Exploring the relationship between support for protest and psychological well-being for Māori

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As a colonised peoples, many Māori have engaged in various forms of political resistance. Accordingly, research suggests that socio-political consciousness, which will sometimes involve at least considering protest, is an increasingly important aspect of identifying as Māori. This paper draws on a large, nationally representative sample of Māori (*N* = 1,977) to examine the links between expressing support for political activism ("activism" being used here synonymously with "protest") and well-being. Support for political activism includes merely contemplating protesting and voting to support Māori issues, as well as actually signing petitions. Well-being includes self-reported mental health via the Kessler-6 and subjective health. Results show that support for political activism was strongly associated with greater subjective psychological distress and lower subjective health, above and beyond the variance explained by exhaustive demographic factors. This research presents the first empirical data in New Zealand demonstrating the strength of this relationship, and provides a good starting point for further investigation.

Keywords: Political Rights, Activism, Collective Action, Māori.

Introduction

New Zealand's indigenous Māori peoples were colonised by the British (now called Pākehā) from the early 1800s. As the British gained control over Māori territories and people, Māori found themselves caught up in, and often crushed by, Britain's colonial expansion. For generations, Māori have resisted colonisation and Pākehā encroachment on their rights to self-determination. In that way, Māori political activists have had a profound impact on New Zealand's history. But while there has been much written about what activists have done and achieved, we ask the following: how does activism, engaging in it or even considering taking a stand, affect individuals psychologically? Research provides a clear picture of when and why people will engage in collective action (e.g., van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008), yet studies which have assessed the psychological impact of collective action on individual participants report mixed findings, with some activists experiencing positive psychological outcomes and others experiencing negative psychological consequences.

At present, there are no studies for Māori on the impact of taking part, or engaging, in political activism on well-being. This paper recognises the efforts of Māori political activists, leaders, and lobbyists (Dominy, 2016; King, 1977; Mikaere, 1988; Patete, 2007; Walker, 1984, 2004) and asks, as its research question, 'What is the psychological impact of supporting activism?' Using a large, nationally representative panel sample of people who identify as Māori, we examine the links between supporting political protest (broadly defined) and psychological well-being. We consider factors other than activism that may contribute to this relationship. We conclude by giving qualified support to the argument that taking part in, supporting or considering supporting

protest can take a toll on Māori in terms of psychological distress and subjective health.

The New Zealand context: Māori identity, protest and activism

A key concern of political science and social-psychological literature concerned with activism is to identify the factors that give rise to acts of political protest. Previous research indicates people are motivated to protest when they (a) identify with a group (Kawakami & Dion, 1995; Simon et al., 1998), (b) perceive their group to be disadvantaged (Becker & Tausch, 2015; Osborne & Sibley, 2013; Osborne, Smith, & Huo, 2012; Smith, Pettigrew, Pippin, & Bialosiewicz, 2012; Smith & Walker, 2008), and (c) believe that their group can be successful at effecting change (van Zomeren et al., 2008). Recent literature also incorporates the role of ideology, noting that protests tend to occur in a context in which activists fight to either challenge or support the status quo (Jost, Becker, Osborne, & Badaan, 2017; Osborne, Jost, Becker, Badaan, & Sibley, 2019). These conditions have been met for Māori in New Zealand, who have a complex history of political activism, which we now outline.

The people now known as Māori arrived from Eastern Polynesia between 1100 and 1300 CE (Walker, 2004). Immersed in their own communities, Māori had no need for a word to define themselves as a collective (Howe, 2018). The name Māori, meaning "ordinary" people, came into use in the early 1800s to distinguish them from the new people arriving in New Zealand (mainly from the United Kingdom), namely, "Pākehā". In that sense, identifying as Māori has always been implicated with the presence of non-Māori, and the need to clarify a different collective identity. After some years of tension, in 1840, some Māori Chiefs and representatives of the British

Crown signed the Treaty of Waitangi and formal colonisation by Pākehā ensued. The Māori and the English versions of the Treaty differed significantly, and the meanings of the documents are still a source of debate and disagreement today (Orange, 1992, 2004). Once the Treaty was signed and settler numbers multiplied, Pākehā established a system of laws that both Māori and Pākehā were required to follow (Mead, 1985, 1999). This process included Māori assimilation. Apart from the legal aspect, colonisation in New Zealand was an often violent process, including wars, and was certainly a process whereby Māori lost the majority of their lands and political control (Belich, 1986, 1996; Ministry for Culture & Heritage, 2017). By the early 1900s, Pākehā had become the majority group in New Zealand and held much of the lands previously occupied and utilised by Māori. Māori found themselves surrounded by a more numerous and economically powerful group who were in a position to exert massive influence over the experience of Māori in most areas of social and economic life (Awatere, 1984).

Within this context, Māori activism and resistance to colonisation over the last two centuries has included a range of strategies and participants (Penehira et al., 2014). Publicly visible protest over the last 40 years has largely centred on the Treaty's (unfulfilled) promises to Māori. Although open warfare was a feature of early colonial New Zealand, not all resistance during the early years of European colonial rule took the form of physical violence. In the early years of colonisation, Māori petitioned the New Zealand Government and local authorities, peacefully marched and occupied lands, disrupted land surveying, and sent deputations to England to implore the British monarch to honour the Treaty (Dell, 2018; Keane, 2012; Ward, 1999; Williams, 1999). Up until the 1950s, despite considerable peaceful interaction between Māori and Pākehā, the two groups remained at a distance geographically as well as socially. Māori lived largely in rural areas, while Pākehā lived in larger New Zealand cities. Māori social organisation changed dramatically after the 1950s as New Zealand's economy boomed and Māori moved to the cities to seek work.

According to Walker (2004), increased Māori-Pākehā contact in the cities meant Māori were exposed to racism in their day-to-day interactions with Pākehā making it difficult to secure good housing and employment. Exposure to racism and its effects, together with an increase in the number of highly educated Māori, lead to heighted political consciousness among young urban Māori (Walker, 2004). In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a significant rise in publicly visible acts of Māori political activism and they began to feature in the mainstream New Zealand media. Māori leaders and political activists instigated a series of high profile protests, land occupations, and land marches that brought New Zealand's damaging history of colonialism and Māori grievances to the forefront of New Zealand politics (Walker, 2004; Webster, 1998). Māori activism placed the New Zealand Government under increasing pressure to deal with Māori demands for reparation for various breaches of the Treaty (see Sissons, 1993). Reflecting this, the Treaty of Waitangi was given greater recognition after 1975 with the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal (a forum where Māori could make claims for compensation for breaches of their Treaty rights). In the mid-1980s, the Government extended the jurisdiction of the Tribunal to examine Māori grievances retrospectively to 1840. This was a major coup for Māori as it enabled them to make claims to the Government for historical injustices against their ancestors (van Meijl, 1995). One goal of this period was the promotion of te reo Māori (Māori language) and Māori culture to counter the effects of assimilationist policies on generations of Māori (Grace, 1986; Ihimaera, 1977; Mane-Wheoki, 1995). Since the 1990s, Māori tribal groups seeking compensation have achieved many successes in the legal arena (see Lashley, 1996, 2000; van Meijl, 1995). This history of protest and resistance to assimilation in the legal, political, educational and artistic domain has become part of New Zealand's history and has featured prominently in the New Zealand media and political arena. This has brought the idea of activism to the attention of the broader community of Māori people, and resulted in socio-political consciousness becoming a core feature of the Māori cultural identity of some Māori – particularly those who have proactively learnt about New Zealand history and the colonisation experience of Māori people (Houkamau, 2006).

Māori–Pākehā social and political history, intermarriage and cohabitation, the urbanisation of Māori and the passing of time have resulted in considerable social and cultural integration between Māori and Pākehā. In the 2013 census, half the (self-identified) Māori population indicated they also have at least one parent who is either European/Pākehā or part-European/Pākehā (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). However, although Māori and Pākehā interact daily in relative harmony on a personal level, tensions remain between Pākehā and Māori as identity groups in New Zealand due to the history of inter-group conflict (King, 1988, 1999).

Moreover, evidence suggests that socio-political consciousness and an awareness of Māori–Pākehā history is increasingly a core aspect of how many Māori experience and form their own sense of identity. For example, Houkamau (2006, 2010) found young Māori women (aged 18 to 35 years), having been born in the 1970s and 1980s and raised at a time when Māori equity and rights were pushed to the fore and asserted publicly, were more likely to refer to Māori rights and the Treaty of Waitangi when they talked about what it means to be Māori. In a national probability sample of 686 Māori drawn from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study, Greaves et al. (2015) explored the extent to which, among other factors, socio-political consciousness was an important part of identifying as Māori. In this study, socio-political consciousness was defined as the extent to which the individual perceives historical factors as being of continued importance for understanding contemporary intergroup relations between Māori and other ethnic groups in New Zealand; and how actively engaged the individual is in promoting and defending Māori rights given the context of the Treaty of Waitangi versus the extent to which the individual perceives historical factors and injustices experienced by Māori as being irrelevant in contemporary society. Items used to measure socio-political consciousness asked participants to indicate on a scale from 1 to 7 whether they agreed or disagreed with eight items including "I stand up for Māori rights" and

"It's important for Māori to stand together and be strong if we want to claim back the lands that were taken from us". In this study, Greaves et al. (2015) found that approximately 70% of participants considered socio-political consciousness to be an important part of their identity. More recently, Stronge et al. (2016) found those who strongly identify as Māori report greater support for political protest.

Given the context of Māori–Pākehā relations in New Zealand and the historical legacies of colonisation and related social and political tensions—tensions that have been increasingly brought to the fore since the 1970s, socio-political consciousness appears to form a critical dimension of the lived experience of identifying as Māori for some Māori people (Greaves et al., 2015; Houkamau, 2006, 2010). And for good reason; Māori political activism and activists have played a key role in shaping New Zealand history. Socio-political consciousness and an awareness of Māori–Pākehā history impacts on the way in which some Māori form a sense of who they are. Accordingly, we ask the following: 'What is the relationship between support for protest and psychological well-being for Māori?'

The uncertain impact of activism

Collective activism and protest may be defined as occurring when individuals engage in group-related activities with the goal of improving the condition of ones' own group as a whole (van Zomeren et al., 2008). Involvement in activism and protest has been found to both promote positive mental health and to buffer the impact of discrimination on mental health (Friedman & Leaper, 2010), possibly because collective action provides the individual with a mechanism to express frustration and also to attempt to create change. However, we know little about the psychological impacts collective action has had on Māori who choose to engage in it, support it or even consider supporting it. International research suggests that engaging in collective action in the face of pervasive discrimination may have positive implications for well-being (Breslow et al., 2015). For example, Foster (2014) found that after being exposed to gender discrimination, women who engaged in collective action had better well-being than women who took no action (especially for those women who perceived gender discrimination to be pervasive). Another study (Foster, 2015) examined how tweeting about sexism affects women's well-being. Women who were exposed to gender discrimination and then asked to tweet publicly about their experience (which could be seen as a form of collective action) experienced enhanced well-being. Drury and Reicher (1999) also point out that those who engage in collective action may experience a sense of empowerment, which, in turn, is associated with enhanced well-being.

At the same time, research shows that some people encounter negative experiences when engaging in collective action. For example, Cox (2014) recently conducted an online survey focusing on activist health and well-being in Australia. Cox's sample of 195 participants was diverse but biased towards female, university-educated, non-indigenous people living in Australasia, and participants were overwhelmingly experienced activists and campaigners. The survey found that, although activism was associated with a number of beneficial outcomes, those who reported in engaging in some form of political activism reported having a stronger sense of purpose, belonging and community. Many, however, reported a down side. For example, respondents reported that being sensitised and hyperaware of injustice can be depressing and the time commitment involved in activism can detract from family time and self-care. The survey also found that activists often felt subject to social stigmatisation and marginalisation. Some reported they took "too much personal responsibility for social change" (Cox, 2014, para. 10) and struggled to not take it all too personally.

Similarly, Chen and Gorski (2015) analysed data from interviews with 22 social justice and human rights activists on their experiences with, and observations of, activist burnout (defined as a sense of being overwhelmed, incapacitated and ground down by their work as activists). All respondents reported burnout including (1) the deterioration of physical health; (2) the deterioration of psychological and emotional health; and (3) feelings of hopelessness. Of the 22 activists interviewed, 16 believed they had suffered serious emotional or psychological health problems as a result of their activism and the conditions surrounding their political involvement. Many alluded to a culture of selflessness that discouraged them from tending to their own well-being, and others noted they felt overwhelmed by the lack of progress they perceived they were making with their activism. Eleven of the participants indicated that their sensitivities to injustice, and the related stress and pressure created by these sensitivities, contributed to their burnout, especially when the injustices they were battling appeared too "unwieldy".

Although collective action may have psychological benefits for those who engage in it, the psychological benefits to the participants taking action against perceived inequalities are unclear. Engaging in collective action may involve positive connections with others who share similar goals and aspirations through engaging in practical strategies to reduce disadvantage along with the confirmation of a shared identity and belief that change is achievable. These experiences could be positive. On the other hand, it could be that people feel empowered when they first engage in collective action. But over time, they may burn out because the injustices they experience or perceive are made even more salient by their participation in collective action. Indeed, while some of the contributors to poorer well-being described in these studies relate to the activism itself (e.g., the time commitment), the activists also describe a more general psychological burden of caring and fighting for a cause – lack of progress, feelings of personal responsibility, and increased sensitivity to inequality. Abundant research shows that exposure to ongoing chronic stress can negatively affect people's mental and physical health (Ford et al., 2014; Harris et al., 2012; Landsbergis, Dobson, Koutsouras, & Schnall, 2013). When the source of the stress is seen as uncontrollable or hopeless (Chen & Gorski, 2015; Cox, 2014), the negative effects on health and well-being can be exacerbated (see Pascoe & Richman, 2009). Accordingly, it is likely that the negative

affect (e.g., anger) that can so effectively fuel people's involvement in collective action (Becker & Tausch, 2015; Osborne et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2012; Tausch & Becker, 2013; Tausch et al., 2011) could also result in a decrease in the well-being of protestors.

The current study

The relationship between psychological well-being stemming from supporting protest and subjective health is unclear and has not been studied in relation to Māori. Some qualitative research suggests that, for self-identified activists at least, supporting political activism can have a negative impact on health and well-being (Chen & Gorski, 2015; Cox, 2014). Other studies indicate a potentially positive impact on well-being (Foster 2014, 2015). Political activism for Māori may have a negative impact, with the long history of Māori protest described as "the struggle without end" (Walker, 2004). At the same time, activism may have a positive impact for Māori, particularly if individuals believe that their behaviour will have a positive influence on political change (perhaps by sending a strong signal to politicians) and effectively help create change. This research aims to assess the associations between collective action and well-being for Māori, many of whom may view political consciousness as an important component of both history and identity. Specifically, we test the relationship between support for protest, subjective health satisfaction and psychological well-being as measured using the Kessler-6 scale.

METHOD

Sampling Procedure

This research used data from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (NZAVS). The study began in 2009 and randomly sampled participants from the electoral roll (see Sibley, 2014 for details). The current research used the sixth wave of the NZAVS, collected in 2014. The Time 6 (2014) NZAVS contained responses from 15,821 participants (15,740 retained from one or more previous wave, and 82 unmatched participants or unsolicited opt-ins). The sample retained 14,875 from the previous year (2013) and 3,727 participants from the initial NZAVS sample in 2009 (a retention rate of 81.5% over one year and 57.2% over five years; for a comprehensive explanation of the sampling procedure, see NZAVS Technical Documents - The University of Auckland, 2018). Participants were posted a copy of the questionnaire, with a second postal follow-up two months later. Participants who provided an email address were also emailed and invited to complete an online version if they preferred.

Participants

We limited our sample to the 1,977 participants who identified as Māori (67.4% female; N = 1,333). The mean age of the sample was 47.29 (SD = 13.14). Seventy-five percent of the sample were employed, 68% of the sample were in a serious romantic relationship, 77% were parents, 59% lived in an urban environment, and 45% identified with a religious or spiritual group. The mean education level was 4.10 (on a scale from 0-10 where 10 is highly educated; SD = 2.90), and the average deprivation level was 6.12 (on a scale from 1-10 where 10 is high deprivation; SD = 2.89). The majority of the sample jointly identified as New Zealand European (68.5%).

Materials

Support for protest was measured using three items adapted from Cronin, Levin, Branscombe, van Laar and Tropp (2012): "I've considered engaging in protest for my ethnic group", "I have considered voting in terms of what is good for my particular ethnic group", and "I've signed petitions for my ethnic group" (α = .76). Items were measured on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Psychological distress was measured using the Kessler-6 scale (Kessler et al., 2010). This scale uses six items measured on a scale from 0 (None of the time) to 4 (All of the time) in response to the item "During the last 30 days, how often did you feel…": "hopeless", "so depressed that nothing could cheer you up", "restless or fidgety", "that everything was an effort", "worthless", and "nervous" (α = .85).

Subjective health was measured using a three-item measure adapted from Ware and Sherbourne's (1992) short-form health survey. Two items (i.e., "I seem to get sick a little easier than other people" and "I expect my health to get worse") were measured on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The final item asked people to rate themselves on a scale from 1 (Poor) to 7 (Excellent) in response to the item, "In general, would you say your health is…" (α = .61).

The health measure used here has previously been utilised with Māori (for example see Scott, 1999) and the protest support items have been used in a variety of contexts with non-Western samples (e.g. Cronin, Levin, Branscombe, Van Laar & Tropp, 2011). The Kessler-6 has been found to perform well as a broad screening measure of non-specific psychological distress for Māori, as it does for many other ethnic and cultural groups (Krynen, Osborne, Duck, Houkamau & Sibley, 2013). For example, the Kessler-6 has been found to have acceptable item response parameters for Māori (Krynen et al., 2013), as well as discriminant and convergent validity with Māori samples (Houkamau, Stronge & Sibley, 2017; Muriwai, Houkamau & Sibley, 2018; Lee, Duck & Sibley, 2017).

RESULTS

We assessed the link between Māori people's support for protest and both the Kessler-6 measure of psychological distress and subjective health satisfaction using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). We estimated support for protest, subjective health and psychological distress as latent variables formed from the multiple items contained in each scale. The SEM also included the residual association between our dual outcomes (i.e., the Kessler-6 and ratings of subjective health). Thus, we recognised and controlled for the potential that other factors may partially account for the association between psychological distress and subjective health beyond those examined in our model.

We conducted the SEM in two nested steps. In the first step, we included support for protest as the sole predictor of psychological distress and subjective health. This first step thus assessed the associations support for protest has

with these dual outcomes unadjusted for other demographic "third variable" factors. In the second step, we extended the model to include a broad range of demographic factors. This model thus assessed whether the association between support for protest and the two outcomes held when adjusting for demographic covariates. As an aside, this model also provides information on demographic differences among Māori in psychological distress independent of support for protest.

one jointly identified as European, religion, parental status, relationship status, employment status, and whether one lived in an urban or rural area. Thus, the finding that Māori who indicate support for protest are also more likely to experience higher levels of psychological distress and report lower levels of health in general is not explained by any of these other demographics.

Table 1. Parameters from Structural Equation Model assessing the association between support for protest with psychological distress and subjective health.

	Psychological distress (K6)				Subjective Health			
	b	se	β	t	b	se	β	t
Model 1								
Support for Protest	.039	.015	.068	2.611**	-.108	.023	-.149	-4.782***
Model 2								
Support for Protest	.049	.016	.085	3.110**	-.108	.025	-.145	-4.389***
Gender (0 Women, 1 Men)	.056	.038	.034	1.472	-.089	.060	-.042	-1.496
Age	-.014	.002	-.240	-9.200***	.005	.002	.064	2.019*
Regional Deprivation	.005	.007	.018	.712	-.034	.011	-.097	-3.115**
Education	-.003	.008	-.012	-.401	.030	.013	.087	2.356*
Socio-Economic Index	-.005	.001	-.102	-3.444**	.002	.002	.028	.796
Household Income	-.100	.018	-.160	-5.596***	.026	.028	.032	.932
Joint European Ethnicity	-.023	.042	-.014	-.561	.094	.066	.044	1.427
Religious	-.023	.037	-.015	-.625	-.059	.058	-.030	-1.027
Parent	-.017	.047	-.010	-.368	.123	.073	.052	1.682
Romantic Partner	-.090	.042	-.055	-2.116*	.069	.066	.032	1.041
Employed	-.233	.044	-.132	-5.290***	.373	.069	.163	5.386*
Live in Urban Area	.044	.036	.028	1.210	-.080	.057	-.039	-1.402

Note. N = 1,977. *= $p <. 05$, **= $p < .01$, ***= $p < .001$. Latent estimates of K–6 and subjective health were predicted simultaneously and their residuals allowed to correlate. Model 1 fit indices: Loglikelihood = -35074.674, AIC = 70622.847, BIC = 70840.851, $\chi^2(66)$ = 395.498, p < .001, CFI = .960, RMSEA = .058, sRMR = .031. Model 2 fit indices: Loglikelihood = -71296.008, AIC = 143808.298, BIC = 144730.622, $\chi^2(159)$ = 891.322, p < .001, CFI = .923, RMSEA = .048, sRMR = .030. Support for protest, psychological distress (K–6) and subjective health were estimated as latent variables. Regional deprivation ranged from 1 (low) to 10 (high), Education ranged from 0 (low) to 10 (high), Socio-Economic Index ranged from 10 (low) to 90 (high). Missing values for exogenous demographic covariates were imputed.

Parameter estimates for the SEM assessing links between support for protest and psychological distress and subjective health are reported in Table 1. The initial model indicated that support for protest was positively associated with psychological distress and negatively associated with ratings of subjective health. These findings indicate that Māori who are more supportive of protests are also more likely to experience higher levels of psychological distress, but lower levels of subjective health in general.

Critically, the associations between support for protest and psychological distress and subjective health held when adjusting for numerous other demographic factors, including gender, age, regional deprivation, education, socio-economic status, household income (log), whether

DISCUSSION

To summarise, our results showed that Māori who reported that they considered taking political action on behalf of their ethnic group had higher levels of psychological distress than those who did not. These results held, and in fact strengthened, when a wide array of demographic variables were controlled, including participants' mixed ethnic identity status, gender, age, deprivation, level of education, SES, household income and employment status. Additionally, as support for protest increased, individual ratings of health decreased (i.e., people were less likely to agree with the statement,

"I am happy with my health"). These results also held after accounting for key demographic variables.

Activism can take normative and socially acceptable forms (such as lobbying, making submissions, and circulating petitions) that fit within the dominant political system, as well as more vigorous, disruptive, and non-normative forms (such as demonstrations, pickets, marches, boycotts, and land occupations; Walker, 1984; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). In relation to the latter, Walker (1984) notes that activism tactics exercised in public places are "a two-edged weapon" (p. 267). "On one hand the action may further the cause, on the other, it also generates opposition from sections of the general populace not in sympathy with the cause. It is these vigorous tactics which, although legitimate, bring down opprobrium on the heads of activists" (Walker, 1984, p. 267).

What is notable about our results is that the forms of support for protest assessed here fit quite clearly into the realm of moderate forms of socio-political consciousness and orientation. Support for protest as measured here included merely contemplating political action: however, the wording of the items was such that individuals who had actually taken political action were also captured by the measures. Support for political protest, or even considering it, is still related to poorer psychological health. Another way to look at this is that those who are more socio-politically conscious, to the point they have considered engaging in protest, are more likely to report higher levels of psychological stress than those who did not. Poor scores on the Kessler-6 are not trivial; self-rated perceptions of health may reflect changes in physical functioning. The Kessler-6 measures non-specific psychological distress and is used by the World Health Organisation as a screening tool for identifying serious mental illness (Kessler et al., 2010).

Socio-political consciousness is an important aspect of how some Māori form a sense of their own identity (Awatere, 2984; Greaves, Houkamau, & Sibley, 2015; Houkamau, 2006, 2010). Another way to put this is that holding activist sympathies in one's identity makes a person more likely to consider protesting, to consider voting for Māori issues, and to sign petitions that support Māori interests. Although this is likely to be true of activists from a wide variety of spheres of interest, given that many activists identify with disadvantaged minority groups (Chen & Gorski, 2015; Cox, 2014), the centrality of socio-political consciousness to Māori identity makes it difficult for those who identify as Māori to ignore political issues related to Māori in New Zealand. Activists report that they feel stress and pressure relating to the perceived injustices they mobilise against, and feel hopeless and overwhelmed in the long term due to the lack of change effected by their activism (Chen & Gorski, 2015; Cox, 2014). For Māori who support protest on behalf of their own group and their own rights, stress from this activism may be particularly challenging. Stress has long been shown to impact negatively upon physical and psychological health, particularly when stress levels remain elevated for long periods of time (Ford et al., 2014; Harris et al., 2012; Landsbergis et al., 2013; Pascoe & Richman, 2009). Additionally, protest requires recognition of inequality, and that process wears on

activists day-to-day (e.g., Becker & Tausch, 2015; Chen & Gorski, 2015; Osborne et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2012; Tausch et al., 2011). Supporting even successful protest, or merely thinking about it, may also mean increased identification with a stigmatized identity (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Stronge et al., 2016). There may be multiple explanations of the mechanisms behind this relationship, and the direction of causation may run opposite to the way we are suggesting here (i.e., those who are more distressed by the experience of their group may be more likely to consider activism). While the mechanisms and causal direction require further investigation, what is clear is that Māori who have considered political activism on behalf of their group have poorer psychological health than those who have not. This research presents the first empirical data in New Zealand demonstrating the strength of this relationship, and provides a good starting point for further investigation.

Although there is a growing body of research that examines the links between activism and psychological well-being, this is the first study to demonstrate these links in New Zealand. This is also the first study to examine the psychological and reported health impact of support for protest on a minority group as a whole. It is ironic, but worth pointing out, that insofar as activism has won gains for Māori in terms of compensation, apologies, official acknowledgement of Treaty rights, an arts renaissance and some revival of the language, its impacts on the whole people are positive; yet our data suggest there is also a downside. Unlike previous research (Chen & Gorski, 2015; Cox, 2014), we do not recruit those who are involved in activism specifically, but rather, focus on a random sample of an indigenous ethnic minority community. Thus, we are able to examine the extent to which varying degrees of support for protest correspond to people's well-being. This research is also the first to examine these links among an indigenous group, which may have interesting implications for other contexts and countries with a background of colonisation.

Limitations

Findings from the present study must be interpreted in the light of certain limitations. The measure used in this study assessed attitudes and intentions in relation to political support rather than actual behaviour. Also, the sample includes people who have considered political action, as well as those who may have actually taken action. One could argue that there is a difference between those who take behavioural action and those who merely consider it. Although we agree with this point, Māori who are politically conscious enough to support protests on behalf of their group are likely to also be aware of the socio-political history which created contemporary New Zealand. This sensitivity to inequality, understanding the socio-historical marginalisation of Māori and thinking about how it might be rectified through political protest is, in itself, a stressor likely to contribute to the results reported in our study.

Although we demonstrate a relationship between support for protest and psychological well-being above and beyond what can be explained by demographic factors, we cannot identify the causal direction of this relationship, as the current research is cross-sectional.

Responding to injustice through providing a collective response may also be viewed by some as a proactive means of coping with the series of historical and contemporary injustices. However, previous qualitative research in the area finds that activists themselves pinpoint their work as the source of their decline in psychological well-being (Chen & Gorski, 2015; Cox, 2014). Therefore, the question remains: Does the act (or thought) of political engagement lead to higher reported levels of psychological distress, or does causation run from distress to considering—and sometimes taking—political action?

Alternatively, it could be that the conditions created by colonisation itself are the cause of the stressors and that those who are more aware of injustices and racism are more likely to report stress as opposed to speaking out against it. Indeed, some data suggest that the intergenerational impact of colonisation on Māori now is felt as a "present day reality" because of the negative effects that colonisation still has on Māori every day (Houkamau, Stronge & Sibley, 2017). For example, Dell (2018) interviewed 22 Māori who were involved in the management of Māori land and found what she refers to as "historical trauma" to be a factor affecting Māori alienated from land. Historical trauma can be defined as "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma" (Brave Heart, 2003, p. 283). Although colonial disruption to possession of the land had occurred in the late 1800s, participants in Dell's study spoke of their suffering and anger occurring in the present. For example, in speaking about the historical loss of their land, participants said the "generation who saw and felt and were part of that loss, it's still there" and, "all those historic grievances, sort of come out, and play out" (p. 135). Dell argued that the negative experiences of subsequent generations had been transferred to them via epigenetics and disrupted attachments (Haskell & Randall, 2009). Further, Dell's (2018) study found high levels of stress related to anger, unprocessed grief and shame tended to be prevalent in colonised communities. Starting from the point that disempowerment is inherited suggests that collective action does not necessarily create a psychological toll, but rather, merely becomes the channel for already existing levels of stress.

Further, it is possible that a self-sustaining cycle occurs in which both protest and poor psychological well-being fuel each other, until those engaged in collective action reach complete burnout. Yet, previous research has found no longitudinal association between well-being (measured by life satisfaction) and support for protest among Māori (Stronge et al., 2016). As we take the first steps into quantitatively examining these links, longitudinal research is an important future direction.

Research that determines which types of people (or personalities) and which types of activism are more likely to cause burnout may answer the question as to where activism and well-being are connected. Activism related to immediate survival needs of shelter, security and food is likely to cause the highest levels of stress. Similarly, threats to deeply held beliefs about identity will also invoke intense anxiety, possibly leading to burnout.

Activism may attract a type of person to the cause. The activist fights against those who do wrong, but this may inadvertently develop into a wronged identity. A wronged identity seeks confirmation and validation for anger and pain. Consequently, it needs to be fed with attention and sympathy for their suffering. Anger and victimhood provides solidarity and purpose for collective action and the group might find a type of strength and rightness in their wronged identity. The focus centres on maintaining solidarity of the collective struggle, instead of the actual transformation out of that struggle. Grievance and suffering may actually perpetuate challenging circumstances. What might be the relationship between this type of activist and the psychological toll? Understanding the interplay of the two may help to inform this field. A potential avenue for future research is to examine moderators of the relationship between protest and well-being. Using online surveys with American college students (N = 341) and a national sample of activists matched with a control group (N = 718), Klar and Kasser (2009) demonstrated that several indicators of activism were in fact positively associated with measures of hedonic, eudemonic, and social well-being. Firstly, it may be that activists can have higher eudemonic well-being (measuring concepts such as autonomy and personal growth), while also experiencing greater psychological distress and poorer physical health from the practical demands of their activism. However, it may be that activism is associated with an initial increase in well-being for younger or newer activists, but that this relationship changes direction over time as stress begins to accumulate. Finally, as suggested by Klar and Kasser, there may be a different association with well-being for those who protest for other people or external concepts such as "the environment", as compared to those who protest to assert the rights of their own group.

Conclusion

Given New Zealand's history, it is difficult for those who identify as Māori to avoid exposure to Māori identity politics. In this study, those who considered engaging in activism (or who had actually done so) experienced elevated levels of psychological distress. While Māori political activism has shown clear collective benefits and has advanced the recognition of Māori political rights to equality, it appears that undertaking such actions—or even thinking about them—may come with a cost to the individual. Over time, these driving forces may take a personal toll on the health of activists. The data also emphasise the potential personal implications of engaging in, or even contemplating, collective political action to advance the interests of one's own ethnic group. While based on findings for Māori, our results suggest generalizability to at least in-group activism (ethnic, gender, or other) in other countries and for different causes, but especially colonised indigenous groups.

High levels of awareness of injustice may mean that Māori are subject to higher levels of psychological distress. This paper is not intended to devalue becoming politically conscious and acting on that awareness. Indeed, Māori efforts to hold Pākehā accountable for the Treaty of Waitangi have been crucial for advancing Māori rights and political recognition (Awatere, 1996;

Greenland, 1984; Ihimaera & Kelly, 2017). While there is evidence that engaging in collective action may give individuals a psychological boost, it is important to recognise there is also a toll associated with such activism. Understanding and coping with historical injustice

involves a host of difficult experiences and emotions. Therefore, understanding the personal impact of political engagement and activism becomes increasingly important.

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