Exploring New Zealand National Identity and Its Importance for Attitudes toward Muslims and Support for Diversity

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In the aftermath of the horrific terrorist attack against Muslims in Christchurch, it is important to examine what psychological factors predict positive attitudes toward Muslims and acceptance of diversity, more broadly. The present work examines how beliefs about national identity predict attitudes toward Muslims and support for diversity in New Zealand. Using a national sample, we first describe the extent to which New Zealanders rate various characteristics as important for being a 'true' New Zealander. We then examine how such beliefs about national character predict attitudes toward Muslims and diversity. Results revealed that the more people believe that having specific ancestral heritage and certain cultural characteristics are important for being a 'true' New Zealander, the more negativity they expressed about Muslims and the more opposition they expressed toward diversity. However, endorsement of more civic characteristics (e.g., respect for the nation's institutions and laws) was unrelated to attitudes toward Muslims and support for diversity. Taken together, this work reveals that how we define who we are as a nation influences how we feel about Muslims and diversity. Broader implications for the future of cultural diversity in New Zealand are also discussed.

Keywords: national identity; New Zealand; national character; diversity; Muslims

Introduction

In the immediate aftermath of the horrific attack against Muslims in Christchurch on March 15, 2019, New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, told a shocked public: "*Many of those who will have been directly affected by this shooting may be migrants to New Zealand, they may even be refugees here. They have chosen to make New Zealand their home, and it is their home. They are us. The person who has perpetuated this violence against us is not.*" While there has been debate on whether the perpetrator of the hateful terrorist attack reflects something about 'us' (e.g., Ghumkhor, 2019; McLachlan, 2019), Ardern's words serve to define New Zealand national identity in a way that psychologically includes Muslims, immigrants, and refugees as part of the nation. Such an approach is largely in line with extant social and political psychology research showing that how people define national identity and conceptualize who is a 'true' member of the country is inextricably linked to the acceptance or exclusion of immigrants, refugees, and ethnic minority co-nationals (Pehrson, Brown, & Zagefka, 2009; Wakefield et al., 2011; for reviews, see Pehrson & Green, 2010;

Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). But, do every day New Zealanders define their national identity in a way that echoes the inclusive language of the nation's Prime Minister? And how do beliefs about what it takes to be a 'true' New Zealander account for diversity attitudes and attitudes toward Muslims in particular, the group directly targeted by this terrorist attack? The present research examines these questions using a large nationally representative sample. Here we argue that lay beliefs about the 'true' New Zealander having specific ancestry or certain cultural characteristics may predict negative attitudes toward Muslims and opposition to diversity. In contrast, lay beliefs about national identity that encompass civic participation may predict neutral to positive attitudes toward Muslims and diversity.

National identity and intergroup relations

For many years, political scientists have argued that national identity can be characterised along ethnic or civic dimensions (Brubaker, 2009; Citrin, Reingold, & Green, 1990; Smith, 1991). Ethnic national character refers to national identity defined by shared

ancestry or heritage in specific linguistic, ethnic, or religious traditions. According to such a conception of national identity, only people of certain descent or ancestral bloodlines can claim national identity, while all others simply cannot be considered 'true' members of the nation, thereby remaining 'visitors' regardless of whether or not they are born and raised in the country and contributing to the nation (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008; Pehrson & Green, 2010; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). By contrast, civic national character defines national identity by political membership and participation along with a shared commitment to certain ideals and principles. By such a definition, anyone regardless of their cultural, religious, linguistic, or ethnic heritage can be 'true' members of the nation as long as they subscribe to core ideals or principles (e.g., respecting individual liberties and freedoms) and participate in society (Bloemraad et al., 2008; Pehrson & Green, 2010; Schildkraut, 2007; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014).

While nations possess legal definitions for who counts as one of 'us' through citizenship laws (Dasgupta & Yogeeswaran, 2011; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014), psychological

conceptions of national identity can include ethnic, civic, or combination of both these conceptions simultaneously. For example, while Americans tend to endorse many civic characteristics of national identity (e.g., the importance of respecting the nation's institutions and laws, freedom of speech, working for the betterment of the country), they sometimes simultaneously show signs of ethnic national character (e.g., emphasising the importance of speaking English, being Christian; (Citrin et al., 1990; Devos & Banaji, 2005; Schildkraut, 2003, 2007). The simultaneous endorsement of both civic and ethnic national characters is further evident when exploring automatic or implicit associations using reaction-time tools alongside more explicit self-report measures as people can consciously endorse inclusive civic characteristics of their national identity, while implicitly or automatically perceiving some groups as more 'authentic' members of the nation than others (for reviews, see Devos & Mohamed, 2014; Yogeeswaran, Devos & Nash, 2016).

Why should we care about people's conceptions of national identity? Extensive research within the social sciences shows that whether people define their national identity in terms of ethnic or civic characteristics has important implications for how we see other groups. For example, Wakefield and colleagues (2011) experimentally tested whether making salient the ethnic or civic aspect of Scottish national identity would differentially impact the inclusion of ethnic minorities and prosocial tendencies. Across three studies, they found that framing Scottish national identity as normatively ethnic led White Scottish participants to be less accepting of criticism about Scotland by a Chinese-Scot (i.e., a Scottish person of Chinese descent), decreased their willingness to include a Chinese-Scot within the national identity, and reduced their willingness to help a Chinese-Scot person in need, all relative to those in a control condition. By contrast, when Scottish national identity was framed as normatively civic in nature, White Scots were more willing to accept a Chinese-Scot's criticism of Scotland, more willing to include such an ethnic minority within the national identity, and increased their willingness to help a Chinese-Scot target who was in need, all relative to controls.

Similarly, in research from the USA, exposing participants to biographical descriptions of Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans who work for the betterment of the country (thereby highlighting their fit with civic national character) increased the explicit and implicit inclusion of both Asian and Hispanic Americans within the national identity (Yogeeswaran, Dasgupta, & Gomez, 2012). However, making salient the ethnic identification of Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans (thereby highlighting the lack of fit with ethnic national character) decreased explicit and implicit inclusion of these groups within the national identity (Yogeeswaran et al., 2012). Taken together, even ethnic minorities who are born and raised in the country, but of specific ethnic heritage, can be excluded from the national identity based on how the national identity is defined.

The distinction between ethnic and civic national identity has also been important in explaining how identification with the nation can have diverging implications on attitudes toward newer groups. For example, Pehrson, Vignoles, and Brown (2009) used data from 31 countries to show that the strength of national identification among majority group members predicts anti-immigrant sentiments, but only in countries where people define their national identity in terms of ethnic characteristics, and not in those nations with a more civic national identity. Data such as these highlight the importance of better understanding lay definitions of national identity and their implications for attitudes toward minorities and immigrants. In fact, going beyond the specific framing of national identity as ethnic-civic, Smeekes, Verkuyten, and Poppe (2011) revealed that making the Christian roots of the Netherlands salient increased opposition to Muslim expressive rights among Dutch participants that were both high and low in national identification relative to a control condition. However, making the humanistic and tolerant history of the Netherlands salient led Dutch participants who were weakly identified with the country to show greater acceptance of Muslim expressive rights relative to those highly identified with the country.

While much psychological research has been done on national identity in other parts of the world, there is limited work on how people define New Zealand national character (see Sibley, Hoverd, & Liu, 2011; Sibley & Liu, 2007) and whether these beliefs predict attitudes toward minority groups and diversity. Therefore, the present work examines two important research questions: (1) to what extent do New Zealanders rate various ethnic and civic characteristics as defining of New Zealand national identity?; and (2) to what extent do people's beliefs about what it means to be a 'true' New Zealander predict attitudes toward Muslims and support (versus opposition) for diversity? Here we specifically focus on attitudes toward Muslims as it is important to understand how everyday beliefs about national identity can contribute to prejudice toward this group in the aftermath of the horrific terrorist attack of March 15, 2019.

METHOD

Sampling Procedure

The current study utilised data from Time 7 of the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (NZAVS). The NZAVS, which began in 2009, is a longitudinal national probability study that investigates social attitudes, personality, values, among other factors. The Time 7 data were collected in 2015. Sampling occurred by randomly selecting individuals from the New Zealand Electoral Roll who were over the age of 18 years. Participants drawn from the New Zealand Electoral Roll are New Zealand citizens and permanent residents who are eligible to vote. A copy of the questionnaire was posted to participants, and a second postal follow-up was sent two months later. Participants were invited to complete an online version of the questionnaire if they provided an email address. A prize draw was offered to participants for their participation in the study (see Sibley, 2018, for further details about sampling).

Participants

The Time 7 (2015) NZAVS data contained responses from 13,944 participants. In total, 13,794 participants provided responses to the relevant measures and were therefore included in the current analysis. The mean age of participants was 50.80 years ($SD = 13.89$), with 62.7% identifying as female and 37.3% identifying as male. Of these participants, 80.3% identified as New Zealand European, 12.2% identified as Māori, 2.6% identified as Pasifika, and 2.5% identified as being of Asian descent.

Measures
Demographics

Participants provided answers to a range of demographic variables such as gender, age, religiosity, household income, whether they lived in an urban/rural area, relationship status, parental status, level of education, and employment status. Neighbourhood deprivation was measured on a scale of 1 (most impoverished) to 10 (most affluent), using the NZ Deprivation Index 2013 (Atkinson, Salmond, & Campton, 2014).

Political Orientation

Participants also completed a one-item measure from Jost (2006), asking them to rate how politically left-wing versus right-wing they saw themselves as being. This item was rated on a 7-point scale which ranged from 1 (extremely left-wing) to 7 (extremely right-wing). This variable was included as a control variable similar to the demographic factors above.

National Character

Participants completed four items which asked them about whether there are certain qualities that make someone a 'true' New Zealander. These items were adapted from Citrin et al. (1990) and asked participants to rate how important they thought each quality was for being a 'true' New Zealander. The items were: (a) "To have New Zealand citizenship", (b) "To respect New Zealand's political institutions and laws", (c) "To be able to speak English", and (d) "To have Māori or European ancestry". While the first two items relate to civic national character, the latter two relate to ethnic national character. However, as the internal consistency of the two ethnic and civic national character items was too low to justify combining the items into composite measures ($αs < .46$), we examined these four items independently. These items were rated on a 7-point scale which ranged from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important), with a mid-point of 4 (somewhat important).

Warmth toward Muslims

Participants completed attitude ratings modelled on affect thermometer items included in United States National Election Study. These items asked participants to rate their feelings of warmth toward Muslims on scales ranging from 1 (feel least warm toward this group) to 7 (feel most warm toward this group), with 4 indicating neutral feelings toward the group.

Diversity attitudes

Participants completed three items ($α = .75$) which assessed diversity attitudes, taken from Breugelmans and van de Vijver (2004). Participants were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with three items: "The unity of NZ is weakened by too many immigrants" (reverse-coded), "I feel at ease when I am in a city district in NZ with many immigrants," and "There are too many immigrants living in NZ" (reverse-coded). The items were rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Larger numbers indicate more support for diversity, while smaller numbers indicate opposition to the same.

RESULTS
Descriptive Analyses:

We first descriptively examined participants' ratings of the importance of each of the national character items (see Figures 1a-1d for details). As evident in Figures 1a-1d, nearly 90% of New Zealanders believed having New Zealand citizenship was somewhat to very important for someone to be considered a 'true' New Zealander (i.e., responded 4 or above on the measure; $M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.63$). Similarly, approximately 92% thought that being able to speak English was somewhat to very important for someone to be considered a 'true' New Zealander ($M = 5.76$, $SD = 1.45$), and more than 97% reported that respecting New Zealand's political institutions and laws was somewhat to very important for someone to be considered a 'true' New Zealander ($M = 6.22$, $SD = 1.10$). Finally, approximately 35% of New Zealanders reported that having Māori or European ancestry was somewhat to very important for one to be considered a 'true' New Zealander ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.89$).

Warmth toward Muslims, and Support for Diversity

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine how different beliefs about what it takes to make someone a 'true' New Zealander predicted attitudes toward Muslims, and support for diversity, while controlling for a number of important demographic factors and even participant's political orientation (see Table 1 for full model). After adjusting for these factors in our model, results revealed that the more people believed that being able to speak English was important to be considered a 'true' New Zealander, the less warmth they reported towards Muslims, $B = -.194$, $SE = .010$, $p < .001$, and the less they supported diversity, $B = -.230$, $SE = .009$, $p < .001$. Similarly, the more participants believed that having Māori or European ancestry was important for someone to be considered a 'true' New Zealander, the less warmth they reported towards Muslims, $B = -.111$, $SE = .009$, $p < .001$, and the less they supported diversity, $B = -.243$, $SE = .008$, $p < .001$. On the other hand, believing that having New Zealand citizenship was important to be a 'true' New Zealander did not predict warmth toward Muslims, $B = .002$, $SE = .009$, $p = .85$, nor support for diversity, $B < .001$, $SE = .008$, $p = .997$. However, believing that respect for New Zealand's political institutions and laws was important for being a 'true' New Zealander predicted a relatively minor increase in warmth toward Muslims, $B = .024$, $SE = .009$, $p = .008$, and a slight increase in support for diversity, $B = .025$, $SE = .008$, $p = .003$. Collectively, this regression model accounted for 13.2% of the variance in warmth towards Muslims, ($R^2 = .132$), and 27.3% of the variance in support for diversity ($R^2 = .273$), with the four national character items alone accounting for 8.8% of the variance in warmth toward Muslims ($R^2 = .088$), and 20.6% of the variance in support for diversity ($R^2 = .206$).
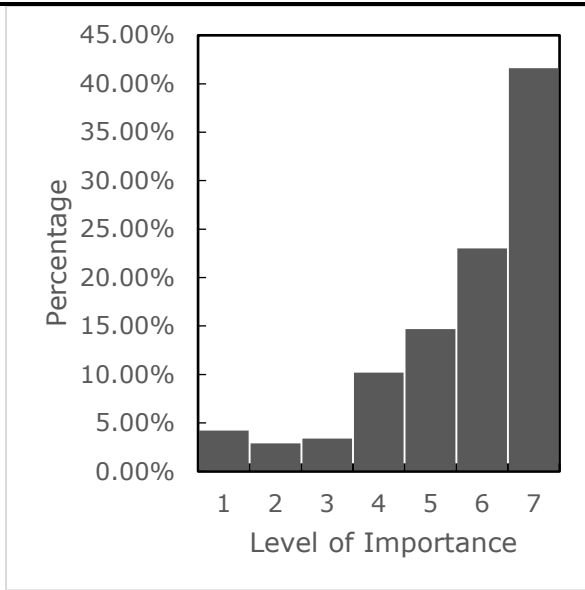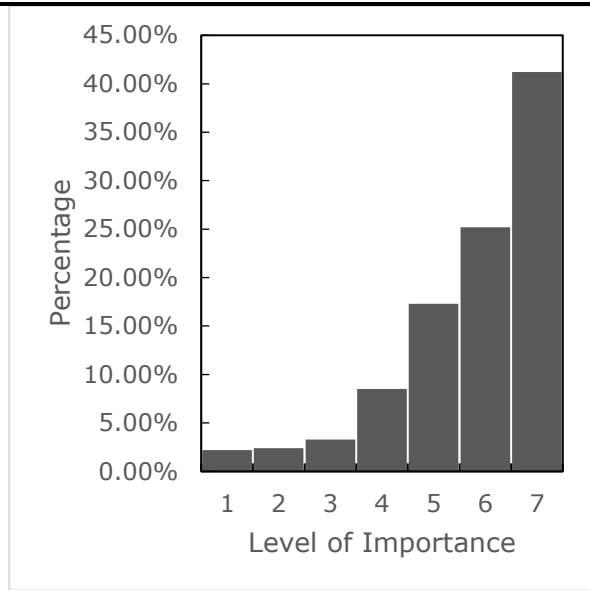
Figure 1a. To have New Zealand citizenship

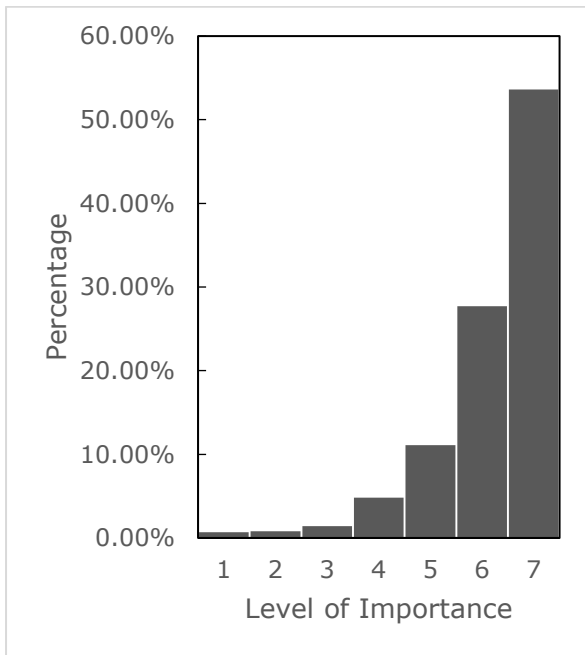*Figure 1b.* To be able to speak English

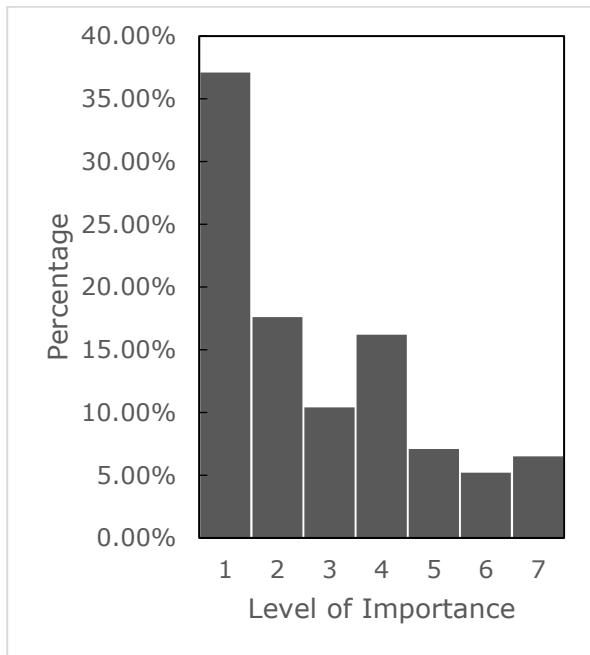*Figure 1c.* To respect New Zealand's political institutions and laws

Figure 1d. To have Māori or European ancestry

Figures 1a-1d. The figures presented display the distribution of responses as percentages from participants when asked how important do they personally think the following qualities are for being a true New Zealander, where 1 = not important, 4 = somewhat important, and 7 = very important.

Table 1. Multiple regression analyses examining the predictors of Warmth towards Muslims and Support for Diversity. Focal predictors (i.e.,To have NZ Citizenship, To be able to speak English, To respect NZ's political institutions and laws, and To have Māori or European ancestry) are emphasized in bold.

	Warmth towards Muslims			Support for Diversity		
	b	*(SE)*	*p*	*b*	*(SE)*	*p*
To have NZ Citizenship	0.002	(0.009)	.849	< 0.001	(0.008)	0.997
To be able to Speak English	-0.194	(0.010)	< 0.001	-0.230	(0.009)	< 0.00
To Respect NZ's Political Institutions and Laws	0.024	(0.009)	0.008	0.025	(0.008)	0.003
To have Māori or European Ancestry	-0.111	(0.009)	< .001	-0.243	(0.008)	< .001
Gender[a]	-0.071	(0.008)	< .001	-0.061	(0.007)	< .001
Age	-0.051	(0.010)	< 0.001	0.036	(0.009)	< 0.00
Household Income	0.004	(0.010)	0.703	0.041	(0.009)	< 0.00
Socioeconomic status	-0.003	(0.009)	0.726	-0.018	(0.008)	0.026
Religiosity[b]	0.029	(0.009)	0.001	-0.017	(0.008)	0.029
Parental Status[c]	-0.002	(0.009)	0.822	-0.018	(0.008)	0.037
Relationship Status[d]	-0.015	(0.009)	0.098	0.001	(0.008)	0.881
Employment Status[e]	0.020	(0.009)	0.031	-0.002	(0.008)	0.823
Urban versus Rural[f]	0.015	(0.008)	0.082	0.022	(0.008)	0.004
Māori (1=yes; 0=no)	0.037	(0.008)	< 0.001	-0.029	(0.008)	< 0.00
Pacific (1=yes; 0=no)	0.031	(0.008)	< 0.001	-0.004	(0.007)	0.574
Asian (1=yes; 0=no)	-0.011	(0.008)	0.168	-0.028	(0.007)	< 0.00
Political orientation[g]	-0.137	(0.009)	< 0.001	-0.170	(0.008)	< .001
Education[h]	0.080	(0.009)	< 0.001	0.139	(0.008)	< 0.00

[a] Gender (0 = female, 1= male). [b] Identify with a religion and/or spiritual Group (0 = no, 1= yes). [c] Parental status (0 = not a parent, 1= a parent). [d] Relationship status (0 = not in a relationship, 1= in a relationship). [e] Employment status (0 = not employed, 1 = employed). [f] Urban versus rural (0 = rural, 1 = urban). [g] Political orientation (extremely left-wing = 1, extremely right-wing = 7). [h]Education (0-10 NZ Qualifications Authority ranking)

DISCUSSION

The present research uses data from a nationally representative sample to explore how New Zealanders define what it means to be a 'true' New Zealander, and then tests how such beliefs predict prejudicial attitudes toward Muslims and support for diversity in New Zealand. Data revealed that a vast majority of New Zealanders believe that respecting New Zealand's political institutions and laws, having New Zealand citizenship, and being able to speak English are somewhat to very important for someone to be considered a 'true' New Zealander. While the first two represent more civic characteristics of national identity where no specific cultural traits or heritage is placed above any other, the third characteristic is argued to represent an ethnic conception of national identity (e.g., Citrin et al., 1990; Schildkraut, 2003; 2007) by placing higher importance on an Anglo characteristic of national identity. With that said, the ability to speak English is an achievable characteristic as anyone regardless of their heritage can learn the language. By comparison, a sizeable minority (35%) believe that having European or Māori ancestry is somewhat to very important

for someone to be a 'true' New Zealander, making it impossible for anyone outside of these ancestral bloodlines to ever be considered a 'true' New Zealander. Overall, these findings suggest that people tend to endorse both ethnic and civic aspects of national character simultaneously, although there appears to be greater consensus around civic aspects of national character.

However, as these data show, beliefs about what makes someone a 'true' New Zealander are not just confined to people's general beliefs – they also have important bearings on how others in society feel about minority groups, and diversity more broadly. Specifically, the more people believe that having certain ancestral bloodlines or certain cultural characteristics are defining of what it means to be a 'true' New Zealander, the more negatively they evaluate a minority group like Muslims, and the more negativity they express toward diversity. These relationships emerge even when controlling for a range of demographic factors and participant's political orientation, accounting for approximately 9% and 20% of the variance in people's attitudes toward Muslims and opposition to diversity, respectively. This implies

that changing these beliefs about what defines 'us' to be less exclusive is an important step for forging positive relations in our increasingly diverse nation.

Broader Implications

While the present work reveals beliefs about what makes someone a 'true' New Zealander and how such beliefs that define national identity in terms of specific ancestral heritage or prioritising certain cultural characteristics can negatively predict attitudes toward Muslims and diversity, it is also important to consider the broader implications of these findings for New Zealand. For example, by a sizeable minority (35%) believing that having European or Māori ancestry is required for someone to be a 'true' New Zealander, it implies that anyone who is not of European or Māori ancestry simply can never become a 'real' New Zealander, even if they are born and raised in the country, participate and contribute to the country, and the same would apply to their children and grandchildren in the future. As evidenced by research on identity denial, ethnic minorities (especially Asian westerners) who have their national identity denied to

them experience a host of negative emotions, reduced life satisfaction, hope, and increased depressive symptoms (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Huynh, Devos, & Smalarz, 2011; Wang, Minervino, & Cheryan, 2013). Moreover, identity denial increases compensatory behaviours and unhealthy eating in order to try fitting in (Guendelman, Cheryan, & Monin, 2011). The experience of identity denial might be especially harmful for ethnic minorities who are second-generation New Zealanders and those beyond as these individuals do not have a sense of connection to any other place and expect to be accepted in nations that claim to possess inclusive and egalitarian ideals (e.g., Wang et al., 2013). This, we argue, is a significant challenge for New Zealand going forward. As the nation has experienced large increases in the ethnic diversity of its populace including people from East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, the Americas, and Pacific Nations, the national inclusion of these groups will be a critical issue for the country in the coming decades. Defining national identity in ways that allows people of diverse backgrounds to feel fully accepted into society will be critically important for these individuals' health, well-being, and participation in wider society. In fact, some of our own recent research (Yogeeswaran, Shurmer, & Hewstone, 2019) reveals that when Asian New Zealanders are exposed to video messaging that frames New Zealand national identity as normatively civic, they show greater national belonging, and in turn a stronger desire for civic participation and engagement with wider society. However, video messaging that frames New Zealand national identity as normatively ethnic in nature reduces Asian New Zealanders' sense of national belonging and decreases their desire for civic participation, as well as reduces their desire for engagement with wider society. Collectively, such work suggests that more attention is needed to consider how national identity is framed in order to examine its impact for both majority and minority groups.

An additional challenge going forward is that national inclusion needs to be internalized in order to create a more equitable society. Many studies have shown that even when people explicitly perceive certain racial/ethnic groups as equally defining of the national identity, they may implicitly possess prototypes that certain groups are more authentic than others. For example, in the USA,

Devos and Banaji (2005) demonstrated that while participants of all races implicitly perceived African Americans and White Americans to be equally American, at an implicit or automatic level, reaction-time measures revealed that White Americans were perceived to be more American than African Americans (for reviews, see Devos & Mohamed, 2014; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). In New Zealand, Sibley and Liu (2007) demonstrated that both explicitly and implicitly, New Zealanders perceived both Māori and Europeans to be equally defining of New Zealand national identity suggesting that Māori were rightfully included at both the implicit and explicit levels, unlike in Australia where Aboriginal peoples were implicitly perceived as less 'Australian' (Sibley & Barlow, 2009). However, even in New Zealand, New Zealanders of Asian descent who participants were explicitly told were New Zealand citizens born and raised in the country were still not considered to be New Zealanders as evidenced by both implicit *and* explicit measures (Sibley & Liu, 2007).

Beyond the implications such exclusion may have for minority group members' psychological health, well-being, and emotions (see Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Huynh et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2013), research demonstrates that such implicit beliefs also predict discriminatory behaviours and judgments (Dasgupta & Yogeeswaran, 2011; Devos & Ma, 2013; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010). For example, in the USA, implicit beliefs that 'real' Americans are White predicts discriminatory job-hiring in contexts that require national loyalty, and more negative evaluations of public policy promoted by an Asian American (Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010). Similarly, implicit conflation between Whiteness and American identity predicted reduced willingness to vote for Barack Obama during the 2008 Presidential election (Devos & Ma, 2013). Such studies reveal that how we define who belongs in the country and who counts as a 'true' member has direct implications for our own behaviour and judgment, including who we are willing to vote for and who we are willing to hire for certain jobs. Moreover, such beliefs also negatively impact psychological outcomes for minority groups experiencing national exclusion making it an important issue for future work. Taken together with the present data, we argue that it is important to recognize that

defining national identity in exclusive terms that prioritize specific cultural characteristics or specific ethnic heritage can have negative implications for creating an inclusive and equitable nation.

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