

Editorial

Banal and Everyday Nationalisms in children's mundane and institutional lives

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Nationalism in many parts of the world takes new shapes merging with populist, far-right, nativist and green agendas illustrating how political evocations of the nation enjoy growing electoral success. One consequence among many is that previously 'settled' matters around racism, fascism and migration, are once again up for debate with elected officials and media personalities able to express any number of views without recourse to an apology (Wodak, 2020). The provoked cynicism and anger infiltrates many spaces of children's everyday lives (Zembylas, 2021a, b) inclusive of the broad range of social media platforms, institutions they inhabit, and everyday interactions. The discursive and ideological structures of nationalism have received significant attention in childhood studies, however, today it is apparent that its affective dimensions and exclusionary pedagogical implications require renewed attention as political struggles are increasingly affectively and discursively expressed in institutional spaces, such as the family, preschool, school and so on (see e.g. Zembylas, 2021a,b).

This special issue emerged from a continued interest in the intersections of childhood and nation, and nationalisms' growing prominence in national and international politics (e.g. Millei & Imre, 2015; Millei, 2014, 2015). In offering a unique contribution to the exploration of nationalism as part of everyday life, this issue focuses on children and nationhood mostly in institutional settings. Many academic fields have developed an interest in researching everyday life and nationhood, such

as political geography, nationalism studies, social psychology, education or political anthropology. A large number of studies explore 'banal' nationalism by drawing on Michael Billig's work (1995), and investigating how people mobilize elite (state) symbols, nationalist discourses, and sense-making in their social interactions. In another stream of research, attention is paid to 'everyday' forms of nationalism, on how people reinterpret elite discourses or create their own versions of nationhood enacted as everyday practices (Fox and Van Ginderachter, 2018; Skey & Antonsich, 2017; Skey, 2011; Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008). Bringing together these bodies of work with a keen interest in children and childhood, scholars were invited to explore nationhood in children's everyday lives in this special issue.

'Banal nationalism' (Billig, 1995) focuses on national narratives, identities, and symbols of nationhood, as well as the social and psychological dynamics that underpin those. Research explores how institutional cultures are reproduced and discursive tropes create and shape the experience of everyday life. This is a more top-down approach of exploring quotidian forms of nationalism, according to Eleanor Knott (2015) (following Eric Hobsbawm's (1992) differentiation). Eric Hobsbawm (1992, p. 10) also highlights the importance of more bottom-up aspects of nationalism, including our understandings of the "assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people" that are developed through the everyday practice of an 'enlightenment' attached to the industrial revolution. Approaches to 'everyday nationhood' take as their starting point ordinary people and their social practice as they talk about, give meaning to, accomplish, undermine or subvert the nation through routine activities. Proponents question the extent to which nationhood is present in everyday life, spot contestations (e.g. Jones & Merriman 2009), and assert that everyday nationhood is not always coterminous with nationalism (Knott, 2016).

If we understand nationalism as “the project to make the political unit, the state (or polity) congruent with the cultural unit of nation” (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008, p. 536), then the intersections of nation, nationhood, childhood, childhood institutions, and children's spaces provide rich fields to explore this relationship. Modern childhood and institutions have emerged with the modern nation and serve as platforms of socialisation efforts (see e.g. Millei & Imre, 2015; Burman, 2008). Children in institutional life engage with national cultures as social actors and participate in continuously reiterating and remaking those (e.g. Benei, 2008). Therefore, exploring this relation in everyday life and within the resurgence of nationalist discourses internationally is even more important for the fields of children's geographies, childhood studies, and education.

From this perspective, there are at least four major questions for this special issue: *How are particular children being socialized into a national identity and culture? How, when, and in what ways do they participate in a national culture on a day-to-day basis, if at all? How and when do children replicate nationhood and how do they re/interpret, resist, contest and re/produce their own versions of nationhood in ordinary practices of everyday life? In addition, how does nationhood operate in the routine activities of children in stable, modern democracies?* Bonikowski (2016, pp. 428-9) differentiates between stable and unstable societies, the latter being contexts of “newly formed states, regions with separatist proclivities, or unstable political regimes”. In unstable societies, the operation of everyday nationalism is easier to spot (Bonikowski, 2016). Therefore, it is not a surprise that most studies exploring children and nationhood concern divided societies, societies in political conflicts, emerging nation states, or unstable political regimes that heighten national self-awareness (see for example Povrzanovic, 1997; Hart, 2002; Spyrou, 2006; Cheney 2007; Habashi 2008; Zembylas, 2010; Leonard, 2012; Benwell, 2014). There is less attention on societies during ‘settled times’ where emerging disruptions are successfully absorbed by existing institutional processes (see for example in the early years of childhood, Waniganayake and Donegan, 1999; MacNaughton, 2001,

Lappalainen, 2006, 2009; Seeberg, Bagge, Enger, 2009; Srinivasan, 2015; Millei, 2019; and during school years but without offering a thorough review, for example, Gullestad, 1997; Scourfield, Dicks and Drakeford, 2006; Huijsmans and Trần Thị, 2015; Moser, 2016).

Methodological innovations for the study of banal and everyday nationalism

Methodological approaches to the study of mundane nationhood vary, but as Michael Skey (2011) argues, it must be studied systematically to understand why, when, and for whom nationhood matters. Ethnographic observations offer a potent way to describe and reconstruct everyday nationhood as it operates in everyday habits, practices, feelings, and experiences. It is also a particularly apt approach to pay close attention to the familiar everyday life of children through which their social world is created and sustained (James, 2007). However, since everyday nationhood often operates 'below the radar' - unseen, unheard, and often unnoticed - researchers need to address important methodological paradoxes and challenges: "How do we know if we don't see it, we don't hear it, we don't notice it? Indeed, how can we know this?" (Fox, 2016, p. 2). Authors of this special issue offer different conceptual and methodological innovations to these challenges.

Annika Åkerblom and Anne Harju (2019) use Basil Bernstein's (1977) sociology of knowledge to make visible how the reclassification and re-contextualization of nationhood is portrayed in the curriculum by preschool actors, leading to applicable knowledge in the preschool classroom. In their analysis of ethnographic observations and interviews, they reveal some ways teachers reconstruct curriculum prescriptions and align those with pedagogical traditions that make them operate in somewhat less visible ways. They are thus able to highlight how democratic ideals of a national pedagogy are recalibrated and shape the experiences and identities of children in more or less explicit ways. Zsuzsa Millei (2019) focuses on the affective aspects of everyday nationalism.

She shows how affect is produced by the performance of songs and children's stories and in children's playful re-enactment of a stereotypical Australian lifestyle. Millei highlights affect as part of pedagogical spaces that align children's multiple becomings with national ways of being and acting.

Iveta Silova (2019) uses Jon E. Fox's (2017) method of 'breaching nation' to explore how the constructs of nationhood rupture in the mundane acts of children, initiating attempts to 'restore' or 'repair' the nation. By focusing also on objects (e.g., girls' hair bows in memories of childhood experiences), she goes beyond the description of how nationhood seamlessly operates in everyday life to bring into view its multiple and contesting constructs that co-exist in liminal spaces. Elizabeth Mavroudi and Louise Holt (2021) also draw on memories of childhood as interviewees assemble the homeland and national culture in stories about their everyday lives in a Greek diaspora in Australia and in their 'imagined home', Greece. Their method of making visible everyday nationalism is to utilize their participants' memorizing, contrasting, troubling, multiplying, transmitting, sentimentalizing, and idolizing of their multiple belongings, pointing to how it is that through these discursive categories they produce their own idea of nationhood.

As Jon E. Fox (2017, p. 25) has highlighted, the 'temporal edge' of nation, when children learn to inhabit the nation "before it has become [their] second nature", is a productive space for nationalism studies. This special issue, by focusing on this 'temporal edge', offers an important contribution to understanding how nationhood operates in children's everyday lives. Authors richly demonstrate the unique opportunities and insights these explorations offer into the boundaries and borders of nationhood, its attractions and repellants, pushes and pulls, orders, longings, pleasures, discontentment and so on.

Modalities of everyday nationhood in children's lives

Papers in this special issue address the different modalities of everyday nationhood. Jon E. Fox & Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2008) identify four modalities of nationhood by paying attention to how nationhood is re/produced in everyday life. The first modality observes how nation comes to matter to different people. Here, the nation is considered as a discursive construct, as routine talk, and how nation is “constituted and legitimated not (only) in response to elite dictates but also according to the contingencies of everyday life” (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008, p. 537). Annika Åkerblom and Anne Harju (2019) observe this relation between the official Swedish preschool curriculum and its operationalisation in everyday practices of a studied preschool. First, they look into how nationhood is legitimated through the Swedish ideal of democracy, more specifically democratic participation. Then they explore how this ideal is translated into children’s participation in pedagogic planning and practice. It seems, however, that in everyday practices the scope of participation is conditioned for children of national minorities and children with ‘foreign’ backgrounds. Boundaries are constructed by using their (lack of) knowledge about, and ability to, participate in Swedish religious and celebratory traditions, their Swedish language competencies, and their parents’ understanding of Swedish democratic traditions. In order to create security for these children, who are assumedly insecure in their new or different environments, teachers stick to routines, dictate activities and impose control over children’s time and space use. The result of these practices is to deny children the freedom and agency so central to Swedish democratic values.

The second modality addresses the ways that nationhood frames the choices people make, how those choices are made national and can reproduce and enact national sensibilities (Fox & Cynthia Miller-Idriss, 2008). Iveta Silova (2019) embeds the analysis of her own preschool memory into the context in which the Soviet state attempted to inculcate a state-wide Soviet identity and at the same time promoted ethnocultural identities and granted national self-determination to different groups of people. Going to a Russian preschool in Soviet Latvia, chosen by her parents, she

experienced political socialisation into Soviet nationhood. This ran parallel to her parents' efforts to maintain their belonging to the Latvian national community and the teachers' leniency towards multiple national identities. On the picture day, they let Iveta go to preschool without a hair bow, resisting the Soviet ideal of schoolgirls wearing large bows. The photographer took two photos of the young girl, one without the bow and the other with an ad-hoc large bow created by a teacher. In this story, the bow creates a national sensibility differentiating between Soviet and Latvian girlhoods, and rendering the choice between bow or no bow a national one. The mundane act of wearing a bow thus can be read as a form of everyday nationalism. Iveta Silova (2019) also brings into conversation children's geographies, childhood studies, and education in post-socialist societies, a less explored and almost invisible context which has received little interest in these fields (Silova, Piattoeva & Millei, 2017).

Zsuzsa Millei (2019) provides numerous examples on the third modality of nationhood: how people 'perform the nation' through consuming and producing national meaning and with the ritual enactment of symbols (Fox & Cynthia Miller-Idriss, 2008). Her study takes place in an Australian preschool. Songs and stories tailored to conjure up a stereotypical Australian lifestyle and food choices, with stereotypically 'cute' Australian animals and the teacher's patriotic feelings animating children's varied participation create a space for the ritualistic and emotional performance of the nation. In another scenario, children in the preschool garden *perform* a barbeque, as an Australian trope, by assembling play equipment and demarcating space. In this space, memories of home and public rituals are being reinterpreted and reproduced by the children's play animated with affective and embodied elements.

Fourth, Jon E. Fox & Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2008) suggest to examine distinctions in tastes and preferences of ordinary people through which they express national belonging and difference in

everyday consumption habits. Elizabeth Mavroudi and Louise Holt (2021) point out in their examination of diasporic Greek participants' memories how 'ethnonational idioms' are invoked and reworked by their participants. They show through rich memories how ordinary people "think the nation, talk the nation, enact the nation, perform the nation, consume the nation – and of course reject, resist, ignore, and avoid the nation – all in ways that contribute to the reproduction and legitimation – or dismantling and undermining – of national forms of belonging" (Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008, p. 574). In their article, they illustrate the various, complex and ambivalent practices of nationhood that are recreated by different generations of migrants between Greece and their new contexts.

Some critics foreground the importance of 'causal and sociohistorical' scholarship on nationalism and argue that studies exploring mundane nationhood in everyday life are too 'microanalytical and descriptive' (Smith 2008, 567, cited in Knott, 2016, p. 7). In some of the reviews of the special issue papers, authors also encountered this contention. Reviewers evaluated the micro-analytical focus on the operation of nationhood in mundane life as having little to offer to advance the present knowledge of nationalism. For this special issue, highlighting the banality of nation is at the very core of descriptions. Moreover, the aim is to demonstrate the linkages between everyday discourses and practices young children experience and engage in and the ways in which nationalism in the public sphere, and as dictated by the elite, takes various forms. The aim is to expose and if needed problematize how nationhood undergirds everyday life, how nationhood can include/exclude, as well as help children make sense of the world and others. Another aim was to open spaces for reflection and critical pedagogic engagements in child institutions. The authors' conclusions point to the messiness, contradictions and inconsistencies of banal and everyday nationalisms in everyday life. There is also a kind of contingent salience of nationalism (Knott, 2016), which is an important aspect of studying nationalism in general, and in children's everyday and institutional lives in particular. Therefore, since explorations of nationhood in children's everyday lives in 'settled

societies' remain rather limited, especially in the early years of care and education, this special issue aims to bring attention to, and calls for more serious engagement with, nationhood as it underpins everyday institutional, civic and personal practices, especially within our contemporary context of rising exclusionary nationalism.

Childhood as method for researching everyday nationalism

Looking at mainstream nationalism studies and theories from a 'child' perspective, one can observe a taken for granted position on children and childhood, and a lack of focus on this vital period of socialization in life (Stanbridge, 2011; Mavroudi and Holt, 2015). Scholars of nationalism in their analysis of modern nationalism often assume a universal childhood in the practice of nationalism, instead of exploring normative conceptions of childhood and the historicity and situatedness of the ways a national culture are passed on and is understood and re/produced by children (Stanbridge, 2011). Childhood can be used as method for theorizing and researching everyday nationalism, as well as discussing variegated appearances of everyday nationalism as it pertains or can pertain to children's everyday lives. There is an overlap between these two problematics as far as questions around nationalism, everyday nationalism, nationalist practices, and discussions about critical agency are concerned. In a similar manner to Brubaker (2012), who suggests four ways to study the relationship between religion and nationalism, the addition of childhood as a practice to thinking about nationalism adds a useful critical dimension to exploring children's everyday experiences.

We can use the following approaches, among others, when bringing together nationalism and childhood: first, assuming that childhood is another social science category, like nation (race or ethnicity), and that the two are analogous to each other; the second way is to think about how it is that childhood might explain aspects of the phenomenon of nationalism and vice versa, such as

nationalism's distinctive character in children's everyday lives and practices of childhood as they pertain to nationalism; the third is to think about how childhood might be an actual part of nationalism itself and how they experience some kind of intertwining relationship, such as childhood as the future of nations and practiced at the present with this view; and finally, and perhaps more interestingly to everyday nationalism, we want to ask if there is a universal 'child experience' of nationalism that might be common to modern childhoods. Thinking about this final point can lead to any number of problems: are there 'child-like' nationalisms, can there be a universal structural understanding of nationalism that all modern children will understand, experience and enact and what will the various approaches to childhood (ie. memory studies, ethnography), tell us about nations and nationalism? In what follows, we outline these four points in more detail:

1. If we assume that childhood is another social science category, like 'nation', and that the two are analogous to each other, then this can create a set of new approaches to how childhood and nation intertwine, grow and develop with each other. It means that we can ask about how these two categories can have similar properties, functions, reasons for existing, parallel concepts of social order and so on. This analogous existence can mean that modern nations and modern children, as subjects of analysis, might have similar structures, origins, correspondences that can help us to think about problems associated with the other major social science categories we use: class, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, and others. It is thus that we are able to place these categories on some kind of analogous footing, including childhood, and begin to develop analyses along these lines.
2. Given the point about analogous existence, we can go on to ask questions about how it is that childhood might explain aspects of the phenomenon of nation, such as nationalism. What kinds of explanatory powers might childhood have, as a social science category, to explain

and analyse nationalism in all of its forms. Most especially, what is it that is happening in terms of everyday nationalism as experienced and practiced by children and childhood: children as subjects, childhoods as national experiences, co-productions of everyday nationalisms that children are involved in that shed new light on nationalism as phenomenon? Using this approach, it is useful to point out that we can develop both micro and macro analyses if we think about how various childhoods might shed light on everyday nationalism through all kinds of different questioning.

3. Then we can move on to thinking about their *intertwining relationship* and the possibility of how the intertwining relationship might be useful for us. What if we think about childhood (and/or children) as something that is part of nationalism (especially everyday nationalism) itself? With this approach, it can mean that childhood is a 'player' in the game of modern nationalisms, and that childhood as a category, and children as subjects (like other subjects we have already determined above: class and ethnicity, for example) can play a role as part of the various nationalisms that exist in the world. What kinds of new approaches are available if childhood forms a part of modern/contemporary everyday nationalism, and how might this change, adapt, and bring new approaches to the analysis of everyday nationalisms and childhoods? What role will institutions and cultural norms play in this intertwined relationship: pre/schools, hospitals, religious institutions, and so on? Do these nationalisms rely on childhood and the supporting institutions of childhood, to build and develop nationalism as an ideology and how do children participate in that? Is it ever possible to take childhood out of the equation? These are the types of questioning that we can open up by assuming there is an intertwining relationship between childhood as a category and everyday nationalisms.

4. Fourthly, is it possible to make claims about 'universality'. Are 'childhoods' universal in the modern period or are they so particular as to mean that each experience and practice of everyday nationalism is a different one, or is it something else entirely? In this mode of analysis/questioning, we are looking to determine how it is that children as subjects, and childhoods universally understood, might give us an understanding or analytical standpoint that is distinctly about children and childhoods: do all children know what a 'nation' is, can all children recognize and practice 'everyday nationalism(s)' in the same way (everywhere and all the time), and is it possible to claim that every child might simply be able to 'naturally' recognize these aspects of everyday nationalism and participate in it, as children, wherever they might go in the world? What does this mean about both crisis, conflict, upheaval in the world, when children are forced to move from one set of everyday nationalism to another one? And, what does this mean for experiences of everyday nationalisms in stable societies where children are not made to be mobile? Alternatively, can we identify particularities of childhoods that counter the argument for a universal experience or some universal process, and related to this, are we moving towards greater or less universality (hegemony, sameness of affect, sameness of process or practices or any other similar kind of questioning)?

And finally, we seek to challenge the notion that nationalism, especially everyday nationalism, is a phenomenon that does not need to involve childhoods and children. Childhood as a phenomenon is most often relegated to the periphery of analyses about nationalisms in general (Benwell, 2014; Millei & Imre, 2015). Are theories of nationalism biased against children? What would nationalism theory be like if it was also created with children in mind, rather than exclusively adults in mind (adults seen as mature, independent, complete – finished beings, while children as non-political, see Benwell & Hopkins, 2018; Beier, 2020)? Echoing Nick Lee (2013), we call to create immature social theory of nationalism to work against the adult bias of sociological and political theorizing. This type of

theorizing would see adults, as well as children, as becoming, as incomplete. Questions then could be asked: How are agencies around nationalism built or in the process of being built; how do discourses, materialities, affects allow agencies to emerge?

The literature around nationalism developed with a passing glance at the various childhoods experienced in modernity, and there remains a rich vein of material to be tapped here that might give us valuable insights in to the phenomenon. Focusing on everyday life and using emerging, relational and distributive conceptualisations of agency might help to shift from giving significance to childhood in historical and sociological explorations to contributing to nationalism studies with 'childhood as method'. It might seem, however, as if we are battling two forms of analytical prejudice: one that questions the value of everyday experience and practice as an analytical category, and another that questions the value of childhoods as an analytical category. Using our first four points developed above, we seek to develop a thematic around childhood as a category that can give us a distinctly new approach to the study of everyday nationhood (and indeed, nationalisms of all kinds).

Developing this agenda further we have begun to chart a series of provocations. For example, is it helpful to impose the terminology of a variety of modern categories: migrant ('mother tongue' language questions, 'culturally assimilated' categories), developmentally staged (grouping based on cognitive abilities of the child), age-appropriate (toddler, pre-teen, teen), generationally determined (Gen X, Gen Y, Baby boomers), and others? If we are to take any of this seriously, then all of those concepts are externally imposed, reinforced via a set of pop culture stereotypes, and reified on a global scale. Liquid identities thus become contained by the neoliberal capitalist 'glasses' or containers they find themselves in (Bauman 2000).

Where does this leave us with the perennial problem of a 'state of nature' for children and childhood. As a field, childhood studies has a possibility to think about this problem in terms of the use of childhood as method (see also Burman, 2019), as a starting point for thinking about persons globally/universally. Rather than cataloguing the influences that might exist on the creation and development of a person, childhood as method might ask a different question that seeks to begin the analysis from the point of view of childhood. This offers a number of limitations on its own. Childhood is often confined to an institution, usually of the state (kindergarten, school, daycare facility) or an institution of consensus in a Gramscian sense (family, kin-group, set of neoliberal capitalist relations mirroring any of these such as private daycare facilities and so on). It is not a surprise that in the face of this seeming liquidity we are experiencing a strong ethno-nationalist backlash looking to interpret the nation, and indeed the person, as a solid entity, occurring 'naturally' on a given territory.

If everyday nationhood is not always coterminous with nationalism as stated above, then it bears examining what other kinds of 'everydays' may not experience the same boundaries as this everyday nationhood: thus we turn to examining children's mundane and institutional lives. Exploring this question in stable democracies is the way that we can come to understand how children interpret, reinterpret and practice their everyday lives. It is also a way to move beyond the dichotomy of 'stable and socialised identity' versus 'uprooted, unstable identity questioned due to political crisis'. Children in stable democracies continue to demonstrate this in their everyday experiences of the nation: socializations are being critiqued, questioned and reinterpreted on a regular basis as children reaffirm their status as agentic beings.

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