Imagined Communities and the Radicalization of Second Generation Muslim Women in the United Kingdom

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Contents

Abstract

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) concerns itself with the issue of its citizens becoming radicalized and joining extremist groups. Daesh is one such group that is able to attract people from varying backgrounds to commit violent acts of terror. Moreover, Daesh encourages those in the West to migrate to their controlled territory to participate in the ongoing conflict in Syria and Iraq. The group relies on women to participate in this migration so that they can marry jihadis and raise the next generation of supporters. This paper examines how Daesh radicalizes these women, specifically second-generation Muslim women in the UK. Daesh uses social media to radicalize recruits and this holds true in their strategy for incorporating women into their self-declared caliphate. Once women have migrated to Daesh-controlled territory, they themselves act as radicalization agents via social media. This paper uses Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* as a way of formulating how Daesh constructs its own community through pseudo-nationalism that is able to radicalize young people in the West who are part of a diasporic group and do not have particularly strong ties to their ancestral culture and religion. To facilitate the radicalization of second-generation Muslim women in the UK, Daesh uses social media to establish a particular image of the caliphate through this pseudo-nationalism. This paper uses a case study of Amira Abase, Shamima Begum, and Kadiza Sultana, or the 'Bethnal Green Girls', to explore the radicalization of SGMW via social media.

Introduction

In recent years, Western states have increasingly attempted to address the problems of radicalization by enacting policies to eliminate the threat of domestic terrorist activities and deter citizens from enlisting as foreign fighters abroad. Likewise, these issues have been more frequently acknowledged within the media. The focus of attention in these public dialogues has traditionally been on male participation within these security issues, often dismissing female involvement by describing these women as lone wolves or mentally disturbed.[1] Currently, the topic of women's involvement in violent jihadi groups is under-researched and occupies the margins of the literature. Although there are many unexplored theories that can offer insight into directed radicalization recruitment methods, this paper will focus on the usage of social media as portraying an ideal narrative of the caliphate declared by Daesh.[2] Specifically, I will focus on how a limited, but nonetheless revealing, number of second-generation Muslim women (SGMW) in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) came to identify with this ideal narrative through what I will call pseudo-nationalism. I define this term as being related to nationalism, as will be described below, but is differentiated based on the essential concept that Daesh is not a state. This paper will explore the implications of diasporic connections and imagined communities amongst SGMW that have been

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[1] Karla J. Cunningham, "Cross-Regional Trends in Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no.3 (2003): 176.

[2] This group is also referred to as the Islamic State (IS), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). These terms will be further explained in section one of this paper.

highlighted through social media postings. These postings offer a narrative of the radicalization process and life in the caliphate following migration to Syria.

Online networks are one method used by groups to entice young people from Western states to maintain connections to an imagined diasporic community and, in some cases, become radicalized. These networks include: using the fire chat app to facilitate planning of coordinated attacks; using ask.fm to respond to inquiries from potential extremists; and using Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts to post about their activities.[3] This adoption of peer-to-peer (P2P) technology means that P2P radicalization, recruitment and mobilization have become the norm where anyone is capable of embodying the role of a recruiter. These P2P technologies have been used by jihadi groups throughout the recruitment of both those encouraged to commit violence in their 'home' countries and those being recruited to travel and live abroad. However, there may be differences in modalities in the radicalization of those in each category as those carrying out violent acts in their states would not need to arrange logistics such as travel.

For those with perceived potential to move abroad, social media offers connections and strategic support. Social networks that are typically in daily use by young people between the ages of 14 and 30 can be leveraged to construct the imagined conceptions of the caliphate. For instance, photographs that are circulated through Instagram appear to reconstruct typical daily activities of women living in

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[3] Gabriel Weimann, "www.terror.net: How Modern Terrorism Uses the Internet," *United States Institute for Peace*, March 13, 2004, http://www.usip.org/publications/wwwterrornet-how-modern-terrorism-uses-the-internet.

the UK, only they have exchanged London for Raqqah.[4] However, although the activities are the same, the significance behind the images of each is different depending upon the location. For instance, from Daesh's perspective, the same activities that are being performed in the caliphate are fulfilling and meaningful whereas those in the UK are decadent and lack significance. This ideal manifests itself in the minds of some SGMW based on the appeal of a lifestyle they aspire towards through its representation in social media postings. In turn, recruits are able to perpetuate P2P radicalization when they post to these same websites upon entering the caliphate.

These easily accessible social media channels are all connected by their capacity to facilitate direct, real-time communication. As a tool, the Internet allows for constant access to information and offers users the ability to conveniently access or post material. It also acts as a space where people can virtually gather with likeminded individuals and post and/or observe without necessarily revealing their identity. Anonymity and accessibility make the Internet a readily available tool in self-radicalization, particularly for minorities such as SGMW.[5] This anonymity means that it is difficult to trace many of the postings made in conjunction with Daesh; therefore, it is often impossible to determine whether the poster is male or female. However, for the purposes of this paper, it will be assumed that those claiming to be female on social media accounts connected to Daesh are indeed female and motivated by jihadi interests.

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[4] Erin Marie Saltman and Melanie Smith, "'Til Martyrdom Do Us Part': Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue,* May 2015: 15.

[5] Sergio E. Sanchez, "The Internet and the Radicalization of Muslim Women," Western Political Science Association, April 2014.

Moreover, the Internet is used both by Daesh and their supporters around the world; the usage of this tool has played a significant role in their rise to infamy. Daesh achieved a form of legitimacy through the act of declaring a caliphate in June 2014 and, ever since, has seen an increasing number of individuals from the West moving into their territory as a result.[6] Legitimacy has been established in the sense that it is seen by some as a valid alternative government to the current regimes in Syria and Iraq based on the inability of these states to provide essential services and protection to their citizens. To their supporters, Daesh is seen as a legitimate successor to these states in a reconfiguration of the Middle Eastern state system.[7] Through the redrawing of state borders and establishment of a caliphate that is perceived as representing the *ummah* while providing key services, Daesh is challenging and dismantling these borders.[8] While its supporters perceive Daesh as being legitimate, each individual is involved in the construction of the pseudo-nation in different ways and this movement has been dichotomized for men and women. Men are classified as 'foreign fighters' whereas women do not receive this label.[9] Women are able to occupy a variety of roles within Daesh, but none of them involve active combat. As a result, women from the West who make the journey to the

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[6] See the work of The International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence for more information on foreign fighters in Syria.

[7] Fawaz Gerges, "Conflicts in the Levant: Lebanon, Syria and Iraq," OCMO2060: International Relations of the Middle East (class lecture, Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences Po, Paris, France, November 6, 2015).

[8] Charles C. Caris and Samuel Reynolds, "ISIS Governance in Syria," *Middle East Security Report* 22 (July 2014): 24.

[9] Carolyn Hoyle, Alexandra Bradford and Ross Frenett, "Becoming Mulan? Female Western Migrants to ISIS," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue,* January 2015: 9.

caliphate are called 'migrants' both by Daesh and those who are examining the issue of women's involvement in this jihadi group.[10]

Figure 1[11]

While this paper's case study is on the UK, the phenomenon that is the radicalization of SGMW does occur elsewhere. The concentration of this paper is based on existing literature that comes from frequently examined instances of certain women that have migrated to the caliphate. One of the most well known examples of the radicalization of young women in the West is through the images of Amira Abase, Shamima Begum, and Kadiza Sultana leaving a London airport for Turkey. These young women, also known as the 'Bethnal Green Girls', have been extensively tracked by the media and the images of them going through security at the airport, as seen above in Figure 1, has become synonymous with the threat of

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Saltman and Smith, 43. [Note: As with each figure in this paper, the source of this image is not original because these accounts are taken down by the social media sites as soon as they are reported as being affiliated with Daesh. Therefore, we must rely on timely screenshots that other researchers has taken as they attempt to understand Daesh and its social media strategy.]

young women leaving their Western countries in support of Daesh. Additionally, the UK has seen terrorist activities perpetrated on their soil by second-generation Muslims, on July 7th, 2005 (7/7), and has responded with counter-terrorism policies since this event. Britain has experienced extremism in a variety of ways in the past century, and so it is interesting to examine how the state is dealing with this threat in its most recent formation.

There is no one way to examine the issue of the radicalization of SGMW in the UK that is more descriptive than any other. Each analytical lens, whether economic or sociological, for instance, will be biased and not account for the other complicated factors that lead young women to an extremist group. Even still, it is still beneficial to assess Daesh's drive to entice women from the West to join the caliphate established through modern day Syria and Iraq. While the vast majority of Muslims do not exhibit any support of Islamism, Muslim extremism is still considered a prevalent issue by many Western governments. Daesh is able to reach some SGMW through their use of social media. Moreover, as more women make the journey, these new recruits are able to act as narrative constructors who can promote the 'glamorous' side of life in the caliphate to potential recruits. Here, glamorous refers to a lifestyle that appeals to these women through the ability to offer certain privileges that they would not have access to at home such as social groups and the ability to live under *shari'a* law. Examining this topic is a vast undertaking, given the complexity of recruitment efforts, and has many associated questions that are important to understanding the more specific circumstances of the radicalization of SGMW in the UK. These questions include: How does Daesh radicalize others? Does

Daesh have a grand strategy for the radicalization process? Does this strategy differ in terms of targeting men and women for radicalization? How is Daesh radicalizing young Muslim women in Europe? What makes some women more vulnerable to Daesh's propaganda when compared to the majority of SGMW? These broad questions can lead more specifically to: How is social media establishing a particular image/narrative of Daesh's caliphate, and why does that facilitate the radicalization of second-generation Muslim women in the UK?

To answer this question, this paper will proceed as follows: First, key terminology associated with the broader topic will be defined. This will provide a foundation on which analytical theory and the context of radicalization in the UK will be built. Second, a theoretical framework that is needed to examine the issue of women being radicalized in the first place will be constructed. To do so, this paper will look to Benedict Anderson's theory of the historical construction and emergence of nationalism established in *Imagined Communities*. Subsequently these theories will be applied through a gendered lens to determine how this can become constructed for women in different ways than for men. This gendered lens will be used in conjunction with the usage of social media to construct idealized, and often misleading, imageries of lifestyle claims that project pseudo-nationalism. Third, these theories will examine how the caliphate has been romanticized to entice the migration of women from the UK to the Middle East. Fourth, this paper will examine how and why social media postings are able to radicalize SGMW in the UK by connecting this phenomenon to general trends on this issue as well as a case study of the Bethnal Green Girls. Throughout this paper I will discuss why examining the

issue through imagined communities in the context of diasporas' nationalism and through the networks of social media is the most comprehensive approach to examining radicalization.

In researching this topic, it was important to focus on qualitative sources since quantitative measures of the number of women who have been radicalized in the UK are uncertain. These numbers are disputed based on the complex nature of measuring extremism and tracking women who are believed to have left their homes in the West to join Daesh. Moreover, the demographical identifiers of these women make it difficult to presume which women are more susceptible to extremism. There is not a particular underlying factor that leads to radicalization. Radicalization is not entirely based on a psychosocial response and there is not a specific socioeconomic condition that breeds radicalized individuals. Various studies have shown that there has been no correlation or causation of these circumstances and radicalization.[12] Therefore, the research of this paper largely relies on preexisting qualitative academic literature and news sources, which are abundant due to the timely nature of this subject. Overall, it is difficult to develop a precise understanding of the factors leading to female radicalization and the situations they experience upon migration. Therefore, it is necessary to look at any of the narratives that have come out of these journeys. This includes observations of specific social media postings (such as those on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook), as well as testimonies of those who have made the trip to Syria and Iraq and those

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[12] Anne Marie Baylouny, "Emotions, Poverty, or Politics? Misconceptions about Islamist Movements," *Connection* 3, no. 1 (2004): 42.

that have ultimately returned to their homes in the West. These testimonies may not always be entirely truthful and are not descriptive of every woman's experience, but they do offer starting points for understanding the context and experiences of these women.

This paper stresses the fact that these women are not migrating to the caliphate out of an exceptionally strong tie to a skewed version of Islam, but rather because they are searching to establish a strong identity for themselves in youth during a crucial stage of their personal development. A general assumption of this paper is that men and women experience radicalization differently based on their gendered perspectives of the world. Additionally, the position of these women as diasporic and Muslim may make them feel disconnected from the country they live in and impacts the ways they are influenced by radicalization. This gendered dichotomy is characterized in the ways radical jihadi groups are able to direct different recruiting tactics to either men or women. The ever-growing concern of radicalization in the West is grounded in public concern and on domestic security and intelligence agencies determining that youth radicalization "is becoming one of the most important threats of international terrorism"[13] and requires analysis in order to lead to a policy response. As mentioned, the majority of the existing literature considers the male perspective in relation to radicalization of Western youth, but this is changing due to the increase of media attention towards 'jihadi

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[13] Margarita Bizina and David H. Gray, "Radicalization of Youth as a Growing Concern for Counter-Terrorism Policy," *Global Security Studies* 5, no. 1 (2014): 72.

brides' over the past year.[14] This attention coincides with the presence of social media postings where connections have been formed through the sending and receiving of images and messages that have increased the legitimacy of these groups as reputable, high-performing organizations. Jihadi groups releasing other propaganda, such as Daesh's *Daqib*,[15] further legitimize this reputation. These materials can create the illusion of glamour and prestige, leading to more active recruitment.[16] Therefore, this reliance on social media to construct itself as a caliphate has the potential to manifest in the minds of some second-generation British Muslim women through appealing to a lifestyle that would be left unfulfilled if they remained in the UK.

Defining the Issues

In order to construct this argument and apply it to the reality of what is presently happening in the UK, it is important to define many of the relevant terms. To do so, I will first explain concepts associated with radicalization, including related concepts of extremism, Islamism and jihad. Secondly, I will deconstruct the many names and acronyms associated with Daesh to better offer the justification for their declaration of a caliphate and how this is associated with the global *ummah*.

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[14] See Poppy Begum, "Why I went undercover to investigate female Islamic State supporters," November 28, 2015, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/12020844/Why-I-went-undercover-to-investigate-female-Islamic-State-supporters.html; Deeyah Khan, "For Isis women, it's not about 'jihadi brides': it's about escape," *The Guardian*, June 21, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/21/isis-women-its-not-about-jihadi-brides-its-about-escape; Joe Shute, "How Isil are preying on female converts in Britain to make them into jihadi brides," *The Telegraph*, January 9, 2016, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/12089882/How-Isil-are-preying-on-female-converts-in-Britain-to-make-them-into-jihadi-brides.html.

[15] *Daqib* is an English magazine accessible online that acts as a tool of radicalization through high-quality content, including photographs and articles about life in the caliphate.

[16] Sanchez.

Finally, I will explain how each of these is relevant to migration through defining the concepts of migrant, diaspora, homeland, pseudo-nationalism and imagined communities.

What is Radicalization?

There are many terms under the umbrella of 'radicalization' that are often used interchangeably throughout the literature. For instance, 'extremism' is commonly used and, while it does not have a cohesive definition, it is often regarded as a departure from mainstream views, norms and beliefs.[17] Moreover, extremism "can be used to refer to oppos[ing] a society's core values and principles."[18] Therefore, extremism can be categorized as views or beliefs that are in opposition to British culture and values. Fundamentalism is another such term often used interchangeably with extremism, possibly because of "historical religious connotations that automatically link it to forms of movements based on religious pretexts" wherein Islamic extremism is a variant of Islamic fundamentalism.[19] Extremism and fundamentalism are related concepts within the framework of radicalization. While the first term addresses the concept of extreme thoughts that oppose Western, liberal values, the latter applies religious basis for these thoughts and actions. As with much of the literature on violent extremism, these two terms will often be used interchangeably throughout this paper.

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[17] Dina Al Raffie, "Social Identity Theory for Investigating Islamic Extremism in the Diaspora," *Journal of Strategic Security* 6, no. 4 (2013): 72.

[18] Peter Neuman, *Prisons and Terrorism: Radicalisation and De-Radicalisation in 15 Countries* (London: The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, 2010), 12.

[19] Al Raffie, 69.

Radicalization, on the other hand, must be treated as a separate entity. Most essentially, it must be understood as a process, rather than a way to describe one instance of behavior.[20] One does not become 'radicalized' because of one event or circumstance. Therefore, to understand why female recruits have intentionally become associated with those who are offering an alternative to mainstream Britain, one must look to the various aspects of each person's identity to see what has influenced their susceptibility to this process. The term radicalization is used to "refer to the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs."[21] Some define the concept in the narrow framework of those who are willing to commit a terrorist attack.[22] However, this must not be the case, as most with radical ideas do not engage in terrorism;[23] thus, for these people, their thoughts have become radical in relation to the prevailing social orthodoxy, but they have perhaps not committed any acts of violence in response. This is important in defining radicalization within the context of this paper, as the SGMW migrating to the caliphate are technically not directly engaging in terrorist activities. Indeed, these women do not participate in combat and are forbidden from doing so.[24] Moreover, many who become radicalized have only "a cursory knowledge of, or commitment to, the radical ideology. They are drawn to the group and the activity for other reasons."[25] This fact indicates that a

[20] Al Raffie, 72.
[21] Randy Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories," *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2011): 9.
[22] START- National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, "Community-Level Indicators of Radicalization: A Data and Methods Task Forces," *Report to Human Factors/Behavioral Sciences Division, Science and Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (*February 16, 2010): 10.
[23] Borum, 8
[24] Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett, 9.
[25] Borum, 9

strong desire to participate in violent, religious activity is not the primary reason for radicalization, but rather there are a multitude of other reasons leading to a radicalized identity.

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 (9/11) against the United States of America, Islamism has become another term strongly associated with those who are participating in extremist activities motivated by their skewed perception of Islam. The term does not refer to the religion itself, but rather to "a totalitarian political ideology driven by a strong anti-Western and anti-democratic sentiment."[26] It must be stressed that Islamism does not refer to Muslims in general, but specifically to the violent ideology that the majority of adherents of the religion do not follow; moreover, "many proponents of the militant ideology are not particularly 'religious' or pious."[27] This is important within the contexts of many SGMW who are migrating to Syria since they generally did not grow up in exceptionally religious households, many do not speak Arabic and they often do not have any in-depth knowledge of the religion itself. However, what unites Islamists is their drive to reconstruct a society with a Muslim majority, live within a caliphate and construct society based on *shari'a*[28] law.[29] These three criteria are embodied in Daesh's caliphate and represent a clear example of why so many foreign fighters and migrants are moving to Syria. Jihad is described as an individual duty for every

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[26] Ibid., 10.
[27] Ibid., 11.
[28] *Shari'a* is the set of rules that Muslims should follow in their lives that describe every domain of life and is an integral part of the faith [Stéphane Lacroix, "Theoretical Introduction," OCMO2095: The Political Sociology of the State in the Contemporary Arab World (class lecture, Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences Po, Paris, France, October 12, 2015)].
[29] Al Raffie, 71.

Muslim that is capable of going to war and, under certain conditions, becomes "obligatory to all Muslims, to defend their religion and its sanctuaries."[30] Daesh extends this obligation to women while ensuring they feel wanted as part of the continuation of the caliphate.

Understanding the Concept of Daesh

Daesh gained legitimacy through their declaration of a so-called caliphate in 2014 by calling on diasporic Muslims to act upon *ummah* consciousness. *Ummah* extends beyond territorial control and refers to the Islamic community around the world.[31] Daesh used this concept to justify why those from around the world must come to the caliphate. According to Daesh, just because these people were not born in this territory, it does not mean that they are removed from the duty to support those within the *ummah*. This tactic was also used by Daesh's predecessor in Iraq, Al Qaeda, who intended to unify the *ummah* to provoke the shift of power between the *ummah* and the West.[32] The strongest difference on Daesh's part from their predecessor is the actual 'establishment' of the caliphate. Daesh believes itself to be a caliphate, with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as its caliph who gains his supposed authority through *shari'a*. These are concepts within the Sunni tradition of Islam that represent the notion that a leader of all Muslims, the caliph, rules over people,

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[30] Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why JIHAD Went GLOBAL* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

[31] Stéphane Lacroix, "Power in the early Islamic Political structures," OCMO2095: The Political Sociology of the State in the Contemporary Arab World (class lecture, Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences Po, Paris, France, October 26, 2015).

[32] Stéphane Lacroix, "The birth and development of the modern Authoritarian Arab State," OCMO2095: The Political Sociology of the State in the Contemporary Arab World (class lecture, Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences Po, Paris, France, November 16, 2015).

not territory.[33] Essentially, the caliphate is worldwide, but there is still significant migration to Syria and Iraq based on the desire to be within the proximity of perceived power and activity.

Daesh and its associated names and abbreviations have sparked confusion amongst many and the change of their names has even worked its way into American comedy through shows such as Saturday Night Live.[34] Moreover, those who are attempting to understand the group have been perplexed in deciding which term is most appropriate. For instance, in one report it was decided that:

> The group in question will be referred to as ISIS, as this is the most widely recognized acronym for the group amongst general readers. The term the 'Islamic State' will be broadly avoided, while this region certainly takes on state-like functions, it has not been recognised internationally as a state and applying that label risks granting a degree of legitimacy to the entity created.[35]

While ISIS is an acceptable descriptor, it is only useful when examining the group from Anglophone contexts. Therefore, I will continue to use the term that many governments have adopted in the past year– Daesh. It is an acronym for *al-Dawla al-Islamiya al-Iraq al-Sham*, the Arabic phrase for the Islamic State of Iraq and the

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[33] Lacroix "Theoretical Introduction".

[34] For more information, see Itay Hod, "'Shark Tank's' Daymond John Disappoint in 'SNL' ISIS Parody: It Was 'Insensitive'," *The Wrap*, November 4, 2014, http://www.thewrap.com/shark-tanks-daymond-john-disappointed-in-saturday-night-live-isis-parody-it-was-insensitive/; Dean Obeidallah, "Did 'SNL' ISIS skit cross a line?" *CNN News*, March 2, 2015, http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/02/opinion/obeidallah-snl-isis-skit/.

[35] Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett, 9.

Levant.[36] This term itself is not apolitical; its growth in popularity amongst Western leaders has been used as a delegitimizing device and is not a neutral term. Even still, I will continue to use Daesh as the name for this group as I agree with Hoyle et al. that in identifying them as Islamic State, or IS, I would be complicit in acknowledging the legitimacy behind their claim of the caliphate and their ability to act as an alternative government to those established in Syria and Iraq.

The Relevance of Migration

As with radicalization, there is no conclusive definition of diaspora, which makes framing the issue problematic. These topics can be understood under the broader category of migration in terms of the flow of people. However, there is neither an international migration regime nor a defined pattern of norms. Generally speaking, concepts of citizenship and migration are fundamentally defined within a dichotomized framework of insiders and outsiders.[37] Migration is a useful lens for analyzing "how identity itself is predicated on movement or loss;"[38] however, it is the diasporic aspect to this discipline that I am most interested in so as to construct the identity framework of SGMW. The term diaspora, then, is based on a group whose identity is focused on a 'country of origin' rather than that of the nation and society in which they live.

The concept of diasporas fits into migration studies as it describes the experiences of those who live in a territory outside of their ancestral homeland that

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[36] Nicola Oakley, "What does Daesh mean? ISIS 'threatens to cut out the tongues' of anyone using this word," *The Mirror*, December 2, 2015, http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/what-daesh-mean-isis-threatens-6841468.

[37] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 67.

[38] Sara Ahmed, "Home and away: Narratives of migration and estrangement, *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2, no. 3 (1999): 332.

maintain cultural, religious and/or sociological ties to this homeland. Moreover, "[i]n its long history, the term has been consistently associated with experiences of displacement, dispersal and migrancy; however the concept has remained peripheral in the debates on human migration and mobility until fairly recently."[39] Since diaspora studies are a relatively new field there is, like migration, no universal theory to explain the phenomenon or how it relates to both host societies and ties to the homeland. One general approach that offers a basic explanation of diasporas is through the criterion of dispersion, homeland orientation and boundary-maintenance.[40] While the first two criteria are self-evident, the third is described in relation to the comparison of the diaspora member's identity in relation to that of the host society.[41] In this sense, diasporas are more of a theoretical construction than anything else; therefore, "diasporas should be seen not as given communities, a logical, albeit deterritorialized, extension of an ethnic or national group, but as imagined communities, continuously reconstructed and reinvented."[42]

The original narratives that described those belonging to a diaspora as uprooted and displaced continue to be reflected in contemporary discussions, but the term is now able to convey much more.[43] Paradoxically, being part of a diaspora is about settling into a new society; the identity of a 'homeland' is circumscribed by

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[39] Roza Tsagarousianou, "Rethinking the concept of diaspora: mobility, connectivity and communication in a globalised world," *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2004): 53

[40] Rogers Brubaker, "The 'diaspora' diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 5-6.

[41] Ibid., 6.

[42] Tsagarousianou, 52.

[43] Ibid., 54; Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, Andrew J. Curiel and Doron Zimmermann, "The Radicalization of Diasporas and Terrorism," *A Joint Conference by the RAND Corporation the Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich* (2007): 23.

that of the dominant society that the diasporic resident now maintains.[44] Diasporas are now linked to inclusion or exclusion within a host society and relates to the complex struggles over social and political belonging.[45] Even still, and perhaps what sustains these connections, is that from the point of view of the host societies, migrants are still seen as outsiders even though they may be largely integrated into the majority culture.[46] Society's branding of them as outsiders may be one of the reasons that so many within a diaspora struggle with a sense of belonging. There is a narrative here of diasporic community that becomes "differently imagined under different historical circumstances."[47] Again, this shows that diaspora itself is imagined; it is a different experience depending on the group, type of movement, and the society and culture they integrate into. Their societal experiences are further dependent on the political circumstances and historical constructs of the 'host' society at that specific time.

As these imagined communities are "continuously reinvented and reconstructed"[48] it has been essential to determine a definition of diasporas in order to begin to understand how connections to a homeland may elicit associations to radicalized groups. Furthermore, how one understands the concept of what it means to be at home is a political question.[49] Many in Britain are not concerned with a cultural identity crisis as they are identified as a Briton by both themselves and others; for those whose parents and ancestors were born in another state, there is a

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[44] Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 190.
[45] Tsagarousianou, 57; Brah, 194.
[46] Brubaker, 3.
[47] Brah, 180
[48] Tsagarousianou, 60.
[49] Mohanty, 126.

fracture between their two aspects of national identity. Those who make up the societal majority believe their lived experiences are universal norms based on a position of privilege, whereas those who are visibly differentiated from this majority perceive their surroundings in a different manner. For this latter group, it becomes clear that despite being accustomed to the privileges associated with Britishness (including access to public services such as education and health care), they are also distinguished as being external to the in-group. The most useful way to frame this identity crisis is through the question: "What does it mean to be at home?"[50] For those SGMW who are migrating to the caliphate, clearly being at home does not mean staying where they grew up. Instead, this means moving to a place that has been constructed as the sort of community they want to be a part of and that they believe will welcome them.

This is described as an 'imagined community' not because it is not real, but rather because it has been socially constructed and suggests collaboration across boundaries as well as a significant commitment and attachment to the community itself.[51] The 'home' that SGMW are migrating towards is "the very space from which one imagines oneself to have originated, and in which one projects the self as both homely and original, that is the most unfamiliar: it is here that one is a guest, relying on the hospitality of others."[52] Once these women arrive in Syria they are not connecting with extended family or those that they knew in the UK, but instead they rely on strangers and connections that they have made online during their

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[50] Ahmed, 330.
[51] Mohanty, 46.
[52] Ahmed, 330.

radicalization process. These strangers are connected through an imagined community that is now quasi-nationalistic in the sense that it follows Anderson's definition of the nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."[53] While it is clear that this stems from a religious-national community, and thus is different from the sort of secular nationalism that is traditionally studied, the same analytical theories can be applied here too. When connections have been based on an imagined political community, it does not mean that these connections are any less real. Indeed, for those migrating to align themselves with Daesh these perceived connections are rooted in these individuals' attempts at finding somewhere they feel as if they belong and are expressed in opposition to a place where they feel as if they do not belong. For these individuals, they view the UK, and the modern West in general, as backwards and not in line with a *shari'a* way of life. Therefore, those that are pledging themselves to Daesh are doing so based on a nationalistic identity that is imagined based on weak connections to a perceived homeland.

Imagined Communities and Radicalization

Politics and global security are typically examined from a male referent. In contrast, female attempts at addressing the issues of international security have long been categorized as feminine, weak and invalid within the existing world order. However, these perceptions are steadily changing with the ever-growing amount of feminist work on global politics. This paper will seek to explain gendered

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[53] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

perspectives of nationalism, but first the 'non-gendered' theory will be presented. Here, Benedict Anderson's pivotal *Imagined Communities* will be used to garner an understanding of the construction of nationalism in the modern state system before it can be positioned within a feminist critique of these issues as put forward by J. Ann Tickner and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. Subsequently, this gendered perspective will be aligned with new theories that attempt to explain social media usage. This is done to provide an outline of how Daesh intends to use social media to formalize their 'state' in the caliphate by transmitting pseudo-nationalism to diasporic communities in Britain. The existing literature on radicalization is biased towards the experiences of men, often dismissing female involvement as being merely psychological or driven by socioeconomic factors.[54] As will be demonstrated, however, this is not always the case. This paper will use a multi-disciplinary approach through a gendered application of nationalism to see how identities are formulated and supported through diasporic connections. This is done in order to properly assess the manufacturing of political identities through transnational nationalism that is propagated via social media.

The social experiences of those who are part of a diasporic community will be different for men and women. These differences are rooted within gendered sociological constructs that are especially evident in diasporic communities originating from conservative homelands. Furthermore, early generations of diasporic communities may experience specific conditions and vulnerabilities outside of those of the national community. The dominant culture often resists

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[54] Cunningham, 176.

adapting their homogeneity, which means that diaspora members must assimilate or face social exclusion. In the case of the UK, British national identity is strongly rooted in history, a set of shared experiences and through their political system that typify their national narrative. For those outside of the national majority in terms of race and religion, this established identity can be disconcerting and impact how they view their own identity, particularly for visible minorities. For some, this tension creates an environment wherein they are more susceptible to radicalization. Depending on the state, different policy approaches are used to tackle particular segments of society based on the likelihood of radicalization, such as the *Prevent* program in the UK.[55] These policies are often based on demographical stereotypes and, particularly in Western Europe, these approaches coincide with migrant integration. Currently, a major concern of Western governments is that migrants and members of diasporas have an "orientation to a real or imagined 'homeland' as an authoritative source of value, identity and loyalty" that overrides their allegiance to their 'host' country.[56]

The lack of research conducted on Western women's radicalization means that few instances of these occurrences have been properly recorded and analyzed. Typical narratives surrounding home grown terror recount a backwards ideology

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[55] The *Prevent* strategy addresses the fact that the UK faces a range of terrorist threats and terrorist groups seek to recruit people to their cause. *Prevent* is part of the broader counter-terrorism strategy and addresses all forms of terrorism that pose a threat to the UK's national security. It responds to the "**ideological challenge** of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it; **prevent people from being drawn into terrorism** and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support; and work with **sectors and institutions** where there are risks of radicalisation which we need to address" (United Kingdom. Home Office. *Prevent Strategy*. United Kingdom: The Stationery Office, 2011, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf).

[56] Brubaker, 5.

and Islamist extremism. However, the descent for many of these radicalized youths is "typically an internal journey driven by teenaged disaffection and anger. It has little to do with geography, religion or heritage."[57] What is universal between men and women who radicalize, however, is the feeling of being disenfranchised in a society that does not accept them. They then turn to Islamism to formulate a cohesive cultural identity as they may have previously felt they were only half connected to both their homeland and place of birth. Additionally, both men and women in diasporic Muslim communities frequently face discrimination that is the direct result of their race, religion, or ethnicity.[58] This is made even more extreme for diasporic women as they are torn between the traditionally conservative roles often associated with them in their homelands and those that may be present in their private lives, in contrast with the often liberal freedoms associated with the West.

Identity as Pseudo-nationalism

Each individual has various aspects to their identity, with a multitude of factors impacting how and why that person is the way that they are. This holds true for aspects of identity that are tied to a culture, ethnicity, or nationality. With each of these forms of identities, "[s]ocial categories define imaginary boundaries, which separate members (in-group) from non-members (out-group)."[59] These separations are not always discernible to outside observers of a society, but for those who make

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[57] "Why terrorism can grow in any soil- including our own," Maclean's, April 12 2013, http://www.macleans.ca/politics/why-terrorism-can-grow-in-any-soil-including-our-own/.
[58] Kawser Ahmed, James Fergusson and Alexander Salt, "Perceptions of Muslim Faith, Ethno-Cultural Organizations in Countering Domestic Terrorism in Canada," *Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society,* Working Paper Series, no.14-12 (2014): 35.
[59] Al Raffie, 76.

up the in-group and the out-group, they are factors that qualify the latter as outsiders who are inherently different. The situational fluidity of identity allows anyone to adjust to the circumstances as deemed necessary; since cultural identity is not static, it can lead to adaptation over time.[60] This means that SGMW in the UK are able to modify their identity within contexts so that they can either be more 'British', based on their place of birth and socialization within the culture, or they can stress their ethno-religious identity. Essentially, identity is best understood as the byproduct of specific sociopolitical circumstances.[61]

There are specific socio-cognitive processes that underlie group dynamics and form various aspects of identity as "[i]dentity is not logical, rational or coherent. Its fragmented and incoherent nature disavows identity as something remotely tangible, fixed or unitary."[62] Configurations of home, identity and community are developed as self-referential where the appeal of a 'home' is based in an inherent desire to belong.[63] The importance of belonging within a community is often a crucial part of various explanations of youth and young adulthood that are strongly associated with the demographics of those SGMW who are moving to Syria out of this drive to return to their imagined homeland. Furthermore, "[c]ommunity, then, is the product of work, of struggle; it is inherently unstable, contextual; it has to be constantly reevaluated in relation to critical political priorities."[64] It is these priorities that these women individually rank as connections based on political

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[60] Peter Mandaville, "Reimagining Islam in Diaspora," *Gazette* 63, no. 2-3 (2001): 170.
[61] Ibid., 172.
[62] Sadia Edross, "Muslim Women, Self and Identity," *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, no. 32 Race, Identity and Change (1997): 28.
[63] Mohanty, 85.
[64] Ibid., 104.

urgency and necessity, but more importantly are the influences for establishing an identity that this individual perceives as being powerful and significant. Moreover:

> Social identities are reflections of the social categories, groups, and networks into which individuals belong. Social categories are broad, "large-scale" sources of social identity that often provide the pretext for the formation of community level social networks and groups. Examples of large-scale categories are religion, gender, and ethnicity.[65]

As such, in attempting to formulate these large-scale identities, members of second-generation diaspora groups are perhaps more likely to turn to the identity that has excluded them from being a part of the dominant identity in the society in which they were raised.

This dominant identity for these individuals, including SGMW, plays off against that of society as a whole. National identity is something that must be strived towards and as such is emulated by those who are rejecting one form of identity for another. Here, we revisit the concepts of home and belonging. The notion of home invokes a narrative wherein a place is sentimentalized; out of this comes fantasies of belonging to part of an imagined community. All national belongings are fantasies as a cohesive common identity certainly cannot be attributable to each citizen, particularly in states such as the UK where there is a significant population. For instance, the question "of home and being at home can only be addressed by considering the question of affect: being at home is here a

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[65] Al Raffie, 76.

matter of *how one feels or how one might fail to feel.*"[66] As for its place within the nation, home refers to the idea of belonging as part of a supposedly cohesive group that can be referred to as that state's citizens. In order to feel as if one is a part of this group, the state must construct a feeling of nationalism where the territorial and social space that is shared by these people formulate what it means to be, for instance, British. This is done based on the understanding that the vast majority of a state's inhabitants will never meet each other, but still must have a sense of loyalty and camaraderie to one another.

For this to happen, the state must establish a unified identity through nationalism that can take on many forms. For instance, this type of identity can be pluralistic, as is increasingly the case in the modern era. The traditional concept of 'Britishness' has been in erosion since the period of decolonization and has not been traditionally unified due to the challenging problem of contesting national identities within a multinational state.[67] Even without the challenge of accounting for four nationalities within one state, the UK presently has contestation over the concept of Britishness following an influx of migrants since the end of World War II. As with other states, Britain is a "composite structure forged [...] out of different cultures and kingdoms."[68] The construction of a nationality here is complicated because of the many national identities and forms of diversity represented throughout the state. Thus, nationalism invokes an imagined community because of these

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[66] Ahmed, 341.

[67] Matthew P. Llewellyn, "For a 'United' Kingdom and a 'Greater' Britain: the British Olympic Association and the limitations and contestations of 'Britishness'," *Sport in Society* 18, no. 7 (2015): 765.

[68] Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," *The Journal of British Studies* 31, no.4 (1992): 312.

differences and because nationals will never meet many of their fellow citizens, "yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[69] For Britain, this would mean establishing a sense of 'Britishness.' However, traditionally this 'Britishness' has been rooted in Christian, Anglo-Saxon characteristics that no longer represent the diversity of the inhabitants of that state. Daesh attempts to gain legitimacy through the Islamic notion of *ummah* and calling on those in the West to find this identity stronger than their national one, so that they are more connected to those outside of their country than those who are within. Therefore, "nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that precede it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being."[70] These systems uphold the international order. Constructing communities are an aspect of the political behavior of states in this system wherein a need for interdependence and identities are part of community building as a dimension of international behavior.[71]

Feminist Responses to Nationalism

Feminist thinkers have argued that women experience the formulation of nationalism in different ways than men. Research on nationalism has traditionally failed to account for this difference as well as how a national identity is often tied to the security of the state, which is masculinized.[72] This is most aptly stated through Simone de Beauvoir's quote: "Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse

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[69] Anderson, 6.
[70] Ibid., 12.
[71] J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 133.
[72] Ibid., 4.

with absolute truth."[73] Men are disproportionately overrepresented in academia and in government, so it is not confusing to see why states and nationalism are constructed from a perspective that is not considered male biased, but rather 'normal'. Attempts to describe female perceptions of political issues are often dismissed as being dramatic and insufficient to provide an accurate representation of the concepts of nationalism.[74] Moreover, the relationship between feminism and the male-centric view of constructed nationalism appears even more artificial than the norm. Imagined communities are useful for explaining nationalism through a feminist perspective because it implies that political, rather than biological, reasons explain these alliances.[75] With this understanding, it is reinforced that sex, race and ethnicity are not the main determinants of perceived belonging; instead, it is based on an imagined construction of what it means to be a part of a nation that transcends these signifiers. Therefore, people can identify with a particular citizenship based on propaganda materials that enacts a call to action to unify mass groups of people who are otherwise varied.

In general, analysis of gender identity "has often been presented as monolithic and homogenous" and so misses out on the complexities of accounting for the various factors that contribute to gender construction.[76] The differences between men and women are socially sanctioned, socially constructed and formulated in an unequal relationship to one another.[77] These differences are

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[73] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage, 1972), 161.
[74] Tickner, 141.
[75] Mohanty, 46.
[76] Edross, 28.
[77] Tickner, 6.

inherent and implied across cultures, but to varying degrees amongst each. Nevertheless, it appears that both Western women and Western feminism remain to be used as the norm throughout these gender analyses to explain how women experience the world in different ways than men. The phrase "women as a category of analysis" is often used in Western feminism in order to describe this differentiation. However, this refers to the "crucial assumption that all women, across classes and cultures, are somehow socially constituted as a homogenous group identified prior to the process of analysis. This is an assumption that characterizes much feminist discourse."[78] The feminist lens that must be used in this paper is one that understands that minority women lack even further privileges awarded to Western women. While a feminist lens can offer insight into global power structures, it is a theory largely created by and for white Western Christian women, and this can ultimately be problematic. Therefore, examining the intersectionality of sex, gender, religion and migrant status is essential to understanding SGMW's place within society, whether it is in the UK or in Daesh's caliphate.

The marginalization of these woman's experiences has been better documented in recent years. For women in the global south and women of colour, their identity becomes contested in relation to their challenges of acknowledging these facets of their identity while engaging with what it means to be a Western woman in the twenty-first century. The assumption that all women face the same disadvantages and experiences is an inadequate assumption of female homogeneity.

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[78] Mohanty, 22.

Specifically, "[t]his homogeneity of women as a group is, in turn, predicted on a definition of the experience of oppression where difference can only be understood as male/female."[79] Beyond this differentiation, minority women living in the West, including SGMW, must individually establish their own personal identity through accounting for their historical and cultural identity as well as what it means to have been born in the West. Therefore, in accounting for these often conflicting identities, becoming Westernized is partly representative of "a rejection of one's ethnicity, culture and religion."[80] For some SGMW this means that in accepting their Britishness, they are dismissing their lineage as they believe it to be what excludes them from a stronger sense of national belonging. For those who become radicalized by Daesh, they have often rejected the imposed nationality of the state they were born in for that of the pseudo-nationalism based on *ummah* and *shari'a*. Multicultural feminism attempts to account for these varying and sometimes conflicting identities that raise questions of home, belonging, nation and community.[81]

Constructing Nationalism Online

Propaganda materials are complex and have varied over time, but they first came to the forefront of state building in its modern formation through the advent of the printing press. The novel and the newspaper had European origins and were able to represent the state as an imagined community.[82] Indeed, states began to use these tools to construct imagined identities amongst the mass population; presently,

79 Ibid., 112.
80 Edross, 30.
81 Mohanty, 124.
82 Anderson, 25.

this is also accomplishable through online mediums.[83] Therefore, state building as nationalism construction is now partially managed through virtual networks that transcend state lines. The use of online materials is largely how Daesh is able to direct its nationalistic qualities to those in the West, extending beyond those who already reside within the regional caliphate. The use of the Internet to construct this identity is brought out further through its instantaneous accessibility that "continually reassure[es] that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life."[84] Linguistic divides now potentially rift this linkage of time and space through various mediums of nationalistic identity construction, specifically those accessible through social media.

As languages become inherently associated with specific groups, and states often have one official language that is different than that of their neighbours, they can come to either divide or unite a people. This can both be used by traditional modern states, as well as groups such as Daesh that are supposedly working in the interest of a quasi-state. Moreover, bilingualism equates to broader access to modern culture and models of nationalism.[85] The ability to speak more than one language is beneficial in many regards, but in this case it would equate to accessibility of more propaganda material used in the radicalization process. Daesh understands that diasporic Muslims may not necessarily speak Arabic and so they

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[83] See Ronald J. Deibert, *Parchment, Printing, and Hypermedia: Communication and World Order Transformation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Ronald J. Deibert, "Virtual Resources: International Relations Research Resources on the Web," *International Organization* 52, no.1 (1998): 211-221; Ronald Deibert and Rafal Rohozinski, "Liberation vs. Control: The Future of Cyberspace," *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 4 (2010): 43-57.
[84] Anderson, 35-36.
[85] Ibid., 116.

are constructing their pseudo-nationalism based on Western languages.[86] While the vast majority of those migrating to the caliphate, both men and women, do not speak Arabic, this fact appears to be unproblematic since the common language amongst Daesh's recruits seems to be English. This is evident through the fact that many propaganda tools, including *Daqib* and postings on Twitter, are in English rather than Arabic. In fact, individuals from other Western states who have migrated because of their radicalization are interacting with new potential recruits from the West. Linguistic ties traditionally rooted in nationalism have no place here. Instead, shared identity for jihadis comes from their Western upbringings, rather than from notions of *shari'a*, which is often their stated reason for migration. This reality manifests in a variety of ways, including the recruitment of women. Many of the men moving from Europe and North America are interested in a jihadi bride that shares commonalities with them. Therefore, a shared language becomes more important than marrying a woman whose entire life experiences, values and means of communication are wildly different from the way these foreign fighters experienced their world prior to movement to the caliphate.[87]

These attempts at reclaiming and establishing certain connections are based in the weak ties as a result of trans-nationalism. This not only holds true for those within the global Muslim diaspora, but rather in diasporas in general. For instance:

> A black British women of Jamaican parentage may well be far
> more at home in London than in Kingston, Jamaica, but she
> may insist upon defining herself as Jamaican and/or

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[86] Saltman and Smith, 7.
[87] Schute.

Caribbean as a way of affirming an identity which she perceives is being denigrated when racism represents black people as being outside 'Britishness'. Alternatively, another young woman with a similar background might seek to repudiate the same process of exclusion by asserting a black British identity. The subjectivity of the two women is inscribed within differing political practices and they occupy different subject positions.[88]

Therefore, personal identity is based on a variety of factors and affects how a person conceives of themselves in relation to the dominant group in society. This is why it is problematic to proclaim that an identity tied to Islam is the most common factor leading to radicalization amongst SGMW; correlation does not equate to causation. Nationalism itself is best understood as upholding certain sects of political ideologies, of cultural systems and a myth of how the state came into being; these traits are also established through a sense of religious belonging. Specifically, the scope of the global Muslim diaspora is involved in how identity and pseudo-nationalism can be tied into this sense of belonging. These connections are often projected onto the community that have become scapegoats for perceived instability in Western states. For instance, "[t]he effects of 7/7 resulted in heightened tensions and negatively impacted social cohesion, and has resulted in an even greater degradation of race and religious relations in Britain than did the 9/11 attacks in the United States."[89] The fact is, until the latter half of the last century, Britain was typified more as a state that sent citizens abroad, or a 'sending state',

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[88] Brah, 190.
[89] Hoffman et al., viii.

rather than one that received immigrants, or a 'receiving state', whereas the United States has historically been a melting pot of cultures.

For Britain to suddenly become a receiving state meant that those who had not previously had to identify themselves as a 'majority' were concerned over the possible erosion of their culture and way of life. So, following 7/7 this majority was granted an example they could point to in order to explain how shifting demographics could become a security threat to their country. Ultimately, these fears resulted in improper stereotyping of all British Muslims as potentially radical.[90] In effect, immigration, nationality and inclusion are best examined through a feminist lens in order to determine how citizenship is racialized and "illustrates the continuity between relationships of colonization and white, masculinist, capitalist state rule."[91] In reality, SGMW have a cognitive process where self-categorization occurs and social identity is established through relation to the dominant (inter) group; here, intergroup differences are emphasized along with the similarities to minority groups.[92] Identity is very strongly tied to radicalization, but as has been demonstrated it is not as simple as stating that a religious identity is wholly responsible for this process.

How Daesh is Using Social Media to Construct the Caliphate

Dissemination of Images

Images are able to reproduce an identity and a story through recirculation of

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[90] Ibid., 9.
[91] Mohanty, 66.
[92] Al Raffie, 77.

the image, suggesting that certain images are sometimes more powerful than the event they are capturing.[93] Images are capable of becoming a permanent part of a society's collective consciousness, particularly with the means of communication and information sharing that now exists.[94] Presently, the mediums that are available to disseminate images via social media networks are able to facilitate the construction of these imagined communities. Particularly for women raised in the West, these images build connections through a traditional 'call to action' used in many Western marketing campaigns. In recent research on how the Internet has facilitated radicalization, it is supported that "recent actions by Muslim women in support of jihad are not likely to abate in the near future, which necessitates a better understanding of the phenomena in order to hinder recruitment attempts by radical groups."[95] This illustrates that the position of women in jihadi groups in general, and specifically Daesh, are not anticipated to diminish in the future and must be better examined in order to see how and why they have been radicalized. Diasporic political identity is maintained through various networks, including: local organizations, remittances, lobbying and radicalization.

Many extremist groups have incorporated the usage of images into their radicalization strategy. Daesh uses such tools to exemplify to the world en masse their capabilities, through such imagery as the beheading videos they post online, as well as radicalization tactics. For example, *Daqib* contains many high quality

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[93] Lene Hansen, "How images make world politics: International icons and the case of Abu Ghraib," *Review of International Studies* (2015): 3.
[94] Lene Hansen, "Theorizing the image for Security Studies: Visual Securitization and the Muhammad Cartoon Crisis," *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 1 (2011): 52.
[95] Sanchez.

photographs and written articles, further perpetuating the narrative of Daesh as a legitimate group who can qualify as a possible contender to Assad's regime. Given the youthful demographic that Daesh is seeking to radicalize, it is not surprising that the group chooses to post these videos and the editions of *Daqib* online. Moreover, the group relies on social media platforms including WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter to further its support, whether it be for inciting violence around the world or encouraging migration to the caliphate. This strategy can be based around direct recruitment, the spreading of images, or providing a narrative of the caliphate, depending on the value of the medium in use.

Direct recruitment is frequently accomplished through making first contact on social media sites such as Twitter and, once a bond has been properly established, more extensive communication takes place through Skype, WhatsApp, or other private messaging services. This standard process has been documented over the past two years, particularly with the discovery of a rulebook that came to light after the conversion of an American teenager by an older man in the UK.[96] Secondly, the dissemination of images is frequently accomplished through 're-tweeting', posting on Instagram and publishing elsewhere online. These other images, such as the one seen below in Figure 2, often support Western social constructions of femininity, but are positioned within an Islamist fundamentalist context. This image constructs a conservatively dressed Muslim woman with the text saying "COVERed GIRL… because I'm worth it!" Within the context of the image, this could signify that women who cover themselves appropriately are doing so in

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[96] Poh Si Teng and Ben Laffin, "Flirting With the Islamic State," *The New York Times*, June 27, 2015, www.nytimes.com/videa/100000003749550/flirting-with-the-islamic-state.html.

accordance with Muslim tradition and out of self-respect. However, within the broader context of what this image is meant to signify, it is clear that the producers are appealing to Western women as it uses the slogan for a mid-price makeup brand that many young women try. However, in this image, Cover Girl's "because you're worth it" no longer addresses an appeal to better one's image through the application of makeup, but rather to better oneself by complying with religious conservatism. Daesh uses this tactic to recruit women as it appeals to tropes with which they are familiar, as they have been raised in the West.

Figure 2[97]
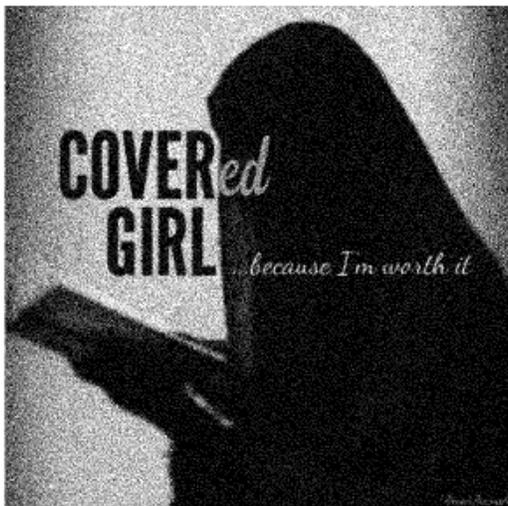
Thirdly, narratives are constructed through the recirculation of these images that provide a timeline of radicalization, migration and life in the caliphate. For many SGMW, the Internet has been a tool of both their radicalization as well as a platform to put forward a virtual life that is not necessarily fully representative of the difficult realities women face once they arrive in Syria. The virtual establishment

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[97] Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, *Women Under ISIS Rule: From Brutality to Recruitment, United States Senate, 114th Congress*, S. REP. NO. 114-85 (2015): 16.

of an imagined life is not unique to those migrating to the caliphate. Rather, in today's information driven world, social media acts as a constructor of a particular image that one seeks to emulate to encapsulate their lives as they show this off to their peers. The same holds true for SGMW who have migrated to the caliphate, only now the image is one that paints the West in a negative light and suggests that Daesh is justifiably challenging Assad's regime in Syria. Much of the propaganda posted in the form of social media by women "demonizes Assad by presenting photographs of children ostensibly starved by the regime."[98] One such example is seen below in Figure 3:

Figure 3[99]

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[98] Saltman and Smith, 12.
[99] Ibid.

While many people around the world denounce regimes that cause unjust suffering to its citizens, the postings of SGMW sympathetic to Daesh are different. Commentary on Assad's regime from these women signifies something more important given that they are supporting the group directly challenging Syria's statehood through eroding their monopoly on violence. Moreover, other narratives these women distribute via social media often surround their position as jihadi brides. The marriages between these women and jihadists have been highly glorified and, upon marriage, images of a lion and lioness are frequently used to symbolize the power and prestige these couples have now attained.[100] Many of these women quickly become widows due to the ongoing conflict and, upon the deaths of their husbands, many women speak out online explaining that they are honoured to have a husband who was brave and is now seen as a martyr. This is shown below in Figure 4. In doing so, they are contributing to the narrative wherein jihadi marriage is desirable and women must support their jihadist husbands even through their martyrdom. Representing these views on social media produces images and narratives that are circulated among current and potential supporters.

Figure 4[101]

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[100] Saltman and Smith, 16.
[101] Ibid., 33.

Radicalizing Social Media

The Internet better facilitates the ability to maintain social networks through instant access to information, whereas P2P technology makes it easier to hide identities and maintain casual connections to people around the world. These networks are particularly popular amongst those between the age of 14 and 30 as well as minorities; therefore, P2P technology is a tool in radicalizing those individuals who may not necessarily have their voices heard throughout society. The anonymity offered through these methods of communication make self-radicalization a growing possibility for those who do not have access to the traditional sources of propaganda. These networks stem from social media connections that enable supporters to be drawn across borders so that diaspora members are capable of supporting violent jihadi networks without direct participation in the violence itself.

These sorts of networks that have been established mean that the narrative of a terrorist as a foreigner "striking at the Western values from abroad" is fading away from public perception.[102] These groups and causes are spreading beyond a specific location by using global networks that are increasingly available online, for both financial gain and recruitment.[103] This is possible based on the manufacturing of an imagined vision of a united political identity established through the technological means of maintaining connections to the homeland. Those who are supportive of and participate in jihadi movements were radicalized through a

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[102] Bizina and Gray, 72.
[103] Ahmed, Fergusson and Salt, 7.

process that lacked "a proper Islamic education."[104] Therefore, those who purport that they are representing the will of Islam and are acting in accordance with the *Quran* in order to radicalize and incorporate foreign fighters are uniting a population under a political identity that is not reflective of the actual ideas, identity and ideology of Islam itself. Diasporas can be especially susceptible to fall prey into a variety of radical ideologies as the youth often feel isolated from society and are seeking to formulate meaningful connections with like-minded individuals.[105]

As diasporas can refer to networks and flows of people, the media consumed by youth at a transnational level can be most easily securitized. This material comes to represent how other members of the diaspora are living in other states and certain representations may lead to identification across borders. For Daesh, this means that they can subvert their postings into the broader media consumed by diasporic SGMW and permeate their understanding of community and belonging. For instance, these postings represent "a sense of contemporaneity and synchronicity to the dispersed populations that make up a diaspora and to their everyday lives."[106] Additionally, the material itself can lead to the manufacturing of political identity as it facilitates "the construction of common experiential frames among their audiences" and is able to create a process of social integration within a particular group.[107] These constructions can be dangerous as they rely on perceived perceptions by the dominant culture in a host country that accepts its own identity and ideology as proper and what must be followed in order to achieve jihad.

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[104] Ibid., 3.
[105] Ibid., 29.
[106] Tsagarousianou, 62.
[107] Ibid., 63.

Transnational networks are able to encourage mobility through ease of communication that promotes interaction across groups. For instance, the "increased use of social media networks to communicate across borders enhances the construction of this imagined community along ideological lines, instituting a virtual community and a novel means of participating from afar."[108] Tracking social media usage offers an informative insight into community dynamics and behavioural patterns of female recruits living in the caliphate. Examining these platforms allows for an analysis of the strategic role of women within Daesh.[109] As with traditional forms of media, social media has a significant role to play in constructing images of minorities "and how they are viewed within a country as well as how minority members view themselves."[110] Essentially, the use of social media transcends spatial boundaries to aid in identity construction, particularly for minorities.

The transnational networks further support the activities of such groups as Daesh because they are circulating the propaganda that leads to radicalization of Westerners. However, once an individual arrives in the caliphate, it is clear that the reality they experience is "significantly different from the utopian propaganda" that they have viewed throughout their radicalization process.[111] This is because Daesh understands that they must construct an image of themselves that extends beyond fighting. This 'Brand Caliphate' is more than encouraging terrorism and migration to

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[108] Emma Pratchett, "Terrorism and Diaspora," *CoHaB Diasporic Constructions of Home and Belonging*, March, 4, 2014, http://www.itn-cohab.eu/wiki/terrorism-and-diaspora.
[109] Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives 17.
[110] Saltman and Smith, 10.
[111] Ibid., 18.

Daesh controlled territory, it "represents the building of an 'Islamic Utopia' and as such it offers people a diversity of roles as part of its state building project."[112] Transnational networks that facilitate the encouragement of pseudo-nationalism through establishing their 'Brand Caliphate' extends its reach to build upon Daesh's activities by allowing people to individually act as a spokesperson for the group through their support on social media, such as that seen below in Figure 5.

Figure 5[113]

Umm Ubaydah @FlamessOfwar, 20 November 2014
'So many beheadings at the same time, Allahu Akbar [God is the greatest], this video is beautiful #DawlaMediaTeamDoingItRight'
https://twitter.com/FlamessOfwar [last accessed 28 November 2014]

Umm Irhab @MuslimahMujahi1, 20 August 2014
'I was happy to see the beheading of that kaafir [non-believer], I just rewinded to the cutting part. Allahu akbar! [God is the greatest!] I wonder what was he thinking b4 the cut'.
https://twitter.com/MuslimahMujahi1 [last accessed 28 November 2014]

Umm Ubaydah @FlamessOfwar, 10 October 2014
'my best friend is my grenade ... It's an American one too Lool. May Allah allow me to kill their Kanzeer [pig] soldiers with their own weapons.'
https://twitter.com/FlamessOfwar [last accessed 28 November 2014]

Umm Khattab @UmmKhhattab_, 8 December 2014
'Laaawl me and the akhawats [sisters] thought maybe murtads [apostates] were in the city lool I put the belt on and everything.'
https://twitter.com/UmmKhhattab__ [last accessed 8 December 2014]

For women, many of their Twitter feeds and blog posts highlight the importance of family in their migration narratives.[114] Daesh anticipates this theme and as a result has catered their integration programs for these women to include activities that encourage a sense of belonging and camaraderie amongst those

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[112] Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives 16.
[113] Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, 19.
[114] Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett, 18.

already in the caliphate, particularly connections with other Western women. Since

the declaration of the caliphate in 2014, Daesh "developed a unique jihadist strategy

that immediately recognized the importance of bringing women more actively into

propaganda and recruitment efforts."[115] This has previously been unseen with other

comparable groups, including Al Qaeda. Since its declaration of a caliphate, Daesh:

> Has increased its female-focused efforts, writing manifestos
> directly for women, directing sections of its online magazine
> publications *Daqib* to the 'sisters of the Islamic State' and
> allowing women to have a voice within their recruitment
> strategy – albeit via social media.[116]

In their new environment within Daesh, SGMW recruits confront significant

challenges and are often unable to communicate due to language barriers. The

construction of sisterhood amongst other women is strongly encouraged by Daesh,

even though the women often have nothing in common beyond their shared

allegiance. Social media postings depict women in the caliphate as "sharing

communal home-cooked meals by candlelight, taking trips to bathe in the Euphrates

River and doting over each other's newborns."[117] This type of narrative encourages

migration as it represents an inherent sense of belonging that potential female

recruits may be missing from their lives in the UK.

Radicalized Identity

All of these explanations of creating a manufactured identity through social

media space can also be associated with female radicalization. While most of the

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[115] Saltman and Smith, 17.
[116] Ibid., 18.
[117] Ibid., 48.

public concurs with the belief that women assume passive roles in extremist groups,[118] women are increasingly expanding upon the roles they are able to occupy. Like men, women are motivated "by personal, private reasons."[119] Moreover, women are often participating in jihadi extremism in order to express themselves where they have previously been restricted in traditionally conservative societies. Radicalization of women is now increasingly possible due to the power of the Internet and its ability to level "the playing field for women to join radical organizations that were previously unavailable or taboo, but are now accessible virtually and anonymously, from the comfort of one's home."[120] Essentially, radicalization methods currently used by terrorist networks allow for an increase of female involvement based partly on the ability to disguise one's identity through technological means.

Significantly, the women who have been radicalized by Daesh are then used as propagating actors themselves for the next wave of radicalization. As seen above, Daesh directly targets female radicalization and migration to the caliphate through varying tactics. Daesh has ensured that recruitment of females is a strategic objective as they literally help increase the population of supporters, whether through the surge of male foreign fighters who are partially motivated by female companionship, or through reproduction.[121] Daesh is aware of the fact that Western

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[118] Karen Jacques and Paul J Taylor, "Female Terrorism: A Review," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, no. 3 (2009): 499.
[119] Ibid., 500.
[120] Sanchez.
[121] Susan Lehman, "ISIS Lures 3 Teenage Girls: Reporter's Notebook," *The New York Times*, August 18, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/18/insider/isis-lures-3-teenage-girls-reporters-

jihadis desire wives who have similar backgrounds to themselves, so recruiting Western women also helps with the recruitment of foreign fighters.[122] Therefore, these people may not be interested in the reality of their situation as much as they are appealed by the constructed imaginary of this life that was provided to them while they were still in the comfort of their own home. Daesh has proven to be successful in this regard as more than 500 women from Western states have migrated to the caliphate.[123]

Figure 6[124]

These women have been encouraged to abandon their communities and are then "funneled into domestic roles, recruitments jobs, or all-women patrol brigade

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notebook.html; Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, 5; Saltman and Smith, 14; Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, 20.

[122] Lehman.

[123] Danica Kirka, "ISIS is luring normal Western women with troubling simplicity," *Associated Press*, May 28, 2015, http://www.businessinsider.com/young-women-are-joining-isis-for-more-than-marriage-2015-5.

[124] Saltman and Smith, 34.

to enforce the group's perverted world view."[125] These roles are aligned with Daesh's conservative notion of what a woman can do and the SGMW that have migrated to the caliphate often perpetuate these notions through their social media accounts, such as that seen above in Figure 6. This image shows women in traditionally conservative Muslim dress with weapons; such an image supports the narrative wherein Muslims must defend their culture against the dominant culture of the West. Moreover, Daesh is offering "adventure, belonging and sisterhood, romance, spiritual fulfillment and a tangible role in idealistic utopia-building."[126] While the first four can also be attributed to other youth sub-cultures, these movements mostly do not add to the same spiritual fulfillment and feelings of contribution to state-building that is offered by Daesh.

Radicalization of British Women

Motivations behind women's radicalization and involvement in terrorism are complex and female involvement within these activities is motivated by ideological, logistical and regional factors.[127] Women are their own agents and just as autonomous as men, so they are able to occupy a variety of roles in terrorist organizations including sympathizers, spies, warriors and leaders, even though they are not allowed to have combative roles within Daesh.[128] Even still, while women's agency is undeniable, this should not overshadow the fact that many women are victimized by patriarchal organizations, including jihadi groups. Members of Muslim

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[125] Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, 3.
[126] Ibid., 17.
[127] Cunningham, 174.
[128] Ibid.

diaspora who have been associated with radical activity fall into one of three categories: 1) those who have converted to Islam under an inaccurate representation of the religion; 2) first generation migrants who live on the margins of society; and 3) those whose families had migrated to the West but have not fully integrated.[129] This paper has focused on the third category through analyzing how pseudo-nationalism is constructed for SGMW in the UK through online radicalization. Each young person in the world experiences an important developmental period that is crucial to establishing their own identity within society.[130] Identities become questioned in early adulthood, but the added factor of being part of a minority ethnicity or religion "tends to naturally embed a sense of 'otherness', particularly for women wearing the *hijab* or *niqab* as a symbol of their faith."[131] There is "a significant amount of diversity within the profiles of women becoming radicalised and migrating to ISIS territory,"[132] but each of these women makes this journey because they are hoping to contribute to the caliphate in some regard. As such, there are approximately 550 Western women who have joined Islamist groups in Iraq and Syria, with 100 of those being British women.[133]

General Trends

For these 100 women, certain thoughts have led to their susceptibility to radicalization. For instance, while many of these women are identified as having particularly strong connections to their mother that could potentially dampen their

[129] Hoffman et al., 2.
[130] Saltman and Smith, 9.
[131] Ibid., 15.
[132] Ibid., 5.
[133] Kimiki De Freytas-Tamure, "Teenage Girl Leaves for ISIS, and Others Follow," *The New York Times*, February 24, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/25/world/from-studious-teenager-to-isis-recruiter.html.

desire to migrate to the caliphate, this connection is superseded by the belief that they will obtain even stronger connections to others once they arrive.[134] In general, these women feel as if they do not benefit "from Western freedoms and opportunity. Rather, they feel let down by Western society and by Western feminists who look at the hijab as a symbol of oppression."[135] This has been addressed in this paper as the major reason why more diverse feminist lenses are more adept at analyzing pseudo-nationalism than others. Specifically, SGMW are treated as outsiders more than their male counterparts as their religious identity is tied to their observable daily image.[136] These women are unified by this experience; it becomes a key drive for their migration to Daesh-controlled territory as they fulfill a need for meaning, sisterhood and identity.[137] This territory is now regarded as "a safe haven for those who wish to fully embrace and protect Islam."[138] SGMW migrants are now not only rejecting British culture, or the culture of the West more generally, but they are now also embracing Daesh's new vision for society.[139] The drive for these women to live within a society that enforces pre-modern Islamic rules is tied to their inability to properly exhibit their Muslim identity in the West without feeling as if they are being discriminated against.

The SGMW that have been radicalized were vulnerable and susceptible to the tactics used by Daesh for a variety of reasons. For instance, an American girl who converted to Islam following numerous online exchanges with a man in Britain that

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[134] Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett, 17.
[135] Lehman.
[136] Saltman and Smith, 10.
[137] Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett, 13.
[138] Saltman and Smith, 14.
[139] Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett, 12.

mirrored the recruitment instructions that can be found in a manual for Daesh.[140]

These types of manuals rely on potential jihadis believing in a certain perversion of

their religion that leaves them susceptible to radicalized groups' encouragement of

violence in the name of Islam. While diasporic Muslims typically "reject traditional

Islamic practices as a starting point, it is reasonable to assume that the religious

identities they craft for themselves will be more a reflection of the social settings in

which they find themselves immersed."[141] This means that the version of Islam that

Daesh seeks to disseminate amongst the Muslim diaspora is compounded by both

the lived experiences of these migrants in the caliphate as well as online activities.

The inability to reconcile their British and Muslim identities is steadily built upon as

exposure to Islamist groups increases.[142] The increased exposure to Islamism online

via social media networks impacts how SGMW perceive their Muslim identity and

may persuade them that it cannot be reconciled with their Western identity. Many

acknowledge their desire to live under *shari'a* law and strict Islamic code as a major

motivator for migrating to the caliphate.[143] These women are united in this regard

as they have been shown a particular image and narrative of this lifestyle via social

media.

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[140] Poh Si Teng and Ben Laffin, "Flirting With the Islamic State," *The New York Times*, June 27, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/100000003749550/flirting-with-the-islamic-state.html.
[141] Al Raffie, 84.
[142] Ibid., 88.
[143] Steven Morris, "Tareena Shakil: 'I don't want sympathy … it was my decision to go to Syria," *The Guardian*, January 29, 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jan/29/tareena-shakil-i-dont-want-sympathy-because-it-was-my-decision-to-go-to-syria.

Moreover, these women are susceptible to Daesh's radicalization out of a desire to have a sense of belonging and shared sisterhood.[144] Friendships with other migrant women form throughout Daesh's controlled territory, but are specifically concentrated in Raqqah where women lived in shared homes as they await marriage to jihadis.[145] As has been seen in friendships amongst jihadis, or in selection of brides by jihadis, these sisterhoods in Daesh-controlled territory are based on nationality and language. For instance, "English speakers from the UK and Australia tend to find camaraderie together while there seems to be limited interaction between female migrants from diverse nationalities."[146] This exemplifies the fact that diasporic Muslims have weak ties to Islam and know very little about certain aspects, including Arabic. This could mean, then, that these women who are qualified as migrants by both researchers and Daesh are actually not a type of diaspora from the West once the enter the caliphate. They are certainly given the same privileges of comfort that are more closely associated to other groups that have been classified as 'expatriates' above those that are deemed migrants.

The women who have become radicalized vary in their backgrounds; however, there are certain trends that have been noticed. Tareena Shakil, a British woman who migrated to Daesh-controlled territory through Turkey and returned to England last year, claims that she was targeted when she was at a low point following a marital separation from her husband in the UK.[147] However, more often, the women who have been radicalized have been described by family and friends as

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[144] Saltman and Smith, 15.
[145] Ibid., 26.
[146] Saltman and Smith, 16.
[147] Morris.

normal, happy and not particularly religious. Some are described as having had typically Western adolescences where they partied, enjoyed socializing, smoked and wore Western clothing.[148] In general, experiencing discrimination in their society has made it difficult for these women to fully identify as British.[149] Instead, their susceptibility to radicalization has been through recruitment that has addressed their vulnerability and desire to belong.

The recruitment of women for Daesh has been perpetuated through social media where women declare that joining is just as much a woman's duty as it is a man's in terms of jihad.[150] The radicalization on social media is incredibly strategic as it targets young women who are vulnerable in their desire to belong. This drive is romanticized by playing "heavily on romantic notions of adventure and finding romance in the form of a husband."[151] Subsequently, it is no surprise that the recruiters often act in this role when they connect with potential jihadi brides. Daesh uses attractive men who speak Western languages, such as English or French, perfectly.[152] These men appeal to women based on their shared Western characteristics while simultaneously contributing to the narrative that life in Syria is incredible and everything is better than in the West. One recruiter is cited as saying: "We have everything here. Masha'Allah, you have to believe me: it's paradise! A lot

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[148] "Hasna Aitboulahcen, from 'party girl' to suspected terrorist," *France 24,* November 21, 2015, http://www.france24.com/en/20151121-france-paris-attacks-hasna-aitboulahcen-party-girl-suspected-terrorist.
[149] Al Raffie, 82.
[150] Saltman and Smith, 14.
[151] Ibid., 16.
[152] Anna Erelle, "Skyping with the enemy: I went undercover as a jihadi girlfriend," *The Guardian*, May 26, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/26/french-journalist-poses-muslim-convert-isis-anna-erelle.

of women fantasise about us; we're Allah's warriors."[153] This sort of language constructs a particular idealistic image that appeals to SGMW and fosters their hopes of finding a family and belonging in the caliphate.

Figure 7[154]

Once these women have arrived, anything they post on social media can be used in the next wave of radicalization of women in the West. Daesh is now skilled in appealing to women from a variety of backgrounds, "using girl-to-girl recruitment strategies, gendered imagery and iconic memes" as means of radicalization.[155] Some women claim that they are being forced into sending messages and pictures that are

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[153] Ibid.

[154] Saltman and Smith, 15.

[155] Katrin Bennhold, "Jihad and Girl Power: How ISIS Lured 3 London Girls," *The New York Times*, August 17, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/18/world/europe/jihad-and-girl-power-how-isis-lured-3-london-teenagers.html.

supportive of Daesh, such as the one seen above in Figure 7;[156] this is unconfirmed,

but it is widely believed that women are encouraged to post online. Each woman

that becomes indoctrinated into Daesh's view of Islam becomes "a new poster child

for its jihadi girl-power propaganda."[157] The brand caliphate is about building a new

'state' and projects its pseudo-nationalism to potential radicalized women through

P2P social media recruitment drives by other women.

Bethnal Green Girls

When Shamima Begum, Amira Abase, both then 15, and Kadiza Sultana, then

16, left their homes in East London and traveled to Syria in February 2015, they

became internationally infamous as poster-girls for this so-called jihadi girl

power.[158] They ran away from home to join Daesh in Syria and became infamous by

the airport security photo released prior to their boarding of a flight to Istanbul

from Gatwick Airport. Their families have been reluctant to divulge great detail to

the press, due to the continuing investigation, which makes it difficult to properly

trace their radicalization and migration processes. From the available information, it

appears that family and friends choose to remember these girls as they were before

they ever showed signs of their radicalization. They are remembered as kind,

sociable, normal teenagers who read popular novels, got good grades and were

involved in sports.[159] Some analysts describe this phenomenon of these girls

belonging to "a world in which teenage rebellion is expressed through a radical

religiosity that questions everything around them. In this world, the counterculture

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[156] Morris.

[157] Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives 1.

[158] While Shamima Begum and Kadiza Sultana were born in the UK, whereas Amira Abase was born in Ethiopia and raised between Germany and England.

[159] Bennhold.

is conservative. Islam is punk rock. The head scarf is liberating. Beards are sexy."[160]

The decision to migrate to the caliphate, then, is based on as much logic as other comparable people dying their hair black and listening to heavy metal. Religiosity is not the major reason for their involvement in jihad.

The radicalization of these girls began online and there is significant evidence that suggests that this group of friends were rapidly and collectively radicalized, "with the girls mutually informing and policing each other's views in a closed-community vacuum."[161] The three girls used social media to inquire about the logistics of traveling into Syria and what they were to expect once they arrived. One such inquiry is seen below in Figure 8 where Amira Abase posts on Twitter regarding piercings:

Figure 8[162]

This series of postings shows that Abase is unsure about whether or not certain representations of Western youth rebellion, namely nose piercings, are forbidden in

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[160] Ibid.
[161] Saltman and Smith, 44.
[162] Ibid., 46.

the caliphate. Daesh prides itself on implementing *shari'a* law as a protection of the Muslim faith and what they perceive to be the proper way of life. Abase's lack of knowledge and confusion about whether this jewelry would be allowed again shows her weak ties to a staunchly conservative interpretation of Islam. By posting questions like this one to Twitter, Abase, like many other women, becomes better equipped with how to prepare for life in Daesh's territory.[163] While social media accounts can also be used to initiate the radicalization process, it is even more crucial when planning the actual migration of these women to the caliphate. For instance, authorities were initially unsure about how the girls managed to pay for the tickets to Istanbul, but it is now believed that they sold their jewelry in order to do so.[164] Through connections they made online, these girls traveled to somewhere they had never been with the hopes of beginning a new life for themselves.

Once they arrived in the caliphate, their families in the UK launched the Internet campaign #callhomegirls that shows that if people believe a hashtag can bring the girls home, then they believe this is how they could have been target from Syria to begin with.[165] The three girls have connected with their families through social media sites such as Instagram,[166] but as of January 2016 the families have lost contact with the girls.[167] While they were still in contact, the conversations gave "the

[163] Ibid., 48.
[164] Ruth Sherlock, "Found: The Bethnal Green schoolgirls who ran away to Syria," *The Telegraph*, July 3, 2015, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11716099/Bethnal-Green-schoolgirls-identified-in-Syria-in-exclusive-video-footage.html.
[165] Bennhold.
[166] Bennhold.
[167] Louisa Loveluck, "Relatives' fears over safety of three Bethnal Green schoolgirls who joined Isil in Syria," *The Telegraph,* January 16, 2016, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/12108794/Relatives-fears-over-safety-of-three-Bethnal-Green-schoolgirls-who-joined-Isil-in-Syria.html.

impression that the girls have few regrets about leaving their lives in London."[168]

Since February 2015, these girls have become powerful symbols in the jihadi girl-power subculture;[169] Daesh uses them as P2P recruiters as the images of the three girls that have been circulated through the media have "become synonymous with the phenomenon of female migrants to ISIS territory, particularly within British consciousness."[170] Propaganda materials support the image of the caliphate that is being constructed online to advance Daesh's pseudo-nationalism. However, the public attention that they receive from radicalized recruits' own online postings is even more significant in providing an interpretation of life in the caliphate that appeals to potential jihadis.

Conclusion

In summary, women belonging to a diaspora community are able to participate in violent jihadi action for an array of reasons that may stem from their position in their host society, their familial role, or the diasporic connections they maintain to their homeland. Therefore, these connections that manufacture political identities through networks are pivotal to understanding just one of the possible explanations for female radicalization in the twenty-first century. Under the dichotomy of understanding women as terrorists that was previously mentioned, women are essentially able to go under the radar and avoid becoming targets for Western intelligence and security agencies, partly because Western narratives paint

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[168] Bennhold.
[169] Bennhold.
[170] Saltman and Smith, 43.

them as passive victims in contrast to the portrayal of their male counterparts. Therefore, with the rise of Daesh and other jihadi groups that may not be explicitly concerned with the oppression of women, there may be more space for females to occupy roles with more power, including radicalization agents. The roles of women in the caliphate are diverse, even though women are not yet able to participate in combative roles. In addition to their position as wives and mothers, women in the caliphate participate in P2P radicalization through social media accounts, including Twitter and Instagram. These are tools that construct the image and narrative of the caliphate, as is desired by Daesh.

Western governments need to do more to create a counter-narrative to that of the P2P movement currently underway by women who have migrated to the caliphate. While it is problematic to establish counter- and de-radicalization programs based on identifying certain groups as being more 'at risk', much of the controversy can be avoided with certain programs. Specifically, these programs must attempt to put forward a non-biased approach to representing life in the caliphate as it is, rather than how it has been imagined and perpetuated by Daesh. This could be accomplished by relying on the stories of women who have returned to the UK from Daesh-controlled Syria, such as Tareena Shakil. The social media postings of women in the caliphate that paint Daesh in a negative light can also be leveraged for counter-radicalization. These narratives rely on women's actual experiences to counter the stories that Daesh is attempting to construct in order to radicalize the next wave of jihadis. Moreover, counter- and de-radicalization policies must embrace the role that families have in preventing their daughters from

migrating.[171] This could include early intervention from families and parents encouraging their daughters to have more frequent exposure to cultural and religious activities.

Alternative methods of deterring SGMW from migrating to Daesh-controlled territory include the same type of online marketing tools that already exist for large corporations.[172] Using criteria that targets individuals based on interactions, preferences and cookies to track online behaviour in ways that these corporations do can also be done with counter-narrative initiatives online. This could be an exceptionally good idea considering the social media and online network that is now significantly used in the radicalization process by Daesh. Once someone has been detected as a potential recruit, authorities can engage in counter-radicalization programs online and at the local level. These programs can vary depending on the analysis of the threat, but each would benefit from encouraging local cultural participation that is related to integrating these individuals within diasporic communities that are placed within sub-cultures of the dominant society. Opening up these dialogues is essential to counter- and de-radicalization programs. Implementing these strategies online directly counters Daesh's attempt to use social media to establish a particular image and narrative of the caliphate. Daesh's usage of these same networks has constructed a particular image of the caliphate as being receptive to diasporic Muslims and able to offer a life that matches their imagined understanding of *shari'a*. As more people become radicalized they are able to further perpetuate these narratives through virtual networks that appeal to some

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[171] Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett, 18.
[172] Saltman and Smith, 55.

SGMW in the UK based on their individual romanticization of Daesh's caliphate.

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