Female Terrorism and Militancy
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A *New York Daily News* story on October 5, 2013 declared that "the world's most-wanted woman is raising a houseful of tiny terrorists" (McShane 2013). The reference to the world's most-wanted woman was to Samantha Lewthwaite, commonly called the 'white widow' who has been linked to a number of terrorist attacks, most recently a firefight and hostage situation at a Nairobi mall in September of 2013. The story in the *New York Daily News* focused on Lewthwaite's children, recounting a conversation where her husband "asked them what do you want to be when you are older? Both had many answers but both agreed to one of wanting to be a mujahid (fighter)" [McShane 2013)].

Interest in Lewthwaite's children can be found in a surprising number of the news articles covering her story. ABCNews reported that she "wanted her young children to grow up as terrorists and die like their father" (Ross et al 2013). Several stories speculate about who fathered her younger children, and others discuss the stories she read to her children, her choice of playmates for them, and the similarities between her relationship with her British parents and her relationship with her children. While the stories repeat a number of Lewthwaite's statements about the honor in terrorizing infidels, we did not find a single mainstream news story directly addressing the political motivations for her engagement in what most news outlets and governmental agencies characterize as terrorism. What we did find was that a disproportionate number of the stories on the attacks that she was allegedly involved in focused on Lewthwaite's personal life, and particularly on the fact that she was a widowed woman.

For scholars who have studied female terrorism and militancy for a number of years now, this sensationalistic, narrow, and gendered coverage was no surprise. Instead, it is characteristic of media, scholarly, and policy world reactions to women's participation in violence classified as terrorism. In these reactions, as we have chronicled before (e.g., Sjoberg and Gentry 2007), women's terrorism is treated as not terrorism but *women's terrorism*, and women terrorists are at once characterized as aberrant, personally motivated, and beyond the agency of the *female* perpetrator. This chapter looks briefly at the existence and prevalence of female terrorists before turning to the question of how those women are represented and understood. It discusses the advancement of feminist research on female militants, gender dynamics, and terrorism before concluding with some suggestions for future research.

Women's Involvement in Terrorism
As many of the chapters of this book demonstrate, the definition of terrorism is anything but agreed-upon, and all approaches to the study of terrorism choose certain foci at the expense of others. A significant amount of work, especially in critical terrorism studies, has noted that, whatever the focus, the word 'terrorism' has normative connotations, and is often used to delegitimize people that it labels (Jackson 2005; Hoffman 2006; Richardson 2006; Schmid and Jongman 2006; English 2009; Gentry and Sjoberg 2014). While various elements of the definition of terrorism describe it as the use of violence, force, and/or fear at civilian targets for political ends to get psychological reactions and/or enact coercion (Schmid and Jongman 2006), controversies defining terrorism are related to controversies about the politics of terrorism. As a

result, understandings of what counts as "terrorism" is subjective (see Jackson 2005), context-based (see Hoffman 2006), and tangled up in the politics of those doing the defining (see Jackson et al 2009).

Feminist scholarship has suggested that, in addition, most definitions and characterizations of what counts as 'terrorism' can be considered gendered. It has made the argument that the word 'terrorism' is used to feminize politically violent actors, perpetuating the notion that masculinized states are (by definition) legitimate actors and feminized non-state actors are (by definition) less legitimate. Feminist scholarship (see Peterson and Runyan 2009; Tickner 1992) has argued that gendered power dynamics in these dichotomies reproduce themselves across interactions in the security arena. This is especially visible, as we have discussed, in the 'New Terrorism' literature (Gentry and Sjoberg 2014; citing Hoffman 1999; 2002; Laquer 1996; 2000). That literature associates a new 'generation' of terrorism with conservative, Islamic politics, and that with a vicious circle of abuse of women,[1] and, in so doing, makes a number of racist and sexist assumptions about an imagined, unified Muslim culture that feminist and postcolonalist scholars have characterized as Orientalist (Nayak 2006; Said 1978; Akram 2000; Gentry 2011a; Gentry and Whitworth 2011).

Equally importantly, a number of feminist scholars have demonstrated that most technical definitions of terrorism would include a number of acts of violence that traditional scholars of terrorism would generally place outside of the category, for example, violence perpetrated by states against their own citizens (Hoffman 2006; Richardson 2006). Particular to a feminist argument are "the parallels between domestic violence and terrorism," where those on whom domestic violence is perpetrated "face violence or the threat of violence to inculcate fear and to coerce and intimidate them into compliance" (Sjoberg 2009a, 71). That is why feminist scholars have thought about domestic violence as the *terrorist* enforcement of a *politics* of gender subordination both within individual households and as a wider (though often unspoken) societal norm. They have labeled this sort of enforcement of existing, gender-subordinating social orders 'patriarchal terrorism' (Gentry 2013, citing Dobash and Dobash 2004; Johnson 1995). Lisa Sharlach (2007) made this argument with reference to what she identified as a "state of terror" in Pakistan, where state rape, honor crimes, high rates of sexual and gender-based violence, and gender bias in justice systems perpetrate a system of stigma and fear.[2] For these reasons, Sharlach (2007, 95) has contended that "the understanding of terrorism should be expanded to encompass the types of violence most often experienced by women." Using the definitions of terrorism provided by various women in the Basque regions of Spain and France, Candice Ortbals and Lori Poloni-Staudinger (2014, 336) identify three types of terrorism present there: ethnonationalist terrorism of ETA, state terrorism against ETA and its supporters, and intimate terrorism/gender violence (see, e.g., Pain 2014). These feminist studies suggest that terrorism in intimate spheres is an important dimension of the concept of terrorism.

These two critiques mean that the scope of "involvement in terrorism" is significantly broader than most traditional readings of the idea when conventional concepts and definitions

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[1] See related discussion about the 'Arab Spring' in Sjoberg and Whooley (2014)
[2] A situation that is by no means unique to Pakistan

are examined through gender lenses. Through gender lenses, the idea of 'terrorism,' if it applies at all, applies as much to state actors as to non-state actors, and to all perpetrators of fear and terror for the promotion or enforcement of a political cause, whether that political cause is one for which the label 'terrorist' is commonly used (for example, nationalist secession or religious promotion) or one for which the label 'terrorist' would be considered nonsensical in the status quo (e.g., enforcement of existing national laws or enforcement of existing gender orders).

Gender analysis has also begun to question seriously the idea of 'involvement' in terrorism. Much of the literature on the causes and logic of terrorism treats terrorists as if they are independent decision-makers acting rationally without constraints (see Pape 2005), which contrasts with the radicalization literature that emphasizes social context, psychological issues, and political extremism (McCauley and Moskalenko 2011; Bloom 2011; Taylor and Horgan 2006). Yet these two approaches are not integrated well, leaving scholars and students with a binary between rational automatons and emotionally-driven extremists. This binary translates to our argument that understandings of the level of agency of 'participants' in terrorism are *gendered* – that is, that accounts of men's terrorism are significantly more likely to see them as active, rational participants than accounts of women's emotionally-driven terrorism (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007). Arguing that women who commit extralegal political violence are "captured in storied fantasies which deny women's agency and reify gender stereotypes and subordination," we proposed a framework for analyzing people's decision-making in that violence that took account of *both* the existing of individual choice and the social constraints in which people make decisions (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007, 5, 13; citing Hirschmann 1989; 2004). Work since then has looked at the complex constitution of the subject of terrorism using gender as a category of analysis (see Auchter 2011; Ahall 2011; Brown 2011; Gentry and Sjoberg 2011), which we will discuss in more detail later in this chapter.

For now, our point is that there are at least two very different ways to begin to address the question of the participation of 'women' in 'terrorism.' The first is to take for granted traditional definitions of women and terrorism, and to treat the idea of participation as if it accounts for varied levels of agency unproblematically. The second is to problematize the ideas of women, participation, and terrorism. The remainder of this section takes the first approach as a prelude to our advocacy for the second approach in the rest of the chapter.

Many mainstream accounts of 'terrorism' as traditionally understood either implicitly or explicitly make the assumption that anyone who is a 'terrorist' is also a 'man.' Previous work on women, gender, and terrorism has suggested that this assumption is over-determined by prevalent gender stereotypes, including but not limited to the idea that women are more peaceful than men, that women are wars' innocent victims, and that extralegal violence requires a level of (both physical and decision-making) strength that women just do not have (see Sjoberg and Gentry 2007; 2008). Like these underlying stereotypes, however, the assumption that women do not engage in terrorism as traditionally defined is historically inaccurate.

While women constitute a minority of terrorists, however the word is defined, they are a significant and growing minority. Women have engaged in self-martyrdom or suicide terrorism in most conflicts in which that has been used as a tactic – including but not limited to the conflicts in Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Kenya. Women have committed acts easily classified as terrorist for a very diverse group of organizations all across the world – from leftist organizations like the Shining Path (Peru), the

FARC (Colombia), and the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Elam (LTTE) to rightist organizations like the Taliban (Afghanistan) and al-Qaeda (globally). When scholars do gender analysis of militant and/or terrorist groups, they find that women play multiple roles in those organizations – from support staff to militant attackers (see Sjoberg and Gentry 2011; MacDonald 1988; Tetrault 1994; Alison 2008; 2011; Ness 2008; Parashar 2009; 2011; Gentry 2011b; McEvoy 2009; MacKenzie 2009; 2012).

Stories of *how* women commit acts of terrorism are as varied as the women who commit those acts and the organizations that they do so within. As we mentioned at the outset of this chapter, recent fascination in the media and among policy-makers about women terrorists has focused on Samantha Lewthwaite, the so-called "white widow" of one of the London 7/7 bombers, a British woman who is by all accounts committed to a version of militant Islamism which involves terrorist attacks on non-Muslims in particular social and political contexts. A convert to Islam in her teenage years, and a self-described fighter, Lewthwaite has declared her commitment to a lifestyle of political violence in her diaries (see discussion, e.g., in Kilpatrick 2013).

Across the world, stories of women's participation in terrorism in Kashmir have both similarities and differences. In Swati Parashar's (2011, 102) account, Asiya Andrabi, a female militant in the Kashmiri independence movement, justified her participation in the movement by the justice of the political cause, arguing that "we have been victimized by India …the women have the same role. We believe in the anti-India movement. We believe that Kashmir should gain independence." At the same time, Andrabi described the organization that she participated in to Parashar (2011, 105) in very gendered terms: "I, through the newspapers, told the women that they should not participate in the militancy. If you participate, our social setup will be destabilized …Allah has given the responsibility of Jihad on men."

In Chechnya, women terrorists are so numerous that the Russian government has a name for them – the 'black widows' (see discussions in Eke 2003; Sjoberg and Gentry 2007) – a name on which British coverage of Samantha Lewthwaite has played to come up with the idea of the 'white widow' (though the Chechen women terrorists are not, to our knowledge, ethnically black). The women terrorists in Chechnya are between 20 and 25 years of age, and characterizations of their organization describe a large degree of involuntariness, including being sold into terrorism, and having their bombs operated by remote control (see, e.g., Bruce 2003; Shematova and Teit 2003; *Argumenty y Fakty* 2003). This coverage is significantly more prevalent than coverage of involuntary involvement in most terrorist organizations (see discussions in Sjoberg and Gentry 2007; Stack-O'Connor 2011), but the lack of first-hand accounts leaves observers to wonder whether a heightened level of involuntary participation exists, or whether existent (or invented) involuntariness is more dramatized in this conflict than in other conflicts.

Samantha Lewthwaite's story that is currently in the news, Aysia Andrabi's almost-unheard story, and the stories of nameless Chechen women fighters are both just a few of literally thousands of accounts (and potential accounts) of women militants, insurgents, rebels, and terrorists – and even these accounts are partial and perspectival – they tell parts of very complicated stories. Often, both in media representations and policy-world reactions, and even in scholarly examinations, these very complicated stories get simplified to fit inherited narratives and assumptions, and/or particular political agendas. That is why a significant amount

of work on female terrorism and militancy has (we argue appropriately) focused on the constitution of the subject of the female terrorist and the representation of her actions in public discourses. The next section discusses the dynamics involved in those processes.

The Constitution of the Subject of the Female Terrorist
Looking at a wide variety of media coverage of women's engagement in acts of terrorism across different times, places, cultures, and conflicts, we found commonalities in the ways that women who committed political violence were portrayed (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007; 2008). The first commonality that we found was that the sex of women who committed acts of terrorism was emphasized in discussions of their behavior significantly more than in discussions of the behavior of men who committed similar acts of political violence. In stories of women terrorists, the perpetrators are often described as women first and as terrorists second.

Another commonality that we found was the deployment of particular narratives about women who commit political violence that simultaneously *focus on* the violent women's *womanhood*, distinguish that (by definition broken) form of femininity from femininity's normalized manifestations, and imply that even women who commit political violence do not actively participate in the decision-making process which results in their violent acts. Our initial research related this to two, related gender stereotypes: the idea that appropriate, or idealized, femininity is by definition passive, peaceful, and in need of help and protection; and the idea that femininity gone astray is somehow irrational, and should be a source of fear. Within these two paired assumptions, we found three narratives, which we called the mother, monster, and whore narratives (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007). The mother narratives blame women's violence on a vengeful rage associated with harm to the woman's family, particularly her husband or sons. In this account, the 'instincts' that usually bring about the tenderness of motherhood, gone awry, bring out the most heinous violence. The descriptions of Samantha Lewthwaite cohere with the mother narrative, as do Andrabi's statements to Parashar. The monster narratives suggest that, since women are by nature more peaceful than men, women who engage in the same sort of terrorist violence as men do must be *by definition* psychologically disturbed. Women described by the monster narratives are described as crazy, irrational, and unpredictable – the worst manifestations of emotional femininity. The 'black widow' label attempts to build upon this assumption of agency-less psychopathology. The whore narratives blame women's violence on their sexuality. Founded in the assumptions that women's sexuality combines heterosexual impulse, chastity, and submissiveness, two versions of whore narratives associate pathologies in female sexuality with women's violence. The first associates excesses in women's violence with excesses in women's sexuality – characterizing violent women as seduced by the "demon lover," the male terrorist (Morgan 1989). In this understanding, the same loss of control that allows women to have unfettered sexual urges inspires violence, and there is no logical end to that desire. The second strand of the whore narratives associates women's violence with their inability or unwillingness to please men – the idea that deviant sexual urges and deviant violent behavior go together, especially when women are 'lesbians' or 'butch' or otherwise looking to emulate masculinities.

We argued that these narratives have two main functions. The first is to construct and reify a gendered personal/political divide in understanding people's motivations for engaging in terrorist acts. These narratives, situated in broader discussions of individual commission of

terrorism, implicitly (see Pape 2005) or explicitly (see Bloom 2011) characterize 'terrorists' as politically motivated and 'women terrorists' as motivated by psychological disturbance, if they have a choice at all. 'Terrorists' are often assumed to be deciding rationally, while 'women terrorists' are more frequently characterized as emotional, out of control, or both. It leads, as Miranda Alison accounts, to the characterization of women terrorists as not only psychologically unstable and easily manipulated, but gender defiant, sexually deviant, and even unnatural (2008).

These characterizations are complicated by chains of gossip and misinformation about women terrorists, many of which are impossible to fully correct. There are untruths and biases in self-reporting of women's violence, some of which deploy the same gender stereotypes that feminists critique (see, for example, the discussion of Pauline Nyiramasuhuko in Sjoberg [2015]). Different tellings of the stories of different women in different conflicts have different personal and political investments in the contextualization and signification of those stories. Those with a vested interest in a particular political order, including a particular gender order, often attribute particular motivations to (women) terrorists as they analyze their stories. For example, Russia has a vested interest in portraying Chechens as ruthless, both externally in their bombings in Moscow or greater Russia, but also internally in how Chechen men treat (control) Chechen women. As feminists we are certainly are not above demonstrating where our own interests lie – we tend to look *for* the political motivations' role in women's decision to engage in political violence, and to look *for* evidence of the deconstruction of the personal/political binary in both men's and women's engagement in terrorism. We look *for* that in part because it is neglected in most traditional work on women's terrorism, but also because we have a political interest in understanding women as agents of violence.

It is in that context that one of the major contributions from the work on the representation of female terrorism and militancy is that all knowledge *about* women's participation in those activities is both *perspectival* (related to the person and context producing the knowledge) and *political* (with a investments in particular means and ends) – like all knowledge about terrorism more broadly. It has urged attention to the "political context of 'terrorist' actors, their interdependence, the role of emotion in triggering and reacting to their behavior" (Gentry and Sjoberg 2014). This interest has led to more sophisticated research on the representation of female terrorism and militancy.

Particularly, after research in the field pointed out that it is important to think about both the politics of representation and the existence of women's agency, subsequent research has suggested that those questions have a greater level of depth to them than initial discussions revealed. The earlier discussions usefully pointed out that both self- and other- representations of women militants are always and everywhere draped with a political purposes, and that portrayals that understood men as agents and women as without agency were both gendered and problematic. They suggested rethinking the ways that we think about terrorism in order to take account of these realizations (see Sjoberg and Gentry 2007).

At the same time, those discussions spent more effort thinking about the relationality of agency than deconstructing what others (see Ahall 2012) have appropriately characterized as a masculinized understanding of measuring what political action is and who counts as political actors. Jessica Auchter (2012, 121) has argued that "agency remains the attribute which marks entrance into the legitimate political community" despite problems with the concept in theory

and in practice. While it is a key contribution of gender analysis about terrorism that women can have *agency* in their political violence, feminists have critiqued notions of agency that characterize people as independent, rational actors with an unlimited number of choices available to them (Butler 1990; Hirschmann 2004). These critiques have focused on the recognition of incomplete independence, constrained choices, relational decision-making, and the social production of political subjects. Feminist critiques of traditional understandings of *how terrorist decisions are made* have led to exploring relationality and social context. Feminist critiques of the *social production of female terrorists as political subjects* have led to interrogating the utility of agent-based frameworks for understanding terrorism. We will discuss both briefly.

Research on women terrorists has paid attention to the social context in which acts of terrorism occur, particularly to race, class, and gender dynamics (see Parashar 2010; Qazi 2011; Gentry 2011a; Gentry and Whitworth 2011). It has done so motivated by the idea that (women) terrorists are not *only* personal actors or *only* political actors, or even actors who can properly be examined without attention to the opportunities, constraints, and experiences that they have as they decide to, and then do, engage in political violence. Using Nancy Hirschmann's (1989) understanding of people as relationally autonomous, we have argued that female terrorists, like male terrorists, and, indeed, like all political actors, do engage in decision-making, but do so inside a matrix of constraints, social expectations, and political pressures which are a part of the constitution of their decision-making process, rather than just an influence on it (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007). This inspires, using gender analysis, an understanding of terrorism (whether women are participating in it or not) as a *gendered* phenomenon that takes place in a *gendered* international arena (Sjoberg 2009a). This work builds on existing gender analysis in International Relations (IR) (see Tickner 1992; Peterson and Runyan 1992; Enloe 1990) to suggest that, like other people in global politics, violent women's lives are structured by gender, and structure gender relations (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007).

It is precisely this realization, though, that has inspired recent research on female terrorism and militancy to reach beyond discussions of representation and agency to try to understand the constitution of the subject of the female terrorist or female militant (see, for example, Auchter 2012; Ahall 2012). This work looks to see "the effect of the operations of discursive power through which subjects are produced" (Ahall 2012, 106). In other words, while it is important to look at what people decide and the contexts in which they decide it, it is equally important to look at the conditions of possibility for seeing them (or failing to see them) as decision-makers in those contexts. Without slipping into a new way to frame women militants as passive and acted upon, it is crucial to understand the discursive frames which make them visible when they are visible, invisible when they are invisible, and always filtered through comparisons of expectations of idealized feminine behavior and their actual behavior. For these reasons, as Katherine Moon (1997, 52) once argued, "without jumping back from two opposite poles of self-agency and victimhood, a middle ground must be found." We suggest that this middle ground might be the basis for future research not only on female terrorism and militancy, but also on its meanings and significations in the larger context of understanding (gendered) political violence in the (gendered) international arena. The next section discusses current research and future directions analyzing women's participation, gender, and terrorism.

Thinking about Women's Participation, Gender, and Terrorism
Work on representation of women's political violence (see Sjoberg and Gentry 2007; 2008; Gentry 2011a; Brown 2011; Auchter 2012; Ahall 2012) has been paired usefully with work that discusses those issues and pairs it with fieldwork trying to understand how women experience participation in conflict, militancy, and terrorism (see McEvoy 2009; Alison 2008; 2011; MacKenzie 2009; 2012; Parashar 2009; 2010; 2012). This work has made a number of important contributions to analyzing female terrorism and militancy. The first major contribution that this work has made is drawing attention to the existence of women who commit political violence. This serves as a corrective to the assumption that women are either less capable of violence than men or inherently more peaceful than men.

The second major contribution that the work has made is to put serious consideration into the type of attention that women's violence in global politics gets, when it gets attention. It has pointed out the sensationalistic, fetishizing reaction to some women's violence, next to the trivializing distancing of some violent women from any choice they might have had in their action. It has demonstrated that women's violence as been read, received, and even *deployed* and *denied* in gendered ways. This leads to the third major contribution that this work has offered – that women's terrorism and militancy take place in a context where gender structures the militant organizations in which they participate, the conflicts in which those organizations engage, the political contexts by which those conflicts are produced, and the international arena in which those conflicts are perpetuated or mediated.

Along these lines, then, the fourth major contribution of the existing research program on female militancy and terrorism is work that helps to rethink the ways we understand people's participation in political violence. As we argued in *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*, seeing that women participate in political violence not only inspires thinking about *why* women commit political violence and how it comes to be possible to see them as violent political subjects, but also more broadly why *people* commit political violence and how it becomes possible to see them as violent political subjects (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007). That is because it reveals the partiality of accounts of *men's* participation in political violence – particularly as they leave out the traits associated with femininity that are so easily invoked in accounts of women's participation in political violence. It is not only important to recognize the elements of masculinity in women's terrorism and militancy, but the aspects of femininity in men's, and therefore the problematic nature of the masculine/feminine dichotomy in understanding individual political violence in global politics.

The masculine/feminine dichotomy, though, is not only present in explanations of why men and women commit acts of political violence – but, as we discussed earlier in this chapter, in understandings of what counts as terrorism and militancy and what does not. We have previously argued that there is a 'you know it when you see it' (Louise Richardson makes this point too linking it to USSC porn ruling) sense to defining terrorism in the policy practice of global politics (Gentry and Sjoberg 2014; see also Richardson 2006, 19). As we suggested above, that sense of knowing terrorism (or of knowing what is not terrorism) leads some things which technically meet available definitions of terrorism to be excluded from common-sense notions. Normally, the things that are excluded are terrorisms that happen to women – the security of men bought at the price of the domestic abuse of women in their households, or the security of states bought at the price of the insecurity of women within them. The omission of women and

gender – from many of the books and journal articles that are understood to be the 'state of the art' in terrorism studies, from policy-making that constitutes terrorism and counterterrorism policy, and from the ranks of terrorists as traditionally understood, has both a *representational effect* (the omission itself) and a substantive effect (which shapes the definition of what counts as terrorism). The fifth major contribution of the existing research program on female terrorism and militants, then, is to critique, interrogate, and reconstruct the deployment of the word 'terrorism' and its meanings in both popular and scholarly discourses. Firmly rooted in Cynthia Enloe's (1990) argument that "the personal is international and the international is personal," this work has suggested that the politics of terrorism reaches both into the bedroom and into the statehouse, rather remaining settled in the limited scope of sub-state actors that engage in political violence.

 It is in the reconstruction of the notions of terrorism, militancy, political violence, and even womanhood that we think research on female terrorism and militancy is best-suited to contribute to terrorism studies generally and critical terrorism studies specifically. It is well-suited to pair increasingly broad and increasingly sophisticated field research on *what women do* and *what men do*; what *happens to women* and what *happens to men* with analysis of the gender dynamics, gender expectations, gendered subjectivity, and gendered power that constitutes not only their lives but the politics of the representations of those lives. It is well-positioned to understand the gendered nature of the CTS assertion that "in the twenty-first century, terrorism, it seems, is everywhere" (Jackson et al 2011, 1) by providing a broad definition of terrorism that understands it as involving the violent enforcement of gender norms, whether it is the terrorism of domestic violence or the terrorism of martyrdom or the eco-terrorism of property destruction. It is nuanced enough to back up the CTS claim that it is problematic to make "claims to objectivity which ignore the subjective baggage which shapes our understanding" (Jackson et al 2011, 112) and to enrich that claim by understanding gender politics as part of the way that the use and deployment of the word "terrorism," as well as acts that are often classified as "terrorist" are not only "inherently political" (Jackson et al 2011, 112) but inherently gendered (Sjoberg 2009a).

 Perhaps more than each of these potential contributions, though, the research program on female militants and terrorists is well-suited engage in a project of rethinking what "terrorism" is, for its self-identified and other-identified perpetrators, and for its victims, not only in terms of the scope of the phenomena, the politics of the deployment of the word, the analysis of the gendered dimensions of it, and the interrogation of what it really means to 'participate' in political violence. Above and beyond those interventions, feminist work in terrorism studies, following feminist work in war theorizing and Security Studies (see Wibben 2011; Cohn 2012; Sjoberg 2013; Sjoberg 2009b; Sylvester 2013; Alexander 2012; Shepherd 2008; Wilcox 2014), can engage with the question of the roles of emotion, feeling, and embodiment in both the commission and constitution of the existence of the idea of terrorism. Those themes have run through existing work on female militants, gender, and terrorism, and could provide a useful springboard both for future research in feminist terrorism studies, and for critical terrorism studies more broadly.

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