CHAPTER 1

Gender, Religion, and Radicalization

FROM TERRORISM TO EXTREMISM: RADICALIZATION

In 2001 the United States declared “a war on terror,” and other countries followed suit, accepting the binary logic of “you’re either with us, or against us.” The consequence has been an increasingly kinetic militarized counterterrorism effort that frequently blurs with counterinsurgency operations both intellectually and operationally. At the same time, as exceptional coalitions of the willing set out to combat perceived terrorist threats, people’s everyday lives have become the target of counterterrorism measures around the globe in ways not countenanced under previous waves of terrorism (Rapoport 2001). Politicians, news pundits, and academics claim that the world faces a “new terrorism” that demands new legislation and powers to counter it. The new terrorism, we are told, is different from old forms because the scale, scope, and motivations exceed those of previous incarnations of terrorist ideologies (Field 2009). The scale of new terrorism is said to be a global, deterritorialized, networked, and even cyber-based endeavor that knows no geographical constraint. Reflecting claims of some jihadist groups of a globalized conflict where the “far enemy” should be the main target, state understanding of terrorism sees “new terrorism anywhere” as “terrorism everywhere” (Rasmussen 2002). As the US report on the September 11, 2001 attacks, claimed, the threats to international security are “defined more by the fault lines within societies than by the territorial boundaries between them” (National Commission, 2004, p. 341). Perhaps because of this global geography, even when compared with “lone actor terrorism,” or mass shootings by mostly white men in the US (“InCels”), the new terrorism remains cast as particularly threatening.
The violence of new terrorist groups facilitated this understanding: mass casualty and spectacular events are their modus operandi. Attacks on New York, Bali, London, Paris, Madrid, and Mumbai, without warning or regard for the attackers’ lives, indicate a new set of tactics that challenge previous methods of control. Governments’ fears that they cannot contain the new threat are heightened by their inability to fully understand the motives and purpose of the new groups. The perception that many attacks are instigated by self-starter or DIY jihadists with little formal connection to organizations, and who have been inspired in basement mosques or online by charismatic speakers, means that old methods of surveillance—spying, informants, and undercover operations—seem inadequate. Adding to the sense of unease, the aims of new terrorist groups are portrayed as irrational, religiously inspired, and apolitical (Jackson 2007a), in contrast to the presumed rationality and politics of Western states. The underlying beliefs of new terrorist groups are considered, in contrast, to be faulty, deviant, and radical. Terrorism is presented as an ideological challenge; negotiations are unimaginable, and terrorists’ actions are assumed to be unpredictable. For example, in July 2015 British prime minister David Cameron introduced a new counter-radicalization policy that argued that the cause of terrorist threats today was not rooted in politics but, “extremist ideology . . . that is a poison, one that it is not grounded in grievances or British politics abroad or at home, but simply those who detest our values” (Cameron 2015). In order to safeguard European or Western values, social cohesion, and peace, states have demonstrated the will to intervene preemptively, extending self-defense to the prevention of possible future acts for those individuals and areas deemed at risk of becoming terrorists. States are increasingly concerned with, “everything that [potentially] happens before the bomb goes off” (Neuman 2008a, p. 4).

The response to this need to preempt and prevent new terrorism is academics’ and think tanks’ appropriation and reinvention of radicalization theory. Drawing on a range of disciplines (although, interestingly, rarely religious studies), radicalization theory has taken hold to explain the new terrorism. At its simplest, radicalization is a process in which a person adopts extremist views and moves toward committing violence (Neuman 2013, 874). It is argued that “cognitive openings” begin an individual along a nonlinear and many-pathed “trajectory” of radicalization (McCauley and Moslalenko 2008). The vast majority of writers attempt to identify a range of possible triggers occurring at all levels of analysis and environments, but ultimately focus on the “at-risk” or already-radical individual. Almost universally accepted is that each journey or pathway toward a radical position is unique. Defining and understanding radicalization becomes a search for
key signatures of deviant behavior, circumstances, mechanisms, pathways, or ideas— with researchers limited to arguing over the items to include in the list, which list ranges from social conditioning, economic poverty, and faulty parenting, to psychological vulnerabilities, cognitive openings, trauma, and the internet (Bartlett and Miller 2010; Wiktorowiz 2005; Dalgaard-Nielsen 2008; Duffy 2009; Brown 2011b; Pattanaik 2011; Bjørgo and Horgan 2008; Christmann 2012; Della Porta 2018; Senzai 2015).

In order to demonstrate how the variables in their lists are linked, writers distinguish between push and pull or supply and demand factors (Silva 2018; Hutson, Long, and Page 2011); others identify a difference between immediate and long-term causes, and precipitant (trigger) factors and general conditions (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010; Volintiru 2010). These categorizations lead to attempts to theorize the relationships between the different clusters of variables that might influence the potential radical. For example, it is common to speak of “ideas, networks, and environment” (e.g., Hafez and Mullins 2015), which has been rebranded by one group of authors as “currencies, communities, and contexts” (Change Institute 2008), while others create a framework around psychological, social, and structural factors—such as “people, places, and processes” as coined by Vertigans (2011) (see also Dawson 2017). Researchers either seek a comprehensive approach (including all likely factors) or tease out a narrowly selective significant list of variables. From each basis, a series of recommendations to state policymakers are then usually made, emphasizing a cluster of factors over others, or stressing areas where the state might have a useful impact.

Nevertheless, because the process remains undetermined, radicalization is often reduced to signifiers of the imagined final stage of radicalization. For some, radicalization is behavioral—the participation in political violence or new terrorism is the evidence of a radical. In contrast, radicalization is also held to be cognitive; the holding of extreme radical beliefs is sufficient to determine that an individual is radical. The signs of radical individuals, regardless of whether the concern is of cognitive or behavioral radicalism, are often conflated with certain types of Muslims: bearded men, veiled women, and converts, for example (see Kepel 2004). This conflation occurs because of an assumed conflict between Muslimness and a Western identity. While those engaging in radicalization research are keen to say they are not targeting Islam, nevertheless, as Lynch (2013) argues, a move from being concerned with a small number of Muslims, to suspecting radical Muslim sects, to suspecting all young Muslims frequently conflates Islam with radicalization and terrorism. For example, not living a “British” lifestyle renders a Muslim (or community) disenfranchised or rebellious and therefore suspect as radical (Hickman et al. 2011; Briggs and Birdwell
Consequently radicalization encompasses a broad concern with a way of life rather than specific behaviors or actions, which has allowed for the securitization of ordinary and unexceptional lives (Amnesty International 2006; Kundnani 2012; Hussain and Bagguley 2012). In other words the, ordinary, and mundane lives of residents and travellers are caught up in, experienced through and justified via a security logic (this is discussed more in Chapter 7).

The basis of antiradicalization advice to the state is an unquestioned expectation that the state must intervene, or strongly justify its non-intervention, in this trajectory of radicalization. This assumption of state agency occurs because radicalization is, with very few exceptions, constructed as an almost inevitable facilitator of terrorism: without radicalization, it is assumed, terrorism cannot occur (Lambert 2008; Lambert and Spalek 2008). This linkage can generate a narrow focus on “the potential of violence” in some analysis of radicalization that restricts the range of pathways and trajectories considered (Schuurman & Taylor 2018; Bartlett, Birdwell, and King 2010). This prediction of violence consequently legitimizes state action and policy intervention in so-called hard counter-terrorism and deradicalization policies. However, the threat is frequently assumed to transcend this narrow understanding, and the US as well as the European Union and the majority of her member states see radicalization as a broader phenomenon of difference and exclusion threatening the basis of democratic social norms and politics. This more encompassing understanding of risk, and the phenomenon of radicalization itself, accordingly legitimizes state intervention in a significantly broader array of life than narrow violence-based definitions would allow (European Commission’s Expert Group on Violent Radicalization 2008 in Coolsaaet 2008). The logical outcome of this expansion is the creation in 2018 of the Commission for Countering Extremism in the United Kingdom. This commission held consultations, requested groups and individuals to submit evidence, and funded short pieces of research, all in order to stimulate discussions about the nature and causes of extremism. In a speech in 2018 the chief commissioner, Sara Khan, talking about the work of the commission, argued that, “while not conflating integration, extremism and terrorism, understanding better the relationship between them is needed. . . . We recognise there exist grey areas of overlap between integration and extremism, and at the other side of the spectrum, the grey area between extremism and terrorism.” She also found that “people know extremism when they see it—and they want it to stop” (Extremist Commission Blog 2018). The slippage between the terms, the assumption of the relationship between the three terms, and
the slippage in harms associated with each results in a breadth of state concern and in attempts at self-policing—in the same piece, it’s the “public understanding” that matters for shaping policy; “we believe extremism is a whole-society problem and therefore requires a whole-society response” (Extremist Commission Blog 2018).

What we have seen therefore in the policy realm since the early 2010s is that the broader efforts to combat radicalization have been reimagined as “preventing violent extremism” (PVE) and “countering violent extremism” (CVE), which are often conflated as “P/CVE,” and then further linked again to the generic ideas of “countering extremism” (CE). The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (The UN CTITF) found at least thirty-four counter-radicalization and antiradicalization state-led measures worldwide, most of which were initiated after 2000; add to these the interventions led and organized by civil society organizations and private companies, and antiradicalization has become a global effort. The UN CTITF found that the significant majority of state-led programs were concerned with al Qaeda–related terrorism, but not exclusively so. They identified eleven different types of programs: engaging and working with civil society, prison programs, education, promoting intercultural dialogue, tackling economic and social inequalities, global programs to counter radicalization, jamming extremist sites and promoting counter-narratives on the internet, legislation reforms, rehabilitation programs, developing and disseminating information, and training and qualifying agencies in counter-radicalization work. These policies and interventions have been characterized as either “hard/narrow” deradicalization or “soft/broad” counter-radicalization, with the former targeting specific individuals at risk of or already holding such ideas, and the latter focusing more broadly on at-risk communities. The broader programs tend to prioritize capacity building of communities—through leadership training, introducing new forums for community-state dialogue, increasing in-mosque regulation, and addressing local grievances and perceived (or actual) inequalities—in order to become resilient or immune to radicalization. In other words, such broad counter-radicalization measures constitute generalized social regulation in attempts to minimize the risk to the state. In contrast, narrow and hard approaches use individual targeting approaches and seek to reeducate or reform individual beliefs (through inducing a cost-benefit analysis on the part of the radical such that deradicalization becomes a rational choice on the part of the individual through material and social rewards), and also tend to seek criminal prosecution and detention or otherwise operate within the criminal justice system.
As a result of the extended remit for antiradicalization efforts worldwide, a range of actors now operate in this discursive space—including organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF (the United Nations Children’s Fund) that would have previously avoided the security arena. All of the interventions, whether PVE- or CVE-led at either end, and both targeted and broad measures, are seeking to achieve the same effect—a reduction in radical or extreme ideas and behaviors associated with violence and terrorism and therefore ungovernable subjects. All state programs, broad and narrow, rely on some form of profiling and social network analysis; all state measures seem to rest on the notion that radicalization is a function of faulty ideas and seek to undermine these ideas (and those authoring them), minimize their acceptability in communities, and promote the state-offered vision of the good life to replace the radical vision in the individual’s psychology. Over the past few years an apparent shift has taken place away from hard approaches relying on coercion and a move toward preventative and more voluntary approaches even among narrowly targeted programs, although paradoxically this move coincides with significantly increased police powers and security measures at the hard end of antiradicalization measures.

GENDER IN TERRORISM AND EXTREMISM

What becomes apparent in the operations and conceptualizations of counter-radicalization, as with radicalization, is that they are highly gendered. Ideas about “the good life” (the presumed outcome of any political action) offered either by radical groups, or by the state in countering them rely on remarkably consistent ideas of masculinity and femininity. Stereotypes about peaceful mothers and responsible fathers factor in countries’ antiradicalization programs, regardless of their cultural framings. Notions of deviance and radicalization also depend on certain ideas about masculine behaviors, especially youth behaviors, and their association with violence. Importantly, recognizing also highlights significant failings in antiradicalization programs. Taking all of these “operational” concerns with gender in mind also shows how antiradicalization programs shore up existing gender structures and global relations. Critiquing antiradicalization through a gender approach quizzes how, where, and by whom highly contested terms (gender, extremism, radicalization, religion, security, terrorism, rights) are constructed and deployed.

Who does what and why are therefore two important interlinked questions in terrorism research. More often than not, the answer is
disaggregated by gender—counting the number of men and women. More specifically, researchers are counting male and female bodies. Here we find gender treated as synonymous with sex—that is, an assumed tidy alignment between distinct biological categories and the behaviors, thoughts, and positions of men and women in society. This simple linkage, while frequently made, fails empirically and normatively. Scientific advancements have shown us that sex is not a binary but rather a sliding scale; the formula of “sex = gender” is therefore exclusionary, resulting in stigmatization, discrimination, and violence, which masks our analysis of motives and opportunities (our agency). Counting bodies alone doesn’t help us address our who does what and why questions. As a result, many researchers use a more complex and nuanced understanding of the “who” part of that question by considering our bodies and our identities. Therefore, for these purposes, the significant term is gender, rather than sex, because I am interested in the how as much as the what.

Gender has three parts: constructed, structural, and performative. The constructed element of gender is summarized by Simone de Beauvoir’s (1949) most cited phrase that, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” De Beauvoir is highlighting that having a biological male or female body (sex) alone is not sufficient condition for being considered a woman or a man in any given society (Haslanger 2017). This is not necessarily adhering to a nature/culture distinction but describes the social significance of bodies (sex) (Zimmerman and West 1987). Gender is therefore situational, and we can think of ourselves as carrying out gender activities that enable us to belong to a particular sex category based on socially accepted norms—in other words, we do gender. There is a risk that our audiences don’t recognize our activities as appropriately “manly” or “womanly,” and we become judged as deviant (Butler 2006). Gender is therefore not essentially or individually defined but shaped through our interactions (or performances) with others. This is the performative element—whereby our performance create a series of effects that consolidate the idea or impression of “being” a man or a woman (Butler 2011). De Beauvoir and other feminists note that the social significance of male and female bodies is one of difference and inequality (Peterson and Runyan 1993; S. Brown 1988). This is the structural component of gender. These three elements are reflected in a lengthy statement from the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (2001) arguing that gender refers to

the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well
as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes [construct]. They are context/time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context [performative]. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities [structural].

UN Women in their definition of gender continue to assert how this learned aspect of gender (becoming) means, in most societies, established differences and inequalities between men and women in control over resources, activities undertaken (and their respective value), and decision-making opportunities. Gender is therefore part of a broader sociocultural context and a power relation, meaning that assumptions about the appropriate behaviors of (sexed) bodies inform most (if not all) social and political processes. Gender is thus a chief “organizing principle” of politics (Kimmel 2003). The UNDP acknowledges this when they stress that, in utilizing a “gender approach,” the focus is not on individual women and men but on the system that determines gender roles and responsibilities, access to and control over resources, and decision-making potentials. The concerns of women and their security and welfare needs have been downplayed in thinking and actions in global politics, and their contributions to society and knowledge creation undervalued. Understanding how power works with and through gender, and how gender is also shaped by this power (this symbiosis is sometimes turned into shorthand as gendered) helps us better grapple with sociopolitical phenomena as well as the differences between the behaviors of men and women.

Gender difference means not only that certain relationships and opportunities are considered socially acceptable or legitimate (or even natural) for men but not women, and vice versa, but also that particular values, concepts, or attitudes become associated with men and women. For example, male leaders are more often described as assertive, whereas women are called bossy; the former term has positive connotations while the latter does not. The implication is that women are not natural leaders, and that a woman leader negatively impacts those whom she leads. Over time, leadership and the positive attributes linked to it then become equated with the male/masculine, such that positive attitudes, behaviors, and relationships of men define leadership in a tautological manner. These are stereotypes, but the effect is that even where women lead, such leadership only becomes possible if the women uphold the values and match
the behaviors and attributes of the men around them (Mavin 2008; Due Billing and Alvesson 2000; Charles and Davies 2000). In other words, a woman leader is upholding "masculine" behaviors, but in doing so she may also threaten the masculinity of the men around her—that is, threatening their sense of the correct ways of "being a man" in this world as "people who lead." We then arrive at the related concepts of masculinity and femininity (and in their plural forms)—terms that express the changeable and complex set of characteristics and behaviors prescribed to a particular sex by society (Peterson and Runyan 1993).

Given these debates, gender is recognized as socially constructed, malleable, and political. Gender is viewed as an activity ("doing gender") whereby we utilize social norms and prescriptions about sex categories based on the situations in which we find ourselves. As the above examples of leadership show, these activities are not always perceived, however, as masculine or feminine behaviors, and there is the risk of being seen as acting in more manly or womanly ways. These assessments of behavior become powerful gender ideologies, or discourses, that shape how societies function. Identifying how certain behaviors and norms are cast as masculine or feminine requires us to pay attention to where and with whom power lies in any given situation. This political element allows us to analyze the ways in which some people are empowered, and others disempowered, in antiradicalization programs and the discourse of antiradicalization. Deliberately adopting a broad approach to understanding gender captures the full extent to which gender is both claimed and ignored in antiradicalization programs.

Despite recent progress in the general field of security studies and the practice of international security, gender in terrorism studies more narrowly is relatively understudied (Del Villar 2019). Although a number of feminist writers discuss women's participation, their findings, analysis, and conclusions are usually ignored by the mainstream. As Davis notes, despite the evidence of women's long participation in terrorism, among counterterrorism analysts and policymakers there is such "incredulity and lack of historical understanding" with each new conflict involving women (2015, p. 79). As I discuss in chapter 3 of this volume, with just one or two exceptions, gender has only been studied in the mainstream of terrorism studies when the focus has been on women's violence within terrorist organizations. Consequently, accounts of women's engagement are also seen only to explain "women's terrorism" rather than inform the field as a whole—gender is seen as a "women's issue." Women's political violence is frequently considered exceptional—perhaps because a smaller percentage of women are members, and a smaller percentage than men
carry out violence in terrorist groups (O'Rourke 2009). Furthermore, a considerable fascination surrounds the female suicide bomber over all other types of women’s political violence. The mainstream study of women in terrorism is perhaps driven by a fascination with the bizarre and exotic, as practitioners in the field of counterinsurgency and counterintelligence view female terrorists as “unnatural” (Third 2010; Corcoran-Nantes 2011). As Sjoberg and Gentry (2007; 2015) explain, for the mainstream of security studies (and society), women’s faulty gender then becomes an explanatory variable—overly sexed (whores), deviantly sexed (monsters), or once-sexed (mothers) women carry out such violence. That is, “The ways in which [political] violence is read, understood, described and even prosecuted obscures the existence of perpetrators and victims who fall outside the sex-stereotypical assumptions” regarding violent political actors (Sjoberg 2016, p. 54). This assumption about women’s agency in terrorism and radicalization is critiqued in more detail in chapter 3, demonstrating that women’s participation is more complex than existing reductionist narratives. Furthermore, as this book reveals, limited understanding of gender in considering women’s violence and radicalization means that antiradicalization programs are woefully underequipped to meet the needs of women members of radical groups seeking exit strategies.

Terrorist movements’ own gender ideologies also shape the actions of individual men and women, and some debate has occurred both within terrorist movements and by analysts about how groups explain the role of women in carrying out violent operations. Recognizing the importance of gender ideologies allows feminist researchers to look beyond claims that women are merely pawns in male violence, or that women’s participation in violence is merely an operational reaction to counterterrorism activities due to increased surveillance or curtailment of the groups’ male members’ activities. For example, a historical view of the Kurdish struggle shows that, for many, their socialist and nationalist agenda places women’s liberation as necessary to their self-determination (Al-Ali and Pratt 2011; Alkan 2018). Ocalan, the ideological representative of The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (or the PKK—in Kurdish: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê), for example, explicitly states, “Without women’s slavery, none of the other types of slavery can exist, let alone develop” (2011, p. 17). This demonstrates that recent attempts by the PKK and Peshmerga forces to assert gender equality in their cause against the so-called Islamic State or Daesh (by constantly highlighting aggression against women by Daesh, and by promoting their female fighters) is not simply a public relations ploy to gain more international support. Nevertheless, Peshmerga women have been fighting for years to get appropriate recognition for their role in paramilitary forces.
Similarly, Irish Catholic and Northern Irish Protestant militant women comment on how their contributions are minimized, as they threaten the restoration of male privilege vis-à-vis the state and other men (Lysaght 2005; Dowler 1998; Fisher-Tahir 2012; Kimmel 2003; Alison 2004; Alison 2008). A failure to acknowledge how women interact and engage with terrorist organizations in radicalization theories hampers understanding and operations of antiradicalization programs because they only address a limited number of participants, and don’t consider how or what motivates men qua men as opposed to as “the radical”.

Gender ideology also shapes the actions of terrorist groups. The Terik-e-Taliban in Pakistan and the Dukhtara-e-Millat (Daughters of Faith) in Kashmir, for example, target women’s beauty shops and pir shrines (places of worship that women frequent more often than men) (Parashar 2011). Keenan (2014) also discusses the ways in which terrorist action occurs in urban spaces and has a gendered effect on security. Terrorist actions reveal their gender ideology, such that they are revealed as endeavors to recast the public sphere and shape the political good life, often to the exclusion of women and to the detriment of their rights (Mustafa, Brown, and Tillotson 2013; Brown 2019a). Terrorist groups carry out sexualized and gendered violence, including the rape of male and female civilians. In the north of Mali, al Qaeda affiliates instigated a campaign of terror through rape, forced marriage, and enforced prostitution (International Criminal Court [ICC] 2018). Sexualized violence and gender based violence is also embedded within and sometimes is used to affirm terrorist ideologies. In the US, the minister of information of the Black Panther Party wrote in his autobiography that he raped white women in order to get revenge on white men (Cleaver 1968, cited in Sixta 2008). Hardy (2001) argues that violent extremist groups may also target female victims for their violent acts because of the emotional impact of female casualties. She cites the example that the American embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, was specifically targeted in 1998 by al Qaeda operatives because the ambassador was a woman. Additionally, lone-actor terrorist attacks often have a gendered element. For example, American Elliot Rodger, who killed six people and injured seven in a shooting (known as the Isla Vista shootings) in May 2014, left a 140-page manifesto and a YouTube video explaining his actions as the “true alpha male,” taking “pleasure in slaughtering all of you,” as a punishment for women not finding him attractive (Rodger, cited in Penny 2014). Rodger, like other InCels seek to alter society through their violence, in the hope, or desperation that the advances of feminism will be undone, leading them to be treated as terrorists by some security actors (Gentry 2020; Merger 2018). These examples show how particular hyper or toxic forms
of masculinity are rewarded by and absorbed by violent extremists and by terrorist organizations. A failure to consider gender in antiradicalization or radicalization theories therefore hinders awareness of the ways in which gender ideology motivates and shapes terrorism.

**GENDER IN ANTIRADICALIZATION RESEARCH**

Since beginning this research project some six years ago, the issue of women in terrorism and counterterrorism has come to the attention of think tanks, such as Wilton Park, and to some extent policymakers and practitioners, including UN Women and the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). Academic research also is starting to address women’s participation and the framing of women, in antiradicalization efforts, particularly women’s involvement in nonkinetic and soft-power efforts such as countering extremism. The research shows that efforts to include a gender perspective in antiradicalization efforts—including by engaging women and women’s organizations—have thus far been ad hoc and siloed; they are often seen as “women-centered,” one-off, discrete activities and commitments that are secondary to, and separate from, mainstream antiradicalization efforts (Huckerby and Ni Aoláin 2018a, 2018b; Giscard d’Estaing 2017; Eggert 2018). The research further shows how the bulk of antiradicalization efforts remain gender-blind, meaning there is little explicit consideration of the role of gendered norms and impacts in these programs for either women or men, rendering such efforts unreflectively focused on men’s security needs and priorities (Möller-Loswick 2017; Idris with Abdelazziz, 2017; Chowdhury-Fink, Zeiger, and Bhulai 2016). Furthermore, because many antiradicalization initiatives are insufficiently grounded in a gender- and human rights–based framework, they can exacerbate adverse gendered dynamics, including gendered inequalities and forms of discrimination.

This broader body of work looking at women in countering radicalization work and countering and preventing violent extremism (P/CVE) is used to support and supplement the primary research used in the forthcoming chapters (particularly the next two). However, much of the prior research conflates counterterrorism or policy discourses with antiradicalization and antiextremism efforts, leading to conclusions about counterterrorism that aren’t necessarily sustained, and that gloss over the different mechanisms, logics, and impacts of these related areas. Additionally, much of the prior research on women’s participation in this field is focused on the antiradicalization efforts directed by the United Nations, the European
Union, and the U.S. Agency for International Development carried out in the global south, often in fragile conflict or postconflict zones, rather than in the global north. This approach is logical given the imperial geographies of the war on terror, but it does mean, in contrast to this book, that domestic interventions and policies in the global north are overlooked or not connected to these global efforts. Finally, although these existing works are useful, often well grounded in empirical research, and go a long way toward filling the gap in knowledge about gender and antiradicalization, they often remain at the level of show and tell—identifying the nature of the antiradicalization and counterterrorism efforts—but don’t necessarily look at the deeper broader question of why. That question is the underpinning intellectual puzzle for this book: Why do we see the modes of gender inclusion that we do? The conceptual framework and answer proposed in this work are rooted in how we understand gender and agency.

**WOMEN’S AGENCY, SECURITY, AND EMPOWERMENT**

The attacks on women’s rights by violent extremists and by radical organizations have been condemned by the United Nations; and as a result, UN agencies have sought to enhance and protect women’s rights and empowerment, both because of existing obligations on member states and as early protection and early prevention mechanisms. This move to enhance women’s rights in antiradicalization efforts is explicitly tied to the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda: an agenda that has promoted and facilitated women’s meaningful participation, consideration, and determination over security policies and actions. The international policy realm—especially as it relates to antiradicalization and P/CVE—is discussed more in the next chapter. For the purposes of this section, it is significant that international and national antiradicalization efforts rely on a narrow framing of agency and empowerment (for women and men) as they are tied to a particular idea of the rights-bearing and empowered individual.

Agency, however, is a complex and much contested concept. Mainstream philosophical thought considers agency as having two core constituent parts: free will and free action (Oshana 2005). Someone’s agency is realized when they carry out activities that are in their rational self-interest—in other words, those activities that further promote their free will and free action. In effect, agency is about realizing autonomy and the ability and capacity to liberate oneself from oppressive contexts. Most accounts of agency are therefore framed as challenging and resisting existing power relations and upholding emancipatory politics: were it not for oppression
we would all seek autonomous selves (Madhok 2013). The emancipatory dimension leads us to assess the outcomes of actions and decisions as either representing an individual’s possession or lack of agency (Auchter 2012). This is problematic, however, because what counts as “liberation” is the emulation of the powers and behaviors of the white, wealthy male (i.e., the rational autonomous man). Women are therefore framed a priori as victims or survivors, because they’re structurally unable to act with as much free will and free action as the rational autonomous man. Rooted in such unacknowledged gender, class, and racial ideals and contexts, this account of agency denies it to those whose actions do not appear to replicate this liberated ideal type—such as women who support female genital cuttings, join radical organizations that limit their rights and movement, become suicide attackers, or voluntarily stay in abusive domestic relationships. The women appear not to be acting in a rational self-interested manner (i.e., agentively) because their activities are not supporting an emancipatory politics. The response is to frame women’s agency in this context as part of “a male patriarchal project,” where women become “pawns and victims in the discourse of nationalist patriarchy.” (Rajasingham- Senanayake, 2000, p. 9) The women were perceived to have faulty agency rather than their actions and choices leading to a rethinking of agency (De Mel 2014). As regards this research, despite behaving “like men,” there is a mainstream refusal to link female participation in terrorism to self-aware and agentive political devotion to a cause, despite the fact that it is a “good enough” explanation in the case of men’s choice of terrorism (Agara 2015, p. 118). This refusal is picked up in chapter 3 of this book, but it occurs because the majority of theories and arguments about terrorism and radicalization are underpinned by these assumptions about agency as something that by the emancipatory outcomes of individuals’ activities can measure (Auchter 2012).

In order to escape the dilemma of only seeing women’s violence as complicit with patriarchy because it doesn’t fit ideal gender types, and to escape the imperial overtones of denying agency of those who don’t seek the autonomous rational standard, feminist philosophers have an alternative account of agency that prioritizes decision-making processes. Nancy Hirschmann (2003) argues that freedom is the “choosing subject” (to make choices; and opportunities and power to participate in the construction of choices) and that agency is determined in the process of decision making. This type of agency is understood as procedural agency; it is content- and outcome-neutral and allows us to recognize the agency of those in oppressive conditions, even where they do not appear to resist them (an example of this approach is Diana Meyers [2000a] discussing female genital
cutting [also known as Female Genital Mutilation—or FGM]). Within this framing is a tendency to see the “choosing subject” as requiring the skills of self-discovery, self-realization, and self-definition (or self-narration) (Lindemann 2014; Meyers 1989; 2000a). Under coercive conditions, impediments to agentive activity still exist, and what Friedman (2003) refers to as these “autonomy competencies” may be diminished. Unlike the framing of agency as outcome-driven, here women’s political violence can be understood, for example, through their own accounts and by following a series of choices and actions in order to understand how they arrived at this particular outcome. Swati Parashar’s writing on women in Sri Lanka and Kashmir brings out these complex choices and narrations (2009). The implication is that agency is the realization of the authentic true self, yet as Saba Mahmood (2005), Madhok (2013), and others note, our subject positions are precarious, and activities of self-shaping or self-fashioning often occur in contradictory, competing, and intersecting discourses or modes of subjectivity.

Agency, especially in oppressive conditions, cannot therefore be founded on the realization of a singular authentic immutable identity. Following Butler (1990), agency doesn’t need to derive from a theory of the self but is seen as an effect of power and discourse through which subjects are produced. Agency is how we recognize others as actors, how we acknowledge and understand people as agents operating within a particular field. We rationalize others’ actions (including speech and silence) via different discourses, within multiple contexts, and relative to other subject positions. However, no single discourse produces the subject woman; the presence of no singular feminine subject (or terrorist subject) means that there is no singular model of agency for how someone becomes known as a woman or a terrorist. Understanding agency is about understanding the discourses and power that produce these subject positions.

As such, I am less concerned with explaining women’s agency as “actions”—although as Chandler (2018) notes, this is the dominant way of thinking about women and terrorism—and more concerned with how their agency as subject positions are produced through the multiple discourses of antiradicalization. I argue that agency in radicalization and antiradicalization discourses is premised on the idea as the self as a project (or a business) who can operate in good order with other projects to balance risks—they are neoliberal conceptions of the self. In neoliberal discourses, people as such are collections of skills and traits that they are continuously responsible for investing in, enhancing, and managing (Martin 2000, p. 582). The self is therefore tasked with responsible self-management and self-governance, and with a will to empower, which also
requires training and directing—that is, policing—toward the ordered and rational balancing of risks in cooperation with others. Failure to responsibly self-govern is a failure to direct the self toward this will to empower, and justifies external intervention and additional policing (Rasmussen 2011; Kienscherf 2016). Within contemporary discourses, radicalization is a problematized (in)capacity for agency and autonomy, because it produces irresponsible and disordered selves. Therefore antiradicalization efforts—whether directed at individuals or communities—are policing attempts at (re)shaping the capacity for responsible self-governance (Kienscherf 2016). Like counterinsurgency, the aim of antiradicalization efforts is not to police irresponsible radicals but to enable them to police themselves. The focus of this book is therefore on the gendered discourses and practices of power that produce radicals and counter-radicals with particular forms of agency.

**RELIGION IN TERRORISM**

Alongside gender, another key factor in this book is a consideration of how antiradicalization discourses and policies interact with discourses of religion. Giving the framing of the War on Terror as a war on Islam and despite various denials from world leaders, the relationship between religion and radicalization is embedded within these debates—even as antiradicalization efforts in the West are beginning to address extremism from far-right, misogynist (“Incel”), and white supremacist groups and ideologues. Scott Atran commented in 2006, “It [religion] has done everything you can imagine, and its contrary.” Religion is seen as both the blessing and the curse of contemporary politics, or to take a more secular analogy, both the disease and the cure. This is sometimes referred to as the “two faces of faith,” and in thinking specifically about terrorism, we find that religion is presented as both the cause of and the solution to political violence. For example, in a United States Institute for Peace (USIP) 2017 briefing paper on engaging religious actors in CVE, they quote a Wilton Park conference, “Efforts to prevent or counter radicalization and extremism therefore need to ‘right-size’ religion as both a contributing factor and part of the solution” (Wilton Park 2016).

**Religion as the Problem**

Numerous attempts have been made to demonstrate a causal relationship between religion and violence, and it appears commonsensical that religion
or at least religious difference leads to conflict (Cavanaugh 2009; Appleby 1999; Huntington 1999). The phrase “Islamic terrorism” attests to this perceived relationship, casting sweeping generalizations about the worlds’ 1.6 billion Muslims, and presuming that violence is inherent in Islam and Muslim societies. We see this in Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu’s un-subtle and orientalist writings advising how the West can defeat terrorism, claiming that the contemporary world of Islam is medieval and that the religion itself invented terrorism in the Middle Ages (see for example: Netanyahu 2001). Bielefeldt (2016), the UN’s Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief from 2010 to 2016, and Juergensmeyer (2003), respond to such language, arguing instead that this is not religious violence but religionized violence or violence in the name of religion, here challenging causality but nevertheless acknowledging the ways in which religion and politics are co-constituted. Empirical research is increasingly nuanced in showing how religion can prolong, exacerbate and encourage violence (see Isaacs 2016 for a review). Nadia Delicata (2009) responds, “Violence within religion, or violence in the name of religion, causes the greatest scandal to human sensibilities. . . . It highlights ever more sharply how in our person, society, cultural existence, we are fundamentally torn apart—within ourselves, from each other, from our infinite hope” (p. 13).

Labeling and Naming “Bad Islam”

The efforts to signal a more complex relationship between religion and violence than direct causality also affects the ways in which terrorist groups are described. Three dominant terms exist for describing in shorthand the relationship between religion and violence: jihadist violence, Islamist violence, religiously inspired violence. The label “Islamist violence” is an attempt to show how the violence is not conflated with Islam (that would be “Islamic violence”) but with the ideology of Islamists, sometimes also discussed as “Islamofascism.” Islamists seek to reformulate politics in the light of religious ideals and precepts, often including the incorporation of sharia, the increased role of religious authorities in state governance, and from some perspectives the reduction in the rights of women and minorities. However, not all Islamists advocate violence as the method to achieve these goals, and not all Islamists view religious involvement in laws and governance as necessarily resulting in anti–human rights and antidemocratic outcomes. In attempts to refine this further, we see the recent inclusion of more refined labels, the idea of “Salafi-Jihadi” or simply “jihadi” as a descriptor of groups with which the state should be concerned. Here
the link is to a particular understanding of jihad as espoused by some violent groups. While jihad has a complex history and multiple meanings, it is within this label understood to be the willingness to use violence (striving) in order to defend and implement God’s divine order. For these groups, jihad is the missing pillar of Islam, and their understanding to fulfilling this duty is best expressed through the phrase “commanding right and forbidding wrong”—the outcome of which is an emulation and reenactment of the early period of Islam when the Prophet’s companions (the Salafs) were alive (Cook 2005; Maher 2016). With this label, the idea of jihad drives the radical’s violence, which is problematic, however, as it accepts the groups’ definition of jihad at the expense of others, and implicitly accepts these groups’ claims to a transhistorical and decontextualized reading of the concept—one that reduces options for questioning and critiquing their use of it.

The third term, “religiously inspired,” offers the loosest of connections between religion and violence. Here violence may be inspired by religious beliefs and religious practices and religious modes of belonging, and religion operates as the register through which violence has meaning. In other words, violence is made meaningful by the actor in terms of Islam, even as other factors intervene.

Religion as the Solution

Having the capacity to be both the cause of our “infinite hope” (borrowing from Martin Luther King Jr.’s sermons) and to separate us from it points to these two faces of religion. Galtung’s (2014) theory of the peace potential of religions is built on this idea. It focuses on the factors that can make religions prone to promoting violence and then extrapolates from these to identify and develop the factors that lend themselves to the potential of religions to maintain or build peace, arguing that the latter can and should be promoted. For Thomas (2005) also, religion can facilitate a dialogue about “virtues” for shaping a better society. Specifically, as Abu-Nimer (2003) explains, Islamic values or virtues are based on the universal dignity of humanity, the equality of all races and ethnic groups, and the sacredness of human life and forgiveness, and are therefore good groundings for peacebuilding and conflict resolution (see also Sachedina [2000] and Kalin [2005]). Others suggest that a good grounding in religious knowledge can reduce the appeal of violent extremism by limiting the opportunities for harmful exploitation by religious or political leaders (Hellyer 2016; Appleby
These approaches are often confessional and viewed as apologia by academia; they are important, however, because they refuse to leave the religious discursive field to Islamophobes or extremists.

This understanding of religion as the antidote to radicalization works because “good religion” shows that religion can be made governable and be knowable in a secular world. “Bad religion” resists this; bad religion, radical religion, and radically inspired religion become evidence of questionable agency and a lack of responsible self-governance. Often the shortcut to identifying good—that is, governable—religion for antiradicalization purposes is a particular reading of gender relations and agency within a religion.¹⁰ For example, emphasis is placed on whether religious practices formally allow women to divorce; have freedom of marriage choices and abortion rights; have access to independent wealth; and have legal protections against violence on their persons (either in terms of anti-FGM or honor killings). “Good Islam” permits women to have these rights and prevents harms; “Bad Islam” does not. In other words, production of the Muslim Woman as self-governing and therefore with agency is a sign of good Islam and is advocated within antiradicalization discourses. However, this understanding of gender relations within a religion is based not on everyday practices or the negotiations inherent in doing gender, but from a presumed position of a fixed official religion—that is, “Islam says . . .”—despite that these are very personal, everyday lived practices. Islam, like rights, in antiradicalization efforts becomes something that happens to Muslim women rather than something they do. Therefore, what we see is how antiradicalization programs engage with, authorize, and govern “big R” Religion. Big R Religion is the official or expert religion, rather than the everyday “little r religion” of Muslims. Shakman-Hurd (2017) makes these distinctions, drawing on Geertz’s differentiation between big Islam and little Islam, and follows the common distinction in feminist writings on international relations to distinguish between the discipline (“ir”) and the practice (“IR”). Moreover, while my focus in this book is less about how religious experts authorize particular subject positions (ways of being Muslim and of being a Muslim Woman) within antiradicalization efforts, it does looks at the religious resources that practitioners, policymakers, and those they target deploy. Such resources are religious ideas (content of belief), religious practices (ritual behavior), social organization (religious community), and religious (or spiritual) experiences (Haar 2004, p. 22). This approach is important as it stops religion being from reduced to belief alone, and includes behaviors and belonging (Brown 2018b; 2020).
INTERSECTIONALITY—RACE, RELIGION, AND GENDER

One of the gaps in this book is a detailed consideration of race and the postimperial heritage of the antiradicalization narratives and interventions. The war on terror is a racial project that sorts and categorizes people as part of a broader policing politics of empire (Naber 2006). In a global racial system, Muslim bodies are not just racialized as a “biological body but also as a cultural and social entity constructed within a number of discursive regimes, including those of terrorism, fundamentalism, patriarchy, sexism and labor migration” (Rana 2011, p. 28). Muslim bodies are racialized not just or only through skin pigmentation, but by ascribing sets of characteristics as inherent to members of a group because of cultural or physical traits, such that those cultural traits become conflated with biology. Antiradicalization policies in Europe tend to rehash assimilationist and integrationist discourse about Europe’s racialized minorities, through pointing to cultural traits as inherent signs of inferiority (Garner and Selod 2015). Thus we find Muslim bodies racialized as “terrorist” in gendered ways (Selod 2019). Race clearly matters, and the antiradicalization lineage in terms of colonial and postcolonial history should be mapped, as it also affects the policies of non-European countries (Howell & Richter-Montpetit 2019).

Others have tried to bring this together by considering the racialization of Islam and treating Islamophobia as a form of racism. This perspective often glosses over the different histories of racialization for Muslims, flattening their identity. Indeed, as Chan-Malik (2011, pp. 8–9) highlights, Muslims as a group represent “dizzying racial, ethnic, class, and generational diversity,” and have an “expansive range of Islamic belief and practice” that makes the term “Muslim” too vague and homogenizing; it ignores multiple subjectivities. In order to overcome this flattening tendency, many observers advocate prioritizing and listening to the voices of the subaltern (in my previous works I have tried to do so), but contrary to many other volumes on antiradicalization, my effort here is to track and highlight the discourses of practitioners and those intervening, as well as those targeted and those labeled as radical. Such an approach makes it hard to deploy the ethnographic pursuit that many Critical Race and critical security scholars advance. In addition, discourses and concepts of race are not distinctly unpacked and critiqued as fully as gender and religion are in this work.

An alternative framework that acknowledges race but doesn’t prioritize it comes through the analytic lens of feminist intersectionality. Carefully trying not to make intersectionality a term deployed only as a more interesting way of saying, “race, class, and gender,” I see intersectionality as an agenda for theorizing inequalities as connected—sometimes reinforcing
and sometimes in contradictory ways (Carastathis 2016). Spivak’s work on the subaltern (1988), Puar’s work on homo-nationalism (2007), Brunner’s work on orientalism (2007), Gentry’s work on empathetic cooperation (2009b), and Penttinen’s work on abjectivity (2006), among others, have shaped my approach on intersectionality and agency. Therefore, this research and analysis prioritizes questions about power and inequality across and through the ways in which our bodies are marked and produced as agentive subjects.

CHAPTER OUTLINES

The chapters are thematic in focus and take five individual countries’ programs and policies to demonstrate the importance of gender in understanding and evaluating counter-radicalization. The next brief chapter introduces the key developments and policies of antiradicalization through the war on terror, and global agencies such as the United Nations and NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), to help situate the policies and programs of the countries in focus. The chapter then gives details about the current situation within each country regarding extremism and radicalization brief outlines of the evolution of antiradicalization efforts. This introduction helps contextualize the arguments that I present in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3 addresses some of the key theories on the radicalization process and looks at women in radicalization, paying particular attention to those theories and writers who discuss groups where women are known to be active members. None of the theories take gender seriously yet, which means they dismiss the lived experiences of radicals—despite their claims to the contrary. A consequence is that theories at worst ignore, or at best diminish, women’s involvement, a trend repeated in policies. Chapter 3 shows how commentators sexualize women’s agency—women are primarily viewed as having been “groomed” or “seduced.” To redress that balance, I consider explanations of individual women who have been involved in terrorism and political violence from the position of intersectional agency. Moving from individual to group analysis, I also show how and when women are violent, or when they support violence within groups; their actions are on the one hand revealed in policy and public discourse as more shocking but on the other as a sign of weakness on the part of terrorist organizations. This denies the internal logics of radical groups that justify and facilitate women’s participation. The chapter focuses on four archetypes of women radicals: the “female suicide terrorist” (FST), the “white widow,”
the “jihadi bride” and the “female foreign terrorist fighter.” Understanding what antiradicalization policymakers and researchers believe themselves to be addressing is important as it enables us to critique and evaluate their outcomes, actions and assumptions.

Despite the lack of consideration of women as violent or as potentially politically violent, counter-radicalization programs nevertheless include women—as collaborators. Chapter 4 focuses on one of the key ideas, a maternal logic, that underpins their presumed participation. This logic derives from beliefs about women’s aims for “world preservation” that situate women as moderate and peaceful in global politics. The consequence is that women are assumed to be a priori antiradical, and any violence carried out by women is dismissed. I then explore how in antiradicalization programs women are located as being naturally peaceful and supportive. I questions this maternal logic by examining what policymakers and women themselves interpret as moderate, and suggest that the thick social bonds that motivate individuals also challenge ideas of the moderate and responsible governing self. This logic of feminine moderation is also compared with how al Qaeda and Daesh discuss the role of women in jihad—“distracting” to men on the battlefield, only permitted to participate as a matter of last resort, and only if they have a higher chance of success than a man. In the second part of chapter 4 I demonstrate that the maternalist logic present in antiradicalization debates only works if, in the same move, young Muslim men are presented as troublesome and violent. Young men are considered at risk by virtue of particular masculinities, which are presumed to be hypersexual, working class, and foreign. We can also see how this plays out in Islamist constructions of manliness or marwa, performing as a marker of normative hegemonic masculinity, embodying the most honored way of being a man.

In chapter 5 I show how maternal logic links the presumed moderate bias and pacifism of women that was identified in the chapter 4 with the emphasis placed on women’s roles as mothers and wives. The focus is on how women’s engagement with the state in antiradicalization programs is filtered through their “mother work.” Ideas of world preservation and mother work presume the home is the site of tranquility (in fact, the name of the Saudi program targeting women who are mothers) and that women are naturally located there. Caring is set up as the counter to radical violent action and dovetails with the moderation narrative. The focus in counter-radicalization on women’s roles as mothers and wives is demonstrated in this chapter. Yet given women’s capacity for political violence, premising antiradicalization programs on the view that wives and mothers (not women) are pro-state and nonextreme is questionable. Additionally,
through these maternalist logics, antiradicalization policies and programs and public debate compound broader tendencies in security politics that women are seen not as agents but as subjects of the debate and policies. Chapter 5 concludes by arguing that debates over women’s appropriate roles in society, in politics, and in the home are the hidden battleground over which both counter-radicalization and radical groups operate. Radical groups present a narrative about the failures of Western society and feminism to protect women, and which has also led to the emasculation of men. Antiradicalization efforts that unreflectively presume that Western society and feminism have benefited Muslim women in Europe equally in comparison to other women fail to fully appreciate the difficulties of young Muslim women negotiating their complex identities under conditions of discrimination, poverty, and Islamophobia. This failure necessarily delegitimizes the programs and discourses, and fools policymakers into focusing solely on religious or foreign policy aspects of radical groups’ propaganda.

However, gender is not just about women. The book moves on to consider the role of fatherhood and paternalism in antiradicalization measures. In chapter 6 I make two arguments: (1) paternalism characterizes the relationship between the state and individuals in antiradicalization programs, and (2) paradoxically the techniques used emasculate and simultaneously demand hyper-masculinity. The consequence is that while individuals may become deradicalized, the policies reinforce inequalities at the group level that some analysts see as a cause of individual and group radicalization. The mechanisms and discourses of antiradicalization establish paternalistic relationships between the individuals operating the program and their beneficiaries (to use the language of the Saudi antiradicalization policies). Building up individual relationships based on an “ethic of care” to generate trust is seen as key to many antiradicalization policies. In the United Kingdom, however, the security quest for information and attempts at building trust to deradicalize are undermined by a lack of accountability and transparency in a number of programs. As a result, there is an ongoing battle between the racialized local Muslim community male power vis-à-vis the state’s white masculine power. A strict but fair disciplinarianism is promoted to accompany the caring paternalism. The heroic physical defense of the state against terrorism is typical of the hegemonic militarized masculinity that feminists note, and as is also demonstrated in this chapter, counterterrorism programs worldwide are increasingly militarized. In conjunction with the militarization of antiradicalization policies, there are numerous accounts of counterterrorism officials engaged in torture and human rights violations—in the name of providing security—that are often sexualized in nature and emasculate particular suspect men. The
policies therefore seek to demonstrate the humanity of the state by acting in a considerate and caring manner, but serve to reinforce its paternal and emasculating undertones. These inconsistencies are important because they reinforce certain groups and forms of male power at the expense of others, and therefore reduce the programs’ success and benefits. More broadly, these elements are significant because antiradicalization programs are assumed to be less kinetic than counterterrorism operations, and many commentators see them as a positive step. However, that these programs replicate military actions and military masculinity and also violate human rights norms must raise questions about whether such programs are positive steps forward or if they are simply iron fists wrapped in velvet gloves.

Chapter 7 has two key elements addressing the failures of antiradicalization programs. The first is that the masculinities supported through antiradicalization discourses are premised on a chivalric defense of the citizens. Such chivalric masculinity, as evident in antiradicalization programs, only operates if we assume that bad men are lurking to attack women, and believe in the existence of helpless, hyperfeminized victims who are not capable of defending themselves. The second is that the more societies accept an increasingly authoritarian and paternalistic state power, the more societies are expected to extend their gratitude for protection and dissent or criticism of that power is marginalized. Symbiotically, there is a proliferation of securitization, where greater areas of ordinary life are reclassified as security concerns, thereby furthering the range of state interest in everyday private lives under the guise of protection. However, these antiradicalization measures are failing to protect women. The broad methods adopted create unsafe spaces through both increased surveillance and the appropriation of other institutions—such as schools, universities, mosques, and health-care providers—for security measures. The negative outcomes of these for men and women are considered in the chapter. Furthermore, as programs frequently incarcerate male heads of household for indefinite periods of time and deny them civil and political rights, women are denied a right to a family life and often experience economic hardship. State attempts to reduce women’s suffering are made in a purely utilitarian manner to reduce the risk of the detainee regressing. Such attempts further place women in the role of wives of detainees, who thus become dependent upon the state—to which they should be grateful and gracious. The consequence of the maternalism and paternalism present in these programs is akin to a protection racket. The measures at worst undermine women’s rights and security, and at best constitute a demand for deference from citizens in exchange for governance and security. This attitude of deference undermines a society’s capacity for critical engagement with
the state over the appropriateness and effectiveness of its policies. Any dissent to these programs is delegitimized through the evocation of security.

In the final chapter I summarize the arguments of the book, reveal the consequences of these programs, and present alternative policy options. I level three main criticisms at antiradicalization programs. First, in their construction, these programs fail to explore or engage with how masculinity and femininity inform the radicalization process. As a result, antiradicalization efforts and practitioners cannot successfully account for the personal drivers or the sociopolitical environment in which these programs operate. Second, despite this conceptual failing, within the operations of these programs it becomes clear that male radicalization is unreflectively linked to an excessive but flawed masculinity, and women’s radicalization depends on orientalist stereotypes about passivity and subjugation, as women are presumed to be groomed. Solutions for male deradicalization therefore hinge on particular ideals of masculinity that few men can obtain, while deradicalizing women is seen as a rescue mission. These are operational failings. Third, the impact of these programs derives from a paternalist logic that justifies intervention in everyday lives in the name of security, yet fails to deliver. The impact of counter-radicalization measures has a gendered differential. Although the rhetoric of countering terrorism is often couched in a narrative of women’s rights and liberal values, in this book I demonstrate that the consequences are often detrimental to these precepts. Antiradicalization efforts to date, therefore also fail in terms of outcomes.

There are wider consequences of these three critiques: First, while they may be presented as less coercive and less violent than militarized counterterrorism operations, they nevertheless rely on a binary of rights vs. security, and reinforce authoritarian and paternalist tendencies in state attitudes. Second, they limit and delegitimize serious concerns about our understanding of radicalization, while absolving states’ responsibility for creating extremism by focusing on particular elements in the radicalization story. Third, by relying on paternalist and maternalist logics, these critiques replicate the limited thinking in extremist narratives. Antiradicalization programs present the “correct version” of living and believing (one that does not threaten the state) in much the same way that extremist groups present their own “correct versions.” The consequence is that individuals are denied agency because they are not given the option to critique for themselves the versions being presented, which engenders a very limited form of loyalty and security for the state.

Finally, in this last chapter, I offer some policy alternatives that are rooted in challenging the whole-life narratives that contemporary extremist
groups present. The alternatives are rooted in a human rights–compliant framework that seeks to enhance the security of individuals as well as the state. I do so by looking at the main elements of each country’s programs and suggest revisions with these two principles in mind.

**CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS**

Introductions offer us insights into the overarching arguments; they also offer a range of themes and issues to which the book keeps returning. I want to draw your attention to three of them.

**The gendered nature of the radicalization concept itself.** The radicalization concept emerged suddenly after 9/11 in the global north to explain how domestic citizens could attack democratic states (see Sedgwick 2010). It radically alters the portrayal of agency in someone’s decision to mobilize. Whereas state counterterrorism discourses previously criminalized the person as “bad” and “evil,” now the person is feminized in their preterrorist state. Within this framing, someone “radicalized” them; someone else did this to them; they were a victim; they did not choose to take on these views. The radicalized individual was therefore not responsibly self-governing, lacking the autonomy and drive to nurture and direct their skills and attributes. The person being radicalized is made passive, whereas the more experienced radicalizer is the agent. Additionally the antiradicalizer has agency and subjectivity, as the chivalric hero. Once the radical has been policed and made governable through the actions of the antiradicalizing forces, the once or former radical confirms the power and legitimacy of the state to intervene, and realizes gendered agency and subjectivity to the state.

**Radicalization becomes a sign of failed responsible self-governance.** Recrafting agency is therefore the underpinning agenda of antiradicalization interventions. Through these efforts, the radical individual, or vulnerable community, is remade as a former or resilient community within the boundaries of responsible self-management rather than in ways that threaten gender, class, and racial global power relations. Antiradicalization efforts only offer a contained agency (not one rooted in critical reflection) and are therefore limited in effectiveness. Antiradicalization efforts therefore can offer only singular accounts of knowledge, power, and agency, ironically replicating the grammar of extremism.

**Antiradicalization efforts support the radical state.** In the quest to counter radicalization, the state and state agents both become and depend upon the radical that they oppose. As critical security scholars before
me have noted, radical groups and the state both believe in their singular mode of being in the world and are willing to use violence to foreclose alternatives. A particular ideal of agency is therefore promoted. This is why the opposite of radicalization should not be antiradicalization, as we have in current policy and public discourses, but in pluralist, inclusive, and expansive understandings of peace and agency that allow for multiple potential futures.