

## **Everyday Ontological Security: Emotion and Migration in British Soaps**

### **Abstract**

Work on affect has made significant contributions to how IR scholars understand high politics of international affairs, capturing political reactions to the horrific, the spectacular and the exceptional. However, the turn to affect has been less inclined to offer comprehensive insight into the importance of emotion in banal or everyday international politics. The theory of ontological security can offer such insight as it attends to experiences of the everyday, particularly through the discursive production of identity. Identity might be disrupted at moments of spectacular or exceptional events that call it to question, but is equally made and remade in the discursive production of everyday life. This research focuses on the latter, analysing the reproduction of the international in the everyday through the vehicle of British soaps *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale*, both of which introduced storylines about migrant workers in the late 2000s. British soaps are designed to be culturally proximate and incorporate didactic messages. Analysis of soaps offers a layered and intersectional view of emotional reactions to international migration at the level of an abstracted individual and the level of the nation-as-viewer.

Work on affect has made significant contributions to how IR scholars understand high politics of international affairs, capturing political reactions to the horrific, the spectacular and the exceptional (Auchter 2014, Fierke 2012, Hutchinson and Bleiker 2014). However, the turn to affect has been less inclined to offer comprehensive insight into the importance of emotion in banal or everyday international politics. Feminists in IR are of course the exception to this rule, variously focusing on the importance of emotion in encounters with international phenomena (Stern 1998, Ackerley and True 2008, MacKenzie 2011, Dauphinee 2013). Notable feminists such as Cynthia Enloe (1989) and Marysia Zalewski (1996) turned attention away from elites and patriarchal structures to attend to everybody and the everyday of international relations. Further, work in everyday experiences of security has made inroads into understanding the politics of resistance and the importance of identity (Hansen and Niessenbaum 2014, Parker 2012). Similarly work on vernacular security has incorporated an experiential security and seeks to learn from the everyday (Bubandt 2005, Vaughn-Williams and Croft 2017). I suggest here that the theory of ontological security can offer insight into the role of emotion in everyday international relations as it attends to the discursive production and, I argue, the performative production of identity. Identity might be disrupted at moments of spectacular

or exceptional events that call it to question, but is equally made and remade in everyday life. This research focuses on the latter, analysing the reproduction of the international in the everyday. To explore the security/identity nexus here I focus on migration in the UK. Studies at the intersection of migration and security have explored variously the securitization of migration (Huysmans 2006), the implications of security for migration (Bigo 2002, Bigo et al 2013, Guild 2009), and migrants as the subject of security (Johnson 2014, Innes 2015). In this study, I ask how security is at stake in the everyday politics of migration. I employ ontological security theory to understand how identity is concomitant to security, foregrounding how security is made in fluid and relational identities that are performed in social contexts.

I use the vehicle of British soaps to access the everyday, arguing that soaps are an important genre for the study of politics manifest in everyday life. British soaps have been overtly political in design, they breach the divide between the private and public spheres, and they represent, reproduce and give rise to public debate on topical social and political themes. Four British soaps have run storylines, of varying length, that involved migration: *Coronation Street*, *Eastenders*, *Emmerdale* and *Hollyoaks*. These storylines have coincided, for the most part, with migration dominating headlines and politics in Britain. In this paper I analyse *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale*, which both feature forms of undocumented migration, and the coverage the immigration storylines generated in the media to offer a layered and intersectional view of emotional reactions to international migration at both the level of an abstracted individual and the level of the nation-as-viewer. I argue that the analysis of soaps permits theorisation of an ontological security that can account for fluid identities and fluid and hybrid subjectivities and reveals the importance of emotional encounters and affective ties for security.

### **Ontological security, subjectivity and fluid identities**

Ontological security, initially conceptualised by psychologist RD Laing and most extensively developed by sociologist Anthony Giddens, refers to an internally held feeling of security that is produced by belonging, a sense of stable identity and continuity in one's place in the world (Giddens

1990). The ontologically secure actor can rely on stable expectations based on a body of shared, social, mutual knowledge of the world (Giddens 1984). The ontological security literature in IR has largely been interested in the importance of identity and memory for the production of security, focusing on the way identity and memory are produced and reproduced at the state level, for nation or society. Ontological security theory always engages affect as a component, although this isn't always the central focus of the theory. For Brent Steele (2005, 2008) the fragility of the state's autobiographical narrative guides foreign policy decisions in a way that reproduces this narrative or, at times, rewrites the narrative to cope with trauma or rupture to the narrative and therefore to state identity. Understanding the importance of identity as part of state security can then explain what might otherwise appear to be counterintuitive security decisions. Security and insecurity are made affectively in this way, although affect is not the central focus of Steele's work. Yet, the role of emotional experiences, things like guilt and shame, guide the production and reproduction of identity narratives. While critically oriented, this work reproduces the dominant narrative of the state in international relations and totalizes security production as the state project by embedding state identity into security. This is a critique that has been levied at ontological security theory in IR. For example, Rossdale (2015) focuses on the totalization of political subjectivity as his point of critique of the ontological security literature, yet there is some elusiveness as to who (or what) holds that subjectivity and whether the subject of security, particularly whether it is an individual or collective subject, is important. While state narratives of identity permit some change in content in Steele's work, the state itself remains the subject of security. Kinnvall, on the other hand, seeks to understand the way ontological security works for groups without a state-based identity, examining how minority collectives generate a non-state security through producing an autobiographical identity narrative that creates an ontological security often in opposition to the state. In this context, ontological security again requires a stable identity narrative, to the extent that groups that might experience hybrid identities will '*securitize subjectivity*', which means an intensified search for one stable identity' (Kinnvall 2004: 749, emphasis in original). Kinnvall's work then has the capacity to recognise fluid and intersectional identities, yet, understood in this way ontological security for a collective subject requires a single stable identity.

Stuart Croft (2012) provides the closest engagement with the individual level in terms of what is at stake for IR in the roots of ontological security theory in psychology and sociology. Rather than upscaling for the state-as-actor, Croft asks how the state makes individual experiences of security and how individual experiences of security are implicit in state policies. Identity in this case might manifest differently in different settings (for example, in public such as the workplace versus in private such as the home). Why and how identity changes in this way is at the heart of my argument.

Similarly, Agius (2016) considers the othering power of discourses of ontological security, although she, like Kinnvall, places particular emphasis on the desire for a stable and consistent idea of self. Here, the emphasis on stability overwrites the possibility for hybridity of identity, something which particularly comes into play for intergenerational migration, postcolonial identity politics, and the complexity of religious sects, ethnic groups, racial and gender identities which often overlap and produce hybrid identities that are not stable, nor yearning for stability. I argue instead that different facets of hybrid identities manifest in different situations but can all be concurrently held by a single person whose consistent idea of self does not need a stable narrative. To fully understand how these facets of identity work, they must be understood within the fluid social environments in which identities are formed and performed. Ty Solomon (forthcoming) draws our attention to the importance of attending to environment, examining affect as it is transmitted amongst collectives, corporate actors, and groups in a way that manifests as an environmental phenomenon through performance that disperses and circulates. Where emotions are the display of a specific feeling, affects are states of experience of varying intensity and potential that circulate and shape environments (Massumi 1987). Thus, as the subject's environment changes, so the feeling and the performance of ontological security also changes. Affective ties to place, group, or idea mean different identities take precedence in different contexts. In this way, ontological security does not require a fixed or stable identity.

In disciplines that are situated more comfortably at the individual level such as sociology and psychology, a single stable identity is not necessary for ontological security; for example, Nunn et al (2015) look to hybrid identities amongst refugees who have naturalised in Australia, where the very

duality of identity produces ontological security. This problematizes, to some extent, Kinnvall's (2012) argument (and Rossdale's 2015 critique of that argument) whereby securitization for one group relies on exclusion and therefore creates an ontological security dilemma where security for some produces insecurity for others, who will act to produce security, thus producing exclusions and making insecurity, so the cycle continues. Kinnvall prioritizes ontological security-seeking relationships and these relationships require that groups and the individuals that compose them achieve security by subscribing to linear and singular identities. Rossdale (2015) engages in some compelling critiques of the ontological security literature – advancing that it is totalizing, not just in the state security orientation, but also in the experience of identity in so far as it constitutes the subject in a closed way. Drawing on Butler and Haraway, he argues that the focus on a group identity narrative precludes possibility of hybrid identities and open subjectivities. Rossdale ultimately makes an ethico-political argument that ontological security seeking is often violent or othering, that it is in the absence of ontological security – the discontinuities – that ethical and political obligations emerge and that theories mobilizing ontological security in international relations are implicated in the reproduction of security-based exclusion, precluding resistance.

In contradistinction to Rossdale, I propose that the concept of ontological security can circumvent the problem of totalizing the state or of totalizing identity and subjectivities to provide insight into an experiential security that can engage hybridity, replicating lived experience that is almost never, in a globalised world, a simple linear attachment to a state. Transnational, diasporic and migrant identities often foreground security experiences, particularly when diasporas have been produced following trauma, or when migration has been forced (Budryte 2013, Nunn et al 2015). I argue that focusing on a performative ontological security as opposed to a historical or linear narrative of ontological security offers space to understand identity *becoming* and the role of ontological security in security experiences in the everyday, not just of transnational, diasporic and migrant identities but permitting other forms of complex identity, including such things as race, class, religion, ethnicity, age, gender and so on. To do so, I draw on Kimberle Crenshaw's (1991) concept of intersectionality. For Crenshaw, when identities intersect and are held simultaneously, identity politics

are problematized. In Crenshaw's example, identity as a black woman is neither accounted for in black identity politics (that default to the black male) or in feminist identity politics (that default to the white, middle class female). Thus, identity politics as a project becomes potentially oppressive, further writing the intersectional identity of 'black woman' out of the dominant narrative and effectively silencing the experiences of black women that are made by being both black and female *at once*. In this way, acknowledging intersectional identities gives scope to understand belonging to more than one identity group simultaneously; here I attend to how this belonging manifests in ontological security in everyday life.

Identity is not a simple linear and complete narrative; drawing from Butler, identity can be understood to be made as it is performed and as it enters relational and structural contexts (Butler 2005). All identities are plural and / or hybrid and are made and remade as they rub up against other identities in social and environmental interactions. Thus, to understand an ontological security it is necessary to examine performances of identity as they are both made and constituted in context and in relation to other identities. A fixed identity narrative is a single reading of a given identity that assumes either consistency or development over time, but does not allow for shifts and changes in the everyday. I seek to look at the complexity of interactions and relationships on the micro level to understand how ontological security works for identities not characterised by the state, and with an acknowledgement that identity is constantly being remade as it is performed in social contexts. This focus draws on sociological literature in migration studies. Some identity formations that are largely absent from the IR literature on ontological security have been more thoroughly explored in the sociological literature. For example, Skey (2010) looks to ethnic majorities, with a particular focus on classed identity in the UK. Understanding ontological insecurities that are attached to class identities can offer compelling insight into how ontological security is made and produced for others outside of that particular group. For a national narrative of identity, the composite narratives of identity made in various parts must come together in a logical national narrative if the interest lies at the state level. The main antagonists of the white British working class identity (and, of course, this is not an identity narrative that is true of all white British working class people) are migrants who are 'coming to steal

our jobs, coming to take our benefits, coming to use our NHS' (headlines of this type have been ubiquitous in the conservative tabloid media. A sample includes *The Express* 17 October 2015, 21 July 2015, 9 July 2014, *Daily Mail* 11 June 2011, 2 January 2009, *The Sun* 6 August 2009, 22 April 2009). A counter narrative, largely adopted by grassroots organisations and migrant advocacy organisations does not necessarily focus on migrant identity, but also on British identity, suggesting that Britain has a long history of migration and refugee resettlement. These positions are generally reconciled by demonising 'economic' migrants while romanticising 'refugees' as victims. Both actions then are problematic for the experience of identity for refugee and migrant populations.

The experiences of migrant populations become more complex over generations but remain linked to social relations. One might ask during what generation of 'migrant' does a person become British and have a 'right' to jobs and welfare benefits, yet the answer will always be constituted in social contexts. Do working class British black and minority ethnic communities share British and working class identity with white working class counterparts? Again, the answer will vary by social contexts and lived experiences. Nevertheless, race is a meaningful criterion of identity production as a visible marker of difference that has been historically policed in immigration policy (for example, see Turner 2015). The particular problem racism causes for identity is manifest in racist events; for example, black and Asian British citizens might be told to 'go back to your own country' when they self-identify fully as British, thus there is an evident potential rupture in identity experience.

Experience of racism potentially impacts ontological security and identity, shifting identity and subjectivity for any given individual in any given place at any given time, belying the notion of a stable and singular identity. As Nunn et al clarify, people often hold hybrid or plural identities, the holding of which is equally important for their ontological security: such as Sudanese and Eritrean refugees in Australia who acquire Australian citizenship and equally 'feel' Australian and Sudanese or Eritrean. The idea of 'feeling' identity in a way that produces security thus permits an affective dimension to the understanding of the security-identity nexus.

The multiplicity of identities and interactions that produce ontological security and insecurity can offer nuanced insight into how those security experiences impact political actions and decisions. I argue that ontological security is not a linear narrative but is produced in complex interactions amongst identity groups and amongst individuals, and hybrid experiences of identity. Neta Crawford (2000) argued that emotion is at the heart of all international relations: love, nationalism, hate, othering, fear, insecurity and so on. In the same way, ontological security is always affective (Giddens 1990) and of course offered a means of incorporating emotion into the study of IR as discussed in some detail above. Yet in assuming state ontological security, the dominant narrative of the state, or of elites in power, is emphasized. By incorporating an affective ontological security as experienced in different interactions – amongst groups or individuals in the world – the story necessarily becomes more complex. Moments of heightened emotion are fleeting but also provoke change; perhaps requiring a rewriting or a reaffirmation of an identity narrative, but also perhaps shifting the boundaries and contours of one identity that overlaps or merges into another if we accept that identities are not singular and static. A performative ontological security can circumvent the problem of the state and can account for multiplicity, plurality and process of identity that is not fixed, static or linear and that happens in everyday experiences, rather than in extraordinary experiences. A performative ontological security highlights the affective experience of identity (and in/security) *becoming* or constantly being remade, rather than the historical narrative that maintains it. This affective focus can then explain interactions and the international level in different contexts, such as Solomon emphasizes in his study of the Arab Spring cited above (forthcoming). While the ontological security literature has successfully explained particular state and group actions based on historical narratives, an affective and performative aspect of identity is arguably overlooked in the ontological security literature in IR, with the notable exception of Croft's work on British Muslim securitization (2008), Steele's work (2016) on organizational processes and Solomon's aforementioned research. In what follows I foreground popular culture, in the form of British soaps, as a means of accessing performative and affective identity as it interacts with ontological security.

## Why Soaps?

Interest in soaps is situated in a broader trend in IR to consider the position of popular culture in analysis of international politics (Grayson et al 2009, Neumann and Nexon 2006). While much of the IR work on popular culture focuses on the high politics of war and conflict as played out in popular culture (Power 2005, Dodds 2008, Bousquet 2006), there has been some attention to everyday forms of popular low-brow culture (Dixit 2012, Pusca 2015). In a similar way to the reality TV show that forms part of Pusca's 2015 study, soaps are often dismissed, arguably because in their construction and thematic content they are concerned with domestic spaces rather than political or public spaces: soap narratives are designed to be consumed amid domestic interruption with stories repeated multiple times as news is conveyed from character to character. Efforts to recognise the importance of the everyday, the personal and the private has of course been at the heart of feminist scholarship for decades, notably drawing on Carol Hanisch's 1969 essay that argues that personal problems experienced by women require political solutions, ergo are political problems. In IR more specifically, attending to the domestic, the private, and the experiences of women has formed an important part of feminist scholarship (Enloe 1989, Stern 1996, Sylvester 2011). Soaps attend to everyday life and are also often gendered female due to both their historical associations and storylines that often focus on family and relationships. The characterisation of soaps as female and domestic is generated by their American history: indeed, it is well known that the first American soaps were radio serials broadcast during the day, aimed at housewives, sponsored by and advertising cleaning products and other household goods, thus establishing the female bias associated with the genre. This is of course no reason to dismiss soaps as political phenomena, as the division depends on patriarchal gender hierarchies. Rather, the domestic and the private are component parts of the political. Nevertheless, British soaps have been consciously political from their inception. In fact, the first British soap *Front Line Family* had international, political moral suasion as its primary objective. The serial was produced by the BBC in 1941 but was initially only broadcast on American shortwave radio with the overtly political intention of encouraging US participation in World War II (McNicholas, accessed 2016, Cull 1995). The thematic content was family-based, portraying a middle class British family

suffering the hardships of war using the accessibility of family life to sway political opinions. The soap proved immensely popular and a similar tactic was adopted in the production of *The Archers*, well known for being the longest-running soap. *The Archers* was intended to be educational and informational in addition to entertaining. It was designed, with collaboration from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to give information about efficient farming methods for farmers and smallholders in the era of post-World War II rationing and food shortages (McNicholas accessed 2016, Donavan 1991). It explained rationing policies to avoid a disgruntled population. One might argue, then, that *The Archers* had not just a political interest but also a security interest. For a historically political genre, then, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to (British) soaps in the study of politics.

*Coronation Street*, the longest running television soap, was also designed with politics at the core of its inception, although not necessarily in its overt themes. Directly influenced by Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* it aimed to portray a culturally proximate account of life in the working-class North, something that had been absent from the BBC (Dyer et al 1981). Coronation Street predominantly explored themes of socioeconomic class dynamics and identities and of gender dynamics, famous for its portrayal of strong Northern women, a notable impact of Hoggart's text (Dyer 1981).

Given their political roots, British soaps provide a unique vehicle with which to explore themes of migration, identity, and ontological security. *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale*, the soaps under consideration here, deal with working-class life in a way designed to be recognizable to those who live it. They attempt to be culturally proximate to their viewers, the hallmark of the British genre. Yet, it is not simply a representational reading of soap plotlines that is sought, rather, an understanding that the soap represents but also makes and produces. For example, soaps regularly take storylines and thematic issues directly from the headlines: a variety of characters take a stance on a variety of socio-political issues, often getting into heated arguments such is the melodramatic nature of the genre. In this way, soaps invite the audience to consider the issues, through both exposure to the storyline which might put a particular issue in the context of a well-loved character, and also through

judgement of the characters (Innes and Topinka, 2016). The anxieties of the characters are a reflection of and an outlet for social anxieties. In this way, attending to soaps allows us to access structural threat and affective insecurity at an experiential level. Accessing the experiential in this way follows feminist IR that recognises that emotion infuses social relationships and interactions (Ackerley and True 2008, Marshall 2011). Indeed, part of the feminist project has been to examine how that emotion transcends the gap between the researcher and the research subjects, and how it can be harnessed to better inform academic outputs (Sylvester 2011, Dauphinee 2013, Auchter 2014). Turning to soaps similarly seeks to access an international politics that recognises the role of emotion and the personal via everyday politics.

Reception studies have explored how publics have consumed media in their everyday lives, with some emphasis on soaps or popular television productions (Morley and Brudson 1980, Ang 1985), yet as Radway (2008) establishes, the reception of culture cannot be studied and understood in isolation from broader contexts. Here I do not pursue the sole objective of examining how particular soap storylines have been received, rather I seek to focus on the performative aspects of ontological security and identity as they are produced – both represented and performed – in the soaps. The storylines provide insight into a variety of positions, perspectives, identities and relationships that were presented for viewers to consume and reflect on. The consumption and reflection is also widely reported on in the tabloids, and is widely discussed on social media, in addition to user-generated archiving of the show's history on blogs and wikis such as 'Corriepedia.' As Innes and Topinka argue (2016) a soap is no "hypodermic needle" injecting a particular vision of working-class life into the ideological veins of the British public; it is an everyday site of contestation of characters and culture, plotlines and politics' (Innes and Topinka 2016: 11-12) These contestations, both on and off screen, perform the identity interactions that rub up against one another, making and unmaking, producing and contesting security and identity. Drawing from Butler, identity is performed within relational, cultural, and structural contexts, involving the expectations of others, and the presence of cultural knowledge, norms, and social mores. Soaps, because they form part of that cultural milieu, making it as they represent it, and because they simultaneously produce characters that are intended to

be culturally proximate and perform storylines that are relatable and current are an appropriate site for analysis of performative ontological security. Of course, there are limitations to the scope for analysis. Soaps are contrived environments in which predetermined scripted events take place. Nevertheless, as is illustrated in the next section, soaps provide a starting point from which to examine how identities interact, how subjectivities can be hybrid and fluid, and therefore how ontological security in international relations might incorporate a more complex reading of identity.

### **Analysis of the storylines**

#### *Context in migration politics*

Soaps, as discussed above, often draw their storylines directly from the headlines, and the particular migration storylines selected are no exception. The two storylines were selected for analysis by their substance and by their reach: *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale* integrated migration storylines into a limited time span that involved multiple characters and at times created moral dilemmas for the characters. Identity can be considered central to the plot. Both the storylines can be clearly related to topical issues from the media.

The *Coronation Street* storyline involves Polish workers who join the employees of the Underworld factory. In 2007 Polish immigrant workers were receiving much media coverage, following Poland's accession to the EU and the corresponding right to live and work in other EU countries. This coverage grew over time: Conservative MP Daniel Kawczynski reproached the BBC in 2008 for focusing on white Christian Polish immigrants in order to portray the problems of immigration without running the risk of being accused of racism or religious intolerance. The question of immigrant workers, and particularly Polish workers was in the headlines, with coverage reaching a peak in 2007, the year the storyline aired.<sup>1</sup>

[Figure 1 about here]

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<sup>1</sup> The data was generated by a Nexis search of all UK publications, excluding entertainment magazines to avoid cross contamination with the *Coronation Street* storyline. The search generated appearances of 'Polish worker' or 'immigrant worker'. Data periods were from July of the preceding year to the end of the labelled year (so '2005' comprised all data from 01/07/2004-31/12/2005. The data relating to numbers of Polish immigrants is taken from the national census.

Looking at the media coverage of the storyline and the media coverage more generally situates the storyline in its broader context. Themes of security that arise reflect the concerns of the public – particularly people in low skilled work who felt their jobs to be threatened – and produce, through the storyline, a performance of security and insecurity as they intersect amongst different groups.

The *Emmerdale* storyline is not as explicit as that of *Coronation Street*, which drew its commentary directly from the headlines, but nevertheless certainly involved an issue that had generated media attention. This storyline focused on a single undocumented migrant who stows away in a truck belonging to the local haulage company, then resides and works without immigration status in the village setting of *Emmerdale*. The issue of undocumented journeys and lorry stowaways was one of national concern in 2009-2010, and has since resurged, particularly following the 2015 so-called Calais Crisis in the UK. While carrier sanctions were implemented in the UK as early as 1987, in 2004 an EU directive compelled all air carriers to begin to share passenger data. Air carriers began to verify immigration documents before boarding. This directive coincided with other EU restrictions on visas and travel, measures which correspond to a rise in irregular journeys towards Europe over time, a link that has been made in literature on migrant journeys (Moreno-Lax 2008, Gammeltoft-Hansen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2008, Innes 2016). As undocumented journeys increased so did attention to the nature of undocumented border crossing. Particular attention was focused on Calais: the UNHCR ran a refugee centre in Calais until 2002. The Dublin II Regulation in 2002 coincided with the UNHCR closing the Sangatte centre; nevertheless, irregular camps known variously as ‘The Jungle’ remained. The French authorities periodically bulldozed parts of these camps, which unfailingly were re-established elsewhere. Media attention was devoted to the intention of people in the Jungle to reach the UK in 2009, following the destruction of a major section of the camp, and the announcement that the UNHCR would re-establish operations. One must be undetected and un-fingerprinted elsewhere in Europe in order to make a UK asylum application, thus irregular journeys

are an integral part of the story and media data shows that this was of particular interest at the time during which the *Emmerdale* storyline aired.<sup>2</sup>

[Figure 2 about here]

Again, the media data situates the *Emmerdale* storyline in its broader cultural context. The themes of security focus on how the experiences of Olena, the immigrant, intersect with other characters, and the ways in which her lack of status ultimately makes her vulnerable.

#### *Storyline content: Coronation Street*

The *Coronation Street* storyline ran in 2007 when a group of Polish workers, Wiki, Judy and Kasia, moved from the nightshift to join the locals working on the dayshift at the textile factory on the street. The storyline focused on two local workers, Janice and Joanne, who were disgruntled with the Polish workers coming to ‘steal our jobs.’ The story culminates in Janice calling immigration, and immigration officers arriving to find that the Polish workers all have legal work visas, but Joanne, who participated in complaining about the Polish women, was without status in the UK as she had been a child refugee from Liberia, and her guardian had never filed her paperwork.

This storyline addresses themes of race and citizenship. Economic insecurity is the motivation both for the Polish workers to be in the UK and for the local workers to complain about it. The classed nature of economic insecurity is revealed when Wiki, one of the Polish women, points out that Janice, the chief complainer about the migrants, is a hypocrite because her husband and daughter both work abroad. Janice is in an insecure economic position, in which she fears for her job. Her family members take the same path to economic security as the Polish workers. In this way the working-class identity and the corresponding economic insecurity both transcends national identity and reinforces national identity, illustrating why a reified link between national identity and security can be problematic.

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<sup>2</sup> This data was generated by a Nexis search of all UK publications, again excluding entertainment magazines to avoid cross-contamination. The search terms were a little more specific as the use of ‘illegal immigrant’ alone generated tens of thousands of hits, and was not as closely related to the storyline, hence the inclusion of the term ‘stowaway’. Data periods were in two-year increments, hence 2007-08 includes data from 01/01/2007-31/12/2008.

While the locals who are bullying the Polish workers are denounced as being ‘racist’ the pervasive economic insecurity ends up being the determinant, and this dynamic is equally experienced by locals and migrants alike. Nevertheless, nuances of insecurity tied to race emerge when Joanne is detained by the immigration authorities. When she is called in for questioning her co-workers accuse the immigration officer of racism, showing that blackness, a visible marker of difference, sets apart and makes identity. Yet when she is detained her co-workers decry the unfair treatment, shouting ‘she’s more of a Manc than you are’. In this way, identities rely on context, both the cultural context in which they exist and the momentary context in which they are manifest. Joanne is a local Mancunian, black, working class and female: precisely because these identities all intersect, none of them alone can accurately account for her experiences. Ontological security does not reside in the continuity of a single aspect of Joanne’s identity, but is remade and reasserted as it is threatened and in response to those threats. The identity to which ontological security is attached changes with context.

The importance of context for identity is evident in the in/security tied to citizenship and immigration status that is revealed through the storyline of Joanne, whose bullying of the Polish workers is a consequence of her own insecurity that results from her lack of citizenship status. The more subtle portrayal of this theme is also evident when the immigration authorities arrive at the factory and Wiki is seen sneaking away: not because she doesn’t have status (although that is clearly the idea the script-writers want to convey, only to then disrupt) but because she needs to fetch her documents. The immigration officers arrest Joanne, who has a Manchester accent but not documents. In this way, the experience of being in status but the insecurity tied to having an ‘othered’ or different identity is made evident to viewers.

This storyline invites viewers to consider and comment on immigration storylines that were in the headlines in 2007 regarding the rolling back of restrictions on Polish workers and the corresponding fear that this would negatively impact working class employment for British citizens. However, it did not do this in a totalizing way: the storyline was not told only from the British perspective, in fact the Polish characters were perhaps more likely to elicit sympathy in the face of

Janice's bullying. Nevertheless, the Polish characters Wiki, Kasia and Judy were not portrayed as victims; in fact Wiki retaliated to Janice's insults, at one point delivering her a pointed pint of 'bitter'. The characters also did not hold totalizing views but instead considered the context of the situation as it impacted them. Janice regretted calling immigration when her friend was detained: she did not have a problem with migration per se, only with the perceived threat to her job. Roy Cropper, when invited to comment by his wife Hayley, suggested that immigration needed to be controlled somehow. Sally pointed out that the situation wasn't the fault of the Polish women and therefore they shouldn't have to suffer because of it. An uneasy truce was reached between Janice and Wiki after Joanne's detention, with the women all uniting against the immigration authorities who were the immediate symbol of insecurity in their continuous existence. Joanne's local identity functioned as belonging, but could not provide her with security whereas Wiki's legal status but lack of belonging equally could not fully provide security. The complexity and the fluidity of security as it relates to identity is conveyed and is commented upon by the characters, inviting viewers to consider the themes of identity, belonging and security of immigration status in a local context.

#### *Storyline content: Emmerdale*

*Emmerdale*, like *Coronation Street*, focused on the theme of undocumented workers, although in this case they were represented by a single woman, Olena Petrovich. The storyline aired between 2009 and 2010, again reflecting media preoccupation with undocumented workers and with reports of people entering Britain irregularly in the back of lorries. Olena arrived in the village as a stowaway in the back of one of the local haulage company's trucks a little before Christmas and remained in hiding until the New Year. When she was discovered she explained that she needed to earn money to send to her son in Ukraine. The Dingle family offered Olena a place to stay and Sam Dingle helped her find a job at the local bed and breakfast. Sam fell for Olena, but she was uncomfortable with that. She moved out of the Dingle's home following a fire and when Sam proposed to her she refused because she feared she would be revealed to the authorities and would be removed. Sam decided to obtain a fake passport to facilitate their relationship; however, Zak (Sam's father) disapproved and warned Olena away from Sam. In the meantime, Olena developed feelings for Eli Dingle, Sam's cousin. After

Sam discovered Olena and Eli kissing, in anger he reported Olena to immigration. Immigration authorities then detained Olena for working illegally in the UK.

The portrayal of the undocumented immigrant as a female character is of particular interest, given that the typical immigrant making the border crossing in the back of a lorry is a male worker. Portraying a female immigrant constructs vulnerability, and, coupled with Olena's injury on discovery, primed viewers to be ready to sympathise with the character. Similarly, Olena's role as a mother is meaningful: Olena had both chosen to leave her son, but also missed him. The difficulties of navigating economic insecurity and family life are apparent in this storyline. The portrayal of Olena as a female undocumented migrant bears on the narrative of security that reflects a gender-hierarchical world where the masculine is associated with agency and threat while the feminine is associated with victimhood and vulnerability. Yet it also serves as a tool to rewrite the narrative of undocumented migrant as a threat into the undocumented migrant as a victim.

This storyline focuses much more on romantic relationships than on immigration politics, yet the romantic relationships in question are infused with immigration politics. As D'Aoust argues, the lack of attention to marriage migration in migration studies betrays a tacit assumption that labour migration and male workers are the 'right and proper object and subjects of migration control' (D'Aoust 2013). Nevertheless, marriage migration and cross-national romantic relationships have been of increasing concern to policy makers interested in governing and controlling migration (*Ibid*). The romantic relationships at the heart of this immigration storyline draw on the theme of a potential marriage of convenience and the lived complexity of personal relationships and immigration rules surrounding it.

The storyline produced headlines such as 'Emmerdale divided' as the inhabitants of the fictional village pitted themselves for or against the irregular migrant (*Daily Mail* 21 October 2009). Insecurity is tied in this context both to immigration status and to human relationships. Olena was initially injured with an infected wound, and relied on the support of the Dingle family. Her insecurity in her immigration status made her simultaneously vulnerable to Sam's advances as she owed him

kindness because he helped her, and also reluctant to reciprocate. Thus, the complexity of being without status is not manifested just in belonging but in how it permits a person to relate to others; how one discloses oneself. Olena is a fictional character but she also represents the undocumented migrant stowaway and so discloses this identity to viewers simultaneously. Viewers might not be exposed to ideas of migrants or migrant identities anywhere beyond the media, therefore Olena's portrayal produces an idea of migrant identity as it invites viewers to comment. The interaction of immigration politics with personal experiences and personal relationships is relevant. Olena is bound in her actions by her identity. Her identity as a migrant produces insecurity in a relationship that depends on that identity, with Sam Dingle. Migrant identity and the insecurities it constructs is communicated through the storyline, but is also localised and personalised through the perspective of a long-term local character on the show.

Sam's insecurity is also evident. He helps Olena, but he also preys on her. She is vulnerable to his advances and he is vulnerable in his relationship status: his previous encounters included euthanizing his wife Alice as she suffered from terminal cancer, and then misunderstanding advances from a friend Jo, who did not return his affection. Sam, in his relationship with Olena, repeated his actions with Jo and was again rejected. Personal insecurity for Sam then translated into physical insecurity for Olena when Sam realised she did not return his affection and reported her to immigration authorities. The personal relationship was a fundamental part of the performance of security and insecurity in the storyline, and therefore the personal is produced as part of the debate of immigration politics that is invited by the storyline and that the storyline is simultaneously trying to approximate.

The role of other family members in this encounter is meaningful. The Dingles are happy to help Olena but then when her presence threatens Sam they are quick to warn her away, replicating the suspicion of the harm brought by 'others' to the in-group. Olena obtains employment but for the duration of the storyline her employer believes her to be Polish with the relevant documents. However, perhaps unexpectedly, Olena's status as an undocumented worker is not a central part of the storyline. The insecurity theme is central to her experience of relationships and how she is constrained

in her interactions with Sam and Eli, yet immigration status is neither the sole cause of, nor the sole solution to, insecurity.

### ***Intersectional identities, interacting identities and ontological security***

Human experiences in everyday life, based in local communities, are central to soap storylines. However, soaps both reflect and reproduce the national discourse. This is designed, particularly in ITV soaps like *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale*, to replicate, address and contribute to the way non-elites, the working class, and the ‘ordinary people’ experience the issues that form national debates. Of course, the soaps are arguably also produced by elites who create an understanding of working-class life. Yet, the consumer demand that they are culturally proximate counters this elitism to some degree: it forces the writers to take working-class experiences seriously. Elite discourse on security has been thoroughly covered in the ontological security literature in the form of national biographical narratives that are made in government documents and political debates and addresses, as well as recorded history, and education materials (Steele 2005, Mitzen 2006). The experiential side of ontological security is less accessible and is particularly difficult to construct as different identities intersect and relate and fluid changeable experiences of security and insecurity are made and unmade.

The soap storylines focus on how the immigrants and the locals interact: how they disclose themselves to one another, and hence how they make or challenge security and insecurity. These encounters in the mundane interactions of the characters stress the personal and the everyday as political. For example, in the *Coronation Street* storyline, the initial focus is on economic insecurity. Janice’s constant refrain is that the Polish workers are going to ‘steal our jobs’. This is reflected in media coverage, which uses terms such as ‘cut-price migrant workers’ that are part of the factory owner’s attempt to ‘slash costs’ (Daily Star, March 1, 2007). Janice, as a proxy for low-skilled workers, is concerned that her job will be replaced and her insecurity is manifested in the threat she then poses to the immigrant workers. Here, the relationship between the economic insecurity experienced by the British white working class is articulated as constituting a threat – both to the white working class and to the security experiences of incoming migrants. The storyline challenges a

simple narrative of xenophobia amongst the white working class and embeds the issue in the local economy of the soap. The local identity and belonging of the white working class is constituted against outsiders and others, incorporating national identity into the performance of security. Local, national and class identities are prioritised over racial and ethnic identities in the way Joanne adopts Janice's narrative; yet, the discomfort of this is also brought to the foreground in the way other workers challenge Joanne's participation in the discourse of belonging, suggesting her blackness should make her tolerant of 'others.' Joanne clearly demarcates a distinction between the performance of national identity and the performance of racial identity, using her race to argue that it's impossible that Janice's reaction to the polish workers is racist. As the storyline unfolds, Joanne's performance of national and local identity takes on more significance as it becomes clear that she adopted her position in order to ascertain her own security. When that security is threatened by the very position she has adopted when Janice calls the immigration authorities the local identity is prioritised, with the characters emphasizing that Joanne is 'one of us' and 'a Manc.' The insecurity wrought by Joanne's intersecting identities (as local, working class, black, female, undocumented immigrant) is at once revealed and resisted by these intersecting identities.

The Polish women are not presented as vulnerable, complicating dominant depictions of female migrant vulnerability. Wiki retaliates to Janice's bullying, pointing out ('quite reasonably', according to the Evening Standard, April 4, 2007) that Janice is hypocritical because her husband and daughter work abroad, simultaneously opening for debate the double standards produced by economic insecurity. Moreover, it is not unusual for women to be the central focus in *Coronation Street*, a soap known for its strong, Northern women. The portrayal of immigrant workers as equally strong characters both produces a particular rendering of working-class women and rewrites a conventional assumption about migrant workers. First, the migrant women are adopted into the characteristics of working class women, performing a common identity even when in conflict with each other. The workers are equal adversaries, rather than a vulnerable minority subject to the bullying majority. Second, conventionally, immigrant workers are thought of as male, yet here they are women. Female migrants are often thought of as vulnerable, or as victims. The women in this context are not

constituted as victims, as described above. Nevertheless, structural victimisation is built into the storyline as Wiki draws attention to the inferior rate of pay she and the other Polish workers receive, which compels them to work double shifts. The inclusion of the unequal pay dynamic in the storyline received positive recognition from the Equality Society, which praised the soap for bringing the issue to light (News of the World March 11, 2007). Structural insecurity is performed while characters overturn victim associations and assumptions of female vulnerability. The women then become rounder characters and the type of economic insecurity they suffer is shown to be systemic, and to have commonalities with the economic insecurity of the local workers. The insecurity attached to local and migrant identities surges and recedes, depending on how the women relate to each other in given contexts where their identities and vulnerabilities intersect. Thus, security and insecurity are made in a relational way and the identity in which ontological security is based varies and changes according to circumstance.

The construction of local identities outweighs the importance of national identity, despite the national level governing immigration status. The Polish women are of course marked by nationality. However, Joanne is emphasized as being local throughout the storyline in which her lack of British citizenship and her identity as a Liberian undocumented immigrant is revealed. Even Janice is not troubled by Joanne's lack of *citizenship* status as her local identity as a 'Manc' secures her belonging. In this way, identity and the security held therein is not constituted by the law, citizenship or nationality but is constituted by affective ties. Yet insecurity – Joanne's in this case – is constituted by the law and citizenship. Joanne is rendered insecure because she does not possess legal status in the UK. These shifts between local belonging and legal belonging reveal a misalignment of security and insecurity as they are understood as relating specifically to *national* identity. The shift can also be understood as a shift between which performance of identity is the most directly related to ontological security at any given time: something that, as aforementioned, changes in given contexts.

Olena's character in *Emmerdale* is more conventionally 'insecure' and vulnerable than the Polish women in *Coronation Street*. Her motivation for stowing away in the lorry was to earn money to send to her young son who she has left behind in Ukraine. She is economically insecure, and she is

vulnerable without a support network in the UK other than that offered in the village setting of *Emmerdale*. The law is evoked in this storyline as producing vulnerability as Olena is constrained by the law. She does not represent an economic or identity threat to other characters, but she does render them vulnerable to the law. She works without legal authorisation, yet the consequences of this for her employer are not explored.

The national imaginary on the insecurity of *being* an illegal immigrant is more predominant in the *Emmerdale* storyline, which focuses on Olena's experiences as opposed to the 'shock reveal' of Joanne's lack of status in *Coronation Street*. Olena is consciously an undocumented worker, unlike Joanne, who was aware of her status but thought it beyond her control. The media expressed some scepticism at the credibility of the storyline; for example, the *Nottingham Evening Post* commented 'an Emmerdale shed is the first place I'd look for an illegal immigrant' (4 December 2009). Nevertheless, the *Daily Record* offers some sensitivity towards the situation of undocumented migrants, with the somewhat sarcastic analysis 'I wonder if this is part of the new life Olena dreamed of? Being smuggled toast by a couple of children and sleeping on the village idiot's floor? This is the England they don't show you in the British Airways commercials' (*Daily Record*, 8 December 2009). In this way, the performance of the undocumented immigrant through Olena's character allows the media to tap into the national imaginary of the undocumented migrant coming to 'take our jobs' using the *Emmerdale* storyline as illustrative of (if not accurately portraying) a more difficult reality and opening scope for debate.

Immigration law in the context of the *Emmerdale* storyline affects the everyday experiences of a wider range of people than the 'immigrant', most of whom are British citizens. For example, when the Dingles first hide Olena, they must circumvent the law in her behalf, such as when Lisa is forced to 'take desperate measures' to help Olena escape the police in a traffic stop (*Daily Star* 15 February 2010). Sam is vulnerable, both in his affection for Olena and in his attempt to navigate this affection by acquiring for her a false passport. The power dynamics of this relationship are complex, as the *Sunday Mercury* observed following Sam's proposal: 'he hopes she may agree just to get a British passport, but it seems not even the thought of being deported will get her to say yes' (21

March 2010). Sam's character has been historically vulnerable in relationships, yet he wields a form of power in this interaction. Olena's insecure status as an undocumented migrant gives him enough confidence to pursue her affections. Sam's character performs a secure national identity that is produced in relation to Olena's insecurity. Similarly, Eli is made vulnerable by his affection for Olena and Olena's insecure status when she is detained by immigration authorities. The power is retained in the hands of the state and conflicts with experiences of security and vulnerability: Sam quickly regrets his actions as he watches Olena being removed. Ultimately the state as an actor is able to protect itself from 'illegal' immigration, yet both Sam and Eli are left harmed by Olena's lack of status: Sam in a complex way as her vulnerability affected her ability to disclose herself accurately to him, and Eli because he is prevented from being with her. As governance works to 'manage' migration as a means of protecting and remaking the state, it produces insecurity that is made in embarking upon emotional relationships cross-nationally (D'Aoust 2013). Attending to this storyline as performative ontological security underlines state-based identity not as providing security for society, but instead as making insecurity for a complex population that interacts with each other in everyday life.

Positioning individuals as subjects of ontological security must also depend on how those individuals relate to and interact with each other. Therefore, to examine ontological security for given identities, one must take into account how that security is made and unmade as identities interact with each other. While ontological security is attached to identity to represent a more permanent and established form of security, identities are constantly being disclosed and interpreted in different ways. What performance or disclosure of identity is most closely related to ontological security changes with context, circumstance, and relationships. Hence a performative and relational ontological security is necessary to then understand the fluctuations in relationships, actions, identities and ideas in everyday life.

## **Conclusion**

At the experiential level of security, affective environments provide the resources for forming, reforming, and performing identities that in turn sustain a feeling of ontological security. Soaps represent performances of the banal and the everyday, but these performances are replete with social and political commentary. The commentary is culturally proximate in that it reflects social life, but bears a didactic message and contributes to producing social life and social experiences. To focus on security experiences in this dynamic, while situating soaps within their contextual cultural milieu and within their media environment gives an indication of an experiential and affective ontological security at a level that can breach different identity experiences and intersecting identities, accounting not just for the national, but for gender, class, race, immigration status and nationality amongst other potential facets of identity. Soaps offer insight into the various layers of performing identity, amongst characters, viewer, scriptwriters, and the commenters of various media including tabloids and online wikis. These experiences intersect and are made in their confrontation and collaboration with each other in the acts of making, performing, consuming and commenting on the soap.

The theory of ontological security in international relations accounts for affect at a national and subnational level. Here I demonstrate that it can account for affect at an intersectional and experiential level while evading the problem of totalising security production as the domain of the state. A number of identities can be held simultaneously, both producing and resolving insecurity in social interactions as they intersect. Ontological security theory incorporates here the potential for fluid identities that react to environmental, circumstantial and relational phenomena and in doing so produce security. In the *Coronation Street* storyline, the ties between identity and security shift and change according to the social context, residing between the local identity that permitted affective ties and belonging, and the national identity that provided security through the rule of law. In the *Emmerdale* storyline, ontological security was made and disrupted through relational encounters and affective ties: both for the citizens of Emmerdale who encountered Olena and for Olena as the undocumented migrant. Ultimately, the experience of ontological security is tied to identity experiences in everyday mundane encounters. Drawing attention to the way identity relies on

affective ties and to fluid and contextual identities in everyday experiences both complicates and enriches ontological security theory in IR.

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