (Mortensen and Maegaard, 2019; cf. Heller, 2013) literally on the grounds of their dysfunctional families; namely, on the basis of their allegedly dubious sexual and reproductive practices, and their families having "extremely many children". Arisa's song and video *Po Ze Le Eropa*, "This is not Europe", takes on the question of Israel as "the home for all Jews" by continuing the debate over its ideological placement between the Middle East and Europe (Levon and Gafter, 2019).

5. Intersectional relations in the mediatization of the "super-rich: An example

In Jaworski and Thurlow (2017), we discussed conflicting stances evident in the mediatization of the "super-rich", or so-called "1%-ers". Following Hjarvard (2013), we argued that, as a driver of aspirational consumption, the mediatization of supreme wealth is at the centre of individual and group *habitus* formation in late capitalism. The two conflicting stances that we focused on were labelled by us: "celebratory" and "derisory". Our interpretation of the internationally sourced data suggested that in the representation of the super-rich and their lifestyles there was a tension between admiration and mockery. We also suggested a tension between the "educational" and "entertaining" remit of the media representations of the super-rich, for example, by providing elaborate lists of luxury goods, pastimes and pursuits creating a degree of "knowingness" about elite consumption, while the underlying irony, mockery and othering of the super-rich, especially positioned as ethnicized (non-white or non-western, e.g. the "oligarchs") and as *nouveau riche*, had a distancing effect.

Here I want to bring to the table another example from the British *Observer* newspaper which illustrates the fluidity and constructedness of social and demographic categories, hence problems of their classification (see above). I also want to demonstrate how apparently "unremarkable" texts (Kress, 1990) can reveal subtle presuppositions and entailments exposing salient intersectionalities, whether overtly or covertly (Fairclough, 2003). The following extract demonstrates what can be categorized as a "xenophobic" stance due to its overt, and arguably redundant, reference to nationality (Kuwaiti), hence ethnicity (Arab).

The first striking contrast made in Extract 1 is between "Highgate's old elite" (lines 2–3) and "the uber-wealthy" (line 4). Thurlow and I have argued that privilege or eliteness is not solely the function of a structured, material reality but "also a discursive, hegemonic formation sustained, at least in part, by an aspirational ideology against which everyone is persuaded to position and evaluate themselves – regardless of actual wealth or opportunity (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2017, p. 553). True, Highgate old elite may not be in the same wealth bracket as the (international) "super-rich" people buying up and remodelling the most expensive property in London. However, the Highgate middle-class needing to "take on" the billionaires (see Note 2) are in no way a destitute and marginalized social group. In fact, "Highgate has always been a resort for the Super-Rich" (lines 18–19). The problem, then, is not so much money as the ethos of the people with "new money", who have a taste for "brutal structural conversions" (line 9) and a "minimalist aesthetic" (12). Besides, the new rich want to live in isolation ("fenced off"; 22), while the old rich were connected to the "local community" (20) with "a sense of noblesse oblige" (20–21).

However, the article seems to actually get to the essence of the issue when it comments on the recent case of "[t]he old elite of Highgate [having had] some success in holding back the newcomers" (24–25). It is then that the author adds that the ultra-rich who were prevented from buying, demolishing and replacing an existing mansion were "the multibillionaire Kuwaiti Kharafi family" (31–32). With this one comment, the question of the "new super-rich" in Highgate turns into the question of non-white migration. The article also gains a prominently nationalist dimension, amplifying its hegemonic orientation to Britishness and implied whiteness. The article's beginning (not reproduced here), refers to Highgate as a leafy suburb in north London, placing it squarely in the traditional lifestyle of the British white middle and upper classes. References to the "period features of the local architecture" (5–6), indexing the Georgian era, and the involvement of "former Monty Python star Terry Gilliam" (29–30), a comedy group considered to espouse a quintessentially British sense of humour, stand in sharp contrast to the Kuwaiti, non-white *nouveau riche*.

The point of citing this example is to align my view of intersectionality with Collins' family ideologies discussed above, and to underscore the centrality of the category of nationalism in media data, even if it is not explicitly manifested. The invocations of "civic pride" (3), "local community" (20) and "noblesse oblige" (21), in contrast to the "newcomers" (25), who are visibly different from the past home owners (19), give a sense of old family ties being dissolved. Buying property by newcomers disrupts traditional patterns of socialization (taste, habitus), continuity (not just occupying a home but owning it), transmission of wealth (inheritance and passing on property and wealth from generation to generation), and unity (local communities no longer being "homogeneous"). And while the national family may be racially diverse, the reproducible hierarchies of race and class mean that some groups are most unlikely to ever attain the status of first-class citizens.

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