



## Sex, violence and nationalism

Thomas Hylland Eriksen

To cite this article: Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2017) Sex, violence and nationalism, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 40:9, 1438-1449, DOI: [10.1080/01419870.2017.1300293](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1300293)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1300293>



Published online: 05 Jun 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1908



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

40TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL ISSUE  
CLASSIC PAPERS IN CONTEXT



## Sex, violence and nationalism\*

Thomas Hylland Eriksen

Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

Reflection on: Nagel, Joane. 1998. "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21 (2). doi:10.1080/014198798330007

### ABSTRACT

This article is a commentary on Joane Nagel's "Masculinity and nationalism", which discusses differing cultural conceptualizations of gender and masculinity, critically interrogating essentialist conceptualizations of maleness, and – in the most empirical and engaged section of the article – relates conceptualizations of maleness to war. This commentary elaborates on and develops Nagel's analysis by introducing new empirical examples and through its emphasis on symbolism, metaphor and kinship imagery in portraying nations in a gendered manner. It is also pointed out that nations at peace project different gender relations to nations at war.

**ARTICLE HISTORY** Received 29 May 2016; Accepted 20 September 2016

**KEYWORDS** Nationalism; gender; violence; masculinity; kinship

The relationship of nationalism to ethnicity, minority issues and race has been carefully researched and theorized in the last decades, but this has not generally been the case with the gendered aspect of nationhood. Indeed, with a few notable exceptions (among them Mosse 1985; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Parker et al. 1992; Enloe 1993; Yuval-Davis 1997; Archetti 1999), the gendered dimension of nationhood has largely been neglected in the literature. Apart from a brief remark by Anderson ([1983] 1991) comparing national identity to gender identity, none of the canonical texts on modern nationalism (notably Anderson [1983] 1991; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Smith 1991) take it seriously into account, and it is often taken as an implicit premise that nations are essentially male.

**CONTACT** Thomas Hylland Eriksen  [t.h.eriksen@sai.uio.no](mailto:t.h.eriksen@sai.uio.no)

\*This article is an updated and modified version of an earlier work, "The Sexual Life of Nations. Notes on Gender and Nationhood", originally published in *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*, 2002, vol. 11, issue 2, pp. 52–65. The author thanks the Editorial Team of *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning* for the kind permission to re-publish his essay in this issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.

This still remains the case today, almost two decades after the publication of Nagel's (1998) seminal article. Her objective was to "explore the fact of men's domination of the nation-state in order to see what insights this acknowledgment of masculinity provides us in understanding contemporary national and global politics" (244). Warning against an essentialization of gender, she considers it a relational phenomenon, suggesting, accordingly, that attempts to rectify the male bias in the literature on nationalism through a focus on women only serves to aggravate the problem. The main arguments of the article are still relevant to scholars of nationalism.

The dominant kind of male habitus projected through nationalist ideologies throughout the world come across as strikingly similar. It may therefore be argued, as Nagel does, that a peculiar form of masculinity grows out of nationalism, one which celebrates violence and sacrifice, heterosexual conquest and the protection of women and children by external force. What Nagel does not do, however, is to consider ideals of manhood at times of the unwaved flag (Billig 1995), peaceful periods when nationalism is focused on strengthening solidarity and trust in institutions, the creation of common cultural values and popular legitimacy. Other aspects of masculinity are likely to come to the fore at these times, and it is far from unlikely that a systematic exploration of nationalism at peace would show that values and practices typically associated with femininity become more dominant features of nationalism in such periods.

Save a few remarks below, this topic will have to wait. Rather than providing complementary perspectives, I will use this opportunity to elaborate on Nagel's inspiring analysis, drawing mainly on anthropological approaches to violence, boundary-making, symbolism and gender. Gender is undercommunicated in most studies of nationalism, even though it feeds into national identities and ideologies at a variety of levels. My argument presupposes (a) that metaphors are based on experiences, (b) that those experiences are gendered through fundamental human relationships founded in socialization and gender relations, and (c) that sexual capital is a scarce resource during situations of stress for the nation. What I am looking for, in other words, are symbolic connections between fundamental personal experiences and symbolism referring to those large-scale abstract communities, or metaphoric kin groups, that we call nations. I shall initially place greater emphasis than Nagel on the ways metaphors work and the role of kinship in nationalism, before moving to considering sexualized hierarchies in nation-building.

### **Gendered kinship in national imagery**

Metaphors are a device, perhaps *the* main device (Lakoff and Johnson 1999) conventionally used by humans to simplify the world, giving it a particular

shape and making sense of experience. Abstract phenomena such as God, the market and the nation depend for their social life on metaphors drawing on widespread, often taken-for-granted personal experiences. The meanings of metaphors, moreover, change situationally. This entails that if there is a symbolic connection between images of gender, family and the individual on the one hand, and images of the nation on the other, the latter is likely to vary cross-culturally as an implication of variations in the former. We may thus assume a priori that in a patrilineal and patriarchal society, the dominant image of the nation will differ from that prevalent in a society based on bilateral kinship and relative gender equality; similarly, that endogamy at the level of the kin group may reappear as "endogamy" at the national level. Before considering such possible variations, I shall outline some general principles regarding the metaphorical relationship between gender relations and nationhood.

Gender and kinship terms figure prominently in portrayals of aspects of the nation, in common terms such as fatherland, mother tongue, brothers and sisters (of the nation) and so on. Less obviously, it may also be argued that the nation is imagined metaphorically as a person (which passes through life stages, emerges out of personal crises, etc.), a household or family, a male group of comrades, or a local community or *Gemeinschaft*. There are, in other words, a bundle of metaphors relating the nation to primary relationships; all can be invoked, depending on the situation at hand.

In the introduction to *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, the editors (Parker et al. 1992) claim that the nation is an eroticized image, and refer to the concept of "love of nation". I should like to challenge this interpretation. Of all the gender relationships that form a symbolic foundation for nationhood, the sexually charged bond may be the least conspicuous. Sex enters into national imagery exogamously together with violence, through the idioms of conquest and rape, not through notions of love. The dominant symbolic idiom is rather that of parents and children, which implies the predominance of the nuclear family and the sibling relation rather than conjugal love or sexual intercourse. In peaceful times, the nation chiefly belongs to the domestic sphere. It is a wife, sister, mother or daughter who runs the risk of being violated by foreigners or subversive elements from within; and it is a father or brother seeking to protect his female family members. Mrs Thatcher, when she made her infamous remark that "there is no such thing as society", she very sensibly added that there are individuals *and families*. When Nagel says that "[w]hile female fecundity is valued in the mothers of the nation, unruly female sexuality threatens to discredit the nation" (256), she affirms, correctly in my view, that it is not sexual attractiveness, but the ability to reproduce that best represents the female face of nationalism.

In the script of the nation-as-family, each family member has his or her own peculiar part to play:

The mother is often represented as the guardian of tradition and the reproducer of the nation. In a typical photo of Indian immigrants to Mauritius shortly after arrival as indentured workers in the late nineteenth-century, all the women wore saris, while the men donned Western clothes. The term mother tongue exists in many languages, but no language I am aware of speaks of “father tongues”; this makes sense in so far as mothers, rather than fathers, tend to be responsible for the everyday socialization of children. The nation as such is often represented as a loving and caring mother, as in “Mother India”, highlighting the central role of women in nation-building, a dimension of nationalism which is somewhat undercommunicated by Nagel.

In peaceful times, the father is typically represented as a hardworking farmer tilling the land (which is feminine, cf. Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989) or, in times of war, as a military officer in command of a troop of soldiers (his sons). The land cultivated and patrolled by fathers is sometimes described as a fatherland or *Vaterland*. A couple of representative lines from the Norwegian national anthem read like this: “As our fathers have fought, our mothers have wept” (*Slig fædrene har kjæmpet, og mødrene har grædt*).

The ideal son and brother is represented as fraternal to his brothers (in horizontal relationships), obedient to his parents and protective of his sister. In their vertical relationship to the State, all men are represented as sons (of the nation).

The sister and daughter, finally, is given the most passive role in this nuclear family of the nation. Her primary task seems to consist in her readiness to make sacrifices.

The Hitler Youth Movement had two mottos, one for girls and one for boys. The girl motto was: “Be faithful, be pure, be German”. The boy motto was: “Live faithfully, fight bravely, die laughing” (Yuval-Davis 1997, 45). Sons/brothers are active; daughters/sisters are passive. Boys are active in public; girls remain in the domestic sphere.

During the war of words following the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001, George W. Bush said:

I recently received a touching letter that says a lot about the state of America in these difficult times, a letter from a fourth-grade girl with a father in the military. “As much as I don’t want my dad to fight,” she wrote, “I’m willing to give him to you.” This is a precious gift. The greatest she could give. This young girl knows what America is all about. (George W. Bush, 7 October 2001)

The female principle in nationhood, expressed through the relational statuses of wife, daughter and sister, is caring and nurturing, but it is also passive, like a fertile field. The complementary male principle is active; it is that of the farmer and soldier.

Towards the end of her article, Nagel (1998, 261) muses:

I wonder whether it might not ... be true that a woman has no nation, or that for many women the nation does not "feel" the same as it does to many men. We are not expected to defend our country, run our country, or represent our country.

As the foregoing suggests, I am not so sure. I would rather argue that nationalist ideologies emphasize gender complementarity, where important tasks are left to women, from the socialization of good national subjects to the reproduction and nationalization of cultural traditions such as handicrafts, lullabies and demeanour. Just as nationalism may be said, with Nairn (1977), to be Janus-faced, and just as it has a formal, state-centred dimension and an informal dimension based and reproduced in everyday life and civil society (Eriksen 1993), it is based not so much on masculinity as on gender dualism, the domestic duties and suffering of women being, in their way, as important as male strength, violence and sacrifice.

### **Gender dynamics and the Other**

Nations change gender situationally. Their female dimension is foregrounded whenever they appear as victims, but also in the continuity of tradition. Children, the symbolic future of the nation, are associated with women. The female principle is thus not exclusively passive. The male principle of activity and aggression predominates in industrial development and social planning, and more generally in the State's use of force against criminals, subversive elements, minorities, foreign enemies and so on.

Could it be said, then, that in some nations, the female principle predominates, while the male principle is more obvious in others? From what I have said so far, this could be the case. Hierarchical gender relations would then symbolically feed into aggressive nationalism. Indeed, Mosse (1985) has documented important connections between domestic relations in Germany and the growth of aggressive nationalism in the 1930s. However, other factors must also be taken into account. For example, it would seem likely that small and/or poor countries have a less boisterous and expansionist national self-image than large and/or rich countries. The Scandinavian countries are often seen as somewhat effeminate in their official emphasis on cooperation rather than competition (cf. Nagel 1998, fn. 10), their considerable efforts in Third World development and their active role in peace negotiations. In their case, their small size is complemented by relative gender equality. It would nevertheless be easy to find other examples which indicate that there is no simple causal link between size, economic power and domestic gender arrangements on the one hand, and dominance of a particular gender in national imagery on the other – although it is clearly easier for a small and poor country to embrace the role of the victim than for a large one; and although domestic gender equality can lead to a general

feminization of politics and thus an “effeminate” national image. This is an area where empirical work waits to be done, just as in other contexts where power differentials are being gendered metaphorically. For example, there are ethnic minorities, notably indigenous peoples, that have portrayed themselves as based on a female principle: they are, as it were, nonaggressive, cohesive and non-competitive, soft-spoken, peaceful and harmless. In ethno-politics, not least among circumpolar peoples and North American Indians, indigenous peoples often represent themselves as carriers of more humane principles than the allegedly insensitive, macho majority nation.

Indigenous peoples, moreover, are also often associated with a higher ecological morality than the expansionist, industrial, utilitarianist majorities bent on insensitive conquest. Actually, in majority/minority relationships, frequently a nature/culture dimension is activated, which is both gendered and ambiguous. To take a few examples: (i) Blacks and Arabs are perceived (not necessarily by themselves, but by their significant others) as being sexually aggressive – they are active and male, but also closer to nature than the more refined, civilized “We”; (ii) indigenous groups are effeminate, irrational and weak; (iii) elites/middle classes are also frequently seen as effeminate by working classes and peasants. In a pigmentocratic country such as Jamaica, blackness symbolizes masculine strength, while brownness symbolizes effeminate weakness; blacks empirically tend to be working class, and browns tend to be middle class. Generally, it could be said that minorities, working classes and women are naturalized, and the ambiguity concerns whether nature is male or female. This changes situationally. In Mauritius, a society in which the Hindu/Creole contrast is constitutive of national identity, Hindu men tend to view Creole men as feminine (irrational, spontaneous); while Creole men similarly tend to view Hindu men as feminine (sexually weak). Both derogatory attitudes contain elements of cultural prejudice and naturalization.

As suggested by Nagel, designating enemy nations, competing groups or subject peoples as essentially feminine is widespread. Nandy (1983) has noted that colonized people were consistently depicted as weak and effeminate by the colonial powers. The sexualization of colonized peoples took place in the literal sense through massive sexual abuse of slave women, and metaphorically by regarding them as “weak” – not just politically, but in other senses as well. The standard late nineteenth-century social Darwinist view, incidentally shared by Darwin himself, was that when two peoples settled in the same area, the superior race would gradually displace the inferior race. Being more fit, it would have more surviving, fertile offspring than the weaker people.

Some oppressed people have responded to naturalization from outside by naturalizing themselves as strong and active men rather than weak and passive women. A compelling description of machismo among black South Africans opposed to apartheid is the centrepiece of Andre Brink’s *The Wall*

of the *Plague* (Brink 1984), a novel which describes the complexities of social classification through a romantic, but fraught encounter between a black man and a white woman. The dominant African-American identity is also based on a strong version of machismo; and the same could be said of the dominant ethos among Latin American peasants. In other words, a response to a depiction from an oppressive Other as “naturally feminine” can be to redefine oneself as “naturally masculine”.

### **Nationhood and endogamy**

In nationalist imagery, an important role of women consists in reproducing the nation both biologically and culturally, and their sexual activities are ideally being monitored by men. Many nations are based on ethnicity (i.e. imputed kinship) in the sense that biological impurities are seen as tantamount to contamination of the nation. In the U.S.A., unlike in the Caribbean and elsewhere, the “one drop principle” still regulates race relations: if you have three white grandparents and one black grandparent, you are considered black. Barack Obama, who is technically a “halfie”, is considered black (but not, confusingly, an “African-American”, since he is a *real* African-American and not a descendant of slaves.) Intercaste marriages are problematic in India for similar reasons of contamination. I mention this because endogamy does not apply only at the international level. What chiefly concerns me in this section, however, are the ways in which sexual violence is used to symbolize national enmities; and, by extension, the relationship between (symbolic and real) endogamy and exogamy in recruitment and reproduction.

Along with the literal slaughter of enemy soldiers, rape is the ultimate act of war and perhaps its most potent metaphor, as the Balkan wars of the 1990s reminded us. A bestseller in the U.S. during the Gulf War was entitled *The Rape of Kuwait* (cf. Nagel 1998, 258). In a study of pre-revolutionary Iran, Thaiss (1978) noted that the public metaphors used by Iranian revolutionaries were strongly sexual and gendered, with “Uncle Sam” featuring as the great rapist. The revival of an Islamic way of life, of the Muslim family and (as a consequence) the toppling of the Shah regime were thus seen as a necessary reaction to the massive rape inflicted on Iranian society by the West. Similarly, the protection of the virtue of one’s metaphoric sisters is the ultimate patriotic act by men. Characteristically, neo-Nazi leaflets often describe how black men (naturalized by referring to their proverbially uncontrollable sexual desires and large penises) violate the essentially innocent blonde and blue-eyed daughters of the nation, calling for immediate retaliation by men of a patriotic bent. The opposite type of relationship – white men with black women – is never mentioned in this material. In nationalist imagery as elsewhere, the golden rule seems to be that sperm is cheap while eggs are expensive.



In this context, the nation appears as a unit of procreation and perceived threats from the outside as sexual threats to the virtue of the nation as woman. “American imperialism” and “westernization” often get this part, as dirty, immoral and insistent seducers or rapists penetrating the inner sanctum of domestic bliss through advertising, television and so on. Cultural nationalism is a typical counterreaction. Indeed, in her recent book about the American military presence in South Korea, the anthropologist Schober (2016) shows how the mounting resistance to the Americans began in a slightly unlikely place, namely Seoul’s red light districts. The final straw, to many Koreans who felt humiliated by the American presence, was the violent murder of a Korean prostitute at the hands of an American GI.

I now turn to a short example from my home country, which elaborates on Nagel’s observation that “impure” sexuality poses a threat to the nation. During the German occupation of Norway from 1940 to 1945, many Norwegian girls had love affairs with German soldiers. Some of them had children by them. These children, who tended to grow up in Norway without knowing their fathers, suffered massive humiliation and stigmatization. Some were put into asylums for no apparent reason; others were by default considered mentally retarded and placed in special classes at school; some actually fled the country in order to escape the inevitable stigma. A leading psychiatrist in post-war Norway even stated that the girls who had affairs with Germans were generally below average concerning intelligence. The denigrating term *tyskertøs* (“German’s tart”) was used for decades after the war to denigrate these women further. As late as 2001, the plight of the “war children” was taken up by several media (including the BBC), and it was suggested that they might receive some form of compensation from the State. At the time of writing, no decision has been reached, and in any case, they would all by now be retirees. This example could serve as a reminder of the strong passions aroused by the heady mix of foreign (potential enemy) powers, sex and procreation involving native women. (Any sex involving Norwegian men and German girls would presumably be treated in a more relaxed way.) The virtue of protecting one’s own country against foreign powers is literally embodied in attempts at “protecting” women of one’s own nation against foreign seducers.

A very different view of nationhood is prevalent in some parts of the world, perhaps especially in the Americas. According to this ontology of the nation, natives can be *created* through immigration and assimilation. Eating local food as a means to become a kinsperson is often associated with certain Papuan peoples, but this is also seen as a significant act of inclusion in a country such as Argentina (Archetti 1999). This model of nationhood, in other words, is exogamous: Foreigners do not pose a threat so long as they can be domesticated; indeed, they bring vitality into the nation. In the U.S.A., the term “naturalization” is used about changes in citizenship in the U.S.A.,

but not in Europe. Although the term may exist legally, hardly anybody speaks of “naturalized” Danes, Germans or Brits. To put it simplistically, it may seem as if the “New World” nationalisms which take immigration past or present as a necessity for the nation’s vitality, see the perils of inbreeding as a greater problem than the contamination of domestic genetic capital.

In an increasing number of countries (“New World” or otherwise), mixing or hybridization is widely seen as an expression of creativity and sexual energy. This is clearly the case in postcolonial, polyethnic societies like Trinidad & Tobago, the quintessential sexy woman is a “Red woman”, that is a girl of mixed African–European origins. White girls even get perms to look more like “red” girls. This aesthetic represents the opposite of the “one drop” principle. On the other hand, the most marginal character in the national cast of Trinidad & Tobago is without doubt the *dougla*, a person of mixed African–Indian heritage. In other words, not all kinds of openness, mixing or exogamy are encouraged even there.

The general issue concerns degrees and forms of endogamy and exogamy at the national level: Which forms of genetic mixing with outsiders are encouraged, and how do such values feed into the overarching ideology of abstract nationhood? In the U.S.A., some forms of mixing and exogamy are encouraged, while others (often involving blacks and whites) are strongly discouraged. Gender enters into the equation, but not in an unequivocal way. If you are a *dougla*, it matters little whether it was your father or your mother who was Indian.

The bellicose language employed by Bush, bin Laden and their allies during the “war on terror” portrayed the conflict as one between good and evil, between hero and coward, between freedom and terror (or between virtue and decadence), between perpetrator and victim. As Bush himself put it: “In this conflict, there is no neutral ground” (7 October 2001) and, most infamously: “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists” (21 September 2001).

In this binary world of black and white, all shades of grey (possibly exceeding fifty) are suspect. As shown by Nagel, homosexuality poses an obvious threat in this cosmological scheme of things. Among all the subversive jokes that circulated on the Internet in the aftermath of 11 September 2001, one is particularly memorable: it is a manipulated photo portraying bin Laden and Bush II performing a homosexual act. Just as the nation is imagined as bounded, sovereign and inherently limited, there is an analogous drive to make gender boundaries and sexual practices clear and unambiguous. Unproductive sexuality, notably homosexual practices, cannot be seen as nation-building in any way: they fail to reproduce the metaphorical foundation for the nation (the family, with its complementary roles) and even more obviously, they fail to reproduce the nation biologically.

## Some concluding remarks on social identity

In this commentary on the main themes of Joane Nagel's article, there are numerous relevant issues I have not dealt with at all, since the focus has been on the various ways in which nations are gendered. The most obvious omission is probably the relationship between theories of nationhood/ethnicity and theories of gender. There are many parallels between majority/minority relations and gender relations, to do with symbolic power, muting and so on. Allow me therefore to end with some general remarks on the double movement of inclusion and exclusion inherent in all processes of identification. Given that nations are relational (just like gender, and minority/majority relations, and class), there are some formal features shared by these and similar identity formations.

There is a tension between analog and digital aspects of identity: the analog refers to a continuum with no sharp boundaries and large fuzzy areas; the digital to the either – or aspect. These identities can be seen as attempts to transform a world of many small differences and gradual transitions into a world of few, large differences with sharp boundaries. In Marxist class theory, large groups in contemporary society are ambiguous, including most public servants (neither bourgeois, petty bourgeois nor working class). From my youth, I remember a heated argument in a Norwegian Marxist party about the class membership of nurses – whether they were to be considered members of the working class or not. Concerning theories of gender, homosexuals, “mannish” women such as Mrs Thatcher, and many other groups are ambiguous. Just as the “hybrids” and “creoles” in theories of ethnicity tend to be highlighted, feminist theory tends to encourage an analog view of gender – and in both cases, it must be said, with limited success outside of academia. Unlike the theories of class which were fashionable a generation ago, current theories of group identity, in so far as they have a normative element, tend to nudge the social world towards a less rigid, less bounded state than what is commonly assumed (see Eriksen and Schober 2016).

In gender theory as well as theories of nationhood, there is also a tension between *horizontal* and *hierarchical* aspects of relationship. In one sense, nations are related to each other horizontally; that is in essence what the principle of sovereignty amounts to. In another sense, everyone knows that there are enormous power discrepancies between countries. Gender relations are usually construed as hierarchical by feminist scholars, but they can also be viewed as horizontal in two ways: as complementary (that would be the view of “difference feminists”, whose thinking is reminiscent of “difference multiculturalism”, cf. Turner 1993) or as symmetrical (anything a man can do, a woman can do at least as well). In popular discourse, gender relations are almost everywhere seen as chiefly complementary and

hierarchical. Similarities with majority/minority relationships are many and obvious, but one important difference is that many dominant majorities have exterminated minorities physically – it would be difficult to envision a male-dominated society wishing to do so to women (although it could be argued that the Taliban, depriving women of their personhood, comes close).

Finally, both gender and national/ethnic identity have a personal dimension and a political one. It is sometimes said about politicized religion such as Indian *hindutva* or political Islam that they take the religiosity out of religion. In this, it is implied that the essence of religion lies in its capacity to generate deep personal experiences, which are interfered with and ultimately destroyed when religion becomes politicized. Similarly, both nationhood and gender identity clearly have an important existential, emotional dimension which serves to define the bearer as a person. Both kinds of identity are also politicized (like virtually any identity these days). Gayatri Spivak's controversial notion of "strategic essentialism" (Spivak 1988) can be invoked by both feminists and ethnic activists. Although it is commonly assumed that gender identity is primarily personal while national identity is primarily political, these two dimensions – the instrumental and the symbolic – merge in practice.

Ambivalence and fundamentalism; openness and closure; analog gradients and digital contrasts; equality and hierarchy; symbolic meaning and political power – these and other binaries can be identified as significant in almost any process of identification. What I have argued in this brief elaboration of some of the salient points in Nagel's article is mainly that any account of nationalism must look for other modes of identification with which the national identity is articulated, and that gender is the most obvious one. Unlike what some of the "culture and personality" theorists of the interwar years may have believed (such as Mead 1935), I am not convinced that a change in gender relations would be sufficient to change the form and content of a national identity, but until proven wrong, there is good reason to believe that it might help.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## References

- Anderson, Benedict. (1983) 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. 2nd ed. London: Verso.
- Anthias, Floya, and Nira Yuval-Davis. 1992. *Racial Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-racist Struggle*. London: Routledge.

- Archetti, Eduardo P. 1999. *Masculinities: Football, Polo and the Tango in Argentina*. Oxford: Berg.
- Billig, Michael. 1995. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage.
- Brink, Andre. 1984. *The Wall of the Plague*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Enloe, Cynthia. 1993. *The Morning after: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 1993. "Formal and Informal Nationalism." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16 (1): 1–25.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, and Elisabeth Schober, eds. 2016. *Identity Destabilised: Living in an Overheated World*. London: Pluto.
- Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. 1990. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 1999. *Philosophy in the Flesh. The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- Mead, Margaret. 1935. *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*. New York: Morrow.
- Mosse, George L. 1985. *Nationalism and Sexuality. Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Nagel, Joane. 1998. "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21 (2): 242–269.
- Nairn, Tom. 1977. *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-nationalism*. London: New Left Books.
- Nandy, Ashis. 1983. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Parker, Andrew, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger, eds. 1992. *Nationalisms and Sexualities*. London: Routledge.
- Schober, Elisabeth. 2016. *Base Encounters: The US Armed Forces in South Korea*. London: Pluto.
- Smith, A. D. 1991. *National Identity*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Thaiss, Gustav. 1978. "The Conceptualization of Social Change Through Metaphors." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 13 (1–2): 1–13.
- Turner, Terence. 1993. "Anthropology and Multiculturalism: What Is It about Anthropology That Multiculturalists Should Be Mindful of It?" *Cultural Anthropology* 8 (4): 411–429.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. 1997. *Gender and Nation*. London: SAGE.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira, and Floya Anthias, eds. 1989. *Woman – Nation – State*. London: Macmillan.
- Media: Online editions of *The Guardian*, BBC, CNN and *Le Monde*.