

Gendering the Nation

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Introduction

The associates of the Nation (state, military, power etc.) are viewed as masculine projects.

Post-1980s there has been more of a recognition of the role of gender and the patriarchy has in the understanding of nationalism.

Social institutions are the basis of the power relations that create and reproduce gender hierarchies.

Women are viewed as filling supportive roles, reflecting the masculine idea of femininity.

Guiding Questions

How is the Nation gendered?

How have women been portrayed in studies of nationalism?

How have women been employed in nationalist projects?

Do women (and others) have a fundamentally different experience and understanding of the nation?

How does the expansive category of gender enable us to unpack the nuances and complexities of the nation?

Projects of
the Nation
Typically
Understood
as
'Masculine'
(Nagel)



State power

Citizenship

Nationalism

Democracy

Political violence

Nationalism as a Feminist Issue

- Feminist theories argue the lack of discussion about women's roles in nationalism erases the work women have in making nations and states
- Not only traditional theorists – feminists, particularly white feminists, often fail to recognize nationalism is a feminist issue
 - Even when it is recognized, solely focuses on women, missing the systemic masculine structures and women's roles within that



Men and Nations

Cynthia Enloe – nationalism originates from 'masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculinized hope'

- Women relegated to smaller, symbolic roles in nationalist movements

American and European ideals of masculinity begun in late 19th – early 20th century alongside modern nationalism, these masculine ideals then institutionalized and used to promote idea of empire

- Example of America: masculinity tied to national imperialism projects
 - ie. Mondore Doctrine, manifest destiny
- Continued link between idea of "being a real man" and supporting the nation, especially in times of war – tying terms like "honor", "patriotism", "cowardice", "bravery", and "duty" in reference to the nation to masculinity
 - Promotion of fear for men to be viewed as cowards by their community and family

Women's Role in the Nation


- Women meant to fill supportive, symbolic, traditional roles in nationalist struggles
 - Meant to reflect masculine definition of femininity and the ideal place of women
- Yuval-Davis and Antias' 5 ways of women's participation
 - Birthing members of the nation
 - Continuing the normative boundaries through proper feminine behavior
 - Continuing to share the collective narrative and teaching culture
 - Demonstrating ethnic and national differences
 - Direct participation in national, economic, political, and military struggles
 - Even if involved directly, once struggle for independence is won, women remain stuck in institutionalized patriarchy



Shame vs Honor

Nationalists have tendencies to compare nation to traditional family

- Places men at head of household/state, and places women as mothers of the nation, highlighting the importance of women's purity



Portrayal of men as defenders of the family and nation, placing burden on women to embody family/national honor, making a woman's shame the shame of the nation



Nationalist's portrayal of women who demand autonomy or rights as disloyal and traitors to the nation

- Currently seeing this in Iran as women protest the mandatory hijab law

Sexuality and Nationalism

Mosse – women on the battlefield as victims of sexual aggression and exploitation

- Enemy women characterized as too sexually promiscuous
- Women of the state characterized as objects of desire, the reason men fight and come home, or the pure and self-sacrificing

Use of imagery of rape and sexual conquest against enemies

- Defensive attacks shown as heterosexual rapes of women
- Offensive attacks shown as homosexual rapes of men

Portrayal of "non-traditional" relationships and family structures as enemy influence, focusing on the importance of tradition of masculine traits for national identity

- Soviet Union/Russian government labelling of queer individuals and HIV epidemic as spies and Western attempts to weaken the nation

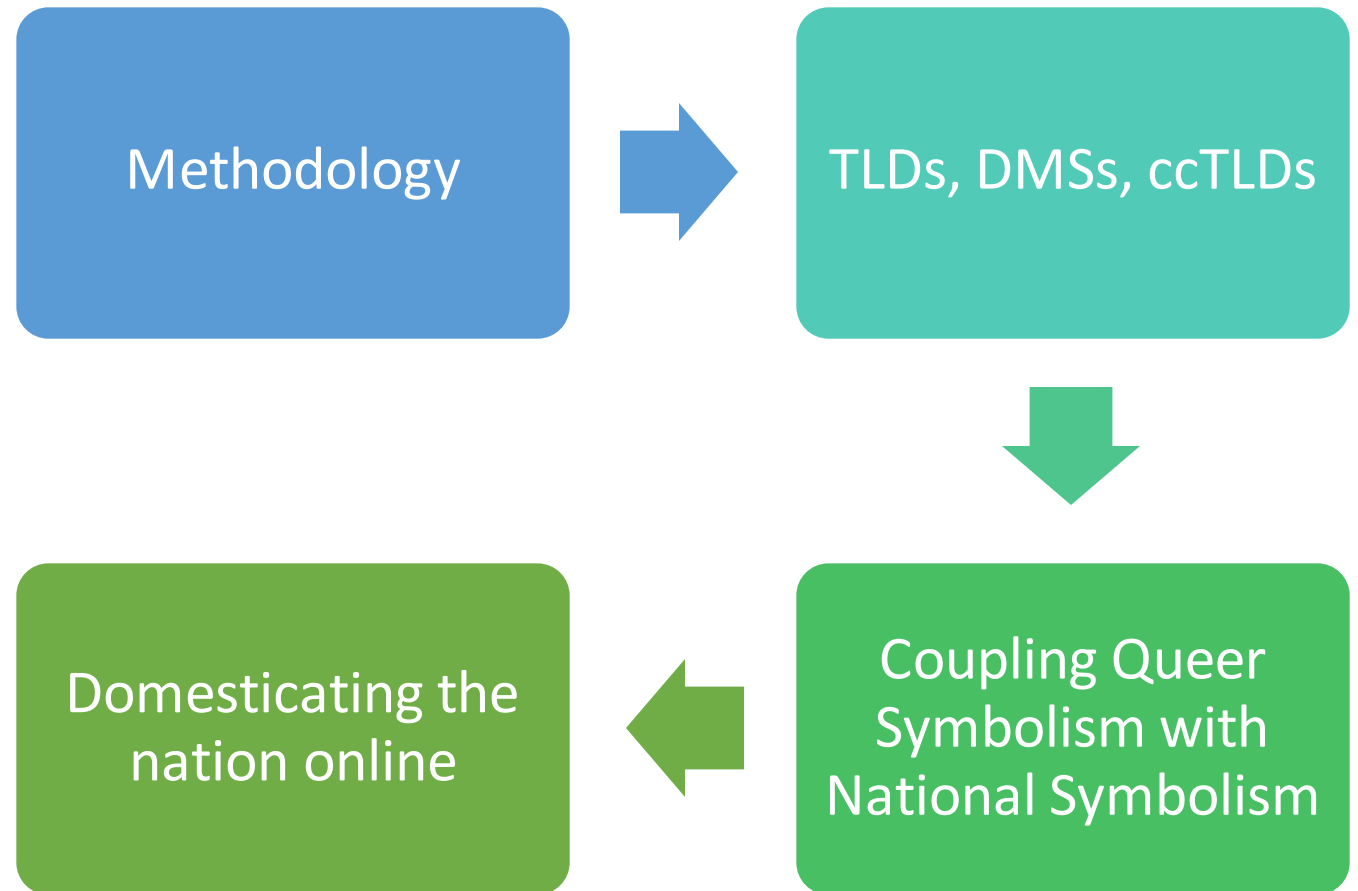
Experience of Women under Masculine Nationalism

Masculinity and Nationalism promotes the tradition of male culture and identity, particularly in military culture in a nation

- Excluding anyone who does not fit the image

Idea that women experience citizenship different from men, without the same expectations of defending, running, or representing their nation

'Domesticating
the nation online:
banal nationalism
on LGBTQ
websites in
Poland
and Turkey'
by Lukasz Szulc



Methodology

Chose these countries because of a lack of studies of them in this context.



Googled key phrases/words in Turkish and Polish Google.



Checked first 10 results for each of these.



Filtered the results by excluding different things; personal blogs, academic, pornographic and dating websites.



Resulted in about 50 websites from which he chose 15 Polish and 15 Turkish websites covering "a relatively diverse range of LGBTQ groups"

TLDs, DMSs, ccTLDs

TLD: Top Level Domain,

DMS: Domain Name System,

ccTLD: Country Code Top Level Domain.

Banal nationalism in using Polish and Turkey ccTLDs (.pl and .tr).

12 out of 15 of the sampled Polish websites do use .pl as a TLD, but none of the Turkish do.

The Turkish ccTLD is supposed to be used as "an online marker of 'respectable' Turkishness"(p313).

Although Turkish LGBTQ websites owners are not explicitly forbidden from using these ccTLD, they are not encouraged to do so either.

Sometimes they choose not to in a way of protesting against these rules, in a want to not belong to that state/nation that is rejecting them.

It is also much easier to apply for the .pl ccTLD than the .tr., which additionally explains that gap.

Coupling Queer Symbolism with National Symbolism

Queer symbols are very popular in the websites' names and logos. Some try to be more hidden as to preserve the viewers' anonymity, some in the contrary are more explicit to give people the opportunity to have an 'online coming out'. Even the more implicit websites showcase many queer visual and textual symbols.

Many websites use their country's name as their handle.

Some with a stronger local attachment use their cities' names.

Example:



Domesticating the nation online

- Also described as 'Queering the nation online' (p318).
- Because these groups are rejected from their nations for being queer, they choose to create a version of it where they would be accepted .
- Does not mean that they are trying to make any systematic change.
- Some of the chosen websites do not exhibit many national symbols and instead choose to turn to international symbols.



Case Study: Afghanistan and the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)

RAWA demonstrates how an intersectional political movement of feminist and nationalist politics with active women participants can be effective in shaping the Afghan nation

The organization links issues of women's rights and feminism with their nationalist goals of democracy and secularism by simultaneously using conservative nationalist methods while reconfiguring women's roles in family and society to restructure patriarchal structures



By following the idea of the nation as a family, RAWA reassess women's role in the family to reconstruct their roles in the nation

Gender Equality as a Western Concept

- The nationalist and independence movements in post-colonial and anti-modernist spaces, such as Afghanistan, coupled with the rise of political and nationalist Islam have marginalized women's involvement partially because of the association of feminism with colonialism and the Western world, modernity, and imperialism
 - This rejection of that association has centered the stricter control of women's disenfranchisement and marginalization in reclaiming "tradition"
- RAWA uses gender roles and norms to counter patriarchal structures within the existing system of community and nation, also using the greater influence men hold in society for political support from male supporters

RAWA's Afghan Nationalism

- RAWA proposes an ideal nation that is secular and democratic with a greater focus on social programs and women's rights
 - The organization's membership requirements of Afghan nationality by birth allows for a definition of an intersectional Afghanistan's National culture of their political platform, feminism, and patriotism
 - The organization resists ethnic, tribal, and kinship identification, instead focusing on the national languages of Afghanistan, and national histories and stories, prioritizing national culture over ethno-linguistic diversity, celebrating their idea of Afghan nationalism
- While many RAWA members are wives and mothers, those identities are not used to construct the Afghan nationalism, instead separating those identities from the masculine idea of the importance of mothers to national identities, allowing women to have a space as equal participants regardless of family life

'Stories of identity and resistance: Palestinian women outside the homeland' by Maria Holt

Methodology

Palestinians outside the
homeland

A Palestinian 'Diaspora'

Articulating the Narrative
of 1948 and the 'thorny
relationship' between
individual and 'collective'
memory

Narratives of Suffering
and Heroism

Stories of identity and resistance: Palestinian women outside the homeland; Methodology

Maria Holt interviewed 137 women and a few men.

Most of them living in refugee camps in Lebanon.

Interviews conducted based on a questionnaire with open opportunities to share as much as they wanted.

Palestinians outside of the homeland

Because of the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, between 800 000 and 1 000 000 Palestinian Arabs were forced to leave their country.

100 000 of them fled to Lebanon where most of them still live in refugee camps.

Very powerful nationalist feelings through the storytelling of how they fled Palestine.

Stories that are still remembered and keeping Palestine alive in Lebanon after many decades.

A Palestinian 'Diaspora'

- A "diaspora" can be defined as a people settled away from their homeland.
- The interviewees strongly contest the notion of diaspora used to defined Palestine refugees.
- That does not seem to apply to the people here as they view the situation as completely temporary.
- The Palestinians in Lebanon have created a community for themselves where they keep Palestine alive. They have not settled in Lebanon where they do not necessarily feel welcome.
- Even younger generations feel a sense of only belonging to Palestine and know that they will one day return. Their living situation further proves how temporary it is.

Articulating the Narrative of 1948 and the 'thorny relationship' between individual and 'collective' memory

In articulating the memories from 1948, Palestinian women are very important actors.

Many of the elderly women who lived in Palestine in 1948 tell detailed accounts of some specific events at the time they were forced to leave and how it made them feel.

They refer to men when it comes to formal historical knowledge but bring in personal anecdotes.

These stories/anecdotes are more effective than politicized speeches in remembering the impact of the displacement of Arab Palestinians.

Narratives of Suffering and Heroism

- After the creation of the Israeli state, 290 to 472 villages were destroyed to erase Arab existence from the land.
- For that same reason, Arab Palestinians were forbidden to return in hopes that their memory would be erased as well.
- Creation of 'village memorial books' from the 1980s. These describe and map Palestinian villages pre-1948.
- They are part of the resistance against the Israeli, go against the narrative that was set for them.
- Mainly made by women, whose role in remembering is very important. Where men cannot fight, women bring a more subtle approach through these impactful stories.



Conclusion

How is the Nation gendered?

- Masculine institutions and associates of the state, patriarchal society

How have women been portrayed?

- Women were portrayed as subordinate to the state, and expected to be in a support role

How have women been employed in nationalist projects?

- Reflects the masculine definitions of femininity, as birth members of nations, continuing the gender hierarchy through feminine behavior, as markers of ethnic/national differences, and occasionally as direct participants

Do women have a different experience and understanding of gender?

- Yes. Women and others experience, different expectations etc.

How does the expansive category of gender enable us to unpack the nation?

- Allows us to understand the views and experiences of different groups and cultures through the eyes of something more complex than a general overview of the people.

Discussion

- Why do women join nationalist groups that are clear about their devotion to the traditional roles of gender in nationalism – particularly in the exclusion of women as active participants?



Sources

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