

## Critical Criminology

# Lone Wolf Terrorism through a gendered lens: Men turning violent or violent men behaving violently? --Manuscript Draft--

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3) In parenthetical citations, please list authors in alphabetical order, rather than in order by date of publication.  
Response: this has been done

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Lone Wolf Terrorism through a gendered lens: Men turning violent or violent men behaving violently?

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## **Abstract**

Lone wolf terrorists who use bombs, firearms, knives, vehicles, biological weapons or other means to kill and injure, sometimes inflicting mass casualties, are of increasing concern to governments, police and security forces in western countries around the globe. This article aims to develop a more multi-dimensional framework for understanding these actors and the attacks they perpetrate by bringing the under examined aspect of gender to the fore. The article adds to the body of literature on lone wolf terrorism by centring gender as a means of analyzing this phenomenon. In particular it looks to the current criminological scholarship on lone wolf terrorism, highlighting the lack of a developed gendered analysis. The article challenges misrepresentations of male violence against women in response to and in representations of lone wolf terrorists. It argues that the proliferation of these misunderstandings in scholarship, policy and practice undermines efforts to understand and effectively combat lone wolf terrorism.

**Key words** lone wolf terrorism, terrorism, lone actor terrorists, lone attackers, violence against women, intimate partner violence.

# Lone Wolf Terrorism through a gendered lens: Men turning violent or violent men behaving violently?

## Introduction

Lone wolf terrorists who use bombs, firearms, knives, vehicles, biological weapons or other means to kill and injure, sometimes inflicting mass casualties, are of increasing concern to governments, police and security forces in western countries around the globe. In the wake of such an attack on Westminster in London that left six dead including the attacker and many more injured on 22 March 2017 a *Guardian* news headline declared “[l]one attackers are the biggest challenge for security services” (MacAskill 2017). After what security services describe as “failed plots” or completed lone wolf terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), Norway, Australia, Germany and France, lone wolf terrorists are widely seen as “the” security threat (Richman and Sharan 2015) with such attacks being described as the “crest of the terrorist wave” (Pantucci et al. 2015: 1). In tracking the increasing lethality of lone wolf terrorist attacks in the US between 1940 and 2016, Hamm and Spaaij (2017) mark 2011 as the beginning of what they term the “age of lone wolf terrorism.” The growth of lone wolf terrorism, or lone actor terrorism as it is sometimes described, as a major security concern has been paralleled by increasing scholarly attention amongst disciplines such as psychology, political science and communications alongside criminology (LaFree et al. 2018: 233-4). The purpose of this article is to apply a critically informed criminological and gendered lens to this interest in lone wolf terrorism both within and outside of the discipline focusing particular attention on the key question are these lone terrorists violent men or men who turned violent?

At the outset it is important to recognize that both the terms “lone” and “terrorism” are contested. In the cases of the latter see inter alia Walklate and Mythen (2015) and McCulloch and Wilson (2016) and in the case of the former see Jenkins (2011) and Schuurman and co-authors (2018) with Pantucci et. al. (2015: 3) suggesting “that there is no consistent definition of lone-actor terrorism.” Thus, following Pitcavage (2015) lone wolf terrorism seems to be malleable concept stretched to meet different purposes for different stakeholders. Despite the contested nature of these terms they both, but arguably lone wolf terrorism in particular, fuel public political and policy imaginations about the

1 threat of terrorism which has real consequences for everyday lives. In a similar vein the use of the  
2 term “terrorism” in relation to intimate partner violence has been equally contested though its  
3 presence is undeniable. Yet the impact of living with the threat of such violence on (women and  
4 children) in their everyday lives can be just as telling (Pain 2012). In both domains it is the impact of  
5 an individual offender which can have such profound consequences. So whilst public terrorism and  
6 private terrorism exist on a number of continua (see Bates 2012 in terrorism and Kelly 1988 on  
7 violence against women) our focus here is on the behaviour of individual men at one end of such  
8 continua. In addition it is not our intention to offer a comprehensive overview of contemporary  
9 terrorism literature, Lone wolf terrorism and/or violence against women. Our interest is both more  
10 straightforward and profound. We are simply concerned to offer some critical, criminologically  
11 informed questions concerning gender into this sense-making equation.  
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31 This article proceeds in five parts. The first part sets out the importance of challenging the  
32 traditional dichotomy between how we understand and respond to violence against women versus  
33 “national” security threats, such as terrorism. The second part provides a brief overview of the  
34 extant criminological and related literature on lone wolf terrorists. The third part critically applies a  
35 gendered lens in order to illuminate the varied ways masculinity and violence against or hostility  
36 towards women, are located in relation to the violence of lone wolf terrorists. The fourth part  
37 presents an Australian case study of a lone wolf terrorist with a documented history of violence  
38 against women. It considers how this history was assessed by authorities and the impact this had on  
39 the approach used by police in responding to the threat he presented.. We conclude by pointing to  
40 the implications of failing to understand violence against women as *real violence* which also has  
41 significance for national security issues.  
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## 58 **Challenging the dichotomy between violence against women and national security**

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1 Intimate partner violence, is the most common type of violence against women (World Health  
2 Organisation, 2010) and is arguably also the most common type of violence dealt with by many  
3 criminal justice systems (Goodmark 2018). Such violence is also unquestioningly largely  
4 perpetrated by men on women. However the threat that such violence poses for the security of  
5 around half of the world's people is largely underplayed in the security industry (Walklate et. al.  
6 2017). At the same time some Western journalists have not been slow to point to the  
7 interconnections to be found in the lives of those identified as lone wolf terrorists and their use of  
8 violence against women (see inter alia, Freeman, 2017; Saltman 2016; Stephenson 2017; Taub  
9 2016). Challenging the dichotomy between violence against women and national security, which  
10 we do here, focuses attention on what it means when the overwhelming majority of terrorist lone  
11 wolves are men and what this might tell us about the violence(s) they engage in. In short, this work  
12 points to the under examined aspects of these lone wolf terrorists as men who frequently have a  
13 known history of violence against or hostility towards women (see also Walklate and Mythen 2016).  
14 Interestingly lone wolf terrorists are considered a type of "blended threat" because here there is no  
15 clear distinction between "home grown terrorism" and the terrorism carried out against western  
16 states by international terrorist organisations, such as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Crone  
17 and Harrow 2011). This "blended" approach blurs the boundaries of what has conventionally  
18 counted as terrorism and what has not and in a similar vein feminist informed work also challenges  
19 the boundaries between what are commonly understood as diverse and distinct forms of violence  
20 (see for example McCulloch and Pickering 2010). Feminist such as Cockburn (2013) and Barberet  
21 (2014) urge criminology to transgress the boundaries of the discipline which has traditionally viewed  
22 violence(s) of war and peace as distinct phenomena (with some notable exceptions; for example  
23 Bonger 1916; McCulloch 2001). This position points to and evidences the continuities and  
24 connections between the everyday, private, intimate, and domestic violence(s) visited on women and  
25 children, war and national security. There are a number of criminologists labouring at this border  
26 (McGarry and Walklate 2015) and employing feminist frameworks to do so (see, for example, Fitz-  
27 Gibbon et al. 2018; McCulloch and True 2015). The conceptual implications of this approach are  
28 further developed below.

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2 Cockburn (2013: 1) puts forward the concept of a “continuum of violence” positing “the notion that  
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4 violence of different types, on different scales and in different periods can usefully be perceived as a  
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6 series, a succession of events that have something in common and may be causally linked.” The  
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8 continuum she sets out exists on multiple planes:  
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13 a continuum of scale of force: so many pounds per square inch when a fist hits a jaw; so many  
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15 more when a bomb hits a military target. A continuum on a social scale: violence in a couple,  
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17 in a street riot, violence between nations. And place: a bedroom, a street, a police cell, a  
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19 continent. Time: during a long peace, pre-war, in armed conflict, in periods we call  
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21 “postconflict.” And then type of weapon: hand, boot, machete, gun, missile. (Cockburn 2013:  
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29 Cockburn (2013: 2) maintains: “One way of alerting ourselves to links . . . is to take a gender lens to  
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31 violence, so as to see the masculine-feminine dimension, gendered causes and effects.” The notion of  
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33 a continuum of violence is embedded in much of the feminist scholarship addressing violence against  
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35 women as well as their oppression and exploitation. Most pertinent to this article is the long-standing  
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37 challenge to the distinction between the often hidden and everyday violence against women and  
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39 children in intimate relationships and more public forms of violence (see further Walklate et al. 2017).  
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41 It has long been acknowledged that the dichotomy between public and private or personal violence  
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43 disadvantages women and children, reinforcing gendered relations of power (Fitz-Gibbon et al. 2018).  
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45 Following this lead here we are particularly interested in (continuing) to challenge the boundary  
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47 between national security threats and those actions which may be seen as crimes but are not  
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49 considered sufficiently serious threats to be elevated to the national security agenda.  
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55 For example, as early as 1878 Power Cobbe wrote of “wife torture in England,” bringing to light the  
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57 common but widely hidden and then unspoken violence against women in intimate relationships and  
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59 the publicly acknowledged anathema of torture. Morgan (1989) wrote of male violence and the  
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1 production of fear amongst women as “everyday terrorism.” Johnson’s (1995, 2008) foundational  
2 work posited a number of types of intimate partner violence with one being “intimate terrorism”  
3 whereby one partner, typically the male, is violent and controlling. More recently Pain (2012) has  
4 written in similar vein of the “everyday terrorism” of domestic abuse connecting it to the type of  
5 global terrorism widely seen as “our main security problem” (Buzan and Weaver 2009: 274). In a  
6 recent collection Fitz-Gibbon and co-authors (2018) make the case for framing intimate partner  
7 violence as a global security issue arguing that the costs of such violence in terms of fatalities, injury,  
8 human rights and the economy, are greater than a host of issues more readily included on national and  
9 global security agendas. Walklate and co-authors (2017), focusing mainly on Australia make a similar  
10 case noting that many more people, overwhelmingly women, are killed and injured in any given year  
11 as a result of intimate partner violence than are killed or injured as a result of terrorism (see also inter  
12 alia Khazan 2017). Thus there is a case to be made that women’s experiences of intimate partner  
13 violence can be a form of terrorism and violence against women and intimate partner violence in  
14 particular is a national and global security threat. Building on this body of work, lone wolf terrorism,  
15 already considered a national security threat in many contexts, might usefully be considered in the  
16 same plane and through a similar lens as violence and hostility towards women associated with  
17 masculinity.

18 The recourse to violence as a mode of expressing masculinity is well documented (see for example,  
19 Connell, 2016; Tomsen, 1997; Winlow and Hall, 2006) and is frequently expressed in violence  
20 towards women (for an overview see Fitz-Gibbon and Walklate 2018 chapter 4). Similarly terrorism,  
21 when seen as part of a continuum of violence(s) as articulated by Cockburn (2013) and others, blurs  
22 the boundaries between public/private, known/unknown perpetrators, collective/individual  
23 motivations, and so on and is mediated by masculinity (Connell, 2016; Danner and Carmody, 2001;  
24 Ging, 2017). Thus the everyday security of women is a vital factor for what is typically considered the  
25 separate realm of state security (Hudson et al. 2012) amply demonstrated by statistics on the gendered  
26 nature of femicide (WHO, 2010), sexual and sexualized violence in armed conflict (Mullins and  
27 Visagaratnam 2015) and the “violence overlap” thesis evidenced in some data relating to military



1 involvement (see inter alia Brown 2015). All of this work and much more makes the case for looking  
2 for continuities in violence.  
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### 6 **Lone Wolf Terrorism: Definitions, Typologies, Trajectories and Turning Points**

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8 The literature on lone wolf terrorism focuses on terminology: what the label means, who it applies to  
9 and the various drivers/pathways leading to it. Some governments, security services and police,  
10 dislike the term lone wolf terrorism on the grounds it glamorizes those who engage in violence (see,  
11 for example, MacAskill 2017). A number of scholars reject the term on similar grounds (Jenkins  
12 2011:21; Schuurman et al. 2018). As a result, the term lone actor terrorism/terrorist/or attackers is  
13 used instead (see, for example, Pantucci et al. 2015; for a discussion about the term lone wolf  
14 terrorism see also, Hamm and Spaaij 2017: 6). Whilst there is definitional inconsistency much of this  
15 debate revolves around the extent to which “lone” wolves need to be separated from more organized  
16 terrorist groups and whether the term should be restricted to single individuals or might appropriately  
17 extend to couples or small groups. The definition of lone wolf commonly rests upon the absence of  
18 direction from organized terrorist groups but not the absence of links to these groups, though the  
19 interpretation of the degree of affiliation needed to the organized terrorist group to exclude someone  
20 from being categorized as a lone wolf terrorist varies. Spaaij’s (2010: 856) definition of lone wolf  
21 terrorism, for example, involves terrorist attacks carried out by persons who (a) operate individually,  
22 (b) do not belong to an organized terrorist group or network, and (c) whose mode of operation are  
23 conceived and directed by the individual without any direct outside command or hierarchy. Hamm  
24 and Spaaij (2017: 5) maintain that lone wolf terrorism is terrorism carried out by “lone individuals”  
25 while other scholars have included groups or couples within the definition. Pantucci (2011) coined the  
26 term “lone wolf pack” to describe a particular sub set of lone wolf terrorists involving more than one  
27 self-radicalized individual.  
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56 In addition to these definitional issues, scholars differ on what types of violence should be understood  
57 as terrorist violence. This is in line with contested definition of terrorism more broadly (see, for  
58 example, Jackson 2011). Terrorist violence, unlike most crimes, is defined by motive, and typically  
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1 includes violence seen to be religiously, ideologically or politically motivated. Some studies of lone  
2 wolf terrorists look only at those motivated by particular religious beliefs, generally Islam (see, for  
3 example, Pantucci 2011), while other studies include a wider range of political, religious or  
4 ideological motivations (see, for example, Hamm and Spaaij 2017). Some include political assassins  
5 as lone wolves (see, for example, Hamm and Spaaij 2017; Simon 2013), while others are unsure they  
6 should be included (Spaaij 2010). None of the studies however include violent acts primarily  
7 motivated by hatred or hostility towards women (Brewster 2018). Based on a range of definitions and  
8 interpretations of what amounts to terrorism, there are a host of scholars attempting to create lone  
9 wolf terrorist typologies by identifying behaviours thought to point to processes of radicalization  
10 leading to lone wolf terrorism (Orlandrew et al. 2015). Much of this scholarship is focused on  
11 identifying “turning points” that lead to the embrace of political violence (see, for example, Hamm  
12 and Spaaij 2017: 32; LaFree et al. 2018). This turning point approach looks for the triggers, events or  
13 experiences leading men to turn to terrorist violence. However, as LaFree and co-authors (2018: 233)  
14 point out “few scholars have drawn on major criminological theories to explain individual-level  
15 participation in extremist political violence.” The scholarship on terrorist lone wolves in criminology  
16 is typically based on case studies. Walklate and Mythen (2016) usefully summarize what they contend  
17 are the main types of criminological approaches used to understand violent religious extremism.  
18 These include strain theory, subcultural, and structural approaches. In addition Hamm and Spaaij  
19 (2017: 32) adopt a life course criminological approach to their study of lone wolf terrorists. Gendered  
20 analyses per se are remarkably absent from this literature.

### 21 **Gender in The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism**

22 While González and co-authors’s (2014) article on female home-grown extremists in the US  
23 considers the different pathways to extremism for women as compared to men little of the existing  
24 literature applies a gendered lens to lone wolf terrorism There are, however, few female perpetrators.  
25 Gruenewald and co-authors (2013: 1) find: “[a]s expected ... suspects were overwhelmingly white  
26 males regardless of subtype” and Gill and co-authors (2014: 434) conclude there is “no uniform  
27 profile of lone actor terrorists” except that they are heavily “male oriented.” This “gender gap” in lone  
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1 wolf terrorism reflects that of violent crime more generally (Phillips 2013). Yet being male is one of  
2 the major factors any criminological theory needs to take into account for explaining crime  
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4 (Braithwaite 1989). Moreover Sageman’s (2008) “just a bunch of guys” thesis succinctly captures  
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6 the way that lone wolf terrorism as *male* violence tends to be taken for granted.  
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11 The *Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism* by Mark Hamm and Ramon Spaaij (2017) represents the first (and to  
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13 date) only book length criminological treatment of lone wolf terrorism. The book is empirically rich  
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15 offering a wide range of very detailed case studies. Indeed they contend “the gendered nature of lone  
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17 wolf terrorism is often noted, but rarely treated in a satisfactory manner” and “that for some of the  
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19 most lethal lone wolf terrorists, *interpersonal conflicts* with women can act as a triggering event for  
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21 their terrorist campaigns” (53; our emphasis). However, this work, whilst recognising the importance  
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23 of gender, goes on to use terminology which simultaneously undermines this commitment. Indeed it  
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25 sometimes sets out violence against women in graphic detail, which is then is often subsumed or  
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27 summed up under euphemisms such as “marital discord” (ibid 74), “conflict with women” (ibid 128),  
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29 and “personal conflict with a woman” (ibid,130). Indeed work in this field more generally in  
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31 embracing the term “trigger” as encapsulating a turning point for this kind of violence implicitly  
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33 repositions male violence against women as something mutual between the perpetrator and victim.  
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35 The work in this field is replete with examples of this kind of embrace. In Hamm and Spaaij’s (2017)  
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37 work the case of Keith Luke is particularly illustrative of this kind of repositioning.  
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45 In 2009 Keith Luke raped and seriously injured one woman who had rebuffed his advances at the gym  
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47 he attended, went on to kill her 22 year old sister, then subsequently shot at a number of people of  
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49 colour he encountered on the street, killing one. His plan was to proceed to the local synagogue and  
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51 kill as many “Jews, blacks and Hispanics as humanly possible” (Hamm and Spaaij 2017: 77-78).  
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55 Luke’s interactions with the young woman at the gym he subsequently killed are described as  
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57 “romantic advances” (Hamm and Spaaij 2017: 77) while the “rejection of Luke’s romantic overtures  
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59 by a woman of color was the immediate trigger event” (Hamm and Spaaij 2017: 167). According to a  
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1 newspaper report, not cited in the book, Luke confessed to police he had been turned down “100,000  
2 (expletive) times” by women, and that he did not want to die a virgin (Staff Reporter 2014). Framed  
3 differently, it is impossible to imagine these rebuffed sexual advances were anything but abusive,  
4 coercive, entitled and intimidating demands that amounted to sexual harassment (see Dekeseredy et  
5 al. forthcoming). The conflation of such violence with the terminology of mutual relationship pushes  
6 the reality of women’s experience of violence and men’s role as perpetrators outside of the frame of  
7 analysis. Feminist scholarship has long critiqued the discursive minimisation in media and legal  
8 contexts of violence against women that occurs in the context of pre-existing relationships (Larcombe  
9 2005; Monckton-Smith, 2010; Morgan and Politoff 2012). Formulations representing such violence as  
10 “mutual” reinforce extant assumptions that these patterns and acts of gendered violence exist on a  
11 different plane than public violence and are, by implication, of less significance. This is endorsed by  
12 the conceptual and policy embrace of this kind of understanding of “turning point” in which  
13 criminology has been complicit. Hamm and Spaaij (2017), in line with much of the scholarship on  
14 lone wolf terrorists, look for the turning points leading men to turn to terrorist violence. Based on  
15 their case studies they suggest violence against women is often a “precursor crime” to lone wolf  
16 terrorism (Hamm and Spaaij 2017: 11) and go on to observe, there “is a noteworthy connection  
17 between lone wolf attacks and abuse of women . . .” (ibid: 122). These statements sit in tension with  
18 the authors’ concern with “identity transformation” and in particular their hunt for what “turns  
19 alienated young men into armed warriors” (Hamm and Spaaij 2017: 32; our emphasis). However our  
20 argument is when a gendered analysis is brought to the fore and the lone terrorists acts of violence  
21 against women are properly understood and represented then the question is: if the lone wolves were  
22 violent before they committed acts of lone wolf terrorism how can their acts of terrorism be said to  
23 demonstrate an *identity transformation*?

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Clearly, the connection Haam and Spaaij (2017) highlight between violence against women and many acts of lone wolf terrorism appears well founded. Evidence of violence against women in the backgrounds of lone wolf terrorists continues to emerge. Cases where lone wolf terrorists have a known history of violence against women, apart from those included in Haam and Spaaij’s study,

1 include Omar Mateen, who attacked a nightclub in Florida in 2016 killing 49 people; Khalid Masood,  
2 who stabbed people near Parliament in London in 2017; and Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, who killed  
3 more than eighty people by deliberately driving a truck into them in Nice in 2016 (Chemaly 2016;  
4 Freeman 2017; Talbot 2016; Taub 2016;). Tamerlan Tsarnaev, who committed the 2013 Boston  
5 Marathon bombing, killing three people and injuring hundreds of others, along with his younger  
6 brother, had been arrested for assaulting his then girlfriend in 2009 (Freeman 2017). Apart from this  
7 there are a number of cases where mass casualty attacks by lone actors were or appear to have been  
8 motivated by hatred or hostility towards women. In Canada's deadliest mass killing in decades, for  
9 example, Alek Minassian allegedly drove a van at pedestrians in Toronto on April 23 2018. He has  
10 been charged with 10 counts of first-degree murder and 13 counts of attempted murder. Eight of the  
11 10 killed in the Toronto attack were women. Revelations about Minassian's online life point to deep  
12 hostility towards women (McCulloch et al. 2018). Moreover Ging (2017) has ably demonstrated the  
13 ways in which the manosphere of the online world is contributing to the formation of hybrid  
14 masculinities underpinning the formation of groups whose being focuses on hostility towards women.  
15 In addition to the cases cited here research from the United States, the site of so many mass shootings  
16 by lone men, also points to the connection between hostility towards and violence against women and  
17 mass casualty attacks. It indicates that more than 50 percent of the mass shootings in that country  
18 between 2009 and 2016 were preceded by the murder of an intimate partner or ex-partner, or a family  
19 member (Everytown for gun safety support fund 2017; Mother Jones, 2018). Moreover the  
20 interconnections between intimate partner violence and offending behaviour more generally is being  
21 increasingly evidenced by criminological research (Iratzoqui and McCutcheon 2018; Sechrist and  
22 Weil, 2017) and informing deterrence strategies illustrating the genuine added value for this kind of  
23 approach.

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56 At this point it is worth returning to Cockburn's (2013) comments about the continuum of violence  
57 and the feminist scholarship challenging the distinction between public and private violence. This is  
58 significant for three main reasons. Firstly this brings violence against women back into the frame as  
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*real* violence. Secondly it suggests that if we really want to understand lone wolf terrorists and violence more generally we need to broaden our focus so we can truly see the continuities as well as ruptures in the behaviour of *men* who commit violence. Thirdly if violence against women is recognized as real violence in the analysis of the histories of lone wolf terrorists, many of them might be understood as *violent men* who committed violent acts against women, politicians, police officers, people of colour and random members of the public, rather than men who *turned* violent. Lone wolf terrorist Richard Poplawski certainly placed his hostility towards women and others on the same plane as the following quote makes clear. The statement was made on pirate radio approximately two years before he killed three Pittsburgh police officers and wounded others:

I want to kill my ex-girlfriend, her mother, her pets, my father, people I don't like, and in a random measure a couple of members of the Pittsburgh police (quoted in Hamm and Spaaij 2017: 201).

Thus the way that violence against women is (mis)understood in the context of the study of lone wolf terrorism is not just academic. The scholarship reflects and reinforces ways of seeing and understanding violence inhibiting the ability to fully understand violence against women as violence *and* to fully appreciate the nature of lone wolf terrorists and lone wolf terrorism. We now turn to an Australian case study exemplifying this contention.

### **The Sydney Lindt Café Siege - "Terror Hits Home"**

In 2014 the Lindt Café in Sydney, New South Wales (NSW), became the location of a siege. The details about the siege and the hostage taker, set out below, are taken from a book by a senior journalist (Snow 2018); a two-part report by Australia's national television broadcaster's premier investigative reporting program - *Four Corners* (Australian Broadcast Corporation 2017); the findings and recommendations of a Coronial Inquest into the three deaths resulting from the siege (State

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Coroner NSW 2017); a joint Commonwealth/NSW Review of the siege (2015) and; a NSW Supreme Court sentencing judgment (*R v Droudis* (No. 16) [2017] NSWSC 20).

On the morning of December 15 2014 Man Monis, a 50-year-old Iranian born refugee and Australian citizen, armed with a shotgun took 18 staff and customers hostage at a Café in the heart of Sydney’s central business district. Monis claimed that his actions were inspired by ISIS and made a number of demands of police negotiators including delivery of an ISIS flag and that arrangements be made for him to debate (then) Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott live on national radio. Apart from the shotgun Monis claimed (falsely) that he had a bomb in his back pack and that he was in contact with other men around the state who likewise had bombs and were ready to detonate them unless his demands were met. During the course of the siege most of the hostages escaped on their own initiative. 17 hours after the siege began police raided the café shortly after Monis executed 34 year-old Tori Johnson the café manager. A second hostage, 38 year-old mother of three and barrister, Katrina Dawson, was fatally wounded by police fire when they entered the café. Monis was also killed and three other hostages were seriously wounded by police fire.

In the aftermath of the siege police were criticized for not entering the café prior to the killing of Tori Johnson. During the siege several of the escaped hostages urged the police to rescue the remaining hostages believing that Monis would carry out his threats to kill. The police adherence to a “contain and negotiate” strategy was criticized by the families of the two deceased hostages and some of the surviving hostages in the subsequent coronial inquest and in the *Four Corners* investigation. Snow (2018: 256) in her book *The Siege* states that:

It became clearer as the inquest went on that senior commanders had radically underestimated the threat Monis represented. They were lulled into thinking that the gunman was incapable of committing violence at his own hand. It was a deeply flawed understanding based on misreading the cues coming out of the café and his past.

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Monis, in common with many lone wolf terrorists, had a long and documented history of violence against women. At the time of the siege he was on bail for 40 sexual offences committed against seven different women *and* being an accessory (before and after the fact) to the murder of his 30 year-old former wife and mother of their two children. Monis committed these sexual offences between 2002-2010 when he was presenting himself as a spiritual healer. In 2013 Amirah Droudis, Monis' new partner, stabbed Monis' former wife 18 times before dousing her body in petrol and setting it alight. In 2016 Droudis was found guilty of the murder of Monis' former wife. The judge who found her guilty concluded the motive for the murder was so that Droudis and Monis could gain custody of the two sons of his former marriage. Monis' former wife had previously been granted custody by the Family Court of Australia. Pointing to a history of violence within his relationship with Droudis, the sentencing judge found "that there was a level of abuse in the relationship between Monis and the Offender, so his psychological persuasion of the Offender was fortified by a level of physical abuse" (*R v Droudis* (No. 16) [2017] NSWSC 20).

Police managing the siege and national security agencies were aware of the sexual assault and murder related criminal charges pending against Monis. For various reasons Monis had come to the attention of Australia's national security agencies prior to the siege. However his history of violence against women was not considered relevant in the assessment of Monis as a national security risk. The joint Commonwealth/NSW review of the siege states:

Monis's acts of *personal violence* were exclusively directed towards women who he knew in one capacity or another, rather than towards the public at large. National security agencies assessed there was nothing to suggest Monis was involved in terrorist related activities (2015: 62 our emphasis).

This thinking that violence against the public and "personal violence" exist on different planes was also apparent amongst those responsible for responding to the siege. The following conversation



1  
2 between the lead police negotiator and the consulting psychiatrist during the siege was accidentally  
3 recorded on a Dictaphone and later played at the inquest:  
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5           Lead negotiator: “he's not a violent man as such, he just likes a bit of power.”  
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8           The psychiatrist acknowledges danger exists but asks: “Does he have the ticker for it?”  
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11           The lead negotiator replies “I don't think he does.”  
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14           “Because he got his missus to kill his other one.”  
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17           “He doesn't do it, he gets someone else to do it.” (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2017)  
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21 The conversation suggests planning and covering up the murder of a former partner is not considered  
22 a violent act, when committed at the hand of another. It also indicates a misunderstanding of the  
23 gendered dynamics of intimate partner violence. Where a man plots to kill his former partner and the  
24 murder is carried out by his new partner one should suspect that the murder likely took place in a  
25 context where the new partner was coerced, controlled and/or abused by that man.  
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33 The (mis)characterization of the 40 sexual assaults also indicates a grave lack of insight into the  
34 nature of gendered crimes and sexual violence in particular. The lead police negotiator giving  
35 evidence to the siege inquest about the sexual assaults said that: “there was no anger or weapons used  
36 it was a passive sexual assault environment,” and that “[t]here's no violence there” (Australian  
37 Broadcasting Corporation 2017). For the assaults to be “passive” it logically follows that the victims  
38 must have participated in or enabled them. The consulting psychiatrist providing advice during the  
39 siege repeatedly referred to the sexual assaults as “acts of seduction.” Similar to Hamm and Spaiijs’  
40 (2017) (mis)characterization of the actions of Keith Lukes’ rebuffed sexual advance as “romantic”,  
41 the evidence in the Sydney siege case demonstrates the psychiatrist failed to understand the  
42 distinction between romance - which implies a respectful, pleasurable and importantly consensual  
43 interaction between both parties - and intimidating or violent criminal behaviour. A number of the  
44 hostages and family members of the deceased hostages indicated they found the consultant  
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2 psychiatrist's testimony equating sexual assault with "seduction" one of the most distressing aspects  
3 of the inquest (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2017).  
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5 In *Siege*, Snow (2018: 256) rationalizes the benign interpretation of Monis' sexual assaults as  
6 essentially non-violent, passive and romantic as follows:  
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11         Neither Brian, the police psychiatrist, nor the negotiators had seen the graphic police fact  
12 sheets from the sexual assault charges laid against Monis, the inquest heard. Those facts  
13 sheets made clear the lack of consent on the part of the victims and how Monis had threatened  
14 and coerced them into silence. Not having seen those briefs meant Brian and the negotiating  
15 team constructed Monis' sexual offences as "acts of seduction" rather than the menacing  
16 crimes they were.  
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25 This rationale represents a significant misunderstanding of sexual assault. Lack of consent defines  
26 sexual assaults. If a person partakes in consensual sex there is by definition no sexual assault. Every  
27 sexual assault involves coercion. Every sexual assault is violent. The Coroner concluded Monis  
28 "coerced them [the victims] to submit to his [sexual] demands without ever using physical force"  
29 (2017: 66). Monis would tell his victims sexual energy was the only way to cure their problems and if  
30 they resisted he would threaten that he would harm them with his magic powers (2017: 65).  
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40 This misunderstanding of Monis' history of violence against women as essentially passive and non-  
41 violent meant the threat he presented to the lives of the hostages was not fully appreciated throughout  
42 the 17 hours of the siege. Additionally, the mischaracterisation of the sexual assaults as "seductions"  
43 perpetuates the history of blaming women for the sexual crimes perpetrated against them (Larcombe  
44 2005). Whether better understanding Monis' propensity for violence would have changed the  
45 outcome of the siege cannot be known. Regardless, the case study demonstrates the relevance of  
46 understanding the nature and dynamics of gendered violence in order to better assess and more  
47 effectively respond to the threat posed by lone wolf terrorists.  
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## Conclusion

Lone wolf terrorism is increasingly viewed as a significant security threat in western countries. The rise in the number of attacks by lone actors inspired by, but not affiliated to organized terrorist groups, has given rise to increased scholarly attention. While much of this scholarship is located in disciplines outside of criminology there is a small but growing body of work within the discipline (see, LaFree et al. 2018). However this scholarship, as in other areas of the discipline, is proceeding as if this kind of violence is separate and separable from other kinds of violence(s). Iratzoqui and McCutcheon (2018: 147) have suggested:

Within criminological research, domestic violence has been treated as a separate entity, because domestic violence is largely seen as a “uniquely female” phenomena, since females are overwhelmingly the victims of this form of violence, especially over time.

The losses to the discipline, let alone public policy and private life in perpetuating these kinds of assumptions are profound and speak strongly to the case for considering further the phenomena of lone wolf terrorism through a gendered lens. In making this case we have endeavoured to highlight the need to understand violence against women as *real* violence and argued that failing to do this distorts our ability to understand lone wolf terrorism and violence against women.

We note the evidence of violence against women in the known biographies of numerous lone wolf terrorists. We contend that the tendency to distinguish the “personal violence” of violence against women and the public violence of terrorism, as if violence against women is qualitatively different, and certainly less significant, than the public violence of terrorism. This represents violence against women as not real violence but also facilitates a “turning points analysis” that allows lone wolf terrorists with significant histories of violence (against women) to be presented as men who turned violent rather than violent men who escalated or continued their violence to include targeted or random members of the public. We include in our analysis a case study of a lone wolf terrorist attack that took place in Sydney Australia in 2014. This case, which resulted in the deaths of two hostages

1 and the attacker himself, illustrates the ways in which the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of  
2 male violence against women undermines the capacity of authorities to fully comprehend the threat  
3 such men present.  
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8 The failure to clearly see the continuities between what is typically understood as private violence  
9 against women and lone wolf terrorism is part of an ongoing failure to take women's security  
10 seriously; a failure that also limits efforts to understand the risks of and respond effectively to lone  
11 wolf terrorism. The consequences of making the connections between the global threats of violence  
12 against women and lone wolf terrorism are numerous. Viewing these two forms of violence as  
13 existing on a continuum reframes violence against women as a form of everyday intimate terrorism,  
14 and lone wolf terror attacks as an escalation of extant tendencies within particular individuals. This  
15 analytical framework provides an enhanced insight into the drivers and capacities of lone wolf  
16 terrorists in addition to a deeper understanding of the experiences of women living with the everyday  
17 terrors of family violence.  
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