Terrorism Anxiety and Attitudes toward Muslims

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Many communities in New Zealand were left shaken following the terrorist attack against two Muslim mosques in Christchurch on March 15, 2019. However, historical records and expert assessments warned of a far-right anti-Muslim act of violence for some time. Our study examined people's reported anxiety about the possibility of a terrorist attack in New Zealand using data from the 2017/2018 New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (N = 17,072). Although anxiety regarding a potential terrorist attack was low, warmth toward Muslims correlated negatively with terrorism anxiety. Numerous other socio-demographic and attitudinal variables (e.g., age, gender, political orientation, nationalism, and aspects of personality) also correlated with terrorism anxiety. Collectively, our results reveal a relatively strong association between terrorism anxiety and attitudes toward Muslims. It remains an open question as to whether this association will endure over time, despite growing evidence of terrorism stemming from the far-right.

Keywords: terrorism, terrorism anxiety, Muslim attitudes, Christchurch, New Zealand

Introduction

On March 15, 2019, a sole gunman with professed connections to white nationalism and supremacy attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand (Coaston, 2019; Koziol, 2019). The terrorist attack (George, Berlinger, Whiteman, Kaur, Westcott, & Wagner, 2019), which killed 50 Muslims and injured 50 more, left the city of Christchurch—and the rest of the world—in a state of shock (Savage, 2019). However, within days of the incident, news articles and opinion pieces emerged that described the growing presence of white supremacy in Christchurch as early as the 1970s (Ainge Roy & McGowan, 2019; Wright, 2019). Moreover, this was not the first time the Muslim community in New Zealand had been attacked over the years (Kabir, 2016; Shaver, Troughton, Sibley, & Bulbulia., 2016). Nevertheless, immediately after this latest attack, academics and experts highlighted the spread of white supremacist and nationalist groups that were left uninvestigated and under the radar while "New Zealand's security agencies investigated and infiltrated the Muslim community, animal rights groups and environmental organisations" (Ainge Roy & McGowan, 2019).

Outside of New Zealand, research has also found connections between white supremacy and violence, particularly against minority religious and ethnic groups (e.g., Blazak, 2001; Freilich, Chermak, & Caspi, 2009). While Freilich et al. (2009) acknowledge the threat of international terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda, their work also draws attention to the danger and threat that homegrown far-right groups pose (see also Bonilla-Silva, 2007). In a survey of 37 states in the United States (US), far-right groups like Neo-Nazis, skinheads, and militias each outnumbered Islamic Jihadist extremists (Freilich, Chermak, & Simone, 2009). In fact, the number of violent attacks or threats from the far-right in the US had increased between 2007 and 2012 (i.e., the time of publication), while Muslim-American terrorism declined precipitously over a similar timespan (i.e., between 2001 and 2012; Perliger, 2012). Relatedly, fatalities from far-right groups have outnumbered those from Muslim extremist groups between 2001 (right after the 9/11 attacks) and 2012 (Kurzman, 2013). Finally, according to FBI reports, more suspected far-right domestic terrorists have been arrested than those "inspired by international terror groups" (Barrett, 2019), and most far-right extremist suspects have been White men (Gruenewald, 2011).

The purpose of this study is to address two questions: First, to what extent did New Zealanders worry about a terrorist attack occurring in their country prior to the terrorism incident in Christchurch? According to most media reports, New Zealanders were not deeply concerned about mass shootings or terror attacks happening in the country (Campbell, 2019).[1] Indeed, given that New Zealand was ranked as the second safest country in the world and the 114th impacted by terrorism (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018), such a sense of security was understandable. Moreover, the last mass killing in New Zealand occurred 22 years ago (Leask, 2017). Therefore, we would expect that only a small percentage of *non-Muslim* New Zealanders would be worried about terrorism occurring in New Zealand.

Second, the present study aims to identify the group(s) that New Zealanders associate with terrorism, and specifically whether attitudes toward Muslims predicts anxiety about terrorist attacks. Although the March 15 Mosque attacks were carried out by a white male who publicly expressed support for white supremacy, and historical records suggest that there is a growing threat of far-right terrorism led by whites (at the global level; Perliger, 2012; Wright, 2019), it is unclear whether New Zealanders could have imagined a white terrorist in their midst.[2] Despite the growing evidence to the contrary, past research on media and prejudice would suggest that most people

[1] However, this may not be the case for Muslims, who have suffered a number of attacks against their community and mosques for over two decades (Kabir, 2016) and have warned against further attacks repeatedly over the years (Ainge Roy & McGowan, 2019).

[2] Given that most group-based violence in New Zealand has been targeted against (rather than perpetrated by) Muslims (Kabir, 2016, Shaver et al., 2016), the possibility of a white terrorist is objectively more plausible. But this is not to say that the public's perceptions reflect this likelihood.

would picture a terrorist with a Muslim (rather than a New Zealand European) background (Kabir, 2006; Pedersen, Watt, & Griffiths, 2007; Shaver, Sibley, Osborne, & Bulbulia, 2017).

Although far-right white supremacist violence (i.e., terrorism) is on the rise, the public and state-level reaction has seemingly failed to take notice (Bouie, 2019). Unfortunately, media coverage has similarly downplayed the threat of terrorism from far-right white nationalists (Aly, 2007). One study found that "attacks by Muslims received significantly more coverage than attacks by non-Muslims" (Kearns, Betus, & Lemieux, 2019, p.10). Another study on New Zealand mainstream newspapers found that hard news tended to portray Muslims as "dangerous others" (Kabir & Bourk, 2012). Indeed, the media – in its various types – has perpetuated, if not created, a stereotypical link between Arabs and/or Muslims and terrorism (Karim, 2003; Saleem & Anderson, 2013; Shaheen, 2009). Moreover, previous research from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study has found a link between media exposure and anti-Muslim attitudes in New Zealand (Shaver et al., 2017).

To what extent, then, do attitudes toward Muslims predict fear of terrorist attacks in New Zealand? According to various studies across the world, the perception of an association between terrorism and Muslim or Middle Eastern groups is quite robust (Park, Felix, & Lee, 2007; Saleem & Anderson, 2013) and intensified after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the US (Harmon-Jones, Greenberg, Solomon, & Simon, 1996; Hitlan, Carillo, Zárate, & Aikman, 2007; Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011). Numerous studies have also demonstrated a strong relationship between anxiety and intergroup attitudes (e.g., Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). For instance, one study found that Australian media fostered associations between "Muslims with the threat of terrorism" (Ally, 2007). An experimental study showed similar effects, whereby participants who played video games with a terrorist theme later reported higher anti-Arab attitudes than did those who played a nonviolent game, even when those games contained no Arab characters (Saleem & Anderson, 2013).

Other research has also found a link between attitudes toward Muslims and a fear of terrorism (e.g., Kabir, 2007). In one study, individuals who viewed Muslims more negatively, particularly when it came to "warmth" stereotypes (e.g., violence and trustworthiness), were more likely to support the "War on Terror" (Sides & Gross, 2013). Similarly, German participants implicitly perceived Muslims to be more aggressive and supportive of terrorism than Christians (Fischer, Greitemeyer, & Kastenmüller, 2007). Another study that examined data from five major Western countries similarly found that participants perceived Muslims as violent and supportive of terrorist groups (Ciftci, 2012; Shaver et al., 2017).

Based on the recent reports and evidence on New Zealand, we predicted that only a small portion of New Zealand participants would be highly worried over a terrorist attack occurring in their country in 2017/2018 (when our data was collected). Despite the hypothesized low levels of concern over a terrorist attack though, lower warmth toward Muslims should still predict terrorism anxiety among our sample. Finally, to demonstrate the robustness of our results, we also include a number of demographic and attitudinal covariates.

METHOD

Sampling Procedure

Data for this study came from Time 9 (2017) of the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (NZAVS) – a multi-year study based on a national probability sample of New Zealand adults. Sample recruitment is based on the New Zealand electoral roll, which represents all citizens and permanent residents over 18 years of age who are eligible to vote. The Time 9 sample contained responses from 17,072 participants. Participants were mailed a copy of the questionnaire, with a reminder posted to non-respondents after two months. Participants who provided an email address were also emailed and offered the option to complete an online version of the survey. All respondents were posted a Season's Greetings card from the NZAVS research team and were offered a prize draw for a grocery voucher in exchange for their participation (see Sibley, 2018, for details). Full details for the NZAVS sampling procedure for this and other waves of the study are available at: www.nzavs.auckland.ac.nz.

Participants

Of the 17,072 participants included in Time 9 of the NZAVS, 16,328 (i.e., 95.6% of the full sample) completed the relevant measures for the analysis. The mean age of the sample was 51.27 (*SD* = 13.73), where 63.4% of the sample were women (36.6% were men), 81.6% identified as primarily New Zealand European, 11.6% identified as primarily Māori, 2.7% identified as primarily Pacific Islander, and 4.1% identified as primarily Asian. In addition, 63.9% of the sample did not identify with any religion or spiritual group, 31.5% identified as Christian, while the rest identified with other religious or spiritual groups, including 0.2% who identified as Muslim.

Materials

Feeling Thermometer

To measure our focal predictor, participants were asked to indicate how warm they felt toward a number of groups using a "feeling/affective thermometer" for each group. The groups included here were Muslims, Indians, Chinese, Immigrants (in general), Refugees, Pacific Islanders, Asians, Māori, and New Zealand Europeans. Responses were rated on a scale ranging from 1 ("feel LEAST WARM toward this group") to 7 ("feel MOST WARM toward this group").

Covariates

To better identify the specific role of warmth toward Muslims in predicting Terrorism anxiety, our statistical model adjusted for demographic variables such as age, gender (0=female, 1=male), household income, and ethnicity (Maori, Pacific Islander, and Asian, relative to NZ European), as well as whether they are religious, employed (0=unemployed, 1=employed), born in New Zealand, have children, are in a romantic relationship, and live in a rural or urban area (0=rural, 1=urban). Deprivation was measured using the 2013 New Zealand Deprivation Index, which uses census information to assign a decile-rank index from 1 (least deprived) to 10 (most deprived) to each meshblock unit (Atkinson, Salmond, & Crampton, 2014). Socioeconomic status (SES) was measured using the New Zealand socio-economic index, with a score ranging from 10 to 90, where 90 indicates high socio-economic status (Milne, Byun, & Lee, 2013). Education was coded into an eleven-level ordinal variable (0 = no qualification, 10 = doctorate).

To adjust for other variables that might also explain terrorism anxiety, a number of attitudinal covariates were also included in the model, such as the Big-Six personality factors, measured through the

Mini-IPIP6 (Sibley et al., 2011). Each trait is measured using 4 items rated from 1 (very inaccurate) to 7 (very accurate) and averaged to give scale scores for Extraversion (α = .76), Agreeableness (α =.72), Conscientiousness (α = .69), Neuroticism (α = .74), Openness to Experience (α = .71), and Honesty/Humility (α = .77). Since neuroticism can measure anxiety tendencies (e.g., "Am relaxed most of the time"), we expected a relatively stronger relationship between that trait and terrorism anxiety.

In addition, two separate political orientation items were included as relevant control variables for this study. These were measured by asking participants to "rate how politically liberal versus conservative [they see themselves] as being" (from 1 = "Extremely conservative" to 7 = "Extremely liberal") and to "rate how politically left-wing versus right-wing [they see themselves] as being (from 1 = "Extremely left-wing" to 7 = "Extremely right-wing"). Finally, two national identity measures, Patriotism ($r = .32$) and Nationalism ($r = .57$), were also entered into the model. Patriotism was assessed using two items from Kosterman and Feshbach (1989): "I feel great pride in the land that is our New Zealand" and "Although at times I may not agree with the government, my commitment to New Zealand always remains strong." Nationalism was assessed using two items from Kosterman and Feshbach (1989): "Generally, the more influence New Zealand has on other nations, the better off they are" and "Foreign nations have done some very fine things but they are still not as good as New Zealand." Responses to these items ranged from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 7 ("Strongly Agree").

Terrorism Anxiety

To measure anxiety about terrorism, participants were asked to rate a single item, "I often worry about terrorist attacks happening in New Zealand", on a scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 7 ("Strongly Disagree"). This item was developed specifically for use in the NZAVS.

RESULTS

The Extent of Terrorism Anxiety

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for terrorism anxiety and all predictors included in the regression model are presented in Table 1. The first purpose of this paper is to estimate New Zealanders' concern about a terrorist attack happening in their country. At the time the data for this paper was collected (i.e., 2017), the average mean score for terrorism anxiety was 2.64 ($SD = 1.61$; with mode and median = 2). Further analysis confirms that this mean score is significantly lower than the midpoint of the scale, $t(16327) = -107.66$, $p < .001$, indicating that terrorism anxiety in New Zealand was relatively low. Indeed, 30.1% of participants "strongly disagreed" with the statement and thus reported no anxiety. Nevertheless, a considerable percentage of participants expressed some concern over terrorist attacks, as a total of 16.1% of the sample agreed somewhat (9.7%), moderately (4.3%), or strongly (2.1%) that they worried about a terrorist attack happening in New Zealand.

Terrorism Anxiety Predicted by Warmth toward Groups

A multiple regression analysis was conducted, predicting terrorism anxiety from feelings of warmth toward different groups, as well as from various demographic, personality, political, and national identity measures. Missing data for the 34 predictor variables were estimated using Rubin's (1987) procedure for multiple imputation, by generating 100 datasets (thinned using every 100th iteration). Table 2 displays the results of this analysis.

After adjusting for the effects of various relevant demographic variables and covariates, warmth toward Muslims negatively correlated with terrorism anxiety. Relative to the other groups that participants expressed feelings toward, warmth toward Muslims had the strongest (negative) association with terrorism anxiety, $b = -.111$, $SE = .016$, $p <.001$. Put another way, the less warmth participants felt toward Muslims, the more worried they were about a terrorist attack happening in New Zealand. The effect size for this predictor was more than double that of any other ethnic or religious group assessed (the second strongest was warmth toward refugees, $b = -.050$, $SE =.016$, $p = .002$). On the other hand, warmth toward New Zealand Europeans did not significantly predict terrorism anxiety ($b = .007$, $SE = .012$, $p = .587$).

Terrorism Anxiety Predicted by Other Covariates

Several other variables also played a significant role in predicting anxiety about terrorist attacks in New Zealand. For instance, with the exception of Conscientiousness, all personality factors predicted terrorism anxiety. Honesty/Humility ($b = -.174$) and Neuroticism ($b = .127$) were the two strongest personality predictors of terrorism anxiety, revealing that those higher on honesty/humility and those lower on neuroticism worried about terrorist attacks less.

Political orientation and national identification also played a strong role in predicting terrorism anxiety. For instance, the higher their nationalism and the more conservative their political orientation, the higher their terrorism anxiety ($b = .133$ and b = .105, respectively). Right-wing political orientation predicted terrorism to a lesser extent (b - .041), whereas patriotism was not associated with terrorism anxiety.

When it comes to other demographic variables, higher anxiety about terrorist attacks was predicted by being female, being older, lower income, lower socioeconomic status, being religious, and living in an urban area. There was no significant relationship between neighbourhood deprivation levels, employment, having children or a partner, or being born in New Zealand. Finally, results showed that those who identified as Māori, Pacific, and Asian expressed more anxiety about terrorist attacks than did those who identified as New Zealand European.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables

	Mean	*SD*	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12..	13.	14.	15.	16.
1. Terrorism Anxiety	2.64	1.61	-															
2. Warmth toward Muslims	4.08	1.47	-.164	-														
3. Warmth toward Immigrants	4.52	1.24	-.120	.702	-													
4. Warmth toward Asians	4.53	1.28	-.077	.612	.703	-												
5. Warmth toward Chinese	4.36	1.34	-.084	.655	.740	.832	-											
6. Warmth toward Indians	4.28	1.37	-.110	.742	.741	.712	.766	-										
7. Warmth toward NZ Europeans	5.60	1.23	.035	.112	.239	.287	.212	.194	-									
8. Warmth toward Maoris	5.03	1.26	-.029	.436	.474	.491	.428	.446	.427	-								
9. Warmth toward Pacific Islanders	4.79	1.25	-.073	.542	.599	.613	.551	.585	.345	.717	-							
10. Warmth toward Refugees	4.67	1.35	-.138	.661	.718	.579	.569	.621	.202	.485	.585	-						
11. Gender (0 female, 1 male)	.37	.48	-.064	-.101	-.062	-.015	-.02	-.039	-.017	-.082	-.080	-0.12	-					
12. Age	51.27	13.73	.094	-.093	-.003	-.016	.029	.008	.019	.013	-.016	-.009	.109	-				
13. Education	5.28	2.77	-.165	.171	.156	.12	.104	.146	-.019	.059	.120	.186	-.045	-.198	-			
14. Deprivation	4.58	2.72	.043	-.022	-.044	-.017	-.02	-.031	-.06	.023	-.016	-.039	-.027	-.030	-.146	-		
15. Socio-economic Index	54.93	16.14	-.123	.141	.137	.109	.104	.132	.015	.067	.115	.150	-.076	-.088	.561	-.155	-	
16. Maori Ethnicity (0 no, 1 yes)	.12	.32	.058	-.011	-.053	-.018	-.025	-.040	-.069	.162	.037	-.043	-.033	-.046	-.105	.158	-.070	-
17. Pacific Ethnicity (0 no, 1 yes)	.03	.16	.055	.008	.009	-.003	.002	-.011	-.066	.021	.100	-.006	-.009	-.065	-.030	.117	-.023	.102
18. Asian Ethnicity (0 no, 1 yes)	.04	.20	.042	.003	.026	.060	.028	-.005	-.083	-.056	-.032	-.026	-.014	-.117	.096	.008	.044	-.047
19. Religious (0 no, 1 yes)	.36	.48	.091	-.026	.037	.037	.031	.029	.028	.049	.066	.032	-.046	.131	-.005	.038	.001	.018
20. Parent (0 no, 1 yes)	.74	.44	.065	-.046	-.011	-.015	.015	.002	.031	.037	.014	-.023	.004	.416	-.111	-.060	-.009	.025
21. Partner (0 no, 1 yes)	.76	.43	-.027	-.002	.025	.009	.014	.027	.039	-.004	.014	.002	.080	.033	.054	-.192	.102	-.073
22. Employed (0 no, 1 yes)	.77	.42	-.082	.055	.03	.012	.012	.031	.024	.023	.039	.012	.037	-.314	.154	-.067	.129	-.006
23. Urban (0 rural, 1 urban)	.82	.39	.017	.044	.048	.054	.052	.030	-.008	.005	.021	.038	-.003	-.053	.091	.096	.092	-.010
24. Born in NZ (0 no, 1 yes)	.80	.40	.038	-.022	-.08	-.024	-.010	-.043	.033	.065	.003	-.022	-.032	-.010	-.159	.06	-0.10	.160
25. Political Orientation (0 liberal, 7 conservative)	3.57	1.39	.199	-.239	-.147	-.091	-.097	-.143	.131	-.091	-.105	-.221	.037	.161	-.221	-.014	-.139	.001
26. Political Wing (0 left-wing, 7 right-wing)	3.71	1.35	.161	-.233	-.129	-.071	-.069	-.131	.149	-.116	-.114	-.229	.107	.151	-.204	-.063	-.125	-.021
27. Patriotism	5.91	1.01	.053	.034	.087	.082	.079	.070	.231	.211	.164	.075	-.052	.183	-.051	-.039	.003	.038
28. Nationalism	3.77	1.22	.170	-.080	-.059	-.025	-.034	-.064	.12	.062	.018	-.068	.056	.042	-.123	.056	-.087	.082
29. Household Income (Log)	11.37	.85	-.123	.062	.068	.042	.039	.051	.055	.023	.061	.046	.065	-.164	.256	-.272	0.30	-.065
30. Extraversion	3.88	1.18	-.031	.073	.103	.073	.072	.087	.070	.127	.126	.094	-.004	-.007	.022	-.046	.055	.023
31. Agreeableness	5.35	.96	-.024	.206	.217	.159	.166	.199	.081	.187	.210	.259	-.291	.01	.092	-.047	.105	-.052
32. Conscientiousness	5.11	1.02	.009	-.014	.026	.021	.021	.015	.123	.046	.042	-.004	-.087	.065	-.014	-.062	.023	.002
33. Neuroticism	3.44	1.14	.102	-.055	-.101	-.100	-.109	-.102	-.077	-.09	-.105	-.056	-.136	-.221	.006	.042	-.022	-.001
34. Openness	4.93	1.11	-.132	.148	.137	.115	.113	.130	-.044	.076	.107	.149	.057	-.112	.235	-.041	.146	-.014
35. Honesty/Humility	5.43	1.17	-.166	.154	.147	.093	.112	.149	-.073	.079	.122	.177	-.121	.176	.061	-.026	.055	-.053

Table 1 (continued). Descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables

	17.	18.	19.	20.	21.	22.	23.	24.	25.	26.	27.	28.	29.	30.	31.	32.	33.	34.	35
17. Pacific Ethnicity (0 no, 1 yes)	-																		
18. Asian Ethnicity (0 no, 1 yes)	.004	-																	
19. Religious (0 no, 1 yes)	.081	.060	-																
20. Parent (0 no, 1 yes)	-.024	-.083	.080	-															
21. Partner (0 no, 1 yes)	-.039	-.021	-.021	.272	-														
22. Employed (0 no, 1 yes)	-.006	.004	-.054	-.075	.079	-													
23. Urban (0 rural, 1 urban)	.044	.059	.022	-.085	-.103	-.010	-												
24. Born in NZ (0 no, 1 yes)	-.025	-.250	-.034	.004	-.060	.008	-.017	-											
25. Political Orientation (0 liberal, 7 conservative)	.009	.012	.244	.143	.048	-.038	-.057	.047	-										
26. Political Wing (0 left-wing, 7 right-wing)	-.002	.013	.154	.134	.075	-.016	-.071	.030	.661	-									
27. Patriotism	.003	-.015	.085	.136	.053	-.018	-.042	.056	.128	.150	-								
28. Nationalism	.042	.030	.091	.051	-.009	-.031	-.001	.082	.139	.125	.278	-							
29. Household Income (Log)	-.032	-.018	-.071	.048	.343	.348	.026	-.028	-.037	.041	.047	-.052	-						
30. Extraversion	.017	-.026	.02	.072	.070	.047	.001	.003	-.053	.001	.129	.026	.094	-					
31. Agreeableness	-.032	-.019	.073	.042	.030	-.009	.014	-.019	-.111	-.151	.164	-.045	.020	.206	-				
32. Conscientiousness	.022	.005	.043	.079	.078	.008	.003	-.020	.141	.144	.154	.005	.072	.054	.140	-			
33. Neuroticism	.003	.027	-.026	-.122	-.062	.008	.030	.003	-.054	-.086	-.159	-.027	-.053	-.144	-.035	-.190	-		
34. Openness	-.001	.001	-.056	-.079	-.001	.061	.020	-.067	-.273	-.223	-.005	-.095	.075	.186	.230	-.027	-.042	-	
35. Honesty/Humility	-.042	-.070	.014	.066	.032	-.084	-.049	-.032	-.078	-.121	.058	-.186	-.027	-.061	.207	.098	-.175	.062	-

Note. Correlations above .025 are significant at $p < .001$; correlations above .015 are significant at $p < .05$

Table 2. Multiple regression with demographic predictors for the dependent variable of terrorism anxiety (N=16,328)

	b	*se*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*	
Intercept	3.487	.254	13.717	<.001	3.069	3.906
Warmth toward Muslims	-.111	.016	-6.914	<.001	-.137	-.084
Warmth toward Immigrants	-.017	.020	-0.840	.401	-.050	.016
Warmth toward Asians	.024	.021	1.162	.245	-.010	.059
Warmth toward Chinese	.004	.021	0.201	.841	-.031	.039
Warmth toward Indians	.040	.018	2.189	.029	.010	.070
Warmth toward NZ Europeans	.007	.012	0.543	.587	-.014	.027
Warmth toward Maoris	.048	.017	2.815	.005	.020	.077
Warmth toward Pacific Islanders	-.017	.019	-0.888	.375	-.047	.014
Warmth toward Refugees	-.050	.016	-3.156	.002	-.076	-.024
Gender (0 female, 1 male)	-.289	.027	-10.813	<.001	-.333	-.245
Age	.009	.001	8.480	<.001	.007	.011
Education	-.031	.006	-5.574	<.001	-.040	-.022
Household Income (Log)	-.120	.017	-6.871	<.001	-.148	-.091
Deprivation	-.007	.005	-1.445	.149	-.015	.001
Socio-economic Index	-.003	.001	-2.775	.006	-.004	-.001
Maori Ethnicity (0 no, 1 yes)	.130	.042	3.085	.002	.061	.200
Pacific Ethnicity (0 no, 1 yes)	.444	.090	4.911	<.001	.295	.593
Asian Ethnicity (0 no, 1 yes)	.343	.069	4.987	<.001	.230	.456
Religious (0 no, 1 yes)	.078	.027	2.934	.003	.034	.122
Parent (0 no, 1 yes)	.060	.031	1.932	.053	.009	.110
Partner (0 no, 1 yes)	.043	.032	1.365	.172	-.009	.095
Employed (0 no, 1 yes)	-.063	.032	-1.928	.054	-.116	-.009
Urban (0 rural, 1 urban)	.133	.031	4.272	<.001	.082	.184
Born in NZ (0 no, 1 yes)	.039	.031	1.271	.204	-.012	.090
Extraversion	-.025	.011	-2.256	.024	-.043	-.007
Agreeableness	.064	.015	4.324	<.001	.040	.088
Conscientiousness	-.003	.013	-0.260	.795	-.024	.018
Neuroticism	.127	.012	10.977	<.001	.108	.146
Openness	-.046	.012	-3.716	<.001	-.067	-.026
Honesty-Humility	-.174	.012	-14.327	<.001	-.194	-.154
Political Orientation (0 Liberal, 7 Conservative)	.104	.013	7.927	<.001	.082	.125
Political Wing (0 left-wing, 7 right-wing)	.041	.013	3.069	.002	.019	.063
Patriotism	-.003	.013	-0.195	.845	-.025	.019
Nationalism	.133	.011	11.626	<.001	.114	.152

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this paper was two-fold. First, we set out to examine how worried people in New Zealand were about a terrorist attack occurring in New Zealand in 2017. After identifying the mean level of concern within the population, we sought to investigate the factors associated with terrorism anxiety in New Zealand. Accordingly, descriptive analyses showed that anxiety over a terrorist attack was relatively low and that only a small proportion of the sample was worried about a potential terrorist attack in New Zealand in 2017/2018. Bearing in

mind that only .2% of the sample identified as Muslims (a population that may have expressed some concern due to past incidents of violence directed toward them), such low levels of anxiety were seemingly well-justified, as New Zealand was the second safest country in the world and ranked low on terrorism impact (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018). The relative absence of concern helps to partly explain the shock over the terror attacks of March 15, 2019. However, it also demonstrates a potential disconnect between the information that members of the community had versus the warnings that came from experts, scholars, and members of the Muslim community who stated that this sort of attack was "inevitable" (e.g., Ainge Roy & McGowan, 2019; Campbell, 2019; Shaver et al., 2017).

Next, and despite the non-Muslim public's relatively low levels of concern about terrorism in New Zealand, we nevertheless found that anxiety toward terrorist attacks were strongly predicted by (the absence of) warmth toward Muslims. Indeed, compared to warmth toward eight other groups including immigrants, refugees, Asians, and other major ethnic groups in New Zealand, warmth toward Muslims was more than twice as strong of a predictor of terrorism anxiety. This implies that the association between Muslims and terrorists remains quite strong—even when the perceived threat of terrorism is low. The next strongest group to be associated with terrorism anxiety was refugees, whereas feelings toward immigrants did not seem to be associated with this anxiety. It is possible that participants distinguish between immigrants and refugees, whereby the latter group is more likely perceived to come from Middle Eastern/Muslim countries (Pedersen, Watt and Hansen 2006). Indeed, the latest statistics show that over half the refugees arriving in New Zealand between 2015-2017 came from predominantly Muslim countries (New Zealand Immigration, 2019). A recent study in New Zealand has also found that anti-Muslim sentiment is relatively higher than anti-immigrant sentiment (Shaver et al., 2016). Finally, it is worth noting that feelings toward New Zealand Europeans did not significantly predict terrorism anxiety. This suggests that respondents' feelings toward New Zealand Europeans are independent from their anxiety over terrorism.

Analyses also show that terrorism anxiety correlated with several other predictors. As expected, socio-political beliefs correlated with anxiety over a potential terrorist attack. Specifically, conservatism, nationalism, and (to a lesser extent) right-wing orientation positively predicted terrorism anxiety, even after adjusting for our key predictors and other covariates. This is consistent with previous studies showing that perceived threat from terrorism correlates with political ideology (left/right-wing or liberal/conservative; Cohrs, Kielman, Maes, & Moschner, 2005; Crowson, Debacker, & Thoma, 2006; De Zavala, Cislak, & Wesolowska, 2010) and national identity (Sekerdej & Kossowska, 2011).

Our results also demonstrated that personality predicted terrorism anxiety. Specifically, honesty/humility (and to a lesser extent, open-mindedness and extraversion) correlated negatively, whereas neuroticism (and to a lesser extent, agreeableness) correlated positively, with anxiety toward terrorism. The strong association between terrorism anxiety and neuroticism was expected since this trait is typically considered to be closely related to anxiety in a number of domains (Muris, Reolofs, Rassin, Franken, & Mayer, 2005; Twenge, 2000). The strong negative association between honesty/humility and terrorism anxiety was less expected in this context, but research reveals that honesty/humility correlates negatively with conservatism and right-wing political orientation (Chirumbolo & Leone, 2010). Moreover, other work has found that humility in general buffers anxiety over death (Kesebir, 2014).

A number of other demographic variables also predicted terrorism anxiety. For instance, women and older participants reported more anxiety than did men and younger participants. Those with lower income, lower education, and lower socio-economic status also worried more about the possibility of a terrorist attack. Living in an urban area also correlated with terrorism anxiety, perhaps because of the higher likelihood of terrorist attacks happening in more densely populated areas (Beall, 2007). Finally, those who identified with a religion and/or religious group expressed more worry about terrorist attacks.

Limitations

Although our study makes multiple contributions to the literature, it is important to note that our analyses utilize cross-sectional data and cannot speak to the causal direction of these relations. Indeed, anxiety about terrorism may either decrease warmth toward Muslim or refugee groups (Navarrete, Kurzban, Fessler, & Kirkpatrick, 2004; Ward & Masgoret, 2006) or foster conservative attitudes (Echebarria-Echabe & Fernandez-Guede, 2006; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). As such, future research will be needed to investigate the causal direction of the associations identified here.

Another limitation to the current study is that it does not include other reference groups in the feeling thermometer scale. Specifically, if "Muslim" is considered to be a religious identity, we did not ask participants to report their warmth toward other religious groups like Christians (i.e., the religion endorsed by most far-right or white nationalist groups; see Fletcher, 2017; McDaniel, Nooruddin, & Faith Shortle, 2011).[3] Future research could examine first whether Muslims are perceived as a religious or ethnic group, and second, whether attitudes shift as a function of how the reference group is perceived (e.g., Muslim vs. Muslim fundamentalists, White vs. White supremacist, Christian vs. Christian nationalist).

Implications

A news piece by *Time*, published the day after the March 15 attack, quotes a bystander near the Al Noor Mosque as saying, "I thought it would be the other way around, the Muslims attacking, that's what everyone was waiting for" (Campbell, 2019). Yet, the latest data on violence stemming from extremist ideology would argue otherwise, whereby violence stemming from whites against minorities such as Muslims has been on the rise, particularly in Western countries. Despite these statistics, a data-based review by the *Intercept* found that, although approximately 268 right-wing extremists met the legal definition of terrorism, only 34 were treated under anti-terrorism laws by the U.S. Justice Department. Notably, this is a number far less than that of alleged international

[3] However, if Muslims are perceived as an ethnic identity, then the comparison group would be "New Zealand Europeans".

terrorists (Aaronson, 2019). Even when examining responses from the FBI and other counterterrorism groups, terror acts perpetrated by white supremacists are treated as local incidents rather than part of a larger threat of violent extremism—a downplaying of terrorism that is also reflected among the public (Ackerman, Woodruff, & Banco, 2019). Accordingly, while multiple scholars have critiqued the media's role in perpetuating the perception of Muslim threat (e.g., Kearns et al., 2019; Saeed, 2007) including New Zealand (Shaver et al, 2017), other scholars note that systematic investigations into far-right criminal activities remain neglected and selectively biased (e.g., see Chermak, Freilich, Parkin, & Lynch, 2012; Simi, 2010).

Therefore, unless the media actively ends its selective coverage and unless formal investigations begin to give other extremist/violent groups their share of attention, terrorism anxiety may continue to correlate negatively with warmth toward Muslims. Although the associations identified here are relatively small, it is worth noting that they remain significant in a model of 34 predictors and covariates—a point that speaks to the strength of the (seemingly implicit) association between Islam and terrorism (Fischer et al., 2007; Park et al., 2007). The current data also indicate that participants do not associate New Zealand Europeans with terrorism, which could partially be due to the fact that the majority of participants identify as European and, thus, may be displaying a form of ingroup favoritism (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). By itself, the fact that Europeans are not stereotyped as violent extremists should be viewed positively. However, when juxtaposed with the (unfounded) association between warmth toward Muslims and terrorism anxiety, it becomes problematic. Therefore, our goal as researchers should not be to foster a fear of all "Whites", but rather, to find ways to reduce the fear of all "Muslims". It is also notable that those who scored high on nationalism were more likely to worry about terrorist attacks, despite the fact that the terrorist attacker of March 15, 2019, was a white nationalist himself. This finding, however, does not imply that all nationalists are violent, but rather, that some of those who subscribe to a nationalist ideology may ignore or discount the violent and extreme tendencies that can be entangled with this ideology (Srenshaw, 1988).

Conclusion

Research has consistently shown that the association drawn between Islam and terrorism, whether by the media or other figures, implies that Muslims continue to be perceived as a threat. Moreover, when Muslims are seen to pose a terrorist threat or support terrorism, they are more likely to be discriminated against, both personally and institutionally (Doosje, Zimmerman, Küpper, Zick, & Meertins, 2009; Fischer et al, 2007). Ironically, this may provide the needed justification or endorsement that white nationalist or supremacist groups need to plot violent attacks against Muslim communities, the very groups that are perceived as violent. The bigger threat is when it leads to a vicious cycle of animosity between Muslims (or Middle Easterners) and predominantly "Christian Whites" through a self-fulfilling prophecy that is marked by ongoing violence. Hope can be found, though, within the Muslim community's response of forgiveness and fraternity, despite the provocation and insecurity threatening their existence. Hope can also be found in the response of New Zealand as a whole. Starting with the media, the government, and New Zealanders at large, the horrific hate-filled attack that took the lives of 50 Muslims on March 15th has unified the community and foiled – at least for now – any long-term intentions to spread hate and violence in the country. Perhaps there is a lesson to be learned here on how we can escape the perceptions that cripple our communities.

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