



Nationalism as competing masculinities: homophobia as a technology of othering for hetero- and homonationalism

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Published online: 9 March 2019
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Abstract

How are masculinity and nationalism intertwined? This question has received scant theoretical attention, and existing theories tend to focus on their shared ideals and are embedded in a heteronormative, homophobic, and patriarchal framework. Such views imply a static relationship between the two phenomena and are incompatible with the recent phenomenon of homonationalism and the incorporation of some homosexual bodies within the nation. Addressing this theoretical gap, this article develops a more holistic framework of the relationship between nationalism and masculinity. Drawing on relational sociology, it conceptualises nationalism as competing masculinities. It argues that the link between masculinities and nationalism is not found in their overlapping substantive ideals, but rather that the two phenomena are co-constructed through their overlapping Othering processes. The proposed theoretical framework does not only provide a more dynamic understanding of the link between masculinity and nationalism, but it also helps to overcome the apparent duality between homonationalism and heteronationalism. It is shown that both phenomena are in fact two sides of the same coin, with the main difference between them being the location of homophobia as a technology of Othering within different types of Self/Other relations. Overall, the article provides an analytical tool that allows for the contextualisation and understanding of seemingly contradictory features of nationalism and its relationship to masculinity.

Keywords Gender and nationalism · Heteronationalism · Homonationalism · Relational sociology · Sexuality · Sexual nationalism

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Nowadays, it is not controversial to proclaim that nationalism is a masculine enterprise (Elias 2008). In his influential work *The Image of Man: The creation of Modern Masculinity*, Mosse (1996) argued that ideas of what it means to be a good (modern) man were from the very beginning co-opted by the nationalist movements of the nineteenth century. Doing so, he demonstrated how nationalism and masculinity are inherently intertwined. Although this view is widely accepted, theoretical explorations of the relationship between masculinities and nationalism remain limited. The predominant conceptualisation of this relationship focusses on and emphasises the overlapping traits of nationalism and hegemonic masculinity (Nagel 1998). Such a view, however, is not able to account fully for the processes of social ordering and hierarchy construction that underpin both phenomena. This article seeks to address this gap by providing a more complex theory of the nationalism/masculinity relationship. Drawing on relational sociology, it introduces the notion of *nationalism as competing masculinities* to highlight how nationalism relies on masculine technologies of Othering to distinguish itself from other nations.

Using gender as a tool of analysis, the article contributes to the feminist literature on nationalism. Whereas this literature has criticised the canonical theories on nationalism for their (implicit) erasure of women from history as well as their (unconscious) reproduction of the problematic public/private distinctions (Yuval-Davis 1997), it has also showed a tendency to consider that “gender equals women” (Nagel 1998). In other words, gendered theories of nations and nationalism “have too often treated men and masculinity as stable, undifferentiated categories, and have posited a straightforward equation between male interest, masculinity and nationalism” (Bracewell 2000, p. 566). The role of men and the impact of nationalism on men and masculinity have been explored to a much lesser extent.

An important exception to the trend is Joane Nagel’s 1998 article *Masculinity and nationalism: gender and sexuality in the making of nations*. A contribution that, to date, remains the seminal work on the relation between nationalism and masculinity.¹ Nagel argued that nationalism and masculinity are intertwined for two reasons. The nationalist project is a major avenue for the accomplishment of masculinity because 1) “the national state is essentially a masculine institution” (Nagel 1998, p. 251; see also Connell 1990), in which the dominant patriarchal gender relations are reaffirmed, and 2) because “the culture of nationalism is constructed to emphasize and resonate with masculine cultural themes” (p. 251). Although she acknowledges that both nationalism and masculinity are hegemonic structures, Nagel explains the relation between the phenomena by highlighting their substantial overlap and the fact that “the ‘microculture’ of masculinity in everyday life articulates very well the demands of nationalism” (p. 252).

¹ The focus on Nagel’s work in this article is not to suggest that there are no other literatures that consider the link between the nation and masculinity or homosexuality. Indeed, within the field of international relations, Cynthia Weber (2016) has provided a strong poststructuralist account of the role of the homosexual within the construction of the state. Additionally, scholars dealing with sexual violence in wartime, particularly focussing on the male victims (see, e.g., Dolan 2002), and historians have provided important contributions to the ideas discussed here (see, e.g., Tosh 2004; du Pisani 2004). However, these different discussions have not found their way into the literature on gender and nations/nationalism. The latter instead tend to depart from Nagel’s work when discussing the intersections between nationalism and masculinities.

Although Nagel’s contribution (1998; but see also 2003) cannot and should not be underemphasized, it has its limitations. Most importantly, her view on why nationalism and masculinities are so closely related relies too much on a substantialist tradition of thought.² Indeed, by highlighting their shared substantive features—something that is taken as a central point in the literature derived from Nagel’s article—Nagel relies on a particular notion of nationalism and masculinity that is embedded in a heteronormative, homophobic, and patriarchal framework. I question this substantialist view for two reasons: 1) the focus on shared features does not allow for the possibilities of different expressions of masculinities and nationalism to be connected, and 2) it implies a static relationship that does not change over time. For example, the specific reading of hegemonic masculinity in Nagel’s work, which excludes homosexuals from the nation, is incompatible with the recent phenomenon of homonationalism (see Puar 2007) in which some homosexual bodies are deemed worthy of the protection of the nation.

Addressing this theoretical caveat, I develop a more holistic framework that is able to encapsulate these different forms of nationalisms and overcome the apparent binary between (hetero)nationalism³ and homonationalism. I make the case for a *relational theoretic approach* to conceptualise how masculinity/ies and nationalism are intertwined. To do so, I draw on relational sociology, which has suggested that categories should not be seen as stable units, but rather as situated within relations that are “preeminently dynamic in nature, as unfolding, ongoing processes” (Emirbayer 1997, p. 289). This theoretical tradition suggests that we should not analyse the world through its “categories” but rather through its processes.⁴ Importantly, a relational approach “allows us to imagine that a process is mutable in relation to space and time, as are the mechanisms established to promote it” (Eyben 2010, p. 388). Thus, rather than focussing on how the substance of the “culture and ideology of hegemonic masculinity go hand in hand with the culture and ideology of hegemonic nationalism” (Nagel 1998, p. 249), this article seeks to examine the *processes* through which the hegemonic hierarchies of masculinity and nationalism are maintained. It argues that the link between both can be found in their similar use of technologies of Othering.⁵ Focusing on the location of *homophobia* as a mutual technology of Othering within these processes,⁶ it contends that nationalism can be conceptualized through the notion of competing masculinities.

² A theoretical stance that is arguably in sharp contrast with the emphasis on the flexible nature of national boundaries elsewhere in her work (see, e.g., Nagel 2003).

³ Heteronationalism is here used to refer to heteronormative nationalism that relies on the exclusion of homosexuals from the nation.

⁴ This, of course, does not mean that “substance” or categories do not matter (as they are real in their effects), but rather that they are always embedded within their relational context and, as such, should not be taken as an analytical starting point.

⁵ The notion that gender hierarchies are a process is not new and has been central to the work of Judith Butler (2004), who also has reflected on how this relates to kinship and nation.

⁶ Location is here used to cover both how homophobia is used as a technology of Othering and in which type of Self/Other relation it is situated.

By considering homophobia as political,⁷ a (masculine) technology of Othering, this article also contributes the current discussions on sexuality, homophobia, and nationalism. Whereas this literature has focussed on how homophobia is used to police the nation's sexuality to ensure the biological continuation of the nation (see, e.g., Mole 2011, 2016, but also Peterson 1999), the argument in this article demonstrates that homophobia as a technology of Othering can also be used to organise and maintain the gendered hierarchy within and among nations.

This theoretical argument is presented as follows. The first section briefly reviews the construction of boundaries in nationalism through Othering, followed by a brief overview of the Othering processes of masculinities. The third section conceptualises nationalism as competing masculinities by the examining three different ways through which masculine and nationalist technologies of Othering overlap. The last section considers the location of homophobia as a technology of Othering in the phenomenon of homonationalism.

Nationalism: othering and the imagining of the nation

Considering that, for the most part, the canonical literature on nations and nationalism has treated nations, nationalism, and nationalist movements as non-gendered phenomena (See Racioppi and Osullivan See 2000),⁸ it is beyond the scope of this article to provide an in-depth review of that literature. This, however, does not mean that this scholarship is not relevant for the current argument. Consider, for example, the work of Anderson (1991 [1983]) and Horowitz (1985). Although not tackling the issue of gender themselves, their emphasis on the constructed nature of nationalism has been instrumental for the gendered analysis of nationalism.⁹ In the remainder of this section, I draw on both authors to highlight how the nation is constructed through Othering processes.

⁷ Homophobia in this article is not understood as the individual prejudices against homosexuality but is rather conceptualised as a political tool, akin to Bosia and Weiss's (2013) concept of *political homophobia*. Thus, homophobia, as conceived in this piece, relates to claims of belonging (Boellstorff 2004) and is to be situated within the "process of [...] self-definition and legitimation" which "helps to explain how authorities [but also societies more generally] create a 'we' among the majority of citizens, at the cost of framing a minority as outsiders" (p. 20). In line with relational sociology, this definition of homophobia as a political tool emphasises the "politics and *process* of collective identity and the invention or imagining of political traditions and practices that forge and enforce those identities" (p.20, emphasis in original). Thus, homophobia here does not relate to the prejudices against homosexuality, but is rather a political phenomenon that organises the hierarchical relations of belonging. It is a disciplining mechanism of masculinity that operates through the fear of being associated with homosexuality and/or an effeminate type of masculinity. It is technology of Othering, both on the micro and macro level, that produces and maintains the distinction between the Self and the Other by projecting any undesired (effeminate) element of the Self onto the Other.

⁸ Some early exceptions are, e.g., Enloe (1989) and Mosse (1985).

⁹ Although this article focuses on nationalism, due to its emphasis on processes of boundary making and maintenance, the argument can be extended to the literatures on race and ethnicity—doing so explicitly is beyond the scope of this article. To demonstrate the overlap, consider the Nagel's (2003, p. 6) definition of ethnicity and nationalism, in which ethnicity is defined as the "difference between individuals and groups in skin color, language, religion, culture, national origin/nationality, or sometimes geographic region [which] subsumes both nationalism and race." As such, nationalism can be considered to be "a particular kind of ethnically based social identity or movement generally involving claims to statehood or political autonomy, and most often rooted in assertions of cultural distinctiveness, a unique history, and ethnic or racial purity" (p. 6). Similarly, see also the work of Yuval-Davis (2011) on the politics of belonging and the intersectional and contested politics of boundary making/maintaining in which Others are excluded or oppressed.

In his work, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Horowitz (1985) seeks, amongst other aims, to understand the nature of ethnic affiliations and how they construct the nation. He highlights the flexible nature of ethnic group boundaries. These boundaries, he claims “are made of neither stone nor putty. They are malleable within limits, [...] and] tend to shift with the political context” (Horowitz 1985, p. 66). One of the key points made by Horowitz (1985) is that the process of defining these boundaries is a guided practice in which community leaders and other elite figures make political choices to emphasise differences (differentiation) or similarities (assimilation) to emphasise a certain already (latently) present identity. Similarly, Benedict Anderson (1991, p. 6), in his seminal work, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, defines the nation as “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” The nation, he argues, is a community, which is “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, [...] always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this *fraternity* that makes it possible [...] for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings” (Anderson 1991, p. 7, emphasis added).

Anderson’s work is of particular interest when analysing how nationalism and masculinity are intertwined because of his description of the nation as a *fraternity* (see also Pateman 1988) and his exposure of the cultural construction of the nation. First, by referring to the nation as a *fraternity*, Anderson (1991) alludes to the gendered structure of nationalism as well as the potential role of masculinities within the construction of the nation’s boundaries. If the nation is conceived as a club of men, it is not a far stretch to argue that the process of defining boundaries is framed in masculine terms, as I demonstrate below. Second, by unpacking the cultural construction of the nation, Anderson highlights the importance of boundary construction in nationalism. A nation is defined by its internal unity (Eisenstein 2000) and is constructed in opposition to the “Other,” the outsider (Mayer 2000b). It requires both “an inside and an outside—natives and foreigners, immigrants, refugees, and the people coming from the outside” (Eisenstein 2000, p. 37). Consequently, nationalism is never just confined to what lies within, but rather the “discourse of nationalism is inherently international. Claims to nationhood are not just internal claims to social solidarity, common descent, or any other basis for constituting a political community. They are also claims to distinctiveness vis-a-vis other nations” (Calhoun 1993, p. 216). Thus, because the nation “is defined by the dissimilarities [...] imagined or perceived to exist between itself and others” (Harrison 2003, p. 343), it can be conceived to be a “series of moving boundaries” (Nagel 2003, p. 44). These boundaries are maintained by both physical and symbolic markers of who is part of the nation and who is not.

From the above, it follows that, in the process of constructing the nation, the definition of who is excluded from the ethnic group is at least as important as the question who is included, if not more so. This in turn draws attention to the process of “Othering” in the construction of the nation’s boundaries. Othering is understood as the process of “differentiation and demarcation by which the line is drawn between ‘us’ and ‘them’ [...] and through which social distance is established and maintained” (Lister 2004, p. 101). It is a process “whereby a dominant group defines into existence an inferior group” (Schwalbe et al. 2000, p. 422). As a process, Othering implies the essentialisation and reduction of “the Other” to a few negative and stereotypical characteristics, ultimately dehumanising them (Jensen 2011, p. 65). It is important to

note that the “Self” and the “Other” are inherently related and dependent on each other. First, Othering is a process of disavowing, censoring, or systematically forgetting of certain kinds of field similarities and shared features of the Self and the Other (Harrison 2003). Second, the Othering process does not simply valorise the Self whilst vilifying the Other, but involves

a double movement, where the Other is simultaneously emulated and repudiated, admired and despised, and the source of this ambivalence is the recognition of Self in Other. That is to say, the Other represents a kind of screen upon which both the despised and the desired aspect of the Self can be projected. (Sax 1998, p.294)

Relating these observations back to the nation, it becomes clear that the process of “[d]efining ‘outsiders’ [...] is part of the process of designating ‘insiders’ and ‘citizens,’ and thus of defining the nation itself” (Nagel 2003, p. 147). Nationalism tries to assimilate anyone different from the norm (homogeneity within the nation) and excludes anyone it cannot (Othering) (Marx, cited in Vickers and Vouloukos 2007, p. 531).

To further conceptualise the practices through which the Other is excluded and dehumanised, I turn to Dehzani’s (2008) notion of *technologies of Othering*, which is defined as

an amalgamation of political discourses and practices designed to transforming the “difference” into “otherness” and punishing those who are different for being “other.” A technology of othering is a political strategy of marginalization, domination and elimination of the “other.” Its techniques ranges [*sic*] from exclusion from political discourse and discrimination, to extermination through state-sponsored violence. (Dehzani 2008, p. 13)

Technologies of Othering is related to Foucault’s (1988) technologies of Self. Although both consider technologies as a set of discourse practices, they have a fundamentally different outlook on identity construction. Whereas Foucault’s technologies of the self capture the productive forces of the ethical techniques through which modern Western identity is constructed, technologies of Othering focus on destructive forces. Rooted in the philosophy of Heidegger (1977), technologies of othering focus on the abjection, rejection, and, in some cases, the persecution of the Other. It is useful to analyse the hegemonic structures of nationalism and masculinity as it draws attention to the political nature of Othering processes. Indeed, Othering does not simply highlight the differences between the Self and the Other, but it is inherently hierarchical in nature. It is based on an implied, particular, and dehumanizing ordering of groups of people. Those that are being Othered are reduced to objects/subjects, ready to be used and then discarded or even destroyed when no longer needed. This process strips the Other of their humanity and when taken to the extreme even allows for the mass-atrocities witnessed during genocides and death camps (Dehzani 2008). Through the notion of a technology of Othering, it can be pointed out that “[o]nce a group of people, a culture or a civilization is considered to be ‘other’ it is only a matter of time, style and degree before they will be stripped of their rights or even existence” (Dehzani 2008, p. 20).

Nationalism’s Othering processes and its underpinning technologies of Othering are inherently gendered. The feminist literature has already demonstrated how the Othering process relies on the gender relations of patriarchy and reproduces such relations (see,

e.g., Beukian 2014; Peterson 2007; Yuval-Davis 1997; Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler 2002).¹⁰ These studies share McClintock's (1993, p. 61) view and criticism that although "the invented nature of nationalism has found wide theoretical currency, explorations of the gendering of the national imaginary have been conspicuously paltry."

As an attempt to summarise this vast literature, it could be said that the feminist critique has demonstrated the gendered division of labour in the imagining of the nation, highlighting, for example, the specific roles ascribed to women by the nationalist project (Iveković and Mostov 2002; Peterson 2007; Yuval-Davis 1997). Women are not only the biological reproducers of the nation but are also in charge of cultural reproduction. Women often perform the role of the "symbolic bearers of the collectivity's identity and honour, both personally and collectively" (Yuval-Davis 1997, p. 45). Due to women's "burden of representation" it has been in the national(istic) project's interest to control not only women's behaviour, but also their body and sexuality; a role ascribed to the male bodies of the nation. Within the patriarchal family, the gendered division of labour follows a pattern in which women are perceived as the passive bearers of the family/national honour, and men are the active defenders of their women's and nation's honour (Nagel 1998).

This article adds to this scholarship by considering how the gendered nature of nationalism operates not only through the patriarchal relations between men and women, but also draws from the (internal) Othering processes of hegemonic masculinity that regulate and maintain the hierarchical relations among men and masculinities.¹¹ This argument is presented in two steps. First, the article explores the relational structure of hegemonic masculinity, followed by a reconceptualising of nationalism as competing masculinities.

Masculinities: homophobia and other marginalised positions

Critical masculinity studies have long argued that masculinity should be conceptualised as a "social position, a set of practices, and the effect of the collective embodiment of those practices on individuals, relationships, institutional structures, and global relations of domination" (Schipper 2007, pp. 86–87). It is "produced, contested, and transformed through discursive processes, and therefore embedded within and productive of power relations" (p. 94).¹² In other words, as a configuration of practice,

¹⁰ The feminist literature on nationalism is vast and has different traditions. For example, some feminist critiques of the "mainstream" theorisation of nationalism has focused on uncovering women's involvement in nationalist movements (see, e.g., Alison 2004; Bunster 1988; Vickers and Vouloukos 2007), whilst others have shown that feminism and nationalism are not mutually exclusive (Cockburn 2000; Jayawardena 1986), albeit that women might have a different "national project" (Walby 1992).

¹¹ Although one can also analyse how nationalism affects the social practices of men and how nationalism shapes the category of men, this article is interested in how nationalism relies on the power structures that govern masculinities, social expectations, and gender norms that govern how men are expected to act.

¹² Whilst masculinities relate to a social position, a set of practices and the collective embodiment of these practices, it is important to note that this is different from the category of men and their social behaviours. Whilst it is true that most men embody a form of masculinity, not all men do. Additionally, the performativity and embodiment of masculinity is not exclusively a male endeavour as women can also perform and embody masculinity. In this article, the relational aspect of masculinity is emphasised and the power structures that govern masculinities are at the forefront. As such, although the article might refer to power structures among men to highlight these issues, the reader should keep in mind that such statement relates to the social position of masculinity and not the social practices of the category of men (albeit that they are closely related).

masculinity is inherently relational,¹³ which does not exist without its contrast femininity (Connell 2005, p. 68). However, the relational character of masculinity does not end there. As Connell (2005) argues, it has become common to recognise multiple forms of masculinities, which relate to each other in distinct ways. Hence, masculinity is not just a configuration of power relations between the constructed categories of men and women, but also *between men*.

To understand and theorise these gendered power relations, Connell (2005) introduced the concept of *hegemonic masculinity*.¹⁴ Hegemonic masculinity is the “masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations” (p.76), and is defined as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (p. 77). Hegemonic masculinity, which can be seen as the *lived expectations* of masculinity, has to be distinguished from men’s lived experiences of their own masculinities, which are always multiple (Dolan 2002). At this point, it is important to note that “hegemonic masculinity [is] not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p. 832). Instead, hegemonic masculinity is normative. It is a prescriptive notion that occupies a structural position of power and embodies the currently most respected/honoured way of what it means to be a man.

Despite such relational formulation, there is a common slippage in the literatures using the concept between the use of hegemonic masculinity as power structure—a concept referring to the most dominant ideational version of masculinity—and as a (substantialist) empirical reference to an actual group of men (often those in power) (Beasley 2013). I consider the later interpretation of hegemonic masculinity, which is commonly used in nationalism studies, problematic. Hegemonic masculinity instead should be studied within its relational structure, i.e., as a “*political ideal* or model, as an enabling mode or representation, which mobilises institutions and practices” (Beasley 2013, pp. 36, emphasis in original). Indeed, one of the greatest contributions of Connell’s concept lies in the conceptualisation of the internal hierarchy. It recognises that not all men benefit equally from patriarchy, and it acknowledges differences, inequalities, and hierarchies among masculinities (Connell 2005). The difference between hegemonic masculinity and other masculinities does not relate to their control of women, but rather to the fact that hegemonic masculinity also entails control of men (Donaldson 1993).

Although hegemonic masculinity is located at the top of the hierarchy, it is fraught with instability and change and exists in a tense, potentially unstable relationship with other masculinities (Tosh 2004). To obtain and maintain

¹³ Masculinity/–ies is a relational concept in two distinct ways. First, it comes into existence via social relations, via its performance. Second, it is defined in relation to other things, such as femininity and other masculinities.

¹⁴ Although the term was already floating around in scholarly debates in the 1980s, it became a mainstream notion with Connell’s (1995) seminal work *Masculinities*. The concept has been criticised (see, e.g., Beasley 2008; Christensen and Jensen 2014) and reformulated (see, e.g., Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; but also Schippers 2007), yet its basic ideas have been widely accepted and it is now commonly used in masculinities (gender) studies (for an overview of the use of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in scholarly debates, see Messerschmidt 2012).

legitimacy and symbolic power, hegemonic masculinity needs to present and define itself in opposition to other masculinities (Christensen and Jensen 2014). Connell (1995, 2005) highlights two types of Othering processes that help to maintain hegemonic masculinity, i.e., the juxtaposition with subordinate and marginalised masculinities.

Subordinate masculinities are those at the bottom of the hierarchy. Although there are multiple subordinate masculinities, the most important one in most heteronormative societies (and particularly contemporary European and American) societies is “homosexual masculinity” (Connell 2005).¹⁵ The subordination is more than a mere stigmatisation of gay identities, and it consists of an array of practices, including political and cultural exclusion, cultural abuse, legal and street violence, and discrimination. Via the process of Othering, homosexual masculinity, “in patriarchal ideology, [becomes] the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity” (Connell 2005, p. 78).

The hegemonic-subordinate relationship becomes more important and more pronounced when considering how men aspire to masculine ideals. Following the fact that cultural ideals of hegemonic masculinity are virtually unobtainable for men (it is an uninhabitable goal for the majority of men), there is a constant need for men to prove their success in achieving these ideals (Alsop et al. 2002). Hence, masculinity is in a constant state of insecurity, and, as a relational process, is in constant need of reaffirmation. Men have to “perform” their masculinity for other men, who will evaluate and approve one’s manhood (Alsop et al. 2002). It is, as Kimmel (1994, p. 129, original emphasis) argues, a “*homosocial enactment* [...] fraught with danger, with the risk of failure, and with intense relentless competition.” He continues that, within this competition,

homophobia is a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood. [it] is more than the irrational fear of gay men, more than the fear that we might be perceived as gay. [...] Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. (p. 131)

Homophobia, in this regard, should not just be conceptualised as an individual bias towards homosexuals, but rather as a *technology of Othering* that plays a crucial, if not fundamental, role in reinforcing hegemonic masculinity and in patrolling “a key male intragender divide between ‘real men’ and ‘others’” (Plummer 2001, p. 69, see also Kimmel 1994; Pascoe 2007). The use of homophobia does not only create the emasculated Other but also constitute an act of self-production (Nayak and Kehily 1996). In other words, by performing or displaying homophobia—and thus rejecting what is non-masculine—men can consolidate their own hegemonic masculinity. In short, it can be argued that homophobia is a masculine technology of Othering,¹⁶ in which some men are reduced to an object/abject used for self-valorisation and that can

¹⁵ Although the position of *subordinate masculinity* is itself a relational field with a multiplicity of masculinities all part of a hierarchy within, the process of Othering stereotypes and homogenises these masculinities into one position against which hegemonic masculinity defines itself.

¹⁶ The notion of “masculine” here is used to highlight the embeddedness of this technology of Othering in the hegemonic matrix and processes that underpin hegemonic masculinity. It should not be taken to mean it is a practice done by men or that it is associated with a version of masculinity.

be (violently) cast aside. It is a practice that is de-coupled from sexuality, i.e., it does not need to be exercised against homosexual bodies, nor does it need to be explicitly based on sexual language. Homophobia as a technology of Othering functions by denying the masculinity of the Other—through projecting despised non-masculine aspects onto the Other—in order to emphasise the masculinity of the Self.

Whilst these studies on “masculinity as homophobia” are situated at the micro-level, these processes are embedded in a macro structure. In an attempt to understand the changing nature and usage of homophobia, Plummer (2014) advances his *gender taboo theory*. In this theory, homophobia, as an expression of a complex system of masculine taboos, plays a crucial role in defining and enforcing gender taboos and well as in policing and punishing gender transgressions. It proposes three patterns and usages of homophobia, which are determined by a culture’s receptiveness to transformations in gender relations and how they respond to gender transgressions. These patterns are: 1) *Rejection*: a refusal to accommodate gender role change and harsh responses to gender transgression; 2) *Reaction*: a reactionary response to change accompanied by a retreat to more secure *fundamental* versions of masculinity; and 3) *Accommodation*: gender role change is accommodated, which is more likely in social settings with flexible masculinities (Plummer 2014, p. 134). In other words, the power of homophobia as a technology of Othering is dependent on the surrounding context and culture, as well as—as I argue below—the national imagination.

The second major process of Othering within masculinities can be found in the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and marginalised masculinities (Connell 2005). Marginalised masculinity comes forth from the intersectionality among gender, race, class, and other social structures, and “refers to the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes or racial groups. Marginalization is always relative to the *authorization* of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group” (pp. 80–81). Although the validity of their masculinity is denied, marginalised masculinities are still considered masculine, albeit inferior to hegemonic masculinity. This middle-ground structural position of marginalised masculinities plays an important role in constructing the dominant gender hierarchies: by depicting the marginalised masculinity as a masculinity of lesser value, hegemonic masculinity gains its position as the one and only proper masculinity (Connell 2005).

To summarise, hegemonic masculinity gains its meaning through processes embedded in the *logic of contrast* and the *logic of contradiction* (Christensen and Jensen 2014; Hutchings 2008). The former maintains the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate masculinities—higher versus lower, normal versus deviant, or hegemonic versus marginalised—and gives hegemonic masculinity flexibility and malleability that allows for change without losing its sense of continuity. Through the logic of contradiction, often relying on homophobia as a technology of Othering, the distinction between the masculine and the not-masculine is created and maintained (hegemonic masculinity vs. subordinate masculinities).

In the following section, I demonstrate how nationalist Othering relies on these masculine Othering processes and technologies of Othering in the imagining of the nation. I argue that the link between masculinities and nationalism is not found in their overlapping substantive ideals, but rather that the two phenomena are co-constructed through their overlapping Othering processes.

Nationalism as competing masculinities

This section analyses different manifestations of nationalism over time and across different contexts in order to highlight how nationalism has deployed ideals of hegemonic masculinity and its technologies of Othering to promote the nationalist project. Several studies have explored the link between nationalism and hegemonic masculinities (see, e.g., Ashe 2012; Banerjee 2003; Bracewell 2000; Hansen 1996; Massad 1995). They all have shown how nationalist mobilisation employs/constructs hegemonic masculinity to define the nation. Nationalists, it is argued, have been manipulating the hegemonic masculine model to serve their goals by linking it to other key markers of identity such as ethnicity and race (Dolan 2002). Based on an analysis of these studies, one can discern three distinct ways in which nationalism builds on masculine Othering processes. Two of these rely on homophobia as a technology of Othering. Here, the national masculine self is constructed by denying the masculinity of other nations or internal Others. The third overlap is based on the use of the logic of contrast to reaffirm the nation's position at the top of the hierarchy by positioning other nations as barbaric and less than.

Before discussing these processes in more detail, it bears repeating that the focus is not to trace the historical co-construction and evolution of the relation between nationalism and masculinity in terms of their substantive overlap. Instead, the examples presented here are used to illustrate the different ways in which masculine technologies of Othering are employed to (re)produce the symbolic boundaries of the nation. Additionally, the reader should bear in mind that these processes are to be situated within their socio-political and temporal context. This means that the examples and the specific ways through which the national Other is imagined are subject to change. The possibility of change reflects the flexibility and malleability of the national boundaries (despite their representation as inherently fixed by nationalist actors). Finally, the described processes relate to the specific position of the Other vis-à-vis the national Self. The identified masculine Othering processes and technologies of Othering, therefore, are to be located within the Other-Self relation rather than being a characteristic of nationalism itself, and thus they can co-exist.

The first way in which masculine technologies of Othering are used relates to external boundary creation. It captures the usage of homophobia (as a technology of Othering) to distinguish the national Self from external enemies and threats to the nation. These external Others can be located in the (imagined) past of the nation as a resistance to how the nation was Othered by other nationalist movements, or they can relate to other nations who are positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy through homophobia as a technology of Othering. As a reminder, homophobia as a technology of Othering does not need to be directed to homosexual bodies or use explicit homophobic language, but it ultimately relies on the fear of being associated with the non-masculine. As such, the projection of undesired non-masculine (often effeminate) traits onto the Other is used to reinforce the national Self's masculinity.

The former is well illustrated in the Mayer's (2000a) study on (twentieth-century) Jewish nationalism, in which she argues that the constant (real or imagined) threat of annihilation over the course of the twentieth century has led Jewish nationalists to imagine the Israeli nation through the notion of the *New Jew*, the *Muscle Jew*, which relies on a heavily militarised form of masculinity. This national ideal was constructed

in opposition to the Other, the *Ghetto Jew*, which is seen as the “stooped, intellectual and victimized diaspora predecessor [associated] with characteristics deemed negatively feminine such as being passive or vulnerable victims” (Katz 1996, p. 87). In other words, the Ghetto Jew is excluded from the nation by means of its subordinate masculine form of Jewishness. Ironically, the use of homophobia as a technology of Othering to deny (and subordinate) the masculinity of the *Ghetto Jew* is in many ways the result of the internalisation of the prevailing anti-semitic views of other nations that described Jews as passive and feminine (see Mayer 2000a, but also Mosse 1985). This clearly demonstrates the relational aspect of both nationalism and masculinities. Whereas European nation-states in the nineteenth and early twentieth century relied on technologies of Othering akin to the way in which hegemonic masculinity establishes itself through homophobia—Jews were depicted as lacking all manliness and “said to exhibit female traits, just as homosexuals were generally considered effeminate” (Mosse 1985, p. 36)¹⁷—the Zionist reaction to this Othering was to re-establish its masculinity by drawing on mythologised, masculinist stories about Jews’ past struggles to survive in the face of numerical inferiority (Mayer 2000a). Emphasising the courage of Jewish men that enabled past victories, these myths have shaped Jewish nationalism so that Zionism and the imagining of the nation is performed through the hegemonic masculine ideal of the *Muscle Jew* and the exclusion of the (metaphorically homosexualised) *Ghetto Jew*.

Hindutva nationalism followed a similar trend. Hansen (1996, p. 138), for example, argued that the “recuperation of masculinity is a common theme in Hindu nationalist discourses.” He identified that this overcoming of the emasculation (by the British colonisers) was at the heart of the *Hindutva* national project (see also Banerjee 2003, 2005). As suggested by Said (1978) and Inden (1990), the British Empire in part justified the colonisation of India by arguing that the Indian men were effeminate, a status that was further cemented by the fact they were conquered (see also Banerjee 2003). Hindutva anti-colonial nationalism sought to reclaim their (by the colonial powers) denied masculinity, thereby Othering the past colonised and effeminate Self.

Whereas these examples have highlighted the imagined past-Self as the object of homophobia as a technology of Othering, this does not always need to be the case. Other nations too can be positioned as non-masculine through similar processes. Indeed, the previous discussion of how Jews were depicted in European nationalisms and the gendered nature of Orientalism already alluded to this point. A more recent example can be found in the contemporary Russian nationalism, which has been characterised as a “remasculinisation of the nation” (Riabov and Riabova 2014). This remasculinisation is achieved through the promotion of (hyper)masculine notion of the nation whilst simultaneously demasculinising its Others. A case in point is the widespread trope of “Gayropa,” which seeks to emphasise the Western perversion of accepting homosexuality as a lifestyle, and mobilises it as a “distinctive feature of Western Europe’s demasculinization” (Riabov and Riabova 2014, p. 29).

The second process through which nationalism relies on homophobia as a technology of Othering relates to the construction and maintenance of internal boundaries.

¹⁷ It is important to note here that Jews, according to Mosse (1985), were seldom accused to be homosexual themselves, but the positioning of Jews as inferior relied on effeminisation strategies and stereotypes that were closely associated with the homosexual national Other (cf. homophobia as technology of Othering).

Unlike with the construction of external boundaries, homophobia as a technology of Othering in this scenario is often explicitly linked to notions of homosexuality. Here, nationalists other those bodies within the nation that resist the national project by using homophobic tropes to undermine political legitimacy.

A case in point is Afrikaner nationalism and the ways in which it stigmatised those objecting to conscription in Apartheid South-Africa (see Conway 2008, 2012). Conscription in Apartheid South Africa has been described as a constitutive performance of masculinity and citizenship for white South Africans (Conway 2008). For the South African state, however, it was also a tool to moderate the intra-white social and political cleavages, forging a new white South African identity based upon the notion of a heroic, virile, and strong masculinity. Objectors to military service, as *strangers* (see Bauman 1991, p. 54)¹⁸—neither insiders nor outsiders of the nation—posed a particular threat to the state as they not only “undermined the normative foundations of the state [but also] contested the accepted gender norms that white men were expected to follow in South Africa” (Conway 2008, p. 425). Although the state’s reaction to objectors to military service was multiple, its use of homophobic stigmatisation seemed to be the most successful. This particular strategy drew from the hegemonic white South-African masculinity and subordinated the “objectors’ masculinity by the charge of cowardice and the innuendo of homosexuality [which] actually stigmatised objectors and destabilized their right to political agency within the public realm” (Conway 2008, p. 434).¹⁹ In short, in Apartheid South Africa, the objectors to military service threatened the gendered binary of political and social life. In its response, the state sought to reinforce the hegemony of its nationalist project through the homophobia as a technology of Othering, stigmatising objectors’ personal identities (irrespective of whether they are gay or not) and questioning their national belonging and existence as political actors (Conway 2008).

A similar process can be noted in Serbia. During the 1990s wars, those resisting the nationalist project were labelled as “traitors of their nation [and] traitors to their gender: cowardly, weak, effeminate and *probably homosexual*” (Bracewell 2000, p. 580, emphasis added). More recently, Serbian nationalists have relied on homophobia as a technology of Othering to discredit those who they perceive to be national traitors. As a case in point, consider the recent objection to Prime Minister Vucic (now President) by nationalist movements, particularly following his softened stance towards the Belgrade Pride in 2014. These objections reached a new high after an incident in which a high-profile football match between Serbia and Albania was interrupted by a drone carrying a flag depicting a map of Greater Albania (which includes Kosovo²⁰). When this happened, the stadium erupted in the chant “*Vučiću, pederu, izdao si Srbiju*” [Vucic, you faggot, you’ve betrayed Serbia], referring to Vucic allowing Belgrade Pride but also his signing of the Brussels Agreement between Belgrade and Pristina (Igrutinović 2015). To this data, the trope remains a popular method for nationalists to undermine Vucic’s policies. For example, in 2015, the nationalist organisations had organised a protest called VCC PDR (reads as *Vucic peder* [Vucic faggot]) in front of Vucic’s party

¹⁸ I use the word “stranger” to keep true to Conway’s (2008) analysis.

¹⁹ It is important to note though that whilst the state used homophobia against objectors and white dissidents, gay men were simultaneously allowed to serve as conscripts (Conway 2012).

²⁰ Kosovo has an important place in Serbian nationalist mythology (see Sloopmaeckers 2017).

headquarters to protests against the Belgrade Pride, which was deemed to be a betrayal of and an attack on the Serbian nation and its system of values (Slootmaeckers 2017).

Here, it is important to note that the maintenance of internal boundaries through the use of homophobia as a technology of Othering does not only exclude internal Others by discrediting them. It can also explicitly target homosexuals as a social group, who are depicted as a threat to the (biological) reproduction of nation (as is argued in the existing literature on homophobia and nationalism, see e.g. Mole 2011, 2016). The “pink triangle” homosexuals were forced to wear in Nazi Germany and the Nazi-occupied territories is only but one example of this. Not only were homosexual men singled out as the national outsiders because they did not confirm to the Aryan hegemonic masculinity, but they were also stigmatised because they did not contribute to the reproduction of the nation (Boden 2011). With its emphasis on reproducing the race (nation or ethnicity), Nazism (and fascism more generally) persecuted homosexuals on the basis that they “threatened the ascendancy of German culture. Since homoerotic intimacy did not serve a reproductive purpose, homosexuals were, by definition, incapable of propagating the Volk. Unable to fulfil the social duties prescribed by their gender, homosexuals were vilified as social pariahs” (Boden 2011, p. 1). Such rhetoric is still employed by nationalist movements—often supported by Churches—who define the nation via their statements on homosexuality; arguing that homosexuality is a threat to the biological survival of the nation (See, e.g., Mole 2011; Pavasovic Trost and Slootmaeckers 2015).²¹

The final process of national boundary construction uses the masculine Othering based on the logic of contrast. Here, nationalism confirms the superiority of the nation by comparing it to other nations, which are deemed to be masculine yet inferior in their expressions of masculinity.²² The previously discussed Hindutva nationalism is a good example, as it did not only position the Hindu nation vis-à-vis the past-Self, but also against the Muslim Other. Here, the nationalist project defined Hindutva masculinity as “patriotic selfless individuals [...], loyal to the nation and the RSS [one of the nationalist organisations], physically well trained, ‘manly’ and courageous, self-disciplined and capable of organization” (Hansen 1996, p. 147), and contrasted it to the “allegedly strong, aggressive, militarised, potent and masculine Muslim” (p. 148). Thus, in *Hindutva* nationalism, the image of the nation is created on the back of the figure of the Muslim and Muslim nationhood more broadly. The figure of the Muslim is othered at least partially based upon its imagined masculinity. The Muslim Other is deemed a marginalised masculinity in relation to the hegemonic *Hindutva* masculinity, which in turn reconfirming the dominance of the Hindu nation (see also Anand 2007).

By the same token, Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s projected a hegemonic masculine ideal as an inspirational image symbolising the nation, aimed at merging different perceptions of masculinities into a single hegemonic one in order to achieve the desired “*volkseenheid*” (national unity) (du Pisani 2004). They did so by contrasting Afrikaner masculinity to other, Black and English, masculinities in order to make Afrikaner men aware of their sameness (Conway

²¹ Here, one can also consider the recent persecution of homosexuals in Chechnya.

²² Just as the Othering process between hegemonic masculinity and marginalised masculinity is rooted within the intersectionality of gender, race, class, and other social structures, the Othering process described here should also be situated within such intersectionality. However, a detailed analysis of how these intersecting social structures play a role in nationalist Othering is beyond the scope of this article.

2008; du Pisani 2004). The English, for example, were othered through references to the Anglo-Boer war, which the Afrikaners had lost not in a courageous battle but because the British has used “methods of barbarism” (du Pisani 2004, pp. 161–165). The Black population of South Africa was also othered as inferior by depicting them as “dirty, contaminated by disease, ugly, dim-witted, lazy, brutal, etc. The black man was regarded as primitive, uncivilised, immature [... and] the antithesis of the Afrikaner ideal of masculinity” (p. 166).

Similar mechanisms could be observed in the portrayal of Syrian male refugees in Europe during the so-called refugee crisis of 2015. If not depicted as non-masculine cowards (the first mechanism discussed), they were depicted as rapists and/or terrorists (Rettberg and Gajjala 2015). In other words, these refugees were threats to the European nations and were configured as sexually predatory and undisciplined aggressive men that do not belong in Europe.

The above discussion can be summarised as follows: when imagining the nation, positive masculine images of the Self are matched by negative images of the Other, both internal and external. The Other is dehumanised or demasculinised through homophobia as a technology of Othering, or represented as a derided or feared masculine Other (see also Horne 2004).

By linking hegemonic masculinity to the imagined community that is the nation, nationalism does not only succeed in creating a representation of itself in relation to the “Other,” but it also achieves the embodiment of the nation in its masculine subjects. The latter is especially true in times of crisis. In periods of resistance or intense nation building, hegemonic masculinity is used in a highly idealised form as a metaphor for the political community as a whole (Tosh 2004, p. 49; see also Väyrynen 2013). This is to say that “*masculine* individuals embod[y] nationality” (Sluga 1998, pp. 104, original emphasis). As men’s identity is so intertwined with that of the nation, it easily translates into what Hroch (1996, p. 90) calls, a “personalized image of the nation.”

The embodiment of the nation by men becomes particularly clear during episodes of armed conflict. In wartime, the previously discussed masculine technologies of Othering are used in extreme forms to assert the nation’s dominance in the conflict. A point in case is the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, which can be considered to be the embodied expression of the previously discussed technologies of Othering. Indeed, Väyrynen (2013, p. 139) has argued that “war can be seen to be one of the most totalizing events where a large-scale appropriation of human bodies takes place and where the scripts of nationalism are violently written on human flesh,” and wartime sexual violence is one of the most violent forms of such bodily appropriation. Despite being much less theorised, nationalist conflicts are also fought over male bodies.²³

As masculine individuals embody nationality, sexual violence during wartime, although disproportionately affecting women, is also targeted at men (see also Féron 2018). As such, sexual violence (whether against men or women) can also be conceptualised as a violent and embodied expression of masculine Technologies of

²³ Feminist scholarship on nationalism already highlighted that women’s bodies represent the symbolic boundaries of the nation and the rape of women in war then is considered to be an act of conquest, occupying enemy territory. The female body, in this regard, has often been labelled as the battlefield of masculine/nationalist conflicts (Krog 2001).

Othring, aimed at producing and reinforcing the nation's (masculine) dominance over the enemy (see also Vojdik 2014, pp. 944–945). Although unpacking such conceptualisation in detail requires another full-length article, I want to demonstrate briefly how sexual violence in wartime acts as a way to mark the boundaries between nations by reaffirming hierarchies amongst nations in masculine terms.

First, by raping “Their” women a message is sent to the Other's men that they cannot protect their women, that they are not masculine enough, whilst at the same time establishing the masculine dominance of nation's Self and its men. Similarly, sexual violence against men is also about male domination; it symbolises the masculinity of the perpetrator as powerful and dominant, whilst at the same time emasculating the victim, presenting it as stereotypical feminine, weak, and powerless (Sivakumaran 2007, 2010; Vojdik 2014). The rape of the male body is a direct act that is aimed at communicating something about the victims' masculine identity (Christian et al. 2012), and in extension the Other's nationhood (for a critical discussion on this, see also Eichert 2018). Sexual violence against men, then, is an act to display power and dominance that subordinates other men/nations (Solangon and Patel 2012). The perpetrator exerts his masculine dominance by either penetrating the victim, sexual torture, or by forcing him to rape other men (or family members). The victim, on the other hand, is positioned as non-masculine, unable to defend himself (or his family), and as homosexual.²⁴ The latter is particular the case when the victim experiences an erection or ejaculate, not uncommon in the context of male rape, as this raises doubts about his sexuality and masculinity (Sivakumaran 2007, p. 272; see also Solangon and Patel 2012). Thus, the act of male rape is an extreme, violent, and embodied expression of homophobia as a technology of Othring. Sexual violence during wartime, thus, is a transaction of the masculine identities of the perpetrator and victims (Skjelsbæk 2001); the masculinity lost by the victim is gained by the perpetrator. Furthermore, because men embody the nation (Zarkov and Cockburn 2002), this exchange of masculinity becomes an ethnic/national transaction. Zarkov (2001, p. 78) for example, argued that

the castration [and rape (see Jones 2006)] of a single man of the ethnically defined enemy is symbolic appropriation of the masculinity of the whole group. Sexual humiliation of a man from another ethnicity is, thus, a proof of not only that he is a lesser man, but also that his ethnicity is a lesser ethnicity. Emasculation [via sexual violence] annihilated the power of the ethnic Other by annihilating the power of its men's masculinity.

The use of sexual violence against men as a masculine technology of Othring also occurs at the discursive level. Consider, for example, Zarkov's (2007) analysis of media representations in the Croatian and Serbian press of sexual violence against men. She argues that the different representation of the male body in stories about sexual violence against men contributed to the construction of the ethnic Self and Other. Although stories about male victims of sexual violence were rare, she contends that the selected

²⁴ It is important to note that such re-positioning does not necessarily relate to the individual identity or experiences of the victim, but rather should be considered within an audience-focused framework (see Eichert 2018). Through the acts of sexual violence against men, perpetrators send messages to different sets of audiences.

presence of some male bodies is significant. Within the Croatian press, for example, male victims were (made) invisible. This invisibility, Zarkov (2001, p. 80) continues, “points to the significance of positioning a heterosexual power at the core of the definition of the ethnic Self in the Croatian media. The raped or the castrated Croat man [...] would undermine the construction of the Croat nation as virile and powerful.” Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks), on the other hand, were always depicted as the victims, and both their masculinity and heterosexuality were systematically questioned. Serbs, in the Croatian reports on sexual violence against men, were always depicted as the perpetrators. Although their masculinity was not brought into question (as perpetrators, their acts are interpreted in terms of power), it was defined as significantly different from Croat masculinity. Serbs were depicted as “perverts” and primitives. Images of masculinity were thus used to signify the boundaries between the different nations. The de-masculinisation and homosexualisation of Bosniaks in the media representation points to the usage of homophobia as a technology of Othering to exclude them from the Croatian nation, whilst Serbs were excluded because their masculinity was perverted and primitive, and thus lesser than the powerful, heterosexual masculinity of the Croat men/nation (othered as a marginalised masculinity).

Based on the above discussions, it becomes clear that nationalism and hegemonic masculinity are co-constructive hegemonic processes in which the (national) Other is defined along the lines of effeminate (i.e., subordinated), or defect/barbaric (i.e., marginalised) masculinities. Homophobia as a technology of Othering plays an important role within this process, but it is not the only technology available. For example, internal objectors are labelled as homosexual—i.e., their masculinity, and therefore their legitimacy has been denied—and outsiders can be presented as effeminate and lacking masculinity. Yet, the Other can also be represented as barbaric, i.e., through the lens of marginalised masculinities.

I use the notion of nationalism as competing masculinities to think about this process in more abstract terms. Competing in the sense that nationalism and nationalist conflict are inherently embedded in a field defined by “politics of social ordering and the creation of hierarchies” (Serrano-Amaya 2018, p. 106), a hegemonic and relational structure in which each nation will seek to claim superiority or dominance over the other. The notion of competing masculinities then is used to emphasise the relational nature of the described processes and to capture how nations seek to position themselves at the top of their own hierarchical imagining by using different masculine technologies of Othering. How this is done is often a reaction to how the nation is positioned and imagined in the Othering processes of different nations. Put differently, the imagining of the nation through masculine processes is transactional and happens in relation to the existing Othering processes within its relational field. As such, technologies of Othering are always located within specific Self/Other relations, whilst their usage can also be influenced by the way in which the nation is othered by others within the field.

Whereas the above has highlighted how homophobia, as a technology of Othering, is used to exclude the homosexual/non-masculine from the nation. It is important to note that the relationship between nationalism and homophobia is not so straightforward. For example, consider the recent phenomenon in which (some) homosexual bodies are included within the nation and a nation’s status is judged based on their homo-friendliness (see Puar 2007). Because masculine technologies of Othering do not just rely on subordination but also on marginalisation, the conceptualisation of

nationalism as competing masculinities provides a theoretical tool that can also capture these new dynamics. Indeed, as discussed in more detail below, homonationalism employs masculine technologies of Othering following the logic of contrast to emphasise the superior position of the nation vis-à-vis its Others.

The masculine othering processes of homonationalism

Homonationalism and heteronationalism are often discussed as two contradictory phenomena. In this section, I question such conceptualisation and argue that these two phenomena might actually follow similar dynamics of competing masculinities. Both rely on discourses centered on homosexuality, albeit with homophobia (as a technology of Othering) being located in different types of Self/Other relations.

With the globalisation of the LGBT rights movement and with the expanding legal changes to protect these minorities from discrimination in a number of states, a new trend is emerging in which “gay tolerance” becomes inscribed in the national identity (Kahlina 2015, p. 74). This shift to the protection of sexual minorities within the nation has been conceptualised by Puar (2007, 2013) as *homonationalism*, which she describes as “a facet of modernity and a historical shift marked by the entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as worthy of protection by nation-states, a constitutive and fundamental reorientation of the relationship between the state, capitalism, and sexuality” (Puar 2013, p. 337). Within this context, nations are increasingly defined by either their gay-friendliness or homophobia. In other words, “the proclaimed tolerance towards sexual minorities is incorporated in the national imaginary as a marker of alleged progressiveness, tolerance, and modernity, creating in this way a spatial and temporal boundary which places the ‘homophobic others’ on the historical path of progress towards Western-style ‘civilisation’ and ‘modernity’” (Kahlina 2015, p. 74). In (Western) Europe, homonationalist discourses have been used to mark the difference between the progressive, homo-tolerant Self and the homophobic immigrant Other (see, e.g., Bracke 2012; Fassin 2010; Mepschen et al. 2010).

Whilst the previous discussion has shown that homophobia can be used to construct a nation’s identity vis-à-vis its Others and to establish its superiority, I argue that masculine Othering processes also guide these homonationalist practices. The difference is that the masculine ideal that occupies the hegemonic position has shifted. Revisiting the earlier discussed gender taboo theory of Plummer (2014) it can be argued that the increased visibility of the LGBT movement in Western countries and the shifts in societal attitudes towards homosexuality has contributed to the decline in homophobia as a masculine technology of Othering. Indeed, exemplifying a response of *accommodation* to shifting gender relations, hegemonic masculinities have come to define themselves in more inclusive or hybrid terms (see, e.g., Anderson 2005).²⁵ Whilst this empirical observation suggests that there has been a decline in the

²⁵ It is important to note here that I do not wish to subscribe to the so-called inclusive masculinity theory postulated by Anderson (2010) and McCormack (2012) as this theory does not consider the relational nature and power dynamics of masculinity construction. Rather, theoretically, I am inclined to follow the work of Bridges and Pascoe (2016), who have argued the performance of hegemonic masculinity can shift to include softer version of masculinities, which are located in a post-homophobic era, wherein homophobia is both the bedrock of the construction of masculinities and in decline (Bridges and Pascoe 2016).

usage of homophobic language to other different masculinities, the tolerance for homosexuals remains arguably superficial. First, whilst some have argued that homophobic jokes are no longer means to discriminate and insult subordinate masculinities (see, e.g., McCormack 2012), others have shown that such *fag discourse*, as a way of teasing, is still used to police masculinities (see, e.g., Pascoe 2007). Second, the inclusion of homosexuals should be understood as *homonormative*, where those who assimilate within heteronormative structures are tolerated (see Puar 2007; but also Duggan 2003). Third, and this is key for the argument made here, is that the inclusion of homosexuals within the imagining of the nation is made possible on the back of the (racialised) Othering process of other non-western cultures. The ultimate *homophobic* Other is then represented as one of an orthodox, hetero-patriarchal masculinity which is sexually backwards and repressive to both homosexuals and women and is therefore positioned as less than the western new modes of inclusive/hybrid masculinities (Jungar and Peltonen 2015).

When discussing homonationalism, it is important to note that the inclusion of homosexual bodies within the nation does not mean that the heteronormative underpinnings of nationalism are being cast away. On the contrary, it can be argued that the national tolerance for homosexuality supports the underlying heteronormativity. To make this case, one has to take note of two particular characteristics of heteronormativity: its capacity to include homosexuality and its difference from homonegativity.²⁶ First, although heteronormativity allows us to assume that everybody is straight, it also provides guidance for dealing with those situations in which this assumption does not hold (Chambers 2007). Non-straight people are required either to pretend they are straight (keeping the assumption intact) or to “come out” as homosexual (and thus explicitly declare their deviance from the norm). This is to say, by coming out, the homosexual becomes the “stranger,” culturally excluded and constructed as the being “outside the ‘normal’ divisions and categories” (Bauman 1991, p. 66) yet tolerated within the framework of homonationalism. That is as long as they do not challenge the heteronormative system (see Duggan 2003).

Second, heteronormativity is distinct from homonegativity (i.e., “homophobia” as an attitude) (Chambers 2007). Contrary to heteronormativity that designates both the political power and social structuring effects of heterosexuality as a norm, homonegativity suggests a reduction to the individual. “Used as a political concept, homophobia [here referred to as attitudes] encourages an interpretation that would reduce the political effects of heteronormativity [...] to the explicit actions of a few homophobic individuals” (Chambers 2007, p. 664). Taking homophobia (as attitudes), rather than heteronormativity, as a political problem within the nation, it is implied that the solution can be found in changing individuals’ attitudes. Consequently, any instance of homophobic/homonegative behaviour by a member of the nation within a homonationalism is reduced to an individualised problem—non-symptomatic for the wider characteristic of the nation—whilst the homophobia of the external Other is essentialised as an inherent cultural characteristic of the nation, signifying their backwards masculinity that still relies on a homophobia as a technology of Othering. Imagined as being an intolerant nation, the Other is thus depicted as inherently inferior.

²⁶ I use “homonegativity” here to refer to individual attitudes towards homosexuality in order to avoid conceptual confusion in the usage of the term homophobia.

Consider, for example, the discourses in Western European media on the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest entry and winner Conchita Wurst. Ulbricht et al. (2015) demonstrated that notion of tolerance was mobilised for intolerant ends in the context of the reporting on Eurovision. They argued that “support for LGBT rights and anti-homophobia are rallied around [...] in order to denigrate a particular identity: Eastern Europeans. In this discursive move, Eastern Europeans are presented as backwards and Other, whereas the West can present itself as the site of enlightened tolerance” (pp. 167–168). Homophobic statements made by elites in Eastern Europe were presented in Western media as proof of the homophobic nature of Eastern Europe, whilst similar statements by elite figures in the West were no such indication of the existence of a homophobic nation.

The difference between heteronationalism and homonationalism, then, is the location of homophobia as a technology of Othering within the different types of Self/Other relations. Heteronationalism draws from homophobia to enforce the nation's masculine image by excluding homosexuals or effeminate masculinities from the nation—to demarcate both internal and external boundaries—and to claim the dominant position in the masculine hierarchy of nations. Homonationalism, on the other hand, targets homophobia as a political problem foreign to the nation. In other words, it is the Other's use of homophobia as a technology of Othering that is used to position it as inferior. Homonationalism thus relies on the masculine Othering process of marginalisation to reaffirm the hegemonic position of a tolerant masculinity that (at least at a utilitarian level) values diversity vis-à-vis the homophobic pre-modern masculine nations. Doing so, homophobia is located outside the national Self and presented as the ultimate defining feature of the national Other.

Because both remain embedded within the heteronormative structure, it becomes possible for both versions of nationalist Othering to co-exist, albeit directed at different Others and within a different set of relations. When this occurs, the homophobic Othering of heteronationalism must be performed in a subtler way akin to Pascoe's (2007) *fag discourse*, so that the homonormative homosexual bodies remain included within the nation. As an illustration of how these different homonationalist and heteronationalist masculine processes of Othering can co-exist in one space, it is worth revisiting the case of Afrikaner nationalism. Whereas I have already discussed how Afrikaner nationalism has used political homophobia to draw its internal boundaries and exclude those who object conscription from the nation, Conway (2009) has demonstrated how the 1987 electoral campaign of the National Party in Hillbrow Johannesburg employed a “gay rights” campaign in order to recreate Hillbrow as a white area. Appealing to white gay men as a minority group, gay rights were “conflated with the preservation of white minority rights against the supposed threat of black majority domination” in an attempt to preserve the apartheid regime (p. 862). Another example is located within the Israeli state, which Puar (2013, p. 338) has described as “a pioneer of homonationalism”, where the inclusion of LGBT bodies “parallels the concomitant increasing segregation of Palestinian populations.” The inclusion of gays in the Israeli imagined state has come at the cost of those who are imagined not to contribute to the “Israeli ‘common good’ (most notably Palestinians, but also genderqueers, pacifists, and many others)” (Milani and Levon 2016, p. 72). More importantly, the way in which gay identities are included is consistent with the previous mentioned technologies of Othering of Zionism. Indeed, Milani and Levon (2016) have

argued that, in Israeli homonationalism, the Israeli gay man is produced through images of young muscled men, which draws on Zionism's history of representing Israel through the picture of the *sabra*, the “young, strong, masculine Jew, who unlike its older, more ‘feminine,’ and weaker counterpart in the diaspora would build the state of Israel” (p. 79). They further argue that the gay Jew is not integral to the construction of the Zionist-Israeli identity, but rather the

hypermasculine character of the traditional figure of the *sabra* [...] is skilfully mobilised for the “economic exploitation of eroticization”. Muscular virility is skilfully [...] deployed in order to tickle the “pornographic imagination” of international viewers, and thus generate a global attraction for a normative ideal of Israeli masculinity, and, by proxy, for Israel. And while it is the leisure sporty facet of the gay *sabra* that it is foregrounded [...], his warrior-like “double” is never too far away. (p. 80, references omitted)

The underlying presence of the warrior-like image of the muscular Jew cannot be ignored as it draws attention to the military as a major site of the (re-)creation of the masculine image of the Israeli nation. The processes through which the national Self is (re)produced within the military perfectly demonstrate how the different masculine technologies of Othering are compatible and can co-exist within nationalism. Indeed, although gay men are able to serve in the army since the 1990s and are now instrumental in the Othering of the homophobic Palestinian Other, it has been demonstrated that the military continues to use homophobia as a technology of Othering to police the masculine combat soldier image associated with the nation. The latter, however, does not occur through the usage of explicit homophobic language but rather by equating poor performances with childlessness and femininity—those characteristics associated with the “unwanted effeminate Jew” (Zaccai 2012; for more on the construction of a nationalist compatible gay identity, see Levon 2014).

Conclusion

To date, the theorising of nationalism and masculinities has remained relatively marginal in the literature. When the link between these two phenomena is analysed, the focus is often on the overlapping substantive features of both hegemonic structures. As such, the theorising about the connection between masculinity and nationalism relies on a particular notion of nationalism and masculinity, both embedded in a heteronormative, homophobic and patriarchal framework. Such views, this article argues, rely too much on a substantialist tradition of thought that is in sharp contrast with the literature's emphasis on the flexible nature of the nation's boundaries and of (hegemonic) masculinities. It does not allow for the possibilities of different expressions of masculinities and nationalism to be connected.

In this article, I am providing an alternative theoretical formulation of the relation between masculinities and nationalism, which aims to understand how the *processes* that maintain both hegemonic structures overlap and reinforce each other. Thus, drawing on insights from relational sociology, the article has argued that the link between the hegemonic structures of masculinities and nationalism can be understood

in their reliance on similar technologies of Othering. Focusing on the location of homophobia as a mutual technology of Othering within the Othering process, I argue that nationalism is best conceptualized through the notion of competing masculinities, in which other nations are (re)produced through either subordinate or marginalised masculinities. Such conceptualisation recognises that the imagining of the nation is always connected to the imagining of the Other and also occurs in response to how the nation is envisioned in competing nationalisms (i.e., as a reaction to its positioning and imagining in the Othering processes of different nations). Put differently, the imagining of the nation through masculine processes is transactional and happens in relation the existing Othering processes within its relational field.

An important contribution of the proposed theoretical framework is that it overcomes the apparent duality between homonationalism and heteronationalism. It conceptualises both phenomena as two sides of the same coin. The difference between these is the location of homophobia as a technology of Othering within different type of Self/Other relations. Heteronationalism draws from homophobia as a technology of Othering to imagine the Self through the processes of contradiction (drawing internal and external boundaries to exclude non-masculine Others), and to claim the dominant position in the masculine hierarchy of nations. Homonationalism, on the other hand, uses the process of contrast to target homophobia as a political problem foreign to the nation, i.e., homophobia is the defining feature of the nation's Other, inherently positioning the Other as less than. In other words, both expressions of nationalism rely on masculine technologies of Othering, albeit with different features of masculinity being emphasised and contrasted with either subordinated or marginalised masculine features.

By conceptualising nationalism as competing masculinities, I provide an analytical tool that allows us to contextualise and understand seemingly contradicting features of nationalism and its relationship to masculinities. Moreover, by situating nationalist Othering within a field of relations with multiple others, the presented theory of the relationship between nationalism and masculinities allows for the study of and reflections on the temporality of these Othering processes, including issues of (dis)continuity or disconnected/interrupted continuities and flexibility/fluidity of masculine imagining of the nation's boundaries.

Acknowledgments Being a long time in the making, this article would not have been possible without the invaluable feedback and input of Heleen Touquet, who has always pushed me to write this piece. I would also like to thank Daniel Conway, Patrick Wielowiejski, Michael Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, Milica Popovic, Leandra Bias, Catherine Baker, Davic Eichert, and the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments. Additionally, I want to thank the Editors of *Theory and Society* for their patience and guidance throughout the process.

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