"This *is* Us": Young New Zealand Muslims' Responses to the March 15th Terrorist Attacks in Christchurch

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Abstract

The terrorist attacks on Masjid Al Noor and Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) on the 15th of March 2019, resulted in the deaths of 51 Muslims, with countless more injured. Despite the growing threat of Far Right violence, the experiences of minoritised communities victimised by such violence remain understudied. A key unanswered question is the impact such terrorist attacks have on those who are distant from the direct site of the violence but belong to the broader community targeted. Young people who belong to these communities and are in the process of finding their identities and determining where they fit in society may be particularly vulnerable to the impacts of terrorism. This research focuses on the experiences and responses of Muslim youth in Auckland with no direct links to the shuhada (martyrs) in the aftermath of the March 15th terrorist attacks. The research aimed to explore how they reacted to and made sense of the terrorist attacks, as well as the strategies, resources, and methods of coping available to them.

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 16 young Muslims from Auckland between the ages of 18 and 24 years old two years after the attacks took place. They were asked a range of questions about their experiences of and responses to the terrorist attacks. Transcripts of their interviews were then analysed according to the six steps of reflexive thematic analysis. The analysis produced several significant findings. First, Auckland's Muslim youth experienced reactions of shock, fear, and disbelief in response to the attacks despite being geographically distant from the epicentre of violence. They identified closely with the victims, perceiving the terrorist's actions as a personal attack against themselves through their shared religious identity. Despite feeling intimately connected to the shuhada, Muslim youth in Auckland thought they did not have the right to mourn following the attacks as they did not lose

any direct family members. The other themes in relation to Muslim youths' meaning-making of the attacks indicate how broader socio-political factors of racism, Islamophobia, white supremacy, and settler colonialism informed their understanding of why the attacks occurred. Finally, themes relating to the coping resources available to Muslim youth indicate that religious, social, and political forms of coping were often utilised. Notions of post-traumatic growth, particularly in relation to spirituality, appear to have been a common experience among Muslim youth. Finally, most Muslim youth appear to have found greater pride in their identities following the attacks.

The findings of this research have important implications for current understandings of the ripple effects of terrorism-related trauma such that those beyond the site of violence can feel directly impacted through shared identity with direct victims. This research also highlights to mental health practitioners that collective forms of coping are preferred by young people in the wake of collective experiences. Lastly, this research highlights the need for mental health practitioners to enhance their understanding of Islam to better meet the mental health needs of Muslim youth.

Keywords: trauma, terrorism, Muslim, youth, adolescence, coping, socio-political

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the 51 Muslims who lost their lives as a result of the March 15th terrorist attacks. Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un (surely to Allāh we belong and to Allāh we will all return).

Abdukadir Elmi, Abdual Fattah Qasem, Ahmed Abdel Ghani, Ali Elmadani, Amjad Hamid, Ansi Alibava, Ashraf Ali, Ashraf Al-Masri, Daoud Nabi, Farhaj Ahsan, Ghulam Husain, Hafiz Musa, Vali Patel, Hamza Mustafa, Haroon Mehmood, Hosne Ahmed, Hussain al-Umari, Hussein Moustafa, Junaid Kara/Ismail, Kamel Mohamad Kamel Darweesh, Karam Bibi, Khaled Mustafa, Linda Armstrong, Maheboob Khokhar, Matiullah Safi, Mohammed Imran Khan, Omar Faruk, Mohsen Mohammed Al Harbi, Mojammel Hoq, Mounir Suleiman, Mucad Ibrahim, Lilik Abdul Hamid, Abdus Samad, Musa Nur Awale, Naeem Rashied, Osama Adnan Abu Kweik, Ozair Kadir, Ramiz Vora, Sayyad Milne, Sohail Shahid, Syed Areeb Ahmed, Syed Jahanda Ali, Talha Rashid, Tariq Omar, Zakaria Bhuiya, Zeeshan Raza, Muhammad Haziq bin Mohd Tarzmizi, Mohamad Moosi Mohamedhosen, and Zekeria Tuyan.

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به شما پدر و مادر مهر بانم. که نمیتونم با تحریر چند کلمه ای قدرداني تانرا اضهار کنم و من افتخار میدارم که به این مقام و درجه ای تحصیلی که رسیده ام البته از برکت لطف، مهربانی، زحمات و تشویق شما بوده. من واقعا ممنون شما هستم. بیجا نخواهد بود اگر یک رساله ای به افتخار زحمات شبانه روزی تان که جهت آینده بهتر ما متقبل شده‌اید نوشت.یکبار دیگر از صمیم قالبم سپاسگزار تان هستم.

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Glossary of Terms

Adhān	Islamic call to prayer
Allāh	Arabic term for God. Is usually followed with "(SWT)" which is an abbreviation of subhanahu wa ta'ala, defined below
Deen	Arabic term for religion
Du'a	A private and individualised Islamic prayer
Eid	The celebration marking the end of the Islamic month of Ramadān
Hijab	A head covering worn by Muslim women
Hijabi	A woman who wears a hijab
Imaan	Arabic term for faith
Jumu'ah	The prayer that occurs at solar noon on Fridays
Madrasah	Islamic classes
Masjid	Arabic term for mosque (singular)
Masjidain	Arabic term for two masjid
Masajid	Arabic term for more than two masjid
Peace be upon him (PBUH)	The honorific used when stating the name of the Prophet Muhammed

Ramadān	The month in the Islamic calendar during which Muslims fast
Salaat	Prescribed Islamic prayer
Shuhada	An Arabic term for the plural “martyr”. Used in this research to refer to those who died as a result of the March 15th attacks.
Subhanahu wa ta’ala (SWT)	The honorific for God in Islam, translates to the most glorified and most high
Ummah	Notion of a global Muslim collective

Chapter One: Literature Review

Introduction

On the afternoon of the 15th of March 2019, I finished my shift at work and headed to pick up my partner's sister, Brooke, from university. We had intended to go for dinner with Kasey to mark seven years since their mother passed away. When I arrived, Brooke nervously greeted me with, "Did you hear about the news from the mosque in Christchurch?". Initially, I was confused by her question. I dismissed the news report as sensationalism and turned up the volume in my car's stereo instead. I drove us home while Open Mike Eagle's *Happy Wasteland Day* played in the background on that warm Friday afternoon:

> Can the people get one day without violence?
>
> No bombs, no gunshots
>
> Can we get one day without fear?
>
> No sirens, no lights
>
> Can we get one day they don't try us?
>
> No bombs, no gunshots
>
> Just like one day the whole year?
>
> No violence, no fights
>
> (Open Mike Eagle, 2017, Track 5)

It was not until later in the evening that I realised what had indeed occurred. I opened my social media newsfeed on my phone and found videos of news reporters stationed outside Masjid

Al Noor in Christchurch. They were interviewing visibly distressed Muslim community members on the side of the road – some with bloodied clothing – while others were strewn across the footpath attending to their wounds. I remember seeing streets cordoned off by police as ambulances seemed to be frantically rushing around. Their sirens interrupted the news reporter's broadcast. My phone began to ring. Family and friends were wanting to check in on me. Throughout the rest of that evening, I found myself quietly humming to the tune of *Happy Wasteland Day*. Open Mike Eagle's plea for a day without violence and fear – just one day the whole year – resonated with me deeply that night, perhaps more so than earlier in the day. While I had been singing these lyrics aloud in the car earlier that afternoon, they now seemed too painful to utter.

In the days and weeks that followed, the devastating news of the attacks emerged as the death toll grew. I travelled down to Christchurch to offer any support I could. I felt compelled to help as an unscathed member of the community. On a few occasions, I travelled down alongside a team of highly experienced Muslim psychologists, all of whom had placed their lives on hold to support the community in Christchurch. I sat alongside them as they counselled community members and offered a listening ear to whoever needed it. Later that year, I was also invited to attend gatherings for Muslim youth in Auckland, Hamilton, and Christchurch. We would sit together and share our experiences of the attacks. Again, I sat and listened as person after person shared their stories of loss and expressed how deeply hurt, angry, and shocked they were by what had happened.

As I neared the end of my first year of postgraduate study that year, I was tasked with deciding on a topic for my doctoral thesis. Having had a personal experience of the attacks and been privy to the stories of Muslims across the country, I began to wonder whether this would

make for a meaningful thesis topic. I talked with groups of young Muslims, leaders in the community, and the collective of Muslim psychologists that had taken me down with them to Christchurch to hear their thoughts on me potentially undertaking this research. They were overwhelmingly supportive and offered to help in any way they could.

Having received their blessings and endorsements, I felt that I was in the right place at the right time to adequately and, most importantly, sensitively explore the experiences of Auckland's Muslim youth concerning the March 15th terrorist attacks. My interest in this research stems from these experiences after the attacks. My conversations and the stories I heard shaped my thinking around how I might undertake this research, the methodology I might employ and what findings I may produce. Moreover, my research was influenced by my personal experience of growing up as a Muslim in NZ. Like the young people I intended to interview for my research, I too frequently prayed inside masajid, attended Eid gatherings, and took part in religious activities alongside the community. I believe my being Muslim enabled me to be welcomed by the Muslim communities in Christchurch and across the country.

It is also important to highlight that professional experiences have influenced my research. For several years before beginning my training in clinical psychology, I worked as a youth worker with former refugee youth. Throughout my role, I gained insights into the challenges and experiences of marginalised young people who called NZ home. In my clinical training, I completed an internship at a child and adolescent mental health clinic, and this, too, shaped my thinking of how contemporary young people experience the stressors of migration and racism and how these factors impact on their mental well-being. Accordingly, in carrying out this research, I intended to bring to light the experiences of a group of young people who have rarely had the privilege of having their experiences centred in research. I intended to demonstrate

to them and the research community that their experiences mattered and were important. Indeed, this was my way of giving back to the community that had shaped my values and beliefs and helped me to get to where I am today in my training as a clinical psychologist.

While the March 15th terrorist attacks captured the world's attention and were a shocking display of violence, such acts of terrorism have become an unfortunate part of the modern world (Chenoweth, 2013; DiMaggio & Galea, 2006). Since the turn of the 21st century, governments and researchers alike have devoted increasing resources and attention to understanding the impacts of terrorism (Koh, 2007). Consequently, understandings of trauma have been influenced and enriched as terrorism research continues to proliferate (Hobfoll et al., 2007; C. S. North & Pfefferbaum, 2002; Pine et al., 2005). Recently, terrorists have begun to employ increasingly violent tactics to advance their political agendas, facilitated by advancements in modern technology that enable global and instantaneous distribution of violence (Danieli et al., 2004a). Together, these factors suggest that the effects of trauma from terrorist violence might extend to people and communities who are geographically distant from the epicentre of violence (Lin & Margolin, 2014). There is increasing recognition of the ripple effects of trauma. However, little research currently offers insights into how communities experience these events, make meaning of them, and respond (Okay & Karanci, 2020; Pfefferbaum et al., 2000; Shamai & Ron, 2009).

Terrorism-related trauma is often framed through individualised notions of trauma or medicalised psychiatric conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Goozee, 2021; Harvey, 1996). Given that terrorism is a politically motivated action, it is essential to understand how the social and political context shapes the way that terrorism is understood and reacted to. It is also vital to consider how the political and social context might influence the coping strategies people can draw from in the face of these abhorrent events.

That the terrorist attacks took place in an Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) context wherein a heightened climate of global Islamophobia has directly shaped the lives of Muslim communities is important to note (Dehar, 2020; Poynting, 2020). For Muslim youth in the West, negotiating their identities became increasingly complex after the September 11th 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon (Ahmed & Ezzeddine, 2009; Lynch, 2013). As global counter-terrorism efforts were developed with the sole focus of eliminating the threat of so-called Islamic terrorism, they contributed to linking Muslims with terrorism, and in doing so, contributed towards hostility and anti-Muslim prejudice in the West (Beydoun, 2018; Thobani, 2012). Muslim youth in the West have accordingly been argued to have found themselves at the "crosshairs" of a global conflict as they navigate and negotiate their sense of identities and belonging in a socio-political context wherein their communities are vilified (Sirin & Fine, 2007, p.152; Ward et al., 2019).

As terrorism, by design, intends to bring terror to entire communities, it is essential to explore how the broader targeted community experiences and are affected by these events. It is particularly important to understand how these events can impact the lives of youth who are developing their sense of who they are and where they belong in their society. Research is needed to help us understand how terrorism-related trauma might ripple through whole communities. It is also equally important to consider the strengths of the communities that are attacked and how they might resist the efforts of the terrorists to undermine their well-being and ravage their communities. Accordingly, this research aims to explore how Muslim youth experienced the March 15th attacks, including how they reacted and made sense of the attacks within their socio-political context. I also aim to explore how Muslim youth responded to the

attacks, identify the resources and coping strategies available, and identify the barriers to accessing support.

This thesis is comprised of four chapters. The remainder of this first chapter is a literature review that describes some of the key events related to the March 15th attacks and the critical research relevant to understanding terrorism, its impacts on people and communities, and how communities cope with the trauma of terrorism. The second chapter lays out the theoretical approach I adopt in this research, the methodology I employ to explore my research questions and the ethical considerations required in this research. In the third chapter, I present an analysis of my findings. Finally, in the fourth chapter, I discuss my research findings along with the implications of this research, its strengths and limitations, and future directions for research.

Literature Review

This literature review is comprised of five key sections. In the first section, I begin by outlining the events of the attacks and then proceed with a discussion on the politics of terrorism and the dominant ways it has come to be understood and defined. In the second section, I conceptualise what is meant by the term trauma before exploring how victims experience the trauma of terrorism. I conclude this section by discussing the major themes in research on distal populations' and minoritised communities' experiences of terrorism. In the third section of the literature review, I outline the various methods and strategies utilised by various people and communities to cope with the trauma of terrorism. In the fourth section, I draw on research on the experiences of youth in the context of terrorism and the coping strategies available to them. Finally, in the fifth section, I outline the current context of this study by describing key research on Muslim communities in NZ.

A Brief Summary of the March 15th Terrorist Attacks

At 1:40 pm on Friday, the 15th of March 2019, Brenton Harrison Tarrant, an Australian national, entered Masjid Al Noor on Deans Ave in Christchurch. He shot at the approximately 190 worshippers gathered there for Jumu'ah (Friday) prayers (Queen v Tarrant, 2020). Tarrant shot dead 42 people before driving to Linwood Islamic Centre, where approximately 100 Muslims had gathered. There, he shot at more people, totalling 51 victims. A further 89 sustained physical injuries. As Tarrant drove towards a third mosque in Ashburton, his vehicle was intercepted by police at 1:55 pm. They discovered several firearms, incendiary devices, and other weapons inside his vehicle (New Zealand Police, 2023). Tarrant informed police at this time that there were a further nine shooters, suggesting his attacks were part of a coordinated set of attacks.

While carrying out his attacks, Tarrant wore camouflage gear. He had decorated his weapons with references to the Crusades, recent terrorist attacks, and various symbols, including Nazi insignia (Royal Commission of Inquiry [RCOI], 2020). Tarrant also wore a helmet that had a video camera attached to it. He used this camera to live stream his actions via Facebook. Just under 200 people viewed the video live, and it was viewed another 4000 times before being removed by Facebook (Bromell, 2022). In the first 24 hours after the attacks, Facebook reported to have removed 1.5 million videos of the attacks, 1.2 million of which were blocked at upload (Meta Newsrooms, 2019). Copies of the video were also uploaded to the video-sharing website Youtube (Bromell, 2022).

Before carrying out his attacks, Tarrant announced his intentions in a post on 8chan, a popular social media platform among members of the Far Right (Nilsson, 2022). He also attached links to a 74-page document that he had titled "The Great Replacement". Tarrant sent

copies of this document to the Prime Minister's generic email address, several other politicians, and various media outlets.

On the evening of the 15th of March, then NZ Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, described the events as a "terrorist attack" (The Beehive, 2019a, para. 6). She also denounced the attacks by stating, "We were not chosen for this act of violence because we condone racism, because we are an enclave for extremism. We were chosen for the very fact that we are none of those things" (The Beehive, 2019a, para. 21-22). On the 19th of March, referring to the shuhada, the Prime Minister stated, "They were New Zealanders. They are us. And because they are us, we, as a nation, we mourn them." (italics added; The Beehive, 2019b, para. 8-9). In the days and weeks following the attacks, a series of vigils were held nationwide to remember the shuhada. The sentiments of the Prime Minister's speeches reverberated across the globe. The phrases "This is Not Us" and "They Are Us" became popularised through social media posts and placards placed at memorial sites.

Shortly after the attacks occurred, a Royal Commission of Inquiry was commissioned. Findings from this inquiry produced a compilation of reports that outlined Tarrant's motivations, the impacts on the community, and recommendations for government policy (RCOI, 2020). The Royal Commission of Inquiry concluded that Tarrant held extremist right-wing views, with a particular disdain for Muslims living in Western countries. This was based on his actions, interviews, and manifesto. Their report also confirmed that Tarrant's claim that there were nine other shooters was a false trail, along with several other statements he had made.

A series of legislative changes swiftly followed the March 15th terrorist attacks, including the banning of assault rifles and military-style semi-automatic weapons, as well as a firearms registry, harsher penalties, and a warning system to show if a license holder is a fit and

proper person (Every-Palmer et al., 2020). The Christchurch Call was also formed, a community of 120 governments, online service providers and civil society organisations aimed at eliminating terrorist and violent extremist content online (Pandey, 2020).

On the 27th of August, 2020, Tarrant was found guilty of 51 charges of murder, 40 charges of attempted murder, and one charge of committing a terrorist act (Queen v Tarrant, 2020). He was sentenced to life imprisonment without parole by Justice Cameron Mander. In his sentencing remarks, Mander J stated: :

> You have caused enormous loss and hurt. The taking of one life and the suffering of one family is an unbearable tragedy in its own right, but the widespread distress and despair you have inflicted by your offending is without precedent. You have caused terrible grief and lasting pain to so many people. Bereaved families have been left desolate and bereft. The human cost of the extraordinary harm you have done to your victims, to their families, and to the whole community is beyond measure. (*Queen v Tarrant*, 2020, p.35)

Understanding Terrorism

To provide a context for my research, it is essential to consider how modern terrorism has come to be defined, its implications for Muslim communities globally, and the role of terrorism discourses in shaping the Far Right's ideologies. I begin by exploring the definitional issues central to terrorism studies and how attempts at defining terrorism have placed religion as the defining characteristic of modern terrorism. I then focus my attention on evaluating how notions of religious terrorism, particularly that of an Islamic nature, may have been appropriated by right-wing actors and groups to form a core part of their ideology. Finally, I conclude by presenting research that examines the Far Right's brand of anti-Muslim prejudice within broader

and historicised contexts of settler colonialism and white supremacy to understand how the attacks may have been understood in the NZ context.

The Challenges of Defining Terrorism. In this section, I briefly outline the key trends in terrorism studies and how terrorism has come to be defined. It is perhaps a truism to state that the usage of the term terrorism to describe specific acts of violence remains a highly controversial and contested topic (Crenshaw & LaFree, 2017; Ramsay, 2015; Schmid, 2011). Although the origins of the word can be traced to the 18th-century French Revolution, there has remained an ongoing debate within academic, public, and political spheres as to the intrinsic essence of this socially constructed phenomenon (Schmid, 2011; Tilly, 2004). In fact, close to 200 definitions of terrorism exist within the terrorism literature, and still, no consensus has been reached (Schmid, 2011).

Central to the definitional problem of terrorism is the issue of who has the power to define it (Gunning, 2007; Schmid, 2004). Terrorism is typically a pejorative label with several negative connotations (Jackson, 2007a; Martini & Da Silva, 2022; Schmid, 2011). When the state prescribes the label terrorism to specific actors and groups' actions, it denounces their actions and delegitimises their political motivations. As such, very rarely do actors of political violence use the term terrorist to refer to themselves, instead opting for terms such as freedom fighter or revolutionary (Ben-Dor & Pedahzur, 2003; Bryan et al., 2011; Ganor, 2002; Jackson, 2007a; Richards & Bryan, 2018). In this way, the term terrorism is thought to enact political power (Jackson, 2007a; Laqueur, 1998).

A second challenge in defining terrorism is the heterogeneity of its actors and the various forms of violence in which they engage (Marsden & Schmid, 2011). Some authors argue that political violence has looked remarkably different across time and in various contexts (Begorre-

Bret, 2006; Victoroff, 2005). It is thought to be futile to attempt to define various violent actions that have used a range of different technologies and have been deployed by various actors of varying ideologies under a single descriptor (Ramsay, 2015). In fact, some theorists have argued that the term terrorism should be altogether abandoned given these foundational issues (Bryan et al., 2011). Despite the challenges of defining terrorism, this has not deterred some researchers from attempting to reach a definition, particularly within academia (Ganor, 2002; Schmid, 2011).

One of the most significant attempts at defining terrorism came in the later part of the 20th century when Alex Schmid and Allard Jongman attempted to elucidate the supposed core elements of the term terrorism by administering a detailed survey to academics and terrorism experts (Schmid, 1992; L. Weinberg et al., 2004). Through this process, they identified 22 core elements which they amalgamated into a single definition. While thought to have made a significant leap towards becoming a universally accepted definition, their definition was critiqued as being too lengthy and, at times, even contradictory (Ramsay, 2015). In response, Alex Schmid (2011) has since revised their earlier definition of terrorism, again relying on academic consensus, to arrive at a definition comprised of 12 elements, the first of which states:

> Terrorism refers, on the one hand, to a doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and noncombatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties. (Schmid, 2011, p.86)

The remaining 11 elements highlight how terrorism intends to instil fear and dread among those who identify with or share similarities with the direct victims and that the direct

victims are not the ultimate target but serve as a means to communicate some message to a broader audience (Schmid, 2011).

One strategy to circumvent the particular challenge of using a single term to encapsulate what is thought to be a diverse range of violent acts has led to some researchers focusing their efforts on delineating specific typologies or sub-classifications of terrorism (Begorre-Bret, 2006; Walter, 1964; Wilkinson, 1974). Through this approach, it is hypothesised that specific terms can be used to more accurately describe the different forms of terrorism occurring in the present day, what relationship these acts of violence share with one another and the resemblance they bear to historical forms of political violence (Begorre-Bret, 2006). Early suggestions for these typologies of terrorism attempted to focus on the process of terror and by whom it was used (Shultz, 1978). Others have presented complex matrixes consisting of various typologies that are distinguished from one another according to their targets, degrees of force, agents, and the context of their violence as either domestic or international (S. Kaplan, 2008). For example, one such permutation from this model could be indiscriminate non-lethal state violence towards an international target. At the same time, another could be discriminate, lethal, non-state violence towards a domestic target. Accordingly, both are argued to fall under the broader category of terrorism but comprise different forms (S. Kaplan, 2008).

Emerging from this line of inquiry has been the idea of demarcating contemporary terrorism from its more historical forms, thus termed "new" and "old" terrorism (Hoffman, 1995; Kurtulus, 2011, p.476; Laqueur, 1998). Proponents of the new versus old terrorism thesis argue that old forms of terrorism often involved the discriminate targeting of people by an organised group. Since approximately the 1990s, however, terrorism is argued to have become qualitatively different, lacking structure and targeting victims indiscriminately (Kurtulus, 2011). Notably, new

terrorism is argued to be primarily motivated by religious – as opposed to political – motivations, making it far more lethal than any other form of terrorism previously observed as its perpetrators are thought to be acting according to divine duty (Hoffman, 1995, 1999; Laqueur, 1998). This distinction between old and new terrorism came under scrutiny by later terrorism scholars who argued that new terrorism is simply a continuation of an ever-evolving phenomenon and that such a differentiation is not analytically useful (Duyvesteyn, 2004; Gofas, 2023; Spencer, 2006; Tucker, 2001). However, insistence on religion forming the basis for a new type of terrorism has proven to be a popular idea among terrorism scholars.

Emerging alongside the new versus old terrorism thesis, David Rapoport proposed the wave model of modern terrorism that has subsequently become the cornerstone of contemporary terrorism studies and counter-terrorism policies (Rapoport, 2002; Sinai, 2012). In the wave model, Rapoport establishes a chronology of modern terrorism beginning in the late 19th century and extending into the present day (Rapoport, 2002; Sedgwick, 2007). He posits that modern terrorist activity fluctuates in a manner that resembles the periodic nature of a wave. Typically, a precipitating event leads to the emergence of a wave of terrorism, during which a series of tactics and weapons are used in a similar way before being replaced by the emergence of a new wave.

Although Rapaport's conceptualisation of terrorism differed from those who wrote about new terrorism, aspects of his model overlapped. Rapoport (2004) claimed that religion, precisely Islam, characterised the fourth wave. He pointed to three key events related to Islam or Muslims that took place in the late 1900s that provided the political context for religion to launch this wave: the Iran hostage crisis in 1979, the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, and the turn of the century in the Islamic calendar. Rapoport (2002) further endorsed his claim that Islam was unequivocally at the centre of the religious wave following the attacks on the World Trade

Center and Pentagon on the morning of September 11th 2001 (hereafter referred to as 9/11 or the September 11th attacks).

Over the next two decades, Rapoport's wave model went on to inform terrorism studies and international counter-terrorism policies and is commonly referred to as the single-most influential conceptual framework of terrorism (Hart, 2023; Parker & Sitter, 2016). Notably, the wave model is said to be responsible for establishing Islam at the heart of modern terrorism (Jackson, 2006). Rapoport excluded right-wing groups from his original model, citing their counter-government reactionary motives as grounds for doing so (Rapoport, 2004).

Building on the wave theory, in recent times, several authors have hypothesised whether right-wing terrorism could be the characteristic feature of a potential fifth wave of terrorism – a prospect that Rapoport, too, has recently posed – with some even specifying anti-Muslim prejudice, or Islamophobia, being at the heart of this wave (Auger, 2023; Jalil, 2021; Kundnani, 2007; Massoumi et al., 2017; Rapoport, 2021). However, it is important to highlight the recency of such efforts and the continued dominance of an Islamic narrative in terrorism discourses over the past two decades. A focus on the threat posed by Islamic terrorism, and more generally, the threat from all Muslims to the West continues to hold centre stage in discussions of terrorism and counter-terrorism in the West (Jamil et al., 2023; Micieli-Voutsinas & Nguyen, 2023).

Consideration of the definition of terrorism makes it clear that this is a politically laden and poorly-defined term with the potential to be used as a political tool. Researchers' attempts at better conceptualising the phenomena of terrorism have led to an articulation of typologies and waves of terrorism. In turn, these attempts, particularly the wave theory, have contributed to establishing religion – exclusively Islam – as central to modern forms of terrorism.

Critical Perspectives on "Islamic" Terrorism. In this section of the review, I consider the contribution of a body of literature that has been critical of how Islam has been implicated in modern terrorism studies. Critical theorists posit several fundamental issues with orthodox terrorism studies (Gunning & Jackson, 2011; Jackson, 2007a, 2007b). They highlight the mushrooming of terrorism studies' experts that emerged through state sponsorship following the September 11th attacks to argue that terrorism studies have become saturated with an "epistemic community", sharing limited narratives regarding terrorism and being led by state counter-terrorism interests (Jackson, 2007b; Lum et al., 2006; Phillips, 2023; Ranstorp, 2009; Reid, 1993, p. 17; Silke, 2008). More specifically, they argue that terrorism studies have produced and reproduced the notion of Islamic terrorism with very little reflexivity and critical input (Gunning, 2007; Jackson, 2007a; Toros & Gunning, 2009).

Central to critical theorists' issues with the notion of Islamic terrorism is the view that it was formed to substantiate a concerted global counter-terrorism response, the Global War on Terror (GWOT; Jackson, 2007a, 2018). While Rapoport's wave model firmly placed Islam at the heart of modern terrorism, the GWOT is argued to have been backed by a tradition of Orientalist scholarship on the Middle East and Arab regions that justified anglo-European imperialism (Flint & Radil, 2009; Jackson, 2007a). These bodies of work, together, contributed to a powerful discourse that has positioned terrorism as, by definition, Islamic. Thus, the invasion of Muslim-majority countries and the mass surveillance of domestic Muslim communities could be justified as part of official counter-terrorism policies (Ayoob, 2013; Goepner, 2016; Qurashi, 2018; Sian, 2017). In turn, the link between Islam and violence was consolidated, construing Muslims as inherently violent and terroristic and furthering prejudiced attitudes towards Muslims, often referred to as Islamophobia (Abbas & Awan, 2015; Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Beshara, 2018;

Cesari, 2009; B. Cohen & Tufail, 2017; Jackson, 2007a; Kundnani, 2007; Semati, 2010). Through the social construction of the Islamic terrorism discourse, an unconscious link between Muslims and terrorism is argued to have been established in the collective minds of the West, substantiating the notion that Muslims and Islam are indeed its enemies (Jackson, 2007a; Kundnani, 2014; Mamdani, 2005; Steuter & Wills, 2010). It is important to note that this notion of a supposed clash of civilisations between Islam and the West has been a cornerstone of Orientalist depictions of Muslims and historical Muslim-Christian conflict, predating the September 11th attacks, but, in recent times, has become reinvigorated by counter-terrorism policies (Altwaiji, 2014; Crowder et al., 2014; Jackson, 2007a).

Based on these arguments, Richard Jackson argues against using the term Islamic terrorism entirely as it discursively links Islam with terrorism (Jackson, 2007a). Jackson draws on empirical research to highlight that terrorism of a so-called Islamic nature is primarily driven by political – not religious – motivations. As such, he argues that the term Islamic terrorism does not accurately describe the drivers of these forms of terrorism and should, therefore, not be used. Jackson proposes the following definition of terrorism that circumvents many of these problems while acknowledging that as a socially negotiated term, there is no possibility of reaching an objective truth of terrorism. Throughout this research, I too will rely on this definition by Jackson that states terrorism is:

> Violence or its threat intended as a symbolically communicative act in which the direct victims of the action are instrumentalised as a means to creating a psychological effect of intimidation and fear in a target audience for a political objective. (Jackson, 2011, p. 123)

As I am concerned with Muslim communities' experiences of terrorism and aim not to further contribute to Islamophobic attitudes towards Muslims, I employ this definition as opposed to others that place an over-emphasis on Islam.

The "Islamic Terrorism" Discourse within The Far Right. In the following discussion, I explore how the discourse on so-called Islamic terrorism has ideologically and materially impacted attitudes towards Muslims globally. I also consider how these ideas have been appropriated by the political right to support their agendas.

The Far Right often used interchangeably with the Radical Right, is an umbrella term used to describe a contemporary, transnational, socio-political movement comprised of individuals who hold extremist right-wing ideologies (Gattinara & Pirro, 2019; Mudde, 2010). Although there remains a lack of consensus as to the characteristic ideological features of this movement, primarily due to their heterogeneity and international spread, they typically share ethno-nationalistic ideals (Am & Weimann, 2020; Golder, 2016; Rydgren, 2007). In recent years, the Far Right has grown increasingly preoccupied with the invasive threat posed by Muslim immigrants and a duty to preserve a so-called white identity (Bai, 2020; Rydgren, 2007; Wojtasik, 2020).

Proponents of the Far Right have been documented to have extensively referred to or drawn upon Islamic terrorism discourses that depict Muslims as terroristic, violent, and backward to evoke fear of a so-called white genocide (Moses, 2019; Poynting & Briskman, 2018; Williams, 2010). In fact, a subset of the Far Right has dubbed themselves counter-Jihadists to signify their reactionary politics to the threat of so-called Jihadi or Islamic terrorists (Aked, 2017; Fekete, 2012). In line with the Far Right's ethno-pluralist doctrine, its proponents call for

the expulsion of Muslim immigrants from Europe – and its settler colonies – as these are supposedly the rightful homelands of white peoples (Fekete, 2012; Rydgren, 2007).

In recent times, several Far Right figures have carried out high-profile violent attacks and have explicitly cited the threat posed by various minoritised peoples, such as Muslims, Jews or Black people, to a supposed white identity in their manifestos (L. Buckingham & Alali, 2020; Leonard et al., 2014; Nilsson, 2022; Ware, 2020). For example, Anders Breivik, who detonated a bomb in Oslo and then travelled to Utøya Island where he shot at 600 people taking part in a youth camp, asserted that "completely stopping Muslim immigration" was necessary to save European civilisation (as cited in Syse, 2014 p.395). Analyses of his manifesto have also concluded that Breivik's primary motivations were anti-Muslim prejudice, or Islamophobia (Berntzen & Sandberg, 2014; Gardell, 2014; Leonard et al., 2014; Ranstorp, 2013). In Breivik's manifesto, he also extensively cited and sometimes directly copied from self-described counter-jihadis (T. Archer, 2013; Kundnani, 2012).

Similarly, Dylann Roof, who entered and prayed alongside churchgoers before shooting at them, wrote about the supposed violent tendencies of African Americans that threatened white Americans' safety (Boyce & Brayda, 2015; Chebrolu, 2020). Before carrying out his attacks on the two mosques in Christchurch, Tarrant also published a manifesto online that contained, amongst other things, his rationale for carrying out the attacks. He was thought to have been heavily inspired by Anders Breivik. Analyses of Tarrant's manifesto, in addition to interviews with Tarrant conducted on behalf of the Royal Commission of Inquiry, have concluded that his primary motivation was a concern around the Islamisation of Europe and its settler colonies which he, and other Far Right actors, believe will result in a so-called white genocide (L. Buckingham & Alali, 2020; Harwood, 2021; Moses, 2019; RCOI, 2020). The only response to

such a perceived threat to a white identity is the violent use of force to expel Muslims, according to the Far Right's logic (Bjørgo & Gjelsvik, 2017; Choudhury, 2019; Obaidi et al., 2022).

Evidently, both Tarrant and Breivik's manifestos illustrate the extent to which the Islamic terrorism discourse – and the reactionary counter-Jihadi movement which it has birthed – have been pivotal in contributing towards the Islamophobia that shapes the political ideologies of the Far Right (J. Kaplan, 2006; Robertson, 2014). The concerns raised earlier in this section around the problematic nature of such discourses become evident when considering their material implications, particularly in the case of Far Right actors like Tarrant, who draw from Islamic terrorism discourses to justify their use of violence against Muslim communities. This discussion clearly demonstrates the link between the actions of the perpetrator of the March 15th terrorist attacks and the discourses around Islamic terrorism. This contributes to understanding Tarrant's motivations and, importantly, for my study, helps to show the context in which this event might be interpreted.

White Supremacy, Racism, and Settler Colonialism Among the Far Right. While both Far Right actors, Tarrant and Breivik, were clearly motivated by Islamophobia, several authors have situated such anti-Muslim prejudice within broader factors of historicised settler colonialism and white supremacy (Al-Asaad, 2019; Poynting, 2020; Waitoki, 2019). These factors appear to be important considerations when attempting to understand why Far Right actors, like Tarrant, engage in such abhorrent acts of violence. In the final portion of this section, I outline what is meant by white supremacy, racism, and settler colonialism to illustrate how these concepts inform the anti-Muslim ideological milieu of the Far Right. Importantly, I explore how these concepts may explain Tarrant's actions within the NZ context, a country with its own history of colonisation, that may frame how the event is perceived and understood.

White supremacy has been defined as a presumed superiority of white racial identities (Bonds & Inwood, 2016). The notion of white supremacy forms the basis for the hierarchical organisation of humans according to their supposed race, referred to as racism, with white Europeans sitting at the top and all other racialised bodies in various positions of subordination (Bonds & Inwood, 2016). Importantly, white supremacy legitimises the supposed white race's domination of non-white bodies (Bonds & Inwood, 2016).

Settler-colonialism is described as a distinct component of the imperial project and is underpinned by white supremacist logic (Morgensen, 2011; Smith, 2012). Concerned with the building of an ethnically distinct national community on indigenous land from which wealth can be extracted, settler colonialism refers to the notion of white supremacy and its hierarchal organising of races to justify its extermination of racialised people in forming and reforming of settler colonies (Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Wolfe, 2006). White supremacy licenses white settlers to forcibly displace and dispossess indigenous populations of their land, using whatever means they see fit, including often genocide (Smith, 2012; Wolfe, 2006).

Analyses of and commentaries on Tarrant's manifesto reveal the role of settler colonialism and its relationship to white supremacy that inform his anti-Muslim prejudices (Al-Asaad, 2021; Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Elers & Jayan, 2020; Poynting, 2020; Waitoki, 2019). In relying on the logic of white supremacy, Tarrant is thought to have assumed his position of supposed superiority within the racial hierarchy, thus necessitating his rightful duty in clearing indigenous and racialised bodies to maintain an ethnically distinct settler colony.

Although Muslims are a religious group, it is argued that through the process of racialisation, they have come to be socially constructed as a supposed race (Al-Saji, 2010; Considine, 2017; Garner & Selod, 2015). This racialisation is made possible by essentialising

Muslims as fanatical and terroristic, notions derived from Islamic terrorism and Orientalist discourses described earlier (Choudhury, 2022; Considine, 2017). Moreover, as Islam is a religion predominantly practised by black and brown bodies, these factors have led to the construction of the supposed Muslim race (Choudhury, 2022).

By becoming racialised, Muslims fall into a subordinate position within the racial hierarchy, allowing for their eradication from European settler colonies, according to white supremacist logic (Al-Asaad, 2019; Poynting, 2020). Moreover, it is through this very same process of racialisation that particular essentialist racial characteristics can be attributed to some two billion people. One such racial characteristic that is of particular concern to Tarrant and others within the Far Right is the alleged high birth rates of Muslims (Ehsan & Stott, 2020; Nilsson, 2022). Hence, the Muslim race is supposedly inferior to the so-called white race and threatens its hegemony over settler colonies through its sheer numbers (Nilsson, 2022). Tarrant's manifesto reveals his primary concern was the decay of the so-called white race in Europe and its settler colonies, to which a growing Muslim population feeds into the myth of a so-called white genocide (G. Michael, 2009; Nilsson, 2022).

Such notions of an invasive threat posed by racialised bodies to the maintenance of whiteness in settler colonies very closely parallels – and has been argued to give rise to – the imperative for aggressive, violent counter-terrorism policies (Ahmad & Monaghan, 2021; Lloyd & Wolfe, 2016; Morgensen, 2011; Smith & Kauanui, 2008). Both white supremacist logic and the Islamic counter-terrorism policy of the GWOT rely upon an us/them or good/evil dichotomy that converges into a violent and often genocidal imperative (Esch, 2010; Etaywe, 2022; Khalid, 2014; Nilsson, 2022; Wojtasik, 2020). As several discursive analyses of Tarrant's manifesto have highlighted, his concern with the so-called Muslim invasion of Europe and its settler

colonies reveals the extent to which such a convergence has resulted in anti-Muslim prejudice, and in Tarrant's case, anti-Muslim violence (Ehsan & Stott, 2020; Moses, 2019; Waitoki, 2019).

Conclusion. In this section of the literature review, I have made the case that terrorism lacks definitional agreeance and is inherently a political phenomenon. From the extensive body of work attempting to classify, delineate, and describe terrorism, the wave theory of terrorism has emerged, notable for its unequivocal placing of Islam at the heart of modern terrorism. In doing so, the wave theory has catapulted the notion of Islamic terrorism to the forefront of the discourses around terrorism and garnered anti-Muslim prejudice in the West. Counter-terrorism policies derived from wave theory and developed in response to the threat of so-called Islamic terrorism have relied on historic Orientalist framing of Islam as anti-West. The overlapping agendas of anti-Muslim sentiment, white supremacy, and colonisation appear to be deeply salient for understanding the motivation for Christchurch terrorist attacks. These ideologies are also likely to shape how NZ's Muslims, as the targets of this attack, interpret and respond to this event. To date, there is little research that helps us understand this unique context and its implications for those affected.

Terrorism and Psychological Trauma

As outlined earlier, it is essential to understand the broader political meaning of the March 15th terrorist attacks to provide a background for understanding their impact and the meaning they carry for those targeted. In addition, it is crucial to recognise that there are intended psychological effects of terrorism commonly referred to as trauma (Danieli et al., 2004b). Jackson's (2011) definition of terrorism, among others (e.g. Schmid, 2011), indeed highlights that violence towards direct victims functions to evoke psychological reactions of fear among a wider audience.

In this section, I will adopt a psychological lens that can inform an understanding of people's psychological responses to the March 15th terrorist attacks. I begin by summarising what the term trauma means and how it has come to be understood primarily in relation to psychiatric diagnoses. I then explore the political implications of a medicalised understanding of trauma which is the basis of much current psychological research and practice. I then turn my discussion to trace how the medicalisation of trauma has influenced trauma research, including in relation to terrorism. I will also consider the potentials and limitations of existing psychological understandings of trauma for making sense of terrorism's traumatic effects among populations distal to the epicentre of the violence and among minoritised communities.

Defining Trauma. Before covering the traumatic effects of terrorism, it is important to first define the term and its history. The term trauma derives from the Ancient Greek word meaning wound (Danese & Baldwin, 2017). In contemporary usage, it has come to denote an injury of sorts to the psychological matter (Athanasiadou-Lewis, 2019). When faced with a traumatic event, it is common for people and communities to experience feelings of disbelief and terror (Hutchinson & Bleiker, 2008). The ordinary systems that give a sense of control, connection, and meaning become overwhelmed (Herman, 1997). Traumatic events are thought to be overwhelming in that they exceed an individual and community's ability to cope, usually posing some threat to life through violence or death (Hobfoll, 1991).

Importantly, trauma is thought to call into question basic human relationships, damaging the construction of the self that is formed in relation to others (Herman, 1997). It is understood to have profound impacts on the belief systems which give meaning to human experience and can shift people's fundamental assumptions of safety in the world (Janoff-Bulman, 1989). As

feminist scholar Liz Philipose (2007) puts it, experiences of trauma can fundamentally undo what people know about themselves and their external world.

Campaign efforts of the Women's Rights Movement alongside Vietnam anti-war veterans and Holocaust survivors led to the eventual inclusion of PTSD in the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 1980). These groups led a political advocacy movement that called for recognising traumatic experiences, such as gendered violence, war, and genocide, as significantly impacting people and communities psychologically (Jones & Wessely, 2006; Scott, 1990). In gaining formal recognition of the psychological impacts of experiencing such events, campaigners hoped it would guarantee access to appropriate resources and support for those suffering from trauma (Herman, 1997). Accordingly, Judith Herman, a feminist writer and psychiatrist, asserts that such advancements in the knowledge and awareness pertaining to trauma, from Freud to feminists, were all fundamentally political pursuits (Herman, 1997).

Similarly, Bonnie Burstow builds on Herman's assertion by stating that all forms of trauma arise from real threats in the external world and that these are inherently political (Burstow, 2003). Burstow asserts that trauma involves specific concrete events and inevitably involves humans at some level as they occur within specific social contexts. Furthermore, she contends that the world is imminently dangerous for people and communities who have experienced trauma. By drawing on the example of Jewish people who experienced the Holocaust, she illustrates that the feeling of being existentially unsafe is not rooted in what dominant understandings of trauma frame as distortions of reality but are closely attuned to a specific social reality (Burstow, 2003).

When PTSD was eventually included in the *DSM-III*, the aetiological symptom, which has come to be known as Criterion A, specified that the traumatic event must be a stressor that would evoke symptoms of distress in "almost everyone" (APA, 1980, p. 236; Scott, 1990). In a later revision, the *DSM-III-R*, Criterion A was widened to include indirect exposure to an event, such as learning about a serious threat or harm to a friend or relative, thus widening of criteria for an event to be considered traumatic and an initial recognition of how indirect exposure to threat or harm can be psychologically damaging (APA, 1987; Friedman, 2013; C. North et al., 2016). In the fourth edition (*DSM-IV*), the criteria for PTSD again changed, this time with the splitting of Criterion A into two components, an objective and a subjective component (APA, 1994). In the objective component, a greater number of stressors were included that constituted traumatic events, such as receiving a diagnosis for a terminal condition and learning of the sudden death of a family member or close friend (Friedman et al., 2011). The second element of Criteria A, the subjective component, included intense responses of fear, helplessness, or horror (APA, 1994). Accordingly, some have argued that broadening the definition of what constitutes a traumatic event may have unhelpful implications for applications of PTSD as ordinary misfortunes begin to be classified as traumatic events. Thus, normal emotional reactions to stressors become over-medicalised (McNally, 2009).

In a more recent iteration of the *DSM-5*, Criterion A of PTSD again changed, losing the two-part system posed in the *DSM-IV* (APA, 2013). Moreover, there was a subtle shift in the exposure aspect of the traumatic event. While the *DSM-IV* stated that learning of the sudden death of a loved one constituted a traumatic event, in the *DSM-5*, this form of indirect exposure was tightened to specify that if a loved one did suddenly die, the death *must have* been accidental or violent (APA, 2013; Friedman, 2013). Sudden death no longer counted as a traumatic event.

Thus, in its current form, PTSD necessitates that the traumatic event must be extreme in nature. Criterion A in the *DSM-5* describes the aetiological criterion as exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence that is either directly experienced, witnessed in person as the event occurred, learned about as happening to a close friend or relative (in such situations, it is stipulated that the death must be violent or caused by an accident) or experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to the details of a traumatic event as is the case in some job roles. Notably, exposure via electronic media, television, movies, or pictures are excluded as forms of exposure to trauma unless related to the individual's work.

Other diagnostic criteria for PTSD in the *DSM-5* include the presence of intrusion symptoms such as recurrent memories of the event, distressing dreams, flashbacks, or distress from internal or external cues. The individual must also exhibit persistent avoidance of internal (thoughts, memories, or feelings) or external stimuli (people, places, situations) associated with the event alongside alterations in their mood or cognitions, such as exaggerated negative beliefs about themselves, others, or the world. The fifth criterion for PTSD posits that the individual must have a marked alteration in their arousal, such as an exaggerated startle response or hypervigilance. Together, these symptoms must be present for more than one month and cause clinically significant distress that cannot be attributed to effects of a substance for someone to be diagnosed with PTSD.

Evidently, since the initial inclusion of PTSD in the *DSM-III*, what constitutes exposure to a traumatic event has undergone several changes. The parameters of a traumatic event have changed, as has the level of exposure to include indirect forms of exposure. Understanding the psychological impacts of traumatic events through PTSD criteria is important as it indicates how the March 15th attacks may have affected people and communities. Moreover, as there is

growing recognition of the adverse impacts of indirect exposure to such traumatic events, this suggests those outside Christchurch, who did not experience the terrorist attacks of March 15th first-hand, may nonetheless be impacted by them. Indeed, the growing body of literature on the notion of trauma contagion, whereby people who bear witness to people's experiences of traumatic events experience similar psychological reactions to those who have experienced the trauma first-hand, adds to the growing awareness of trauma's indirect effects (Shamai & Ron, 2009).

While the inclusion of PTSD in the *DSM* marked a recognition of the real psychological impacts of various kinds of trauma, by codifying trauma, several contemporary critical theorists and practitioners argue it has also medicalised – and by extension depoliticised – the experience of trauma (Burstow, 2003; Pupavac, 2004; Stein et al., 2007). Although Criterion A acknowledges the etiological role of an external event in PTSD by way of exposure to an actual or threatened violence, the dominant psychiatric model through which trauma has come to be framed, studied, and treated commonly emphasises predisposing factors and biological vulnerabilities to PTSD or the role of cognitive biases in the interpretation of traumatic events (Bracken, 2001; Ehlers & Clark, 2000). For example, Elhers and Clark (2000, p. 320) describe individuals experiencing PTSD as being "unable to see the trauma as a time-limited event that does not have global negative implications for their future". In framing trauma and its psychological effects this way, the role of the social and political environment is largely precluded, as well as the ongoing threat that some contexts may present (S. C. Holmes et al., 2016). Provisions are not made within the diagnosis of PTSD for how oppressive social structures, such as sexism and racism, contribute both to inflicting the trauma and dictating how victimised communities respond (Bryant-Davis, 2007, 2019; S. C. Holmes et al., 2016).

In decontextualising trauma through a medical diagnosis, traumatic events are argued to have come to be treated as an apolitical experience (Goozee, 2021; Pupavac, 2004). That is, the politics of trauma have been divorced from where it stems and how it is understood to affect people and communities (Giacaman et al., 2011). This contrasts with Burstow's (2000) assertion, described earlier that *all* forms of trauma are inherently political. Goozee (2021) argues that a medicalised, decontextualised, and depoliticised approach to trauma functions precisely as psychiatry intends, given that its purpose is to reintegrate the individual into the context from which they came. In this way, she argues that trauma cannot be used to challenge the political context from which it emerged. Drawing on the writings of Frantz Fanon in the context of colonial Algeria, Goozee (2021) adds to her argument for how trauma has come to be decontextualised through an individualised framing that obfuscates its political origins.

In contrast to the diagnostic representation of trauma, she describes how Fanon firmly attributed the mental suffering of the Algerian and French patients he saw in his practice to the environmental aspects of their lives, namely their livelihoods within a colonial context. She reports how Fanon opposed the notion of individualising his patients' traumas as this would mask the true agent of violence: the colonial state. Goozee's (2021) argument appears to be in line with those of several other critical theorists that have urged for contemporary understandings and studies of trauma to move away from a medicalised approach that frames trauma within a positivist, biomedical paradigm and to instead contextualise it within the socio-political context in which it occurs (Bistoen, 2016; Harvey, 1996; Pupavac, 2004; Summerfield, 2001).

Extending on the notion of all traumas being political, it should come as no surprise that experiencing the violence of terrorism is commonly cited as an example of trauma (Danieli et al., 2004b). Indeed, as the very etymology and definitions of the term terrorism imply, acts of

political violence are intended to evoke a great deal of fear and dread in their victims (Jackson, 2011; S. Michael, 2007; Schmid, 2011; Teichman, 1989). A second and equally important aspect of terrorism, as outlined in the earlier section, is terrorism's political motivations (Jackson, 2007a). The violence used by terrorists is thought to be a vehicle to advance some form of political struggle. Evidently, the terror and politics central to trauma parallel the terror and politics central to acts of terrorism. Thus, terrorist events and their effects must be re-connected to the political context in which they arise.

Terrorism-Related Trauma. To provide background to my study is important to evaluate the current psychological literature pertaining to the trauma of terrorism. Accordingly, in this section, I explore the key psychological research conducted following previous acts of terrorism across different contexts. I endeavour to cover both qualitative and quantitative research to develop a broad understanding of how terrorism-related trauma is experienced by direct and indirect victims that may shed light on how Muslims experienced the March 15th terrorist attacks.

In recent decades, several large-scale terrorist attacks have occurred in the Western world, leading to a noticeable surge in terrorism-related research (Elbedour et al., 1999; Galea, 2002; Schlenger et al., 2002; Stuber, 2001). Psychological research, in particular, has seen a rapid proliferation following the turn of the twenty-first century, resulting in large-scale studies being conducted in various countries to measure the psychological impacts of terrorism (see Laugharne et al., 2007 for review). Following the September 11th attacks, for example, Schlenger and colleagues (2002) conducted a study with over 2,000 participants. They reported higher than expected rates of PTSD symptomology among those in New York City compared to elsewhere in the country. Similarly, Lowell and colleagues (2018) recently completed a

systematic review of 15 years' worth of studies relating to the September 11th attacks. They concluded that PTSD rates increased in some populations, including rescue workers. Elsewhere, the prevalence of other psychiatric conditions, such as anxiety disorders, has been measured and reported alongside the associated functional impairments of such conditions following exposure to terrorism (DiMaggio et al., 2009; Malta et al., 2009; Solberg et al., 2015). Indeed, it has come to be widely understood that experiencing terrorism is associated with the onset of psychiatric conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depressive disorder, or generalised anxiety disorder (Dalyop & Saleh, 2017; Gabriel et al., 2007; Ghafoori et al., 2009; Laugharne et al., 2007; Shalev & Freedman, 2005). However, as is apparent in summarising the findings from these large-scale studies and systematic reviews, beyond psychiatric diagnoses and post-traumatic symptomology, there is little that the psychological research into the traumatic effects of terrorism offers in terms of details of victims' experiences (Engdahl, 2004). Even outside a Western context, studies conducted in India, Kenya and Spain following terrorist attacks in their respective countries have predominantly focused on measuring psychopathology and formal psychiatric diagnoses (Baca et al., 2004; Conejo-Galindo et al., 2007; Gabriel et al., 2007; Gautam et al., 1998; Pfefferbaum et al., 2003).

Despite the tendency for research in this area to focus on symptoms of psychopathology, there are a limited number of researchers that have attempted to explore how people's beliefs of themselves and the world changed following exposure to terrorism and how the impacts of terrorism extend beyond individualised symptomology to contribute to community-level changes (Campbell et al., 2004; Chaiguerova & Soldatova, 2013; Somasundaram, 2004; Updegraff et al., 2008). In line with broader theories on the impacts of trauma and diagnostic criteria for PTSD from the *DSM-5*, findings from such studies indicate that terrorism impacts people's beliefs in

themselves and a just world such that they feel unsafe well after the traumatic event has passed (Janoff-Bulman & Usoof-Thowfeek, 2009; Silver et al., 2013; Updegraff et al., 2008). Moreover, in tracing the impacts of terrorism beyond the individual, some studies indicate how terrorism can have subtle but significant impacts on social structures, including the segregation of communities and fostering distrust of authorities (Somasundaram, 2004). While the research in this area is limited, these few studies begin to demonstrate the far-reaching impacts of trauma from terrorism as extending beyond the individual and into the social and political domain by not primarily investigating trauma through post-traumatic symptomology but rather a structural analysis.

A further feature of the research literature on trauma related to terrorism is the reliance on quantitative methodologies that do not consider the meaning systems through which people make sense of their experiences. Indeed, it can be argued that much of the lack of political analysis in relation to the trauma of terrorism is perhaps to do with quantitative methodologies that are typically employed in studies conducted with populations exposed to terrorist acts (e.g. Conejo-Galindo et al., 2007; Ghafoori et al., 2009; Pfefferbaum et al., 2000). For example, many studies have used psychological measures, such as the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI), to assess the presence of psychiatric symptoms (Conejo-Galindo et al., 2007; Gabriel et al., 2007), while others have administered surveys and structured questionnaires via telephone to assess the impacts of terrorism (Bleich, 2003; Galea, 2002). While there is a significant body of literature that adopts a qualitative approach to understanding people's experiences of ongoing state-perpetrated or sectarian violence (e.g. Bryant-Davis et al., 2017; Shannon et al., 2015), the qualitative literature on civilian-based terrorism is limited and devoid of commentary on victims' political meaning-making processes.

In 2004, Brian Engdahl critiqued the literature published shortly after the September 11th attacks as being dominated by epidemiological surveys that measure the onset of psychopathological symptomology (2004). At that time, there was very little in terms of qualitative descriptions of the experience of the 9/11 attacks and political analyses of terrorism's psychological effects. Similar critiques were made several years later, such as the over-reliance upon symptom-based outcomes following exposure to terrorism and its failure to provide a fuller picture of the impacts of terrorism (Maguen et al., 2008). However, disappointingly, such critiques remain valid after almost two decades and several terrorist attacks later.

There are, however, a few exceptions to the dominance of quantitative studies exploring terrorism's impacts. One example comes from a South African study by Ogden and colleagues (2000). They conducted interviews with survivors of a terrorist attack that occurred in a South African church in 1999, resulting in the deaths of 11 people, with another 58 others sustaining injuries. The authors reported an array of typical psychological reactions to trauma through their thematic analysis, including disbelief, hyperarousal, and fear (Ogden et al., 2000). They also described how the site of the attacks and the religious orientation of the victims facilitated the construction of the trauma as meaningful and growth-enhancing. The socio-political context of this terrorist attack was rather markedly apparent as it occurred in Apartheid South Africa, where a group of predominantly white worshippers belonging to the Saint James church were targeted by the Azanian People's Liberation Army, a Black political group. Yet, besides the religious orientation of the churchgoers and its relationship to the victims meaning-making, the authors do not report on how the trauma was contextualised within Apartheid South Africa's racialised context and to what extent the victims referenced these socio-political factors in relation to their experience of trauma.

More recently, further efforts have been made to move away from exploring the impacts of terrorism beyond clinical diagnoses and in doing so, the body of knowledge of terrorism's impacts has grown to include more nuanced details of peoples' experiences, including some movement towards considering trauma's political dimensions (Bauwens, 2017; Bugge et al., 2019; Okay & Karanci, 2020; Van Overmeire et al., 2021). An analysis of the impacts of terrorism on witnesses' social relationships, for example, was discussed by Van Overmeire and colleagues (2021) following coordinated terrorist attacks in Brussels, Belgium. The themes in their study revealed how participants had noticed changes in themselves, such as increased hypervigilance behaviours and distrust in society, particularly a distrust of Muslims because of their association with terrorism. As these attacks occurred in a period where the Western world's anxiety around Islamic terrorism was particularly heightened, their findings demonstrate how socio-political factors may interplay with the hypervigilance exhibited among terrorism's victims. The particular fear participants had was more than just a fear of being victims of terrorism, but rather a specific distrust of all people belonging to the same religious group as the perpetrators of the attacks. Other themes related to participants' avoidance of discussions regarding the attacks they witnessed and how they only chose to speak to those who had been through the same experience.

Another example of qualitative research that explores the political dimensions of terrorism comes from Bauwens' (2017) review of several doctoral theses that explored the long-term effects of the September 11th attacks on family members who lost a loved one. In addition to concluding that terrorism's trauma extended over time and dispersed through populations, her review indicated that family members of victims experienced marginalised grief more than 10 years after the attacks. She discussed how those who had lost siblings to the attacks felt that their

grief was illegitimate relative to those who had lost family members, adding a political dimension related to the grief of traumatic events. More specifically, this review demonstrates how disenfranchised grief can be felt among people indirectly exposed to a terrorist attack. Moreover, her analysis of the grey literature uncovered how often family members of victims actively sought to be in the company of others who understood their struggles and experiences of grief, allowing them to feel safe, much like the participants in Ogden and colleagues' (2000) and Van Overmeire and colleagues' (2021) studies.

These studies suggest that qualitative research can offer deeper insights into the impacts of terrorism, developing a picture of the trauma that goes beyond psychiatric diagnoses such as PTSD and begins to contextualise how the experience is shaped and influenced by the social and political contexts. The scarcity of these kinds of studies, however, suggests the need for more research of this kind to not only explore the nature and variation in experiences of those exposed to trauma but also to provide a link between the individual's experience and the political context which shapes the way they make meaning of these events.

Terrorism's Indirect Effects and Minoritised Communities' Experiences. In this section of the literature review, I turn my attention to the literature on the impacts of terrorism on populations distal to the epicentre of violence and the particular position of minoritised populations in this situation. These two groups of populations are particularly important to consider in light of the March 15th attacks if we are to begin to understand how those Muslims outside of Christchurch experienced the attacks. Moreover, as Muslims comprise a religious minority in NZ, focusing on how minoritised communities experience terrorism may reveal how political dimensions of terrorism are experienced.

Since the proliferation of research efforts following the September 11th attacks, researchers have attempted to document the breadth of the psychological impacts of terrorism (see Durodié & Wainwright, 2019, for a historical review). As such, a range of different populations' experiences became the focus of several large-scale studies, including people distant from the epicentre of the attacks, sometimes referred to as indirect or distal victims of terrorism (Comer & Kendall, 2007; Eisenman et al., 2009; Lin & Margolin, 2014; Luhmann & Bleidorn, 2018).

Findings from several such studies converged on the idea that distal populations' experiences parallel those in the direct firing line of terrorism in terms of prevalence rates of psychiatric disorders (Galea, 2002; Neria et al., 2008; Schuster et al., 2001). Similarly, qualitative research with indirect victims of terrorism indicates the extent to which the ripple effects of terrorism extend beyond immediate victims (Lin & Margolin, 2014; Noppe et al., 2006; Pulido, 2012). For example, Mary Pulido (2012) conducted interviews with mental health clinicians supporting people who had provided care to victims of the 9/11 attacks and reported that through working with this group, clinicians felt as if they were re-experiencing the trauma of the attacks themselves. She also reported a range of intense and painful emotional reactions among the clinicians she interviewed and that they "didn't allow themselves to feel" for up to two years after the attacks had passed (Pulido, 2012, p. 312). Eisenman and colleagues (2009) report how minoritised communities, such as African Americans and Chinese Americans, engage in avoidance and worry even though they have not been targeted by acts of terrorism. This growing body of research challenges previous understandings of trauma that posited such traumatic effects as being largely dependent upon proximity to the site of violence, informally

referred to as a bullseye model, and has called for a more complex model of trauma processes (Marshall et al., 2007).

Considering that the various definitions of terrorism propose that its key feature is the employment of violence to symbolically communicate a message to an audience beyond its direct victims, it is perhaps unsurprising that terrorism has psychological consequences for distal groups (Jackson, 2007a). Indeed, this is a direct function of terrorism's political dimension as it seeks to reach an audience beyond its immediate victims (Jackson, 2007a). Moreover, as the diagnostic criteria for PTSD have expanded to include indirect exposure to threats of violence as constituting a traumatic event, it is apparent that the trauma of terrorism is recognised to reach people beyond those in the immediate firing line. However, what remains unclear is the political meaning-making in which distal populations may engage.

In recent years, several high-profile terrorist attacks have occurred by Far Right actors motivated by hostile attitudes towards ethnic, racial, or religious communities that they see as threatening. In addition to the Christchurch terrorist attacks and the Oslo bombing, there was a shooting in a predominantly Black Church on the 17th of June 2015 (Chebrolu, 2020), a shooting in a mosque in Quebec on the 29th of June 2017 (Kendil, 2019), and a shooting in a synagogue in Pittsburgh on the 27th of October, 2018 (Vogel-Scibilia, 2020). While these attacks were different and occurred in different contexts, there were common features insofar as they were politically targeting communities already contending with the politics of being minoritised. Although Anders Breivik did not directly target minoritised communities in his act of terrorism, he intended to convey his anger with Muslims being allowed into Norway to the Norwegian government by killing young people at a Labour Party camp (Syse, 2014). Despite extensive media coverage of these events, regrettably, there remains relatively little psychological research

that has attempted to explore how these attacks were experienced by survivors, their families, and the minoritised communities that were their targets.

Following the Québec City mosque shooting, for example, where a terrorist entered a mosque and killed six Muslim worshippers and injured eight more, only one study was published examining how the attacks have impacted Muslims in Canada (Kendil, 2019). This study, much like the dominant psychological literature on terrorism, measured and reported that approximately a third of those involved in the shooting continued to require psychological support more than three months after the attacks (Kendil, 2019). Similarly, only one published study has explored the experiences of Jewish communities following the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, where 11 people were killed (Vogel-Scibilia, 2020). Although a few qualitative studies have been published related to the Oslo shootings and bombings, these, too, are limited relative to research using quantitative methodologies (Dyregrov et al., 2018; Nordström et al., 2022; Stene et al., 2019).

Conclusion. In this section of the literature review, I have highlighted that while research measuring prevalence rates of various psychiatric conditions is well-established among various populations following their direct or indirect exposure to terrorism, very little qualitative data exists. There has instead been a tendency to rely on measuring the presence and severity of psychiatric conditions following exposure to terrorism. As such, we do not know enough about people's trauma experiences that offer insights into their meaning-making processes within their social and political contexts. This appears to be a pressing issue, given that politics lies at the intersection of trauma, terrorism, and belonging to a minoritised community. While the current psychological literature may offer some insight into how NZ's Muslim communities experienced the March 15th attacks, there appears to be a gap in the research as to how this group may have

reacted and responded to terrorist attacks targeting their community. This highlights the pressing need for qualitative research with this group.

Coping with the Trauma of Terrorism

In the wake of the March 15th terrorist attacks, the NZ government assembled a task force of professionals and support staff to assist with the recovery efforts. Among these efforts, mental recovery was seen to be critically important. In fact, shortly after the attacks, the NZ Government pledged to invest 17 million dollars over three years in mental health services in the Canterbury region to support recovery efforts relating to the March 15th attacks (The Beehive, 2019c). Given the importance placed on mental health recovery after the terrorist attacks, this section explores how individuals and communities faced with terrorism may cope with such experiences. I begin by briefly presenting research on how stress has been described in the literature and the associated coping theories. I present critiques of the dominant models of coping and explore the research related to collective coping. I then move on to explore the key research findings on the common collective coping methods utilised following terrorism, including spiritual, social, and political coping. Finally, I evaluate research pertaining to the psychological growth reported among individuals and communities following traumatic events.

Stress and Coping. In this section, I cover the key models related to stress and coping to contextualise how terrorism may be experienced and responded to. Over the years, psychological stress has received scholarly attention and ensued in much debate. Some theories posit stress as an external stimulus, while others see it as a response, and others describe it as an interaction or transaction between the two (Biggs et al., 2017; Brough et al., 2009). The latter of these, which has fittingly come to be known as the transactional model of stress, posits that stress is produced through a complex transaction between the individual and their environment (Folkman &

Lazarus, 1988). More specifically, through cognitive-phenomenological processes, people are thought to be constantly appraising events within specific environments. Accordingly, neither the individual nor the environment alone produces stress but rather the bidirectional relationship between the two (Biggs et al., 2017; Folkman & Lazarus, 1988).

As a transactional model, experiences within the environment are thought to produce emotional responses in the individual (Biggs et al., 2017). When these environmental stimuli are appraised as threatening or harmful in some way, people use strategies to either manage their emotional responses, termed emotional-focused coping or modify the environmental stimulus through some means, termed problem-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Thus, coping is broadly thought to alter the relationship between the individual and their environment in some way (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). After engaging these strategies, people's reappraisal process determines whether the outcome was favourable, unfavourable, or unresolved. In instances where the environmental stimuli is appraised to be unresolved as it exceed the individual's capacity to cope, either through emotion-focused strategies or problem-focused strategies, the theory purports that the result is stress (Biggs et al., 2017). Meaning-focused coping was more recently added to these appraisal systems and was described as being used in instances when the stressor is overwhelming and uncontrollable, as is the case in instances of terrorism (Folkman & Greer, 2000).

The appraisal process that has been described within this model is comprised of the individual's values and beliefs, as well as the demands and resources available to them. It is thought to occur in two phases, though, as some have argued, these are not necessarily sequential or mutually exclusive (Dewe & Cooper, 2007). The first, primary appraisal, determines the meaning and significance of the transaction between the individual and the event, while the

second determines whether something can be done to manage the event. More specifically, if the primary appraisal evaluates that the transaction is stressful in that it can cause harm or presents a challenge, secondary appraisals are employed to determine what can be done.

Although the transactional model of coping appears to provide a succinct explanation of coping, it has not been without its critics. Critiques have been mainly concerning the dichotomy between emotion-focused and problem-focused coping initially proposed in the model (Brough et al., 2009; Dewe & Guest, 1990). Some have argued that these concepts are too broadly defined, while others have argued that emotion and problem-focused strategies are not mutually exclusive (E. A. Skinner et al., 2003). For example, when an individual seeks social support, that has both emotional elements and problem-solving elements (Pargament et al., 2004).

An additional and more substantial critique of the transactional model is that it takes an individualised approach to coping, neglecting collective psychological processes, thus divorcing coping strategies from any political meaning they may hold (Kuo, 2013). This is perhaps a particularly pertinent critique in the context of terrorism. After all, political violence does not solely target an individual but rather entire communities and societies (Veronese et al., 2021). In such instances, individualised notions of coping might not adequately capture the collective nature of coping often employed by affected communities and societies, particularly those with collectivist orientations (Bailey & Dua, 1999; Fischer et al., 2006).

Collective Coping. Given the shortcomings of notions of individual coping for understanding responses to terrorism, it is important to consider how coping can be understood as a collective response. In this section, I summarise what collective coping means and how people have used it to cope, as this may help inform how Muslim communities cope with the trauma of the March 15th attacks. Collective coping has been defined as "a constellation of

multi-faceted stress responses shaped and enhanced by collectivistic norms, values, and tendencies" (Kuo, 2013, p. 4). Some of the important aspects of collective coping include interpersonal-based coping strategies such as seeking family support or social support and coping behaviours stemming from culturally specific religions. In this way, collective coping is considered a broader construct encompassing social and religious forms of coping (Kuo, 2013).

Considering that the targets of political violence, including in terrorism, are often at the group level, it stands to reason that such forms of collective coping and meaning-making may be utilised in response to such collective traumas, defined by Kai Erikson (1976) as the long-term damage to a community in the aftermath of a disaster. The empirical research supports this. Schuster and colleagues (2001) reported that 90% of some samples reported to have turned to religion following a terrorist event. Moreover, the few qualitative studies reporting communities' meaning-making of terrorism and other forms of group-based discrimination have concluded that such attacks are indeed viewed as a collective experience of trauma (Ansari & Cufurovic, 2021; Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Ogden et al., 2000; Vogel-Scibilia, 2020).

The specific role of religion in assisting communities in coping with adverse life experiences has received considerable research attention (see Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005 for review). Not only is religion a commonly utilised source of support following exposure to terrorism, but research findings also highlight a plethora of positive psychological and psychosocial outcomes associated with religious coping, including lowered levels of depression and post-traumatic symptomology (Ai & Park, 2005; Bleich, 2003; Khan et al., 2016; McIntosh et al., 2011; Meisenhelder & Marcum, 2009; Ogden et al., 2000; Pargament et al., 1998). Terror Management Theory (TMT) has been used to explain how religion assists individuals and communities impacted by trauma to cope (Greenberg et al., 2014; Vail et al., 2010). It posits that

people look to religion for reassurance as the inevitability of death is too overwhelming an idea and one that becomes particularly pronounced when an act of terrorism results in the mass loss of life (Jonas & Fischer, 2006; Pyszczynski et al., 2003). As many religions promise immortality in the form of an afterlife, religion helps ease this death anxiety (Vail et al., 2010). Moreover, attempts to delineate the specific mechanisms through which religion allows people to cope with traumatic events have proposed several key processes through which religion can be a source of support, including providing a sense of comfort, an avenue through which individuals can collaborate against crises with a higher power; allow them to regain a sense of control; and providing a connection with a wider community (Kelly, 2006; Meisenhelder & Marcum, 2009; Pargament et al., 1998).

In looking to qualitative studies to illustrate how religion may support communities to cope with terrorism, a handful of articles can be found that begin to shed light on how significant this form of coping can indeed be for religious communities (Ogden et al., 2000; Vogel-Scibilia, 2020). For example, following the St James Church Massacre of 1993 in South Africa described earlier, the authors reported how survivors used specific Christian rituals such as prayer to find comfort following the attacks (Ogden et al., 2000). The study reported that Christian theological principles, such as God testing the faith of his worshippers through the attacks, were used by participants to describe how they had made sense of their experience. Ogden and colleagues (2000) also reported how survivors talked with others about their experience, helped others, and felt that the support within their Christian community grew after the attacks, all of which were found to help cope with the aftermath of the attacks.

A more recent qualitative study following a shooting in a synagogue in Pittsburgh described earlier, also demonstrated the role of collective religious coping (Vogel-Scibilia,

2020). During open-ended interviews, participants shared their subjective experiences of how religious theology and ethnic history were used to adaptively cope with the attacks (Vogel-Scibilia, 2020). The authors discussed how congregation members were shocked that such an attack could have occurred. However, they cited that such violence was not, in fact, surprising to them given the history of oppression experienced by Jewish communities historically, even in settings where relationships with non-Jewish communities appeared peaceful. While this history of victimisation was noted to be drawn upon as a source of strength and resilience for many interviewees, the authors concluded that the notion of facing ongoing risk as a Jewish person was culturally ingrained. Ansari and Cuforvic (2021) also demonstrated the concept of collective trauma in their research with women survivors of the March 15th attacks. Two days after the attacks, they travelled to Christchurch to conduct an observational study with women who survived the attacks and reported anecdotes from their observations. Among these was a report of a woman who, when asked whether she lost any immediate family members in the attacks, responded by stating that all the victims were her family members simply by way of being Muslims. The authors concluded that this participant did not see any distinction between her identity and the group's. Thus they situated their participants' individual experiences of trauma within a collective/cultural framework.

Terror Management Theory and mechanisms of religious and social coping may explain why religious communities may sometimes make sense of their experiences as a collective trauma (Ogden et al., 2000; Vogel-Scibilia, 2020). Making meaning of trauma as a collective experience appears to help alleviates the individual threat of death and allows the self to transcend beyond the physical realm. Evidently, religious forms of coping can be a significantly beneficial force in supporting collectivist communities to cope with collective trauma. Such

qualitative studies offer new insights into the interplay between culture and trauma and, perhaps more importantly, shed light on how communities targeted in such attacks can be supported to make sense of their experiences through a culturally relevant and collective framework.

As suggested in the paper by Ogden and colleagues (2000), religion not only provides religious coping, but through facilitating gatherings at a church, it also enables social coping. Timothy Kelly highlights the uniqueness of places of worship for religious communities to cope with terrorism-related trauma (Kelly, 2006). He asserts that such sites provide a place for people with shared belief systems to congregate following exposure to terrorism, remind them they are not alone, and provide a meaningful theological framework against which they can understand the trauma they have experienced (Kelly, 2006). Ironically, terrorists recognise these locations as the centre of the community and their lack of safety measures, which make them ideal targets for terrorist attacks from the perspective of terrorists (Břeň & Zeman, 2017; Pethő-Kiss, 2020).

Research that has investigated the role of social coping indicates that this form of support is also widely utilised by people and communities exposed to terrorism and that they find it helpful for coping with terrorism's traumatic effects (Birkeland et al., 2017; Dyregrov et al., 2018; Moscardino et al., 2010; M. Weinberg, 2017). According to the stress-buffering model, social support can promote psychological health in the face of stressful life events by supporting adaptive coping strategies and providing practical support (A. N. Cohen et al., 2004). Indeed, social support is argued to be beneficial given its capacity to restore feelings of safety and trust, factors that are crucial for populations faced with violence in which fear and intimidation are arguably its core features (Birkeland et al., 2017; Jackson, 2007a). Writing on the crucial aspect of community in recovering from trauma, Judith Herman writes:

> The solidarity of the group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic experience. Trauma isolates; the group re-creates a sense of belonging. Trauma shames and stigmatises; the group bears witness and affirms. Trauma degrades the victim; the group exalts her. Trauma dehumanises the victim; *the group restores her humanity* [emphasis added] (Herman, 1997, p. 172)

Indeed, her assertion makes a strong case for how healing that happens in a community is crucial to mitigate the effects of trauma and thereby becomes a political response in the face of political violence.

Various forms of social support following exposure to terrorism have been identified within the literature, including received support and perceived support (Dyregrov et al., 2018; Freh, 2016). Whereas received support refers to actual support received, perceived support refers to a safety net of support (Haber et al., 2007; Kaniasty & Norris, 2004). The latter can be accessed if needed (Haber et al., 2007). Dyregrov and colleagues (2018), in their study with bereaved parents following the Oslo attacks, reported parents experiencing benefits from both forms of support, particularly the role of peers – other parents who, too, had lost a child to the attack. Participants in their study discussed how this was often the single most helpful form of social support, as only these people knew what they had been through. A similar notion was repeated in a review of the qualitative literature on people who had lost siblings to the September 11th attacks; 9/11-related support groups were described as the only place where some people felt they could talk about their experience as only these people understood their experience of loss (Bauwens, 2017).

In contrast to the benefits of social support, Dyregrov and colleagues (2018) also reported on stressful elements of social support, for example, unhelpful injunctions by colleagues of

people who had lost a loved one to terrorism to focus on positives or comments that pushed them to move on too quickly following the trauma. They also noted that participants were particularly not fond of "show off" sympathy where people, such as politicians, showed up to offer support for selfish reasons (Dyregrov et al., 2018, p. 6).

Within the coping literature, there also appears to be evidence that suggests individuals and communities may engage in individual and collective political actions that foster a sense of resilience when facing oppressive political violence (Hammad & Tribe, 2020; Sousa et al., 2013; Veronese et al., 2021). For example, Veronese and colleagues (2021) report how Palestinian women who engaged in collective practices of resistance against an oppressive regime were able to enact their resilience. Their individual acts of resilience and resistance are argued to be intimately connected with a multigenerational and collective Palestinian story of trauma. In effect, they were positioned as social actors engaged in fostering collective hope and resistance. Similarly, Sousa and colleagues (2013) concluded, following their review of the resilience literature, that political engagement and activism can enable well-being and promote quality of life. Elsewhere, Haglili (2020) arrived at a similar conclusion, asserting that social activism may facilitate coping with trauma.

Post-Traumatic Growth. While coping strategies, such as social support, spiritual coping and political resistance, have been demonstrated to buffer against the negative impacts of political violence, there is also a growing body of research demonstrating that such strategies can, in fact, facilitate positive psychological adaption following trauma, including that from terrorism (Milam et al., 2004; Park et al., 2012; Shaw et al., 2005). In this section, I briefly discuss how people can grow after experiencing traumatic events. The term post-traumatic growth has come to describe the phenomena whereby trauma victims thrive following stressful

life experiences, exceeding pre-crisis levels of functioning (Tedeschi et al., 1998). The three processes central to post-traumatic growth are often identified as greater awareness of the purpose in life, greater connection with others, and a change in life's priorities (Muldoon et al., 2019).

Although a recently studied phenomenon, the notion of enduring hardship and its leading to positive personal development has long been central to several of the world's major religions and philosophical traditions (Shaw et al., 2005). It should come as no surprise, then, that religion, by providing its followers with a framework through which to understand themselves, their purpose, and the world, can facilitate post-traumatic growth. As Michael and Cooper (2013) assert, violent meaningless deaths, such as terrorism, shatter people's fundamental assumptions of personal safety and a just world. In the face of such adversity, religion can provide tools that aid in coping and contribute to an enhanced connection with faith and others (Shaw et al., 2005).

Similarly, the role of social support has been argued to facilitate meaning-making processes that are thought to contribute towards growth following exposure to traumatic experiences, including terrorism (Aliche et al., 2019; Frazier et al., 2004; Park et al., 2012; Park & Ai, 2006, p. 200). More specifically, social support is argued to allow people to share their emotions, activate their sense of purpose, and find meaning in life (Aliche et al., 2019). Political engagement, too, can provide communities with purpose, an avenue for action, and opportunities for connection. Muldoon and colleagues (2019) concluded from their systematic review of the trauma literature related to peoples' social responses to trauma that growth may be facilitated by engaging in activism or collective action as it provides opportunities for meaning-making and social connections.

Although research into the mechanisms of post-traumatic growth is in its infancy (Hobfoll et al., 2007), the growing evidence provides promising results that suggest how communities victimised by terrorism can experience growth and come to thrive. Evidently, further research is needed to clarify how factors such as social support and religion can promote post-traumatic growth, particularly among different populations. For example, it may be particularly beneficial to study post-traumatic growth among youth, given its relationship to meaning-making, as during this life stage, young people undergo important developmental processes such as identity formation (Meyerson et al., 2011; Milam et al., 2004). There remain unanswered questions as to the interplay between forming an identity and experiencing growth from trauma, such as terrorism. Moreover, critics of post-traumatic growth raise concerns about the concept, such as the social pressures to embrace a growth narrative despite continuing to endure hardships and the concept of post-traumatic growth as a psychological equivalent of the neoliberal idea of every crisis presenting an opportunity (Jayawickreme et al., 2021; Wright, 2021). Thus, more research is needed to understand better how religion may contribute to people experiencing growth after exposure to a traumatic event.

Conclusion. In this section of the literature review, I outlined some of the key models of stress and coping. I presented critiques of these, particularly relating to their individualistic ideas of coping. I then explored the concept of collective coping and how it relates to collective trauma experiences, particularly focusing on religious, social, and political forms of coping. Across these various forms of coping, I presented how they have been substantiated to be effective for communities in the wake of political violence. I concluded with a brief discussion on the concept of post-traumatic growth that demonstrates how individuals and communities can flourish following even the most traumatic experiences. My coverage of the coping literature appears to

give some insight into the various forms of coping available to people targeted by terrorism. Further research, however, is necessary to determine how Muslim communities coped in the aftermath of the March 15th attacks.

Young People in the Context of Terrorism

In this section, I continue discussing the impacts and coping strategies of terrorism and consider these specifically in relation to youth. I will begin by defining what I mean by youth and outline the general developmental tasks associated with this life stage. I then explore research conducted with young people following their exposure to terrorism and examine the extent to which young people's own experiences have been included or excluded from research. To conclude this section, I briefly discuss the literature relating to young people's experience of terrorism before outlining how such research has been conducted in relation to young Muslim people in the West.

Defining Youth. To contextualise how young people experience, are impacted by, and respond to terrorism, it is important first to define what the term youth means and locate this within a broader understanding of contemporary youth development from different approaches.

The discovery of adolescence is commonly attributed to American psychologist Stanley Hall whose observations of white, middle-class men led him to conclude that this life stage is characterised by a crisis of "storm and stress" (Demos & Demos, 1969, p. 635; Griffin, 2001). Hall wrote about adolescents as having "violent urges" and "unreasonable conduct" (as cited in Demos & Demos, 1969). Other traditional developmental theorists, such as Erik Erikson, took a similar view of adolescence as a transitional period and posited identity development as the key task associated with this life stage (Erikson, 1979, 1994). According to Erikson's psychosocial theory, the foundational elements of identity formation begin during childhood when the child

initially identifies with their parents (Erikson, 1979, 1994; Waterman, 1982). With the onset of puberty that brings with it newfound cognitive skills and physical abilities and greater interactions with neighbours, schools, and communities, adolescents are thought to explore their identities (Sokol, 2009). During this time, they consider career options, begin to engage in romantic relationships and develop their belief systems (S. L. Archer & Waterman, 1983). Adolescents attempt to find answers to the fundamental question of "who am I?" (McLean & Pasupathi, 2012, p. 8). The transition from childhood into adulthood is thought to have successfully been completed when adolescents explore various identities available to them and eventually commit to an identity (Meeus, 2011; Waterman, 1985).

Since Erikson's initial conceptualisation of identity formation, several other authors have expanded on his work (Marcia, 1966; Meeus, 1999; Waterman, 1982). Some of the most significant of these contributions to developmental theory came from James Marcia, who presented the processes of exploration and commitment in relation to identity formation (Marcia, 1966; Meeus, 1996). Exploration, he argued, involves examining the various identity alternatives available, while commitment was defined as having assumed an identity (Marcia, 1966; McLean & Pasupathi, 2012). Accordingly, Marcia (1996) posited that adolescents could occupy four distinct statuses that are derived from a combination of exploration and commitment processes: achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. Diffusion indicates that the adolescent has not made any commitments yet regarding specific developmental tasks and has not explored alternatives. Foreclosure implies the adolescent has committed but without much exploration, while moratorium is exploring identity without any clear commitments. Finally, achievement signifies the successful end of this process whereby the individual has completed exploration and committed to an identity.

Traditional developmental theories have been criticised as adopting a deficit approach to describing the lives of young people (Gillies, 2000; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005). By viewing adolescence as a period of storm and stress, their experiences are seen to be problematic and characterised by risk and irresponsibility (D. Buckingham, 2008). Moreover, in their framing of identity formation as a normative process, it is argued to inadequately consider the role of the adolescent's external world (Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; Schachter, 2005). Rattansi and Phoenix (2005, p. 101) argue that such an approach "obscures the understanding of complex ways in which identities are formed and operate dynamically in different contexts". From this normative approach to describing adolescence, considerable research efforts have been directed towards rectifying deviations from a supposed normal trajectory of development (Gillies, 2000). That is, adolescents are seen as needing fixing. Furthermore, Archer (1992) states that Eriksonian approaches that operationalise identity neglect the specific identities of women and ethnic minorities as it assumes young people necessarily have options or choices of identity when, for many women and ethnic minorities, their identities are more likely to be assigned than chosen (Grotevant, 1992). In short, the traditional development theory of adolescence is critiqued as positing an individualistic theorisation of identity (Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005).

Other critiques of the notion of adolescence have come from Jeffrey Arnett (2007), who argued that the period between late teens and mid-twenties in contemporary Western society has distinct developmental characteristics that are not captured by either adolescence or adulthood in developmental theory. Accordingly, he proposed the term emerging adulthood to distinguish this period. Emerging adulthood was termed to reflect that the period of youth has extended out as changing social and economic conditions of industrialised societies by the latter part of the 20th century meant that people were getting married later, more were pursuing tertiary education, and

more were trying different roles and experiences beyond their teenage years before settling down in work and love (Arnett, 2007). In line with this idea, the United Nations has also adopted the age bracket between 15 and 24 years as constituting youth (United Nations, 2020). In my research, when referring to youth or young people, I am referring to young people within this age range.

Sociological theories also oppose the term adolescence and instead opt for the term youth as it recognises an extended age range and is socially constructed within particular contexts (Fuseel & Green, 2002; White & Wyn, 2003). Equally, as a social construction, the boundary of youth is seen to be defined according to bureaucratic state-defined limits, such as legal rights (France & Threadgold, 2015). Thus, the notion of youth has been used to challenge the notion of adolescence as normative, assuming all young people pass through similar tasks at the same time in a similar way (White & Wyn, 1997; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Sociological constructions of youth have not been without critique. Contemporary critical theorists argue that despite emphasising the social contexts of young people, at times, sociological conceptualisations of youth have been limited by only considering individualised interpersonal relationships and neglecting broader social factors of gender, race, and class (Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005). Moreover, these theories of youth are argued to resemble the notions purported by the traditional developmental theory that treats adolescence as a period of storm and stress by viewing youth largely as a social problem to be managed (D. Buckingham, 2008).

In response to these fundamental assumptions across developmental and traditional sociological theories, some critical sociological theorists argue for a social generation approach to youth (Wyn & Woodman, 2006). This is a deliberate and intentional move away from disenfranchised and decontextualised perspectives of young people that views youth as a period

of mere transition and instead proposes the use of the term generation to emphasise how groups of people respond to a common set of experiences shaped by social, political, and economic conditions (Wyn & Woodman, 2006). This generational framework argues that youth experience a specific and similar set of social, political, and economic conditions that situates their experiences (Furlong et al., 2011; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Most importantly, within this framework, young people have the autonomy to have a range of experiences, both as individuals and as a collective, with a firm recognition of their social contexts giving meaning to their experiences (Woodman & Wyn, 2015). Accordingly, in this study, I adopt this approach to explore young peoples' experiences of terrorism in their specific context. More specifically, I take the approach as articulated by Wyn and White (2013, p. 31) that state, "Youth is framed and constrained by institutions (i.e. structure), shaped and acted on by young people (i.e. agency), and experienced in enactments of identity, taking account of different contexts and circumstances (subjectivity)".

In line with this view, youths' identity development processes are understood to be shaped by a context of limited possibilities made available to them by their social, political, and economic contexts (Davies, 2006; Wyn et al., 2012). In this way, identity formation is understood to be a complex and fluid process produced through a range of socially mediated phenomena, not merely an internal and linear developmental process (McLeod, 2015; Stokes & Wyn, 2007). This means that notions of multiplicity are acknowledged wherein young people may hold several layers to their identities, as opposed to an authentic self, and that there is room for potential contradiction (Chappell et al., 2003; Stokes & Wyn, 2007).

Wyn and White (2015) also offer some important ideas in relation to the notion of belonging, which they argue is a central component in the lives of youth. They argue that

belonging provides a framework for understanding how young people navigate their individual lives in changing contexts. They draw on a conceptual triple helix to argue that at the centre of institutions, young peoples' actions, and enactments of identity lies social connection, or the experiencing of belonging (Wyn &White, 2015). Thus, belonging is argued to be significant for understanding youths' lives as it describes their connection to locations, spaces, and places, the meaning they give to their experiences in time and place, and how young people are connected to people, institutions, events, and cultures both materially and subjectively.

Both sociological and developmental perspectives also emphasise the role of peers in the lives of youth (Erikson, 1994; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). According to the sociological approach, a key aspect of youths' social environments is comprised of their peers (Glynn, 1981; Rankin & Quane, 2002). Thus, youths' lives are argued to be deeply linked to that of their peers, and it is through their peers that they seek connection and support and in whom they confide (Flynn et al., 2017). In the context of peers, youth co-construct their identities, give meaning to their experiences, and generate collective experiences (Davis, 2013; Sussman et al., 2007; Valentine, 2000). Developmental theorists argue a similar notion, albeit from a different approach, noting that in the process of individuating from their families and coming to understand themselves, youth place increasingly greater importance on their relationships with their peers (Berndt, 2002; Felsman & Blustein, 1999; Meeus & Dekovic, 1995).

Evidently, there are significant complexities in how contemporary groups of young people negotiate their identities and make sense of their experiences. Taking these factors into account and adopting a critical sociological perspective on the experiences of youth may be particularly important to inform researchers' efforts to understand young peoples' experiences of

terrorism. In the proceeding discussion, I present some of the key literature on young people's experiences in the context of terrorism.

Young People's Experiences of Terrorism. In line with a general shift in researchers' interests toward understanding the broader impacts of terrorism, a large body of research has explored the effects of terrorism in relation to distal groups of young people (Liverant et al., 2004; Okay & Karanci, 2020; Pfferferbaum et al., 2019). General findings from research conducted after the September 11th attacks indicate that distal populations of young people are likely to experience psychopathology and even meet the criteria for psychiatric diagnoses following media-based exposure to terrorism (Bosco & Harvey, 2003; Comer et al., 2010; Kung et al., 2018). Populations of young people 100 miles away from the site of terrorist attacks have been reported to experience PTSD-related symptomology in some studies (Comer & Kendall, 2007; O'Donohue et al., 2021; Pfefferbaum et al., 2003). The limited research from outside an American context, such as Israel, the United Kingdom, and Türkiye, has produced a similar pattern of results among distal populations of youth (E. A. Holmes et al., 2007; Okay & Karanci, 2020; Pfefferbaum et al., 2019). Accordingly, terrorism is argued by some researchers to be a particularly adverse experience for young people to whom the ripple effects of terrorism extend.

While the association between psychiatric conditions and exposure to terrorism is well-established in the research, other important aspects of youths' experiences have received comparatively less attention. For example, how political violence may interplay with the identities of young people may be an important area for research. The few studies that have explored this topic suggest identity can buffer against the traumatic effects of political violence (Barber, 2008; Barber & Schluterman, 2009; Hammack, 2010; Muldoon et al., 2009). Phillip Hammack (2010) argues that for youth exposed to political violence, identity can serve as a

personal benefit as they can attribute collective meaning to trauma and injustice, allowing them to cope. He draws on his research with Palestinian youth to highlight that their experiences of structural and direct violence are made sense of as a collective struggle of Palestinians, thus allowing them to challenge the Israeli occupation. Moreover, he contends that for young people, identity and its reclamation can serve a liberatory role in resistance against social injustice. Similarly, Barber (2009), who also studied Palestinian youths' experiences of the first Intifada, suggests that their meaning-making related to their identities served as a protective mechanism against the trauma of conflict as it facilitated support for a collective cause. That cause being resistance against Israeli occupation.

Elsewhere, studies that have employed a qualitative methodology to explore young people's subjective experiences of terrorism further demonstrate the nuanced ways in which young people experience terrorism, particularly as a socio-political phenomenon (Bugge et al., 2019; Stene et al., 2019). For example, Van Overmeire and colleagues (2020) conducted a content analysis of the chat data from a youth helpline following an incident of terrorism in Belgium to explore how young people made sense of and reacted to terrorism. Among their findings, they reported themes of helpline users fearing for their own safety and that of their families and friends. According to their analyses of helpline transcripts, several young people felt media reports only exacerbated their fears of future terrorism. The authors drew on one participant's discussion of having formed an escape plan should a terrorist attack occur at their school to illustrate the way the fear of further terrorism had, in fact, materialised into young people devising their own emergency procedures. Perhaps most concerningly, Van Overmeire and colleagues (2020) also reported on the fear described by a Muslim user of the helpline. For her, the fear evoked by the terrorism was not necessarily related to experiencing further

terrorism-related violence but in relation to being blamed for the terrorist attacks by her peers due to her association with the religion of the perpetrators. In other words, she was worried about the heightened Islamophobia she would have to endure *as a result* of a terrorist attack.

Similar themes of fear following indirect exposure to terrorism emerged in a Turkish sample of youth (Okay & Karanci, 2020). The authors of this study reported how participants personally identified with the victims of terrorist bombings and given their shared routines with the victims, many young people were left feeling that they too could have been amongst the victims of the attacks. Some participants reported avoiding sites that resembled where the original attacks had taken place as a means to avoid becoming victim to further attacks. These results provide evidence of how the distinction between the political and personal becomes blurred in young people's experiences of terrorism. Despite having not been personally affected by terrorist attacks, in the sense that they and their families were not personally injured or killed, young Turkish students appear to have felt fearful and even made changes in their day-to-day behaviour to avoid victimisation. The political dimension of this sample's experience was rather pronounced in how some participants noted that their sense of identity changed after the attacks. Several Turkish youth reportedly re-examined their plans in life and questioned their religious beliefs following the attacks. Okay and Caranci (2020) explained this finding as a direct effect of experiencing terrorism as it disrupts significant attachments that, in turn, impact young people's sense of stability and identity. Evidently, the findings from the above studies begin to offer some insights into how young people experience the trauma of terrorism, particularly in relation to its political elements and in relation to their identities (Barber, 2009, 2009; Hammack, 2010; Okay & Karanci, 2020; Van Overmeire et al., 2020). Further research is needed from different contexts

and in relation to different forms of political violence for researchers to develop a broader understanding of these processes among youth.

It is also important to note that among the various social contexts of young people, online and digital spaces have become increasingly popular given the proliferation of digital technologies over the past few decades (Allen et al., 2014; D. Buckingham, 2008; Manago et al., 2012). Equally, it appears modern technology has facilitated the dispersion of the trauma of terrorism such that it is increasingly more efficient in reaching people distant from the epicentre of violence (Jain & Vaidya, 2021). As Yael Danieli (2004a) asserts, terrorism is primarily psychological warfare, and modern-day terrorists have accordingly utilised advancements in technology to reach global audiences. Young people as users and consumers of social media – fittingly referred to as digital natives – are thus likely to become exposed to terrorism through their online activity (Prensky, 2001). Several studies exploring the traumatic effects of terrorism mediated through media exposure indicate that it has particularly adverse effects on youth (Busso et al., 2014; Comer & Kendall, 2007; Pfefferbaum et al., 2018). As the March 15th attacks were live-streamed and shared extensively on social media (Bromell, 2022), these findings suggest youth exposed to the violent imagery of the March 15th attacks may have experienced negative psychological impacts.

Youth Coping with Terrorism. Similar to the benefits of social support outlined earlier, young people too are reported to experience benefits from their social relationships following exposure to terrorism (Henrich & Shahar, 2008; Moscardino et al., 2010; Schiff et al., 2010). In fact, several studies have indicated that young people prefer informal peer support following exposure to traumatic events, including terrorism, over professional support (Afana et al., 2020; Bleich, 2003; Hiller et al., 2017; Schönbucher et al., 2014). This pattern is in line with broader

research on young people's patterns of coping and help-seeking, indicating their preferences for informal peer support over professional support (Bazarova et al., 2017; Egan et al., 2013; Rickwood et al., 2005). Indeed, it is imperative to view young people's support-seeking in relation to their developmental priorities (K. Gibson, 2021).

Elsewhere, it has been hypothesised that young people may be unwilling to seek professional and adult support following terrorist attacks specifically due to the nature of terrorism and trauma heightening membership lines between an in-group and out-group (Tatar & Amram, 2007). In other words, young people may wish to seek support from those they perceive to be similar to them, which is often other young people (Tatar & Amram, 2007). Given these factors, it is important to explore what social supports are available to young people following their indirect exposure to terrorism and how they may utilise such social supports.

Young people are also reported to use religion to cope with traumatic events in various contexts (Breland-Noble et al., 2015; Cherewick et al., 2015; Del Castillo & Alino, 2020). As with adults, religion and various forms of spirituality serve young people with a framework from which the meaning of their experiences of terrorism can be drawn that incorporates a specific set of values, practices and collective discourses shared among their religious group (Slone et al., 2016; Vindevogel et al., 2014). Specifically for youth, religion may serve as a particularly important source of support as they are undergoing developmental tasks of forming a self-concept, part of which can be facilitated by religious identity, enabling the traumatic effects of terrorism to be buffered (Furrow et al., 2004; Hammack, 2010; Hemming & Madge, 2012; Phalet et al., 2018; Slone et al., 2016). However, it is important to note that this research is limited, and there are mixed findings as to the utility of religious coping following young peoples' exposure to terrorism (Laufer et al., 2010; Milam et al., 2005; Slone et al., 2016). Evidently, there is a

pressing need to conduct exploratory research on the role of religion for young people, given the increasingly frequent and large-scale attacks on places of worship, including mosques.

Muslim Youths' Experiences of Terrorism. To understand how Muslim youth experience terrorism, it is important to look at research that situates them within their social realities and the political forces that shape their experiences and identities. In this section, I outline research pertaining to Muslim youths' identities and positioning in the West.

Muslim youth in the West occupy a precarious and politicised social position (Adamson, 2011; Lynch, 2013). Social theorists have posited that over the past several decades, particularly so after the events of September 11th 2001, Muslim youth living in Western countries have come to exist in the "crosshairs" of a global conflict (Ciftci, 2012; Sirin & Fine, 2007, p. 152). Their religion – and by extension, themselves and their communities – are deemed inferior, hostile, terroristic, and fundamentally incompatible with the West (Ahmed & Ezzeddine, 2009; Lynch, 2013). These discourses have made the task of negotiating identity an increasingly difficult task for Muslim youth in the West (Cainkar, 2009; Sirin & Fine, 2007; Tiflati, 2017). Allegiances to a Western identity are often positioned in stark opposition to their Muslim identity, a framing driven largely by a war on terror rhetoric (Abu El-Haj & Bonet, 2011). Sirin and Fine (2007, p. 152) describe Muslim youth in the West as straddling "hyphenated identities" between their ethno-religious identity and a dominant Western identity. This notion of a "hyphenated identity" is thought to mirror the idea of hybrid identities described elsewhere in the literature that recognises the intersectionality and complexities of young people's identities (Boland, 2020; Hosseini & Chafic, 2016; Jamal et al., 2022). In occupying such social positions, Muslim youth in the West experience a myriad of acculturative stressors – specific stressors related to existing between two or more cultures – that are experienced alongside developmental stressors of

adolescence and emerging adulthood (Goforth, 2014; Sirin & Fine, 2007; Stuart & Ward, 2018; Tineo et al., 2021).

Naved Bakali (2016) details how anti-Muslim bias or racism, known as Islamophobia, shapes and influences the lives of Muslims in the West. He borrows the idea of Islamophobia being an ideological formation from Stephen Sheehi (2010) to demonstrate how anti-Muslim racism is disseminated and normalised through a fixed set of beliefs and tropes regarding Muslims, predominantly as terrorists. In turn, these beliefs and tropes inform government policy as well as media discourses and social practices, which translate into shaping the material and social realities of Muslim youth in the West (Bakali, 2016). To illustrate this argument, Bakali draws on his research findings with Muslim youth in Canada who report experiences of having to misrepresent their faith to their teachers in order to fit in at school and being ridiculed by teachers for engaging in Islamic practices, such as prayer. He also reports how a young Muslim participant was made to feel othered when their peers did not see any problem with dressing up as a so-called dangerous Muslim man for Halloween. In this way, the archetype of Muslims as dangerous and terrorists are demonstrated in the actions of their non-Muslim peers.

Currently, it is unclear how occupying such a social position informs or influences how Muslim youth in the West experience acts of terrorism, particularly those that target Muslims exclusively. A small but substantial body of research has attempted to explore Muslim youths' experiences of terrorism, particularly since the turn of the century (Chebotareva, 2013; Muedini, 2009; Peek, 2003). However, it is pertinent to note the context of much of this research was in relation to attacks carried out in the name of Islam or by so-called Islamic terrorists. In this way, research investigating Muslim youths' experiences of terrorism in the West does so from the position of Muslims as perpetrators of terrorism (Rousseau et al., 2015; Lynch, 2013). This has

meant that terrorism-related research among Muslim youth in the West is focused more on the social ramifications of terrorism, such as Muslim communities' experiences of discrimination, and less on the psychological experiences and responses to the terrorist act itself (Rousseau et al., 2015; Sirin et al., 2021).

For example, in one of the few qualitative studies exploring New York City's Muslim youths' reactions and responses to the September 11th attacks, Lori Peek (2003) reported how they stayed home from university for weeks, described their parents' worrying about their safety – particularly in relation to taking public transport – and even asked them to shave their beards or remove their hijabs to appear less identifiably Muslim. While such themes offer rich insights into the experiences of Muslim university students following a terrorist attack, they do so following a terrorist attack in which Muslims were the supposed perpetrators. As the author notes, such responses among Muslim youth and their parents were driven by a fear of a backlash to Muslims carrying out terrorism (Peek, 2003). Thus, these findings represent reactions that are less to do with the terrorist attack itself and more with the social implications of a terrorist attack being perpetrated by Muslims. Nonetheless, they offer some insights that may explain how Muslim youth in NZ may have responded to the March 15th attacks.

The other strand of terrorism-related research with Muslim youth has been focused on deradicalisation efforts (e.g. Doosje et al., 2016; Silke, 2008; Verkuyten, 2018). This approach has been largely critiqued as perpetuating harmful discourses around the terroristic nature of Muslim youth (Lynch, 2013). The assumption within this research is that Muslim youth in the West are predisposed to engaging in terrorism and will inevitably go on to become radical extremists that carry out terrorist attacks without adequate state intervention (Lynch, 2013). Indeed, this line of research has perpetuated much of the 'Muslims as Other' discourse discussed

earlier in this literature review and offers little insight of relevance into Muslim youths' experiences of becoming victimised by terrorism.

In effect, the extant research from a Western context on how Muslim youth experience and respond to terrorism focuses on events where Muslims were the perpetrators and not intended targets. Numerous studies have qualitatively examined the experiences and coping strategies of Muslim youth in Palestine facing terrorism from Israeli forces and Pakistani Muslim youth experiencing the terrorism of suicide bombers (e.g. Elbedour et al., 1999; Nayab & Kamal, 2010; Yazdani et al., 2016). However, in cases where Muslims have been the exclusive targets of terrorist attacks in Western countries, such as in the Quebec Mosque shooting in 2017 or the Christchurch Mosque shootings in 2019, little to no research has explored how Muslim youth have experienced these events. As Orla Lynch argues:

The experience of terrorism should be understood as a community or group phenomenon. When a victim is explicitly chosen because of their identity, communities may experience vicarious trauma, leading to increased in-group solidarity and allegiance to the group and an increased sense of risk leading to a reduction in well-being. (Lynch, 2023, p. 52)

Thus, the impacts these attacks may have had on Muslim youths' well-being, how they may have influenced their processes of negotiating their identities, and where and how they have sought support following these attacks remains unclear. Evidently, these are all important areas of inquiry that require careful consideration through exploratory qualitative research efforts to begin to understand.

Conclusion. In this section, I have briefly outlined what is meant by youth and how they may define themselves and their experiences according to generational experiences. I then summarised the research relating to young people's experiences of terrorism and their utilisation

of social and religious forms of support. Next, I shifted the discussion to look at how Muslim youth have experienced terrorism and argued that the existing research may not adequately capture the experiences of Muslim youth in the West when Muslims have been the exclusive targets of a terrorist attack.

The Current Context

In this final section of the literature review, I briefly outline the history of Muslims in NZ and summarise key research findings in relation to Muslim youths’ experiences of identity and coping in a NZ context. To conclude this section, I will briefly outline the aims of my research.

Muslims in Aotearoa New Zealand. To better understand the impacts of the March 15th terrorist attacks, it is important to understand the history and social context of Muslims in NZ. Recent research has revealed that the earliest Muslims to have arrived on the shores of NZ came as sailors with European vessels (Drury & Pratt, 2021). Following the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, a treaty between the British Crown and the indigenous population of Māori, early Muslim settlers arrived through British interests from South Asia, with numbers increasing by the turn of the decade (Drury & Pratt, 2021). Not until the 1970’s did large-scale migration of Muslims occur. Since then, the population of Muslims has grown to exceed 57,000 Muslims, comprising just over 1% of the total population according to a recent census estimate, however, it is understood to be rapidly growing (Ministry of Social Development [MSD], 2008; Stats NZ–Tautauranga Aotearoa, 2018a).

Approximately three-quarters of Muslims in NZ are born overseas, with a small proportion who enter the country as quota refugees (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2012; Stats NZ – Tautauranga Aotearoa, 2013). The largest group are comprised of those from India, followed by those from the Middle Eastern region (MSD, 2008; Ward, 2011).

Approximately 15% of Muslims in NZ are between the ages of 15 and 24 years old compared to 13.2% of the general population who fall between these ages (Shepard, 2006; Stats NZ – Tautauranga Aotearoa, 2018a, 2018b).

Since the March 15th attacks, a handful of papers have been published in relation to the attacks (Ansari & Cufurovic, 2021; K. G. Byrne et al., 2022; Dorahy & Blampied, 2019; Kerdemelidis & Reid, 2019). The observational study by Ansari and Cufurovic (2021), described earlier, directly interviewed women survivors of the attacks and reported several important findings, namely how Muslim women situated their experiences within the framework of collective trauma and that Islamic faith allowed them to make meaning of their experience. Sulaiman-Hill and colleagues (2021) have published their protocol for a longitudinal study that is currently underway that is screening and assessing the long-term impacts of the attacks on the wider Christchurch Muslim community. They are adopting a mixed-methods approach whereby self-report measures and clinician-administered interviews will be used to determine the prevalence of psychiatric conditions. They report their study will also include qualitative interview findings. Their findings are yet to be published.

Byrne and colleagues (2022) recently published a study that examined how the attacks had impacted the broader NZ community using data from the NZ Attitudes and Values Survey. In the year after the attacks, they found a statistically significant increase in terrorism anxiety among the general population and a greater sense of community. However, there were no significant changes in the mental well-being of their sample, comprised of approximately 47,000 individuals. Although this study offers some interesting findings, given the targeted nature of the March 15th attacks, it may not reflect the experiences of Muslims, who were its exclusive targets.

Two months after the attacks occurred, Kerdemelidis and Reid (2019) produced a rapid literature review of the findings in relation to the impacts of mass shootings. Although obviously not directly related to the victims of the attacks, they concluded from their review of the literature that mass shootings are experienced as more intensely traumatic than other disasters. Moreover, they concluded those most at risk of developing psychological difficulties may be those highly exposed to the attacks and people from within the Muslim community. Finally, Dorahy and Blampied (2019) reported how they adapted a brief screening measure initially developed to triage those affected by earthquakes in Christchurch and used it following the attacks. The screening measure was an amalgamation of the Trauma Scale Questionnaire (TSQ), Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD7) scale, some items relating to depression from the Patient Health Quesitonnaire-9 (PHQ-9), and four dissociation items from the Detailed Assessment of PTSD. Although these studies are important, current understandings of the ways Muslim communities experienced the attacks remain limited.

Muslim Youth in Aotearoa New Zealand. To understand how Muslim youth may have experienced the impacts of the March 15th attacks, it is important to understand the way that young Muslims are positioned and experience their lives in NZ. Aligning with the research findings from other Western contexts (e.g. Akbarzadeh, 2016; Brooks et al., 2021; Lynch, 2013), Muslim youth in New Zealand are reported to frequently experience interpersonal discrimination, racism and Islamophobia (Stuart, 2014; Ward et al., 2016). Hate crimes data from NZ Police indicates Muslim communities are disproportionately targeted in attacks motivated by anti-religious prejudice (Graham-McLay, 2023). Although the collection of this data began after the March 15th terrorist attacks, they demonstrate the extent to which anti-Muslim prejudice is prevalent in NZ society. Despite experiencing discrimination and racism, Muslim youth appear

to be integrating into NZ society relatively well, retaining a strong sense of Muslim identity alongside a national identity (Ward et al., 2010). Given that racism is known to have detrimental effects on mental health (Harris et al., 2018) and religious discrimination specifically has been linked to poor psychological functioning (Schmitt et al., 2014), it is imperative for researchers to better understand how these social and political factors are experienced by Muslim youth in NZ. This may be a particularly pertinent topic to explore following terrorist attacks fuelled by anti-Muslim racism.

The role of religious coping for Muslim youth as a strategy to deal with discrimination has been investigated across several studies within an NZ context, yielding mixed findings (Adam & Ward, 2016; Gardner et al., 2014; Jasperse et al., 2012; Stuart & Ward, 2018). Stuart and Ward (2018) examined the relationship between religiosity, stress and mental health outcomes among 155 migrant Muslim youth. The authors reported that while religious practices directly predicted positive mental health, high levels of religious practice exacerbated the detrimental effects of discrimination on mental health. In other words, for Muslim youth who experienced discrimination, engaging in religious practice as a means of coping worsened their psychological well-being. This was an unexpected finding. They concluded that having a strong Muslim identity may have distinguished Muslim migrant youth from their peers and heightened the stress of integration, negatively impacting their mental health.

These findings appear to differ from those of Gardner et al. (2014), who found religious coping was positively associated with quality of life and a lack of stress among some Muslim university students in NZ. Religious practices aside, for those Muslim youth who strongly identified with their Muslim identity, discrimination distress was associated with lower levels of

depression. Put simply, Muslim youth with a strong sense of Muslim identity were less psychologically affected by discrimination.

Adam and Ward (2016) measured religious Muslim religious coping across cognitive, behavioural, and social domains and its relationship with acculturative stress, life satisfaction, and psychological symptoms among Muslim youth. They found that acculturative stress did predict lower life satisfaction and greater psychological symptoms and that Muslim religious coping moderated the relationship between these variables. However, contrary to their hypothesis, Muslim religious coping did not moderate the relationships between acculturative stress and psychological symptoms, even though it independently predicted greater life satisfaction. Put simply, using religious forms of coping did not appear to buffer against the psychological effects of acculturative stress.

Given the limited and mixed findings in relation to Muslim youths' religious coping with stress, the need for further research becomes evident. Specifically, it remains unclear whether Muslim youth relied upon religious forms of coping and practices following the March 15th attacks. Moreover, it is unclear how their sense of religious identity may have been utilised to cope and potentially been impacted by the attacks. Further research is required to explore these effects among Muslim youth for whom identity was already complex due to the politicised nature of being a Muslim in the West (Hosseini & Chafic, 2016; Sirin & Fine, 2007). Evidently, the current understandings of Muslim youth, their experiences, and their preferred methods of coping have been developed prior to a national tragedy in which 51 members of their community were killed in their place of worship. Thus, more updated research is required to explore how such an attack may have impacted Muslim youth.

Conclusion. The limited research conducted with NZ's Muslim communities indicates that Islamophobia has been a part of their social reality for some time, including for Muslim youth. Although the extant research may offer some insights into the ways the March 15th attacks may have been experienced by NZ's Muslim communities, including how they may have used religion to cope, it is clear that there is a pressing need for further research.

The Proposed Study

To date, there have been no studies exploring Muslim youths' experiences of or responses to the Christchurch terrorist attacks on the 15th of March 2019. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how 18 to 24-year-old self-identifying Muslims in Auckland experienced the impacts of the attacks and their subsequent responses.

As described above, Muslim youth in NZ occupy a distinct social positioning that gives rise to a range of acculturative stressors, most notably of which are their experiences of anti-Muslim racism, or Islamophobia. However, considering the unprecedented nature of the recent terrorist attacks, these previous findings around Muslim youths' well-being and conceptualisations of their identities may not accurately describe their realities post-March 15th. This research aims to advance current understandings of these issues with the intention of better informing mental health practitioners that engage with Muslim youth of the complexities and evolving nature of contemporary Muslim youths' identities and well-being.

Through my research, I will explore the experiences of and responses to the March 15th terrorist attacks in Christchurch among Muslim youth in Auckland. More specifically, I seek to apply a youth-focused and strengths-based approach to understand how Muslim youth reacted to the attacks, made meaning of them within their cultural worldviews, and the role of socio-political factors in their broader experience of the attacks. Moreover, I aim to explore the coping

strategies and resources available to Muslim youth and how they may have utilised these to cope with the trauma of the March 15th attacks. I am also particularly interested in the role their religion and identities might have played in their responses to the attacks.

The central research question of this study is: How have Muslim youth in NZ, who were not directly targeted, experienced the March 15th attacks? This will entail addressing three sub-questions:

1. How did Muslim youth react to the March 15th terrorist attacks?
2. How did Muslim youth make sense of the March 15th terrorist attacks?
3. What strategies, resources, and methods of coping did Muslim youth utilise following the March 15th terrorist attacks?

Chapter Two: Research Methodology

In this research, I aimed to explore how Muslim youth living in Auckland experienced and responded to the terrorist attacks that occurred in Christchurch on the 15th of March 2019. More specifically, I intended to explore how Muslim youth in Auckland, without any direct familial links to the victims, reacted and made sense of the attacks. I also sought to explore how they responded to the attacks by identifying the strategies and resources available to them and those which they utilised to cope in the aftermath of the attacks. I was also interested in the barriers that impeded upon their coping. In this section, I outline the theoretical framework I used to explore these questions and the methods I employed in this study. I also give an account of how my personal subjectivity influenced the research. I provide details of how I went about analysing my data and the steps I took to ensure I was conducting quality qualitative research. I finish this section by reviewing some of the key ethical considerations I accounted for during the research process.

Theoretical Approach

In this research, I used a critical realist epistemology that is informed by Islamic Psychology principles to explore the experiences of contemporary Muslim youth following the March 15th terrorist attacks. A description and rationale for why I used this particular epistemological framework is outlined in the section below.

Critical Realism

A critical realist approach to research has been described as a midpoint between positivism and social constructionism (Patomäki & Wight, 2000). It asserts that there is indeed a reality to the physical world in which events take place and that these events or phenomena exist independently of our thoughts or interpretations. Equally, however, critical realism recognises

that each person produces their own interpretations of the events which take place in the material world and that the particular meaning-making process they engage in will depend upon various factors including language, social, and political influences (Riley et al., 2007).

In relation to this research, a critical realist approach recognises the indisputable fact that the attacks which took place on the 15th of March 2019 resulted in the deaths of 51 people. However, the unique lens that this framework brings with it allows me as a researcher to recognise that the social and political context will influence how this event is made sense of and responded to among different groups. So, while indeed there is the reality that people lost their lives, how young people made sense of these attacks and what did they to cope will differ. Critical realism allows me to hold these two perspectives simultaneously (Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018).

My research aimed to achieve several outcomes by adopting a critical realist epistemology. Primarily, it served as a means through which the experiences of the Muslim community could be understood within their particular social and cultural contexts. Thus, it allowed me to take the stance in which I was not asserting that a single objective truth of how the attacks can be – or should be – understood. Rather, critical realism allowed for diversity in young Muslims' interpretations of the attacks and their own coping strategies (Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018). A critical realist epistemology thereby was well placed to capture a range of different meaning-making process of the events among Muslim youth (Fryer, 2022). Concurrently, through this research I attempted to provide an avenue through which to amplify the perspectives, worldviews, and experiences of Muslim youth living within a dominant Western social context in which their voices are not frequently privileged. In doing so, the stories of their

experiences were able to be told authentically, without judgement, and without the supposed implication that there is only a single Muslim view.

Islamic Psychology in Research

The field of study referred to as Islamic Psychology has been described as a holistic approach to understanding people and their connection to the Divine, with a greater emphasis on the heart than the mind (Al-Karam, 2018). Moreover, it is grounded in Islamic traditions drawing on Qur'anic and prophetic teachings while also embracing modern psychology (R. Skinner, 2010).

In this research, I applied Islamic psychology principles and concepts, which are those concepts derived from an authentically Islamic tradition that Muslim youth draw upon to explain their meaning-making of the events. In this way, my research intended to apply a culturally appropriate theoretical lens to inform the critical realist epistemological framework with the aim of understanding the socially and culturally influenced experiences of Muslim youth. In other words, principles and concepts borrowed from Islamic psychology were used to appropriately capture and explain the unique interpretations young Muslims had of the March 15th terrorist attacks.

Research with Young People

According to dominant psychological discourses of youth, this period is characterised as normative and universal and defines young people as being "at-risk" (D. Buckingham, 2008; White & Wyn, 1997, p. 20). Similarly, researchers often depict adolescence in deficit-based terms, as a period of storm and stress or in need of fixing (Baldridge, 2014; Griffin, 2001). Deficit-based discourses appear to also extend into the context of mental health research with minoritised young people (Fogarty et al., 2018). Critical researchers, on the other hand, challenge

these taken-for-granted assumptions by describing young people as having the agency to navigate and negotiate their social and cultural challenges in unique ways and, along the way forging unique identities in their progression to adulthood (Griffin, 2001). In my research, I aimed to take a similar critical approach to my conceptualisation of the period of youth to recognise the complex interplay between young people, their identities, and their social and political contexts.

Given representations of Muslim youth and Islam within the dominant discourses are generally centred around Muslims as perpetrators of violence and other negative connotations, it was especially important in my research that a youth empowerment approach was taken (Shannahan, 2011). I did not want to draw on or contribute to further academic research that adopted deficit framings of Muslim youth that would reinforce the status quo. In line with suggestions put forth by critical youth development researchers, in my research, I attempted to engage in meaningful participation with young people, engage in critical reflection on the interpersonal and socio-political processes which were at play, and, perhaps most importantly, prioritised young people's own descriptions of their lives and experiences over those of adult researchers' (Jennings et al., 2006).

Design of the Study

Qualitative research is typically concerned with the systematic collection and interpretation of textual data from discussions, interviews, or documentation (Kitto et al., 2008). In many cases, its aims have been to explore the meanings, values, and experiences of individuals and groups from purposefully selected samples (Kvale, 1983; Qu & Dumay, 2011). This is especially the case with research from the broad field of clinical psychology (Thompson & Russo, 2012). Qualitative research allows the opportunity to understand people's lived

experiences within their specific social and cultural contexts, particularly among those from minoritised and marginalised social groups (Fossey et al., 2002; Frost et al., 2020; Gergen et al., 2015). As Willig (2019, p. 23) puts it, "Qualitative research methods allow the researcher to take into account the social and historical contexts within which people (including researchers and other experts) experience themselves and others".

A qualitative approach suited the purpose of my research particularly well, as I was concerned with how Muslim youth experienced and made sense of the March 15th attacks within their specific social contexts. Given the concern of this study was to broaden current understandings of terrorism-related trauma by exploring young people's experiences, a qualitative research design seemed most appropriate. It allowed me to hear directly from young Muslims themselves about their experiences and responses following the March 15th attacks. Some have described the benefits of such research as "giving voice" to people, particularly those whose experiences and identities are marginalised (Facca et al., 2020, p. 1; G. Gibson, 2004; Jack, 2010).

Within the qualitative research design I employed, I used in-depth individual interviews to gather my data. Semi-structured interviews have been described as a particularly useful tool for allowing participants to disclose important but oftentimes hidden aspects of human experience and meaning (Qu & Dumay, 2011). They allow for more nuanced descriptions of participants' experiences and the meanings they attribute to these experiences to be gathered, unlike other forms of data gathering, such as surveys (Kvale, 1983). Moreover, as in-depth interviews allow for the exploration of new areas of research and allow participants to frame their experiences in their own ways, this was suited particularly well to the aims of my research

as I was interested in Muslim youths' subjective experiences of the attacks (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews also allowed me to develop a level of rapport with each participant before asking personal and sensitive questions relating to their experiences of the March 15th attacks. Rapport has been described as an essential component of individual interviews, given the unfamiliarity between researchers and participants and is particularly important for doing research with youth participants (Schelbe et al., 2015). Semi-structured interviews also have the flexibility to adapt to the individual participants' needs and styles (Adams, 2015; Prior, 2016). In this research, using semi-structured interviews was particularly important as it allowed participants to speak more freely, particularly about difficult experiences, and refer to Islamic concepts that are central to their lives and the meanings they make of their experiences.

Within qualitative research, a range of methods of analysis have been adopted. Among the more popular of those is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis has been described as a method of identifying, reporting, and interpreting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis has several strengths. It is a flexible approach that can be used alongside a range of different theoretical approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006), allowing me to incorporate an Islamic psychology framework into my research. Since their seminal discussion of thematic analysis method, Braun and Clarke (2021a, p.3) have since clarified that thematic analysis is a broadly construed method that belongs to a cluster, or "family", of methods and thus articulated the assumptions underlying each method. They describe codebook approaches, coding reliability approaches, and reflexive approaches to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021a).

The latter of these, reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), involves the development of themes later in the analysis process once various codes have been identified. These themes reflect a pattern of shared meaning within the data and are underpinned by a central concept (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Unlike the other forms of thematic analysis that rely on a structured approach to coding, RTA takes an organic approach to coding. That means no codebook is used. Instead, the codes evolve as the researcher engages with the data, reflecting the researcher's deepening understanding. Thus, Braun and Clarke (2021b) are clear in their stance that reflexive thematic analysis is necessarily informed by the subjectivity of the researcher that is interpreting the data. The researchers' values, skills, experiences, and training all inform how data is coded. To this end, themes are said to not spontaneously emerge from the data but are generated by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Consequently, RTA necessitates the researcher engage in reflexivity, the careful consideration on their part to interrogate how their assumptions inform and shape the coding, as well the broader research process. I was able to use the subjective experiences I had as a member of NZ's Muslim community to begin to interpret how other Muslim community members may have experienced and made meaning of the attacks. RTA also ensured that I critically thought about my own positioning and the assumptions I held, and how these may have presented strengths and weaknesses in the analysis of the data. I elaborate on my personal reflexivity below. RTA has also been described as a suitable method of analysis when attempting to explore how people give meaning to their experiences within sociocultural contexts and is useful for informing practice (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2021b). As I aimed to understand how Muslim youths' experiences of and responses to the attacks were constrained and influenced by their socio-political identities and positions in the West so that I could inform clinical

psychology practice within NZ to better meet their mental health needs, this method of analysis was well suited to my research aims.

Personal Reflexivity

Given the centrality of reflexivity to RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2020), it is important I outline the experiences, values, and beliefs that have guided me throughout this research and highlight how they shaped my interpretation of the data. As outlined in the introduction, my personal experience of the March 15th 2019, terrorist attacks as a member of the NZ Muslim community influenced my decision to undertake this research. Having visited Christchurch shortly after the attacks and having talked to the family members of the shuhada, I felt it was important that such a research project be carried out. My position as a Muslim community member also influenced *how* I conducted this research.

I understood that my close proximity to and relationships within Auckland's Muslim community would present several challenges or complications. Neila Miled (2019, p. 1) discusses the tensions of being a Muslim researcher doing research about/with/for Muslim youth, which some have termed "insider" research, and how the insider-outsider dichotomy is more accurately conceptualised as a continuum than a binary (Greene, 2014, p.1; Marlowe et al., 2015). In relation to some aspects of her participants' identities and experiences, she was indeed an insider, namely, as a Muslim. However, in relation to their ages, socio-economic statuses, or migratory backgrounds, she acknowledged being an outsider. In fact, even as a fellow Muslim, she acknowledged the vastly different ways *being* a Muslim could be practised and embodied. I, too, see my Muslim identity as a single point of intersection in my participants' lives, leaving room for how vastly different this very identity can be influenced by so many other factors in our lives.

While I was from within the Muslim community and shared this element of my identity with participants, I was cognizant that there were several other factors that made me an outsider, such as my socio-economic status or my status as a researcher and theirs as a participant. Even as a Muslim, how I embodied *being* Muslim was different to that of my participants. For example, some of my participants discussed attending Muslim high schools as a core part of their *being* Muslim, an experience I was unfamiliar with and had no direct exposure to as I attended a mainstream secular high school. For the young women who wore a hijab, for example, their embodiment of Islam was a physical marker in the form of clothing that led to some feeling fearful of being targeted after the attacks. I do not wear a hijab; therefore, how I embodied my Muslim identity and the implications that this held for me were different to the young women I interviewed. In this way, I recognised that I, too, moved along this continuum of insider-outsider in different aspects of my identity in relation to each participant.

There were also implications of my being a Muslim in how I conducted the interviews and interpreted the data. I was careful to delineate my own personal experiences of the attacks from participants' experiences, though, at times, this proved to be useful during interviews. For example, when participants referred to the aspects of speeches they had heard at a vigil held near Auckland city centre, I was able to infer the specific event they were referring to as I had attended that vigil myself and could ask them detailed questions about their experience of this event. Indeed, Braun and Clarke (2020) emphasise that the researcher's subjectivity can be an analytic resource in qualitative research. There were other instances where I had to actively separate my experience from theirs, such as when one participant began wondering out loud if Muslims shared some portion of responsibility for what had occurred. Such views challenged my own thinking of the attacks and the beliefs I held. In these instances, rather than question

participants on their positions, I would encourage them to elaborate further to allow me to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and opinions.

Undertaking several interviews that were sometimes up to 90 minutes long, where participants shared detailed accounts of their experience of the attacks, was an emotionally taxing endeavour for me. It often brought up memories, emotions, and thoughts of my own experience of the attacks. I recall one instance where a participant recounted his discovery that a three-year-old child, Mucad, had been among the shuhada. As he stated this, he became tearful, and so did I. We agreed to pause the research interview for a moment while we sat and acknowledged our grief of this collective loss together. There were also moments throughout my transcribing and coding of the data that evoked strong emotional reactions in me. In these instances, I would note my reflections in my research diary, which I would bring to my supervision sessions to discuss. My supervisors are experienced clinicians in the fields of clinical psychology and social work; thus, through supervision with them, I was able to make sense of my own experiences while also being challenged to articulate my assumptions and how these might be different to what participants were reporting. On several occasions, my supervisors prompted me to discuss aspects of interviews or the data that surprised me so as to allow me to bring into conscious awareness my assumptions and biases. I also stayed in consistent communication with the Muslim psychologists who were on my advisory panel for further supervision and debriefing, particularly in relation to matters around the interface of Islam and psychology.

Completing my clinical training while conducting this research meant I had to carefully navigate how I approached research interviews so as not to inadvertently turn them into psychological assessments or therapy sessions. However, as several authors have noted,

techniques from psychological practice can be utilised within psychological research interviews, particularly in doing research relating to distressing content such as traumatic experiences (Gale, 1992; Jaffe et al., 2015; Seedat et al., 2004). Thus, I carefully used some therapeutic techniques, such as validation and normalising, during my research interviews upon the instruction of my supervisors. However, even this was not entirely straightforward. Two of my participants stated at the beginning of the research interview that they were looking forward to taking part in a "counselling session" when referring to the research interview. Given how few Muslim mental health practitioners are currently registered and practising in NZ, I could understand their rationale for wanting to use the interview as a means to receive counselling from someone who understood their religious background, particularly in light of the attacks. However, as this was not the purpose of the interview, I gently reminded participants at the beginning of their interviews that the intent behind the interview was to understand their experiences as opposed to counsel them. I informed them that sometimes participating in research interviews can *feel* therapeutic for participants, as they get to share intimate experiences and reflect on them or make connections between experiences, but that this was not our central purpose. Upon this clarification, the two participants who made the statements about viewing the research interviews as a counselling session decided that they still wanted to proceed. I also provided them, and all other participants, with information on whom they could go to for Muslim-specific counselling and they were pleased to have received this information.

Recruitment

The recruitment criteria for this study were Muslim youth from Auckland between the ages of 18 and 24 years old (inclusive) who had been living in NZ for at least five years prior to the attacks. I was interested in this specific age group as they fell within the age range considered

to be youth. I did not recruit Muslim youth younger than 18 years old as I was concerned about the potential impacts of participating in a research interview related to traumatic events for younger participants. The criteria of having lived in NZ would ensure that those who participated in the study had spent a significant period of their youth living in this particular context and could therefore draw upon experiences specific to being a young Muslim in NZ (in contrast to an individual who had spent most of their life in another country and only recently migrated). As the intention of this research was to explore how terrorism is experienced indirectly, people who were present at either of the masjidain in Christchurch where the attacks took place were excluded. Moreover, people who had direct familial links to the shuhada were also excluded because of the potential for causing them undue distress by participating in a research interview soon after the attacks took place.

Participants were primarily recruited from tertiary education providers around the Auckland region and through social media advertisements. I contacted Muslim Students' Associations (MSA) at four Auckland-based universities via their social media pages, asking them to share the advertisement on their social media pages. Of the four MSAs approached, three responded and agreed to share the recruitment poster (Appendix D). I also approached other social media pages with a large number of Muslim followers (e.g. "Halal in NZ", "Muslims of NZ", "Ōu Mātou Reo") and asked to share the online recruitment ad. All pages agreed to share the poster.

When potential participants responded either via email or a messaging application (Viber, SMS, Whatsapp) to the recruitment poster, they would then be sent an email message (Appendix A), a participant information sheet (PIS; Appendix B), and a consent form (Appendix C). Those

who had questions upon receiving the documents were contacted via telephone to answer their questions, after which an interview time would be arranged.

Participants

A total of 26 individuals expressed interest in participating in the study. After receiving their expression of interest, I sent them a PIS along with the consent form. Of the 26 who expressed interest, 10 were excluded. Four of these people who expressed interest were outside Auckland, so they were not interviewed. Six people did not respond after being sent the PIS and consent form, so they were not interviewed. The remaining 16 met the inclusion criteria, consented to participate in a research interview, and were subsequently interviewed.

The 16 people who did participate were between 18 and 24 years old, with a mean age of 20 years (SD = 1.43) and a modal age of 21 years. A total of 11 participants identified as women and five as men. Their ethnic backgrounds included Indian, Pakistani, Malay, Indo-Fijian, Fijian-Indian, Singaporean, Bangladeshi and Afro-Arab. Most were full-time students. Two indicated that they studied full-time alongside part-time work. One participant worked full-time alongside part-time study. For a full breakdown of participant demographics, refer to Table 1.

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

	n	%
Gender		
Young women	11	68.75
Young men	5	31.25
Mean Age (years)	20	
Mode Age (years)	21	
Primary Occupation		
Full time student	13	81.25
Full time student/part time work	2	12.50
Full time work/part time student	1	6.25
Ethnicity		
Indian	5	31.25
Pakistani	4	25.00
Malay	1	6.25
Indo-Fijian	1	6.25
Fijian-Indian	1	6.25
Malay	1	6.25
Singaporean	1	6.25
Bangladeshi	1	6.25
Afro-Arab	1	6.25
Migratory Background		
NZ-born	10	62.50
Migrant	6	37.50

Data Gathering

Those potential participants who completed the consent form were contacted to arrange a time and location of their choosing to conduct the interview. They were offered the opportunity to either conduct the interview at the University of Auckland's city campus or at a public venue of their choosing.

Prior to commencing the interview with each participant, the consent form was reviewed, and any remaining questions were answered. I reviewed any ethical issues with each participant and reminded them that I was bound by confidentiality; hence their identities would not be shared publicly. Participants were also given the opportunity at this stage to choose a pseudonym against which their responses would be recorded and reported. I reminded each participant that their interview was being recorded and that they could wish to end the recording at any point or entirely withdraw from the interview should they choose to do so.

Each interview began with me providing an outline of the research project, a brief introduction to who I am and how I arrived at this project and then the participant could introduce themselves. I asked each participant a set of demographic questions, including their age, gender, ethnicity, migratory background and work status. The remainder of the interview followed the semi-structured interview format as outlined in Appendix E. These included asking the participants to share something about themselves, which would entail further questions as to their schooling background, early experiences, and family. Approximately halfway into the interview, I would then transition into asking participants about their experiences of the attacks, allowing them to begin wherever they felt comfortable (i.e. day of the attacks, prior to the attacks, or sometime after the attacks). Most began by recalling how they came to know of the attacks, so this is where we began the following set of questions that aimed to explore their

experiences in more depth. Questions relating to their experience of the attacks included their initial reactions, how they made sense of the attacks, and how they felt the attacks had impacted them. Questions relating to their responses to the attacks included the coping resources that were available to them, where they went for support, how helpful they found the support they accessed or received, and what they found to be unhelpful.

For many participants, sharing details of their experiences during the interviews was not always easy. Some participants became visibly distressed and tearful. I attempted to approach these moments in the research interviews sensitively by gently reminding participants that they did not have to answer questions that they were not comfortable answering or if it was too painful at that moment to elaborate that we could move on to another question, or even end the interview if they wished. Although some topics were difficult to discuss with participants, including how the attacks impacted their sense of spirituality or how it felt for them to see the videos of the attacks, none of the participants refused to answer any questions or asked to end their interview prematurely. In fact, many stated that they were eager to share their experiences as the research interview was their first opportunity to share in detail. Lakeman and colleagues (2013) discuss how participants can experience benefits from discussing difficult experiences in research interviews. This appears to have been the case for many of the research participants in my study. My general impression of participants was that the interviews were an opportunity for them to reflect on their experiences, draw connections between their early lives and how the attacks impacted them, and how they responded. Accordingly, most noted that the research interview inadvertently provided them with insights into their experience through being posed questions and answering these. At the end of each interview, I would inform participants of where they could seek support if any portion of the research interview had brought up difficult

memories or feelings for them by providing them with the details of the Muslim chaplain at the University alongside helpline numbers.

I conducted the first interview on the 15th of March 2021, two years after the date of the attacks. The remaining interviews were completed in the following three months. All the interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Those that were towards the upper end generally took longer as participants became upset and wanted to pause or because they had questions they posed to me in terms of the purpose of the research, what the next steps would entail or how they might be able to access the findings of the research.

Some Muslim community members adhere to conservative Islamic protocols around interactions between genders, particularly in one-to-one settings. As I did not want to exclude Muslim women who wished to participate in this research but did not want to be interviewed alone with a male researcher, I indicated on the PIS and consent form that they could bring a support person or chaperone with them to the interview, or that I could arrange for a woman colleague to be present at their interview. Two of the young women who participated in this study requested a woman researcher be present during the interview, and this was arranged. My colleague, who had signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix F), sat in these interviews, and introduced themselves but did not pose any questions. One young woman asked for her friend to be present during the research interview, and this was accommodated. Her friend sat in the room and chose to wear noise-blocking headphones while she was occupied on her phone while we conducted the interview.

Data Analysis

All the interviews were transcribed verbatim in their entirety. I transcribed two interviews manually and used online software to transcribe the remaining 14 interviews. I checked those completed by the transcribing software by listening to the audio recording and following along with the transcript to ensure consistency and accuracy. I corrected any errors in the transcription and then sent each participant their transcript to review. I requested that they check their transcript and indicate if they wished to make any amendments, then confirm they were happy with their transcript within two weeks. They were also informed that they could choose to withdraw their interview if they wished to do so before the end of those two weeks, after which it would not be possible as I would have begun data analysis. I sent a follow-up email to two participants who did not confirm the transcript of their interview within the two-week period. They responded shortly after my follow-up email. Some minor corrections were made by three participants. None of the participants withdrew their consent.

Within the approach to doing reflexive thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2021b) outline six broad steps. These include familiarisation, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing and developing themes, refining and naming themes, and writing up. Importantly, these steps are said to be part of an iterative and recursive process, meaning that the researcher does not begin with the first step and ends with the sixth. Rather they repeat the process several times. The familiarisation process involves the researcher reading and re-reading the dataset so as to become familiar with it. This can be enhanced by manually transcribing the data. Next, they generate initial codes within the data that are short, concise descriptions or interpretive labels that relate to the research questions. Anything that could be useful for the research questions should be coded. Once the data set has been coded, initial themes are generated. This is a move

towards aggregated meaning across the dataset (D. Byrne, 2022). It is important that each theme is distinct and conveys something meaningful about the research question. In fact, one theme may even contradict another. Codes and the themes they comprise that are not directly relevant should be discarded. At this point, the initial themes that were generated are reviewed to highlight whether any do not function as meaningful interpretations of the data or do not directly answer the research questions. It may also be necessary to return to the data and re-code the data upon completion of the review. Researchers may also develop a theme map at this phase to map out all the initially generated themes and how they relate to the codes and to each other. Next, the themes are refined and named. Each theme is required to provide a coherent narrative of the data that is distinguishable from other themes. Quotes are selected from the data to illustrate the theme and provide a compelling argument that is being made. The final step involves producing the report. Given that this process is recursive, this write-up will take different forms and changes as themes and codes are revisited and revised.

I followed these six steps of reflexive thematic analysis to analyse my research data. I read each transcript in its entirety to help identify initial codes which appeared as patterns across the interviews. Examples of these initial codes that related to my research questions included "he did not like Muslims" and "time stood still when I heard about the attacks". Following this process, I began to identify initial themes that were relevant to my research questions about Muslim youths' experiences and responses to the attacks. Examples of initial themes included "hatred of Muslims" and "shock, disbelief". There were several codes that I ended up discarding because they did not help answer my research question, such as "understanding my Muslim identity when I went to Pakistan". Although this may have informed how participants came to

understand their identity when they travelled to their parent's country of origin, it was not directly related to their experience of the attacks, so I discarded it.

I engaged in discussions with both of my supervisors around these initial themes that I had interpreted within the data before labelling them. For example, the initial theme of "hatred of Muslims" was changed to "It needs to be seen as part of Islamophobia and racism" as a more meaningful way to capture one element of participant's meaning-making of the attacks and that fits within the broader picture of the research. I then selected quotes from different participants that could be used to illustrate each theme by first identifying several quotes that related to that theme and then, through a process of elimination, identifying a handful that highlighted important aspects of the theme. For the quotes I included, I sometimes made minor adjustments such as removing identifying information or making them shorter for brevity's sake if there were several ideas within the single quote.

While attempting to establish overarching categories under which the themes could be categorised, I went through several iterations. Initially, I began by organising the different categories into different temporal phases of participants' experiences, such as immediate reactions and later responses. However, these categories did not adequately capture the themes that sat within each category. Following a discussion with my supervisors, I decided to reorganise these categories into initial reactions, meaning-making, and coping strategies and resources. These categories adequately captured the key themes relating to various aspects of participants' experiences *and* tied in with the key questions I set out to explore in this research.

Quality in Qualitative Research

Given that concepts such as reliability and validity are not applicable to qualitative research, it has led some positivist researchers to question the quality of qualitative research (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2002). However, prominent qualitative researchers have proposed various strategies and alternative criteria to ensure quality can be achieved within qualitative research. Among these, Treharne and Riggs (2015) propose the following quality criteria for qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity.

Credibility refers to congruence between participants' descriptions of their experiences and the researchers' interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Treharn and Riggs (2015, p.58) pose the question as to whether "participants or members of the community being researched feel that the findings represent their experience?" to help assess this criterion. During each interview, I would consistently check my understanding against what participants had stated to ensure that I had correctly interpreted their statements. On some occasions, I would clarify by asking "did you mean" followed by what I thought they were meaning, and they would either correct me or confirm that I had indeed understood them correctly. Moreover, I presented preliminary analyses of my findings to various stakeholders within the community, including a group of Muslim psychologists and mental health practitioners who had supported Muslim communities after the attacks. These served as opportunities for me to check whether my interpretation of the data broadly aligned with their views of how the Muslim community experienced the attacks. I also engaged in in-depth discussions with my research supervisors, both of whom are experienced researchers and practitioners, throughout all phases of my research.

Transferability in qualitative research is understood to mean the theoretical generalisability of the research findings (Gasson, 2004; Morrow, 2005; Treharne & Riggs, 2015).

As qualitative research looks to explore a specific issue within a specific context among a specific population, it is inappropriate to determine its quality based on its statistical generalisability (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). To ensure the transferability of my research, I have provided a detailed description of the research process, such as the factors leading to this research, my own positioning, the theoretical orientation I adopted, the participants who participated in this research, and the specifics of the event I was interested in studying. While my findings may not be generalised across all populations of youth, in NZ or elsewhere, other researchers may be able draw theoretical generalisations from my research that apply to situations with similar features.

Dependability in qualitative research asks whether similar findings would be produced if another research carried out the project (Treharne & Riggs, 2015). Morrow (2005) posits that the *process* through which a particular set of findings is produced in research should be made as explicit as possible. To ensure the dependability of my research, I have carefully outlined each step that I took in the methods section to allow for scrutiny. Moreover, I offered a detailed discussion of how I arrived at the final themes. I also detailed how my personal subjectivity influenced my interpretation of the data and the steps I took to ensure I continuously reflected on my assumptions that may have shaped and limited my coding of the data. These have been considered to be important measures for qualitative researchers to take, particularly while conducting reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2020; Kitto et al., 2008).

These steps have also helped enhanced the confirmability of my research, which is defined as the research being a product of the participants' responses and not researchers' biases, though with the understanding that research can never be "objective" (Morrow, 2005, p. 252; Treharne & Riggs, 2015). Reflexive thematic analysis recognises the researcher's subjectivity as

an analytic resource and is recommended when the analytic interest is on how personal experiences fit within wider sociocultural contexts with the aim to have clear implications for practice (Braun & Clarke, 2020a; Braun & Clark, 2020b). I have acknowledged throughout this research that my personal experiences of the attacks led me to this research project, thus it is deeply connected to me, however, I also outlined how I took to various steps to ensure that I allowed myself to be challenged by participants' responses when their views differed from my own experience. Throughout the entirety of my research, I engaged in in-depth discussions with my research supervisors, both of whom are experienced researchers and practitioners, to enhance my researcher reflexivity. These discussions took place from the conception stages of the project where I discussed why I wanted to embark on this particular research topic and how it had been largely informed by my own experience. During the data collecting phases, my supervisors served as an important sounding board for me to discuss how I experienced the interviews or how participants' responses surprised me and allowed me to continuously articulate my assumptions so as to recognise them and to ensure I made room for perspectives different to my own. Upon transcribing the interviews, I sat down with my supervisors and discussed what I had noticed and the ideas within discussions that stood out to me.

Finally, authenticity refers to the research representing a fair range of different viewpoints and whether there is community consensus that the findings are useful and have meaning (Treharne & Riggs, 2015). Throughout my analysis, I ensured that I kept track of and presented negative cases across several themes to highlight the diversity of experience among the Muslim youth who participated in this study. Moreover, as noted earlier, I presented my findings on several occasions to Muslim community members to ensure that the research was indeed

useful and produced meaningful results that would ensure appropriate action could be taken to support the community with post-attack recovery.

Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of this research, there were various factors that I had to pay close attention to in order to ensure that this research met ethical obligations. The key ethical considerations related to participant confidentiality, my position and power within the Muslim community, and the emotional safety of participants.

As my research involved conducting interviews with young Muslims where I would ask them about the personal impacts of the terrorist attacks, it was imperative that I maintained their confidentiality. This is an especially important consideration given that the details of what participants shared in their interviews were deeply personal and related to a significantly traumatic event. At times they critiqued their schools or the institutions to which they belonged and shared things that they did not want their parents to know about their experiences. Thompson and Russo (2012) describe how qualitative research conducted within the scope of clinical psychology is usually related to relatively small populations, and as such, it is important to take measures to ensure their confidentiality. This is very much the case for the current study as the Muslim population in NZ is relatively small, and there is a high likelihood that the young people who participated in the study may be identified by others in the community.

To mitigate the chance of participants being identified in the research, identifying details of participants' responses were removed. For example, when they referred to the particular mosque they attend or their school's name, this was omitted from any quote that I included. Moreover, I asked all participants to choose a pseudonym against which their responses would be recorded. Those who did not have a preference were allocated a pseudonym that did not

resemble their names so as to protect their identities. Secondly, the participant consent forms were stored separately from the recordings and transcripts of the interviews. All participants chose to have their interviews conducted on the university campus in a private room. An "interview in progress, do not enter" sign placed on the door to ensure no disruptions.

Despite being a Muslim myself, my positionality as a researcher inherently could have created a power differential between myself and the young people who took part in the study. Most of my participants were university students completing undergraduate degrees, while I am a post-graduate student enrolled in a doctoral programme. In addition to these factors, I was older than all my participants, so although I am youth-adjacent, there was still an aspect of power over my participants that I had. This may have been particularly pronounced in this situation given Islamic values around respect being important to be shown towards elders. To manage these overlapping power dynamics, I reminded participants that they were welcome to bring a support person with them when arranging an interview time. Also, I ensured that I spent adequate time introducing myself to allow participants to feel comfortable when sharing their responses to questions. I also made sure to make explicit my positioning and to present myself as a naïve inquirer who is interested in hearing about young people's experiences. I explained to participants that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was interested in hearing about their personal experiences and perspectives. When appropriate, I briefly shared my experiences with some participants to lessen the divide between us as a researcher and participants.

To ensure that I was not misusing the relatively prominent role I have within the Muslim community, I did not approach any individual person in the recruitment stages of my research to ask them to participate. Instead, I approached organisations and asked them to share the recruitment poster on my behalf so that only those who wanted to participate could reach out and

do so voluntarily without feeling coerced into participating. I also drew on my experience as a former youth worker and as a clinical psychology student to communicate in a non-judgmental, empathetic manner with participants.

As I was asking participants to recount their experiences following a significantly traumatic event, there was the chance that some may have become distressed, and indeed this did occur on several occasions. I ensured that I monitored each participant's emotional reactions closely during the interview, and at times when participants found a particular question distressing, I reminded them that they did not have to answer if they did not want to do so. At the end of each interview, I provided each participant with an information sheet of services and people they could reach out to for emotional support. My primary supervisor, who is a qualified clinical psychologist with many years of experience working alongside young people, was also available during interviews to manage any participants who may have become distressed. Ethics approval for this research project was granted by the Auckland Human Research Ethics Committee on January 12th, 2021, reference number AH3106

Conclusion

In this section, I described my rationale for using a qualitative study design and semi-structured individual interviews to explore the experiences of Muslim youth in relation to the March 15th attacks. I also described how I analysed the data using RTA and highlighted the personal reflexivity involved with doing so. This was particularly pertinent for me to elaborate on as a Muslim researcher doing research with Muslim youth. Finally, I detailed the steps I took to improve the quality of my research and ensure I met my ethical obligations as a researcher.

Chapter Three: Findings

In this chapter, I present the key findings from the semi-structured interviews I conducted with the 16 Muslim youth participants. The themes I constructed from the interviews are arranged into three overarching categories. The first of these categories details participants’ reactions and responses to the March 15th attacks. The second category of themes covers participants’ meaning-making of the attacks. Finally, the third category outlines themes that describe the coping resources available to participants, the coping strategies they used, and the barriers that impeded their coping. Together, these themes build a picture that illustrates a snapshot of the experiences of Auckland’s Muslim youth following the March 15th terrorist attack. While these themes clearly suggest that Muslim youth experienced a range of trauma responses to the terrorist attacks, they also paint an equally convincing picture that the political nature of terrorism profoundly shaped their experiences. In turn, their politicised identities as Muslim youth in the West shaped how participants utilised the strategies and resources available to them in response to the attacks. A summary of the categories and themes is outlined below in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of the Categories and Themes

Category	Themes
Reactions	Being In Shock
	Worrying About Safety
	Feeling on Edge
	Avoiding Reminders
	Fear of a Backlash
Making Meaning	It was a Personal Attack
	I Don't Have the Right to Mourn
	He Is a Terrorist
	It Needs to Be Seen as Part of Islamophobia and Racism
	The Root Cause Was White Supremacy and Colonialism
Coping Strategies and Resources	The Public Was Caring but Their Support Was Temporary
	Counsellors who Listened, but There Aren't Enough Who Get Me
	Having Understanding Friends Helped
	Being Around My Muslim Community
	Growing Closer to My Faith
	Becoming Proud of Being Muslim

Reactions to the Attacks

In this section of the findings, I present an analysis of the themes that encapsulate participants' reactions to the March 15th attacks. Beginning with their immediate reactions, the

analysis captures their initial shock upon discovering an attack had taken place and how they experienced immediate concerns for their family and friends. I also present an analysis of participants' fear and avoidance responses after the attacks. Finally, I present an analysis demonstrating how participants' reactions were shaped and informed by the politicised nature of their identities as young Muslims living in NZ.

Being In Shock: "I didn't comprehend what was happening"

News of the attacks emerged piecemeal on Friday the 15th of March 2019. Initial reports described a shooting that had taken place at a mosque in Christchurch with little detail about the victims, perpetrator, or whether there was a continued threat of further violence. As all the participants were either enrolled in high school or tertiary education when the attacks happened, they recalled being made aware of these incomplete details while at their place of study. They discovered news about the attacks via their social media feeds, receiving text messages and calls from family and friends, or reading the news headlines. Almost all participants described being completely in shock upon immediately discovering attacks had occurred:

> I think I turned on the TV and then it's like, "breaking news there's been a shooting in Christchurch". And then I just remember, like, just looking but like, not understanding what's happening. Like, I was just staring at it in disbelief. I didn't comprehend what was happening. Like, I was there. But like, [it] didn't seem real… My mind wasn't processing what was happening. ("Asma")

Many participants stated that upon hearing about the attacks, they tuned into the ongoing news coverage from that Friday afternoon on the 15th of March and continued throughout that weekend. For some, this meant not sleeping over the weekend as they awaited further details of the attacks to see whether anyone they knew was amongst the deceased:

> We just kind of sat there like in front of the TV to watch the news like the whole day. And for like next two days as well, that's pretty much all we did. We just sat and watched the news because we didn't know what else to do. ("Marwa")

Despite the ongoing news coverage, many participants felt they could not comprehend the events that had transpired and that a series of attacks had indeed taken place. Only upon returning to their schools and universities on the following Monday, where they were met with various responses from peers, did the reality set in for some participants. For example, "Asma" stated that "over the Saturday and Sunday, I don't remember what happened. But like I was still really shocked. But then when you come to school, you actually talk to people, it hits you, what actually happened."

The shock of hearing about the attacks was experienced and described by several participants as distorting their sense of time. For some, the weekend which followed the attacks went by so quickly that time felt as if it did not mean anything, such that their memory of that weekend was a "blank". One participant likened their perception of time during the weekend of the 16th and 17th of March to waking from a midday nap and feeling disoriented. Conversely, several participants could recall specific details of events before and immediately after hearing about the attacks. They recounted these details of their experience at the time of their interviews, which were conducted two years after the attacks had taken place:

> I remember that day really clearly so, so during Jummah time, on Friday prayer, I had biology class, I was literally sitting in bio watching, not doing classwork, unfortunately. But watching videos on my friend's phone. And then straight afterwards, I think, I had another period of class and then it was after school. And on Fridays, I do fencing. So, like the sword fighting thing in the school gym. And so, after my fencing session, at like five-

> ish, I came, I sat down in my dad's car, and he was like, "an attack happened in Christchurch". ("Fatima")

Participants described how they found themselves ruminating over elements of the attack that were particularly "shocking". That the mass loss of life in this event resulted from human action was described as one particularly shocking feature. In contrast with other events where many people had lost their lives, such as an earthquake, participants described the March 15th attacks as avoidable. Moreover, that the attacks were carried out on NZ soil shocked almost all participants. A recurring discussion was had across several interviews where participants described their perceptions of NZ before the March 15th attacks as a "safe place" where mass shootings did not occur. NZ's sense of safety was contrasted with other countries, often the United States of America, where mass shootings were thought to be commonplace:

> It's very easy to look at news overseas and be like, it's not gonna affect us. And that doesn't change things for you too much. But this time, it was in New Zealand. And I guess people always had this false sense of security that everything's safe here. Everything's okay. We're removed from the rest of the world. But then, like the bubble popped and like we're not. We're exactly the same. ("Farah")

Other aspects of the terrorist attacks were also referenced in many participants' interviews as shocking. Some participants pointed to the exclusive targeting of Muslims in masjidain as something they had not seen before, in NZ or overseas. That Tarrant live-streamed his actions was also shocking to some participants. "Fatima", who saw the video of the attacks, described her reaction as:

> Watching that video was just basically like one of those… video games like Call of Duty. It was like that. Just watching someone just gun down people. And it took me a second to realize, wait, this is not a game. This is what actually happened. And I was, to say mortified, would be like an understatement. I was shaking, like, my hands started shaking real bad. ("Fatima")

Additionally, the fact that the terrorist chose to carry out his attack on a Friday, a day which is considered to be holy among Muslims and where there was a large gathering of people taking part in Jumu'ah prayers in an enclosed space disturbed some participants:

> The more you thought about it, the worse it would get. You know, if you think about from the get-go, it was a terrorist attack, right, but then you think about it, no, they specifically took, they specifically went to a masjid. They specifically went to Jumu'ah. They specifically went at this time, it just gets worse and worse, the more you think about it. ("Samura")

In summary, almost all participants described some sense of shock when immediately hearing about the attacks. The very fact that an attack had occurred was shocking to them, as were the specifics of what transpired in Masjid Al Noor and Linwood Islamic Centre on the 15th of March 2019.

Worrying About Safety: "your only thought is, 'okay, my dad's at Jumu'ah, so why isn't he picking up his phone?'."

Upon discovering that the attacks had occurred across several mosques, many participants recounted how their immediate response was to check on the safety of family members, friends, and peers. Their concern for family and community was often described in

relation to the unknown elements of the attacks, particularly whether the perpetrator was carrying out the attacks in isolation or whether the shootings in Christchurch were part of a coordinated set of attacks. Tarrant had informed Police upon being arrested that there were another nine shooters.

The importance of Jumu'ah prayers was also highlighted as another reason why many participants' immediate reactions were a concern for their family members. The regularity with which some participants' family members attended Jumu'ah prayers led them to believe that their family members may have been among the victims of the shootings, even if they were not in Christchurch:

> And then you hear the shooting was at a mosque. And you forget the fact that it's in Christchurch, and your only thought is, "okay, my dad's at Jumu'ah, so why isn't he picking up his phone?" ("Jerry")

In addition to checking on the safety of their family and community, some university student participants described how their immediate concerns were directed towards ensuring that Muslim students – particularly hijabi women – could get home safely on the afternoon of the 15th of March. "Nargis", who wore a hijab, stated she and her hijab-wearing friends were "too scared to take public transport" to get home from university. She said the hijab was similar to "wear[ing] our religion on our head". The hijab was described as placing Muslim women in Auckland at risk of being attacked on public transport amidst the initial uncertainty of the attacks. Those participants involved with university Muslim students' associations described being immediately concerned with organizing transport home from the university campus for hijabi students, even while they were in the initial period of shock.. Ibrahim stated, "I just go and

get the MSA [Muslim Students' Association] together. So, [I] hit up [peer] and say, "how are people getting home?".

In some instances, participants' immediate concerns for their family members overrode their concerns for themselves. "Fawad" and "Ibrahim" spoke about their fears for the women in their lives who wore a hijab and how this made them a more identifiable target for any further potential attacks. "Fawad" stated, "I have a mum and sister that do wear hijab. So that makes me worried for their safety". "Zara" shared a similar fear for her mother, who wore a hijab. She spoke about going out in public with her mother to help her feel safe:

> I remember I went home and then I talked to my mum about [the attacks]. She was very upset cause my mum wears a hijab and she said to me, "look I don't feel safe going out anymore. Can you come and like when I grocery shopping and stuff, can you come with me?". And I was busy with uni, but I was like, "ok actually this is quite important". And I don't know how my mum would be treated. Would she be treated differently? I don't know. Yeah, for a week after that incident happened, it was constant supervision with my mum. ("Zara")

"Farah" also shared this fear. She described her immediate reaction to the attacks was to ask her mother to remove her hijab, something she somewhat shamefully admitted she would never do again:

> Initially, I was scared – not for myself – but for my parents. People who identify, like you can see them walking on the road you'd be like, they're Muslim. I was scared for people like that, like my cousins who wear the hijab, things like that. I guess it was kind of conflicting… because the purpose of me telling my mum to take the hijab off – which

> was so bad for me to do, like I would never ask her to do that again – it was because I just wanted to keep them safe. ("Farah")

This theme described how participants feared for their safety and the Muslim community in Auckland immediately following the attacks. Their concerns for their family and friends were mainly due to them also taking part in Friday prayers, as the victims in Christchurch had done. Despite the geographical distance between Christchurch, where the shootings occurred, and Auckland, where participants and their loved ones were located, participants evaluated the threat of terrorist violence as direct and ongoing. For several participants, the focus of their fear became the hijab as this was a visible sign that set Muslim women apart from their fellow New Zealanders, and that which was feared would make them targets of further attacks.

Feeling on Edge: "You're not as safe as you thought you were"

Even once Tarrant was apprehended and the police evaluated that he was acting alone, several participants reported feeling on edge and fearful of the prospect of further terrorist violence. Participants said they believed NZ to be a place of relative safety where Muslims could practice their religion freely and without fear of persecution. Following the attacks, however, many reported that their beliefs around safety were challenged. Notably, even those participants who described that their fears of white supremacist violence were present prior to the 15th of March 2019 reported that they, too experienced a "wake-up" call of sorts due to the attacks.

"Fawad" shared how his beliefs and assumptions about his safety in NZ were challenged after the attacks as he had come to develop a learned association between masajid and terrorist violence. When describing his experience of praying at the mosque in the present day, "Fawad" regrettably admitted that the very act of visiting a masjid in Auckland on a Friday continued to serve as a reminder of the terrorist attacks and evoked feelings of fear:

> I think that event scars me till this day as well, in the sense that honestly, I'm not even I'm not even gonna lie here, I want to tell you the complete truth, whenever I'm going and praying in a mosque or praying in Jumu'ah, it's always in the back of my mind, "what if a gunman comes behind me?" Genuinely. It's always like, literally plays my mind every Jumu'ah, it's just like, "if someone comes behind me right now with a gun, where do I run? Where do I escape from?". That's how it scarred me two years on, I still think about that. ("Fawad")

"Jamal" also shared a similar experience of thinking about further shootings while visiting a masjid in Auckland around the time of his interview. He described "subconsciously" being fearful of further attacks taking place in Auckland mosques. Consequently, he reported situating himself near exits to make for an easy escape should a terrorist enter the masjid he was praying inside. "Aaliyah" also described how mosques became symbolic of a potential threat long after the attacks. For her, this evocation of fear from a place of worship persisted for nine months following the attacks. She described feeling nauseous on her journey to her local masjid for the remainder of 2019. Interestingly, her fear was not limited to sites where Muslims exclusively congregated but instead seemed to generalise to other contexts as she reported feeling anxious any time she left her home.

The notion of feeling on edge in public settings, in addition to fear being associated with mosques, was also spoken about by several other participants. Some participants reported becoming hypervigilant of their surroundings, including on university campuses, which led to them withdrawing from public places:

> Going out in the university again you were always really conscious about, like, where you are and if people are watching you … I don't know if you're too visible and too

conscious, so I just took a break for a few days… Yeah for a good like month or two. ("Ayesha")

As a result of the March 15th attacks and the increased cautiousness with which participants navigated public settings, many reported a shift in their beliefs about NZ's relative safety. Prior to the attacks, some participants said they had perceived NZ to be free from terrorism, particularly the kind which targets Muslims. The March 15th attacks, however, were in direct opposition to those beliefs and appeared to confront many of the participants' assumptions. Consequently, they shifted their stance to see NZ as not being the safe haven they once perceived it to be. Even two years after the attacks took place, when the interviews for this study were conducted, many held firm to their belief that NZ was not safe for Muslims. As "Fawad" put it, the attacks took away a "fundamental right… to practice our religion freely, and in a place of worship where we should be guaranteed safety."

Rather interestingly, the participants who spoke of their awareness of the threat of violence toward Muslim communities even before the attacks took place on March 15th, 2019, also noted a shift in their thinking and behaviour. For example, "Samura" described how he had organised security for events where Muslim students gathered because of the threat Muslims faced in public settings, including university campuses. For him and other participants who were also aware of such threats, the attacks appeared to entrench their beliefs about NZ being unsafe for Muslims. The attacks served as a timely reminder for "Samura" to become "even more conscious" of his surroundings as a Muslim.

This theme of participants feeling on edge further illustrates how the threat posed by terrorist violence in Christchurch was experienced as an ongoing and direct threat to Muslims in Auckland. For many participants, the threat of further violence resulted in them engaging in

hypervigilant behaviours such as planning exit routes, particularly when sitting in masajid. The March 15th attacks seem to have disrupted the fundamental assumption of safety held by many participants. Moreover, for those participants who feared for their safety even before the 15th of March 2019, the attacks served to entrench their beliefs that they can never be entirely safe as Muslims in NZ.

Avoiding Reminders: "disconnecting or trying to ignore things"

News coverage of the attacks seemed to be never-ending in the first few days and weeks after the 15th of March 2019. In response to this barrage of media reports, several participants described attempting to avoid information relating to the attacks. Their avoidance strategies included disengaging from discussions of, and events relating to, the attacks, including on social media, and staying away from places that would trigger memories of the attacks. For some, their avoidance extended to their emotional experience of the attacks, and they tried to return to some sense of normality by temporarily trying to block the event from their minds.

Avoiding mosques in the period immediately after the attacks was mentioned in several interviews. Mosques were avoided because they either reminded participants of what occurred in Christchurch or because they wanted to ensure they, too, would not fall victim to a terrorist attack in Auckland, and sometimes both. "Ayesha" described developing "anxiety" after the attacks such that she had not returned to the university prayer space in the two years since the attacks.

"Farah" described how she pleaded for her mother to remove her hijab and asked her father not to attend the mosque after the attacks because she feared another attack might occur. Her fear and avoidance extended to anything relating to the attacks as the reality of 51 Muslims becoming victims of a terrorist attack was beginning to affect her emotionally:

> I never really dealt with how much it affects me. Because after that I just started using avoidance like if there was anything about it, I just don't want to see it. Like I wouldn't I don't look at any of the news, I wouldn't look like when the victims, their families came out with their statements. I didn't want to look at it. I couldn't because I can't handle it. So yeah, I think I've noticed a shift from me seeing all the news, like reading everything about them, the families who was there, to me just avoiding and don't want to hear it, I don't want to see it. Because it was too real. ("Farah")

One participant's avoidance of the attacks went as far as leaving NZ entirely and going to China for a "getaway". This served the purpose of allowing her to geographically distance herself from the attacks as well as being disconnected from posts relating to the attacks that inundated her social media feeds, given China's Facebook ban.

Social media avoidance following the attacks was also mentioned elsewhere. Some participants described social media as "toxic" to their well-being, particularly after March 15th. Although they recognised its benefits, some participants felt social media was taking a harmful toll on their mental well-being, and so decided to withdraw from digital spaces. The live-streamed and widely-shared video of the attacks was also cited among the reasons for doing so because participants did not want to inadvertently come across the violent video of Muslims being gunned down:

> And another way I coped from it actually, with it actually was staying away from social media to a large extent, because I stayed on it for about a week after it happened. But then I just stopped because I realized that while there'll be a lot of support and care, there'll be a lot of negative things as well, of which one of the things was the video, the March 15th shooting video. ("Fawad")

"Ayesha" highlighted the duality of social media as an avenue through which young people could obtain information about the attacks while also risk facing unwanted exposure to content such as the live-streamed video. For her, digital media allowed her to search online for answers as to why someone could carry out such heinous acts of terrorism. However, this quest for answers impacted her negatively and resulted in her parents restricting her access to technology.

Other descriptions of participants' avoidance strategies were related to their emotional experience of the attacks. Participants reported disconnecting from their emotions to get on with the pressing tasks and responsibilities they had in their lives. For some, this was school or university work. Others who were involved in leadership roles or efforts to support the families of the victims felt that it was necessary to disconnect from their own emotions in order to make space for those they were supporting. "Jamal", for example, described his strategy of "blocking" emotions related to the attacks. Similarly, "Nargis", who held a leadership position at her university, elaborated on her avoidance strategy by stating:

> I would say I did ignore it as well like I was kinda like I almost didn't give myself the right to feel my feelings type of thing. I was like, "Oh I'll do this later, like right now they need me" type of thing. I disregarded my feelings. I definitely think I did that… definitely that entire semester. ("Nargis")

"Maia" likened her strategy to placing difficult experiences on a "mental shelf", thus allowing her to not worry about the attacks. By keeping herself "as busy as possible", she felt she could get on with other things in her life and return to some semblance of normality.

In this theme, I have described how avoidance was among the common reactions participants had following the March 15th attacks. For some participants, their avoidance was

related to minimising the threat of danger zones from public spaces, such as universities and mosques, while others avoided digital spaces and news media. Other participants also described avoiding emotions and thoughts relating to the attacks. This response of avoidance seemed to be a way of managing the intensity of the threat that the participants experienced after the attacks.

Fear of a Backlash: "Please don't let it be Muslims"

The initial reporting of the attacks did not identify the attacker by his name, ethnicity, or other distinguishing features. Given the scarcity of information available, it was unknown who committed the attacks and whether they were operating as part of a more extensive network of operatives. Within this context of limited information being made public immediately after the attacks and the Prime Minister announcing the national security threat level was escalated, many participants concluded that the perpetrator was a Muslim. Consequently, they feared the backlash that would ensue towards Muslims from the wider NZ public.

Many participants described how their immediate reaction after being presented with only a single sentence of information containing the words "terrorist" and "attacks" was to conclude that the terrorist was a Muslim. Participants linked this assumption to years of terrorism discourses dominated by the threat of so-called Islamic terrorism. "Fawad", for example, elaborated on how he had learned to associate terrorism with Islam through limited media portrayals of Muslims. He summarised his reaction to hearing about the attacks as:

> When I first read the news… I just read "mosque" and "shootings" in the headline, I just thought it was just like, you know, what media always tells us that a Muslim terrorist has just come and done something. ("Fawad")

"Fawad" also described how seeing Muslims portrayed in this way had reinforced the notion that Muslims are "enemies" of the West and perpetrators of terrorism, even for him as a Muslim:

> I think media has a big part to play in this, but particularly the Muslims, we're obviously portrayed in a light where we are often shown as the perpetrators and the enemies of the world… the initial logical thing that made sense to me because of the way that media has programmed us to think that Muslims are always enemies and perpetrators. ("Fawad")

Similarly, other participants pointed to news media's portrayals of Muslims as terrorists as contributing to their assumption that the perpetrator of the March 15th attacks was a Muslim. Their accounts suggested that Muslims being associated with terrorism was entrenched in broader social beliefs, something "Jamal" described as existing on a "subconscious" level. Further to the notion that terrorists are almost always Muslims, one participant, "Jerry", described her conceptualisation of a terrorist as a binary between a white man and a Muslim. Given these two options, she confessed to pleading for the terrorist to be a white man and not a Muslim:

> You have two options, you know, in your head. After watching all this American media, you're like, "Okay, it's either a Muslim, or it's a white man with mental issues". You know, those are your two options. Please let it be the other. ("Jerry")

Her reason and the reason given by other participants wanting the attacker not to be a Muslim was due to the backlash that they feared would ensue. More specifically, they feared counter-terrorism policies like those formed following 9/11 would be reintroduced and reinvigorate Islamophobic sentiments. A resurgence of Islamic counter-terrorism policies was feared to lead to Muslims being rejected from NZ society. The counter-terrorism policies post-September 11th

were, in fact, seen to be so significant to the lives of Muslims that even those participants who were not born at the time of those attacks referenced its role in the vilification of Muslims in the West. They noted how the ramifications of the September 11th attacks contributed to portraying Muslims as the exclusive perpetrators of terrorism. To highlight the magnitude to which 9/11 shaped the lives of Muslims globally, "Ibrahim" poignantly stated: "The word 'Osama' was thrown out, you know, we can't even name our children [Osama] anymore" because of its strong association with terrorism.

Interestingly, even when the attacker's identity emerged as an Australian national belonging to the Far Right, the fear of Muslims experiencing backlash following the attacks remained for one participant, "Asma". She worried that even as victims – and not perpetrators – of such unprecedented attacks, Muslims had somehow tarnished the global reputation of NZ as a peaceful country:

> I felt like people were angry at me and I don't know why… this has never happened in NZ. It's kind of like broken the norm of NZ, like, you know, just a mass shooting, and that being of Muslims. And I felt like people would be angry at us. So, I was really scared to go to high school… [I thought] people would be mad, "oh look, because of them, it happened here"… It's like, it tarnished the reputation or something. ("Asma")

This fear of backlash, even when discovering the attacker was not a Muslim, was attributed to Muslims returning to the "spotlight" after September 11th. Being in the "spotlight" was considered dangerous for Muslims by some participants as any form of national and global attention towards Muslims – whether as perpetrators of terrorism or its victims – left participants worried about further harm coming to Muslim communities. They conveyed the view that they would rather Muslims remain "invisible" to keep themselves safe.

In summary, this theme described the fear participants experienced at the prospect of a Muslim terrorist carrying out the March 15th attacks. Alluding to the decades-long terrorism discourse that has positioned Muslims as inherently terroristic and justified Islamophobic counter-terrorism policies, participants feared that the March 15th attacks would result in a global resurgence of Islamophobia. Even as the exclusive victims of terrorist violence, one participant feared Muslims would be condemned after the attacks. It becomes clear, then, that participants' initial reactions to the attacks were intensely political, highlighting the precariousness with which they navigate their lives as Muslim youth in the West.

Making Meaning of the Attacks

In this section of the findings, I present the themes relating to participants' understandings of and explanations for the March 15th attacks. The themes in this category capture how participants felt personally victimised by the attacks but felt they did not have the right to mourn. Other themes relate to participants' deliberate framing of the perpetrator as a terrorist and how his actions represented global anti-Muslim prejudice. The final theme in this section describes how participants situated Tarrant's ideology and violence within a broader and historicised socio-political context.

It Was a Personal Attack: "it felt like an attack on me"

Despite all the young people who participated in this study living in Auckland and having no direct relatives among the shuhada, they almost all described experiencing the attacks as a personal attack on themselves. The reasons they reacted this way varied but were often attributed to a shared identity with the shuhada.

Several participants stated that based on sharing the same religious identity as all the victims – and despite living in Auckland – they felt that they, too, were among the terrorist's

targets. As such, many of the participants made statements akin to "It could have been me". For example, in "Fatima's" interview, she discussed how she had recently rediscovered her connection to her religious identity and became a "newly fledged" Muslim. She reflected on how undergoing this process significantly shaped her reactions to the attacks:

> So, because I identified more as a Muslim, that attack emotionally hurt a lot more. If I didn't have that reawakening, or rebirth of my religion… the attack would have hurt me, but not as much as it had as someone who identified themselves as Muslim. ("Fatima")

Although none of the participants had direct relatives among the shuhada, one participant confessed that they did not even know anyone who lived in Christchurch. Yet, when asked whether this mattered to how they reacted to the attacks, they stated:

> No, I think I would've gone through the same things. Obviously, like, if I'd lost someone down there that would've been detrimental as well. You know, you've lost someone that you knew. But all the feelings about being scared and anxious, I think I would've gone through that as well because of the religion aspect, yeah. It kind of felt like an attack on you because it was an attack on religion and you know it's your religion, so it kind of felt like an attack on you. ("Aaliyah")

Other participants described that they felt it could have been them or their families among the deceased because of their shared practice of attending Jumu'ah prayers. They described that it just so happened that the terrorist chose to attack sites in Christchurch rather than Auckland, which prevented them and their families from ending up among the causalities. As such, the attacks in Christchurch were perceived as a near-miss of sorts to Muslim youth in Auckland because they and their families were often in a similar place of worship, carrying out a similar

prayer, just in a different city. As "Fawad" stated, "[the attack] was in a mosque on a Friday, which I would be present at that as well, so that's why I felt like an attack [on] me".

Witnessing the police stationed outside every Islamic centre across the country in the aftermath of the attacks further cemented the idea to some participants that it could have very easily been them among the deceased. The police presence indicated to them that the threat was not limited to Christchurch but extended to Muslims across the country, even weeks after the attack had passed:

> Why would there be police surrounding the masjids if there wasn't a possibility that this would happen in Auckland…. it was horrible like to say the least. Because you start realizing that this could affect me as well. Even though I wasn't in Christchurch, that could have been me. ("Fatima")

Additionally, some participants commented on both their shared religious identity with the victims and their shared religious practice of praying Jumu'ah, which led to them feeling that they could have been among the shuhada. Both components – identity and practice – appear to have compounded one another, leaving participants feeling intimately connected to the attacks in Christchurch such that they perceived themselves to be among its victims, despite being geographically distant. One participant explained how they felt closely connected to the shuhada and how as a Muslim, her experience of the attacks was different to non-Muslims:

> It was the religion aspect in the fact that... you know you're thinking, "that could've been me" because I was someone who could go to the mosque. It wouldn't be my neighbour because they go to a church, it's me because I would go to a mosque. ("Aaliyah")

The relatively small numbers of Muslims in NZ appear also to have played a role in some participants viewing the attacks as an event close to home. Given that the attacks occurred in the same country they were living in and coupled with the "close-knit" nature of the Muslim community in NZ, participants felt that they were likely to know of the victims through their community networks. This appeared to enhance their sense that this was an attack on them. As "Jerry" recalled stating in her speech at her school assembly, "I said, "New Zealand is small and the Muslim community is even smaller. So, there's a chance that girls in the audience who are listening to this assembly lost someone". In contrast, participants often referred to hearing about attacks occurring elsewhere overseas and while news of such events where Muslims were targeted did shock them, over time, they had become desensitized to such events.

In summary, although the attacks occurred in Christchurch and all participants in this study lived in Auckland, analysis of this theme revealed how the participants experienced the attacks personally, given their shared religious identity and practices with the shuhada and the small size of the Muslim community. These elements connected them to the shuhada such that they felt the pain of their families but also placed them in the firing line. Participants felt that it was only by chance that the perpetrator did not choose Auckland-based masajid for the site of his attacks. They recognised that if he did, they very well could have been among the deceased or mourning the death of their loved ones. In this way, the participants seemed to feel that the attacks were a personal attack against them.

I Don't Have the Right to Mourn: "I didn't feel like I had a right to genuinely act like it impacted me as much as them"

Despite feeling connected to and identifying with the victims, many participants questioned the validity of their emotional reactions to the attacks. Many felt they did not have the

right to mourn, although it was clear that they were experiencing considerable grief. Some participants described not being able to make sense of their grief, while others even described feeling guilty for experiencing or expressing their sadness in response to the attacks. In almost all cases, participants attributed not having lost any family members in the attacks as precluding them from the "right" to mourn.

When discussing their feelings of grief following the March 15th attacks, some participants used descriptions such as having their hearts broken and realities shattered. Many reported uncontrollably breaking out in tears even up to a year after the attacks occurred when discussing or thinking about the attacks. Despite this, participants often expressed a sense of surprise – and sometimes unease – about their emotional reactions as they did not "lose anyone" in the attacks. To them, this factor precluded them from mourning.

One participant, "Ibrahim", elaborated on his reasoning for not feeling entitled to this "right" to grieve. As someone who had flown into Christchurch from Auckland following the attacks, he believed his role was to support and console Muslims in Christchurch who had lost family members. He described that his emotional processing was unimportant at that moment relative to the families of the shuhada. Similarly, other participants spoke of the duty of Auckland's Muslim community to emotionally support those with direct relationships with the shuhada in Christchurch. According to some participants, the grief experienced by those in Christchurch took precedence over participant's own emotional reactions. Consequently, some participants reported ignoring or suppressing their own feelings. When community supports were made available to them, participants spoke about feeling that they did not deserve to make use of these because they believed others would need it more:

> I'm not saying I didn't hurt, but not letting myself be in that position to really process it to [understand] how it makes me feel because I couldn't stop thinking about how other families felt that lost an actual loved one. My grievances were towards them, and the shuhada, not towards me. I didn't feel like I had a right to genuinely like to act like it impacted me as much as them. Because yeah, like holding, I guess, emotional, personal emotional space for them was the most important thing for me at the time. ("Abdul")

When participants did find themselves experiencing feelings of grief, many questioned its legitimacy:

> …sometimes I do think, "I didn't have a family member affected so why is this affecting me so much?". Yeah that's a big thing I ask myself you know, "Why am I so upset when I didn't lose someone?". ("Aaliyah")

According to some participants, their grief was illegitimate based on their relational proximity to the victims of the attacks. They believed they were in an outer "layer" of the people impacted by the attacks. These layers comprised shuhada and their families in the centre, while those Muslims without family links were placed further away from the centre. In line with this view of the attacks, some participants, as Aucklanders, placed themselves as "outsiders" to the March 15th experience:

> So, I don't think I actually ever gave myself space to internalize it fully in terms of how it made me feel at the time. Because I wasn't there… Yeah. I mean people lost their parents. And I think I couldn't imagine how it was for them. Not saying that we didn't hurt but I think there is different magnitudes in hurting. ("Abdul")

Although participants noted that it was only a matter of location that separated them from the victims' families in Christchurch, this theme captured how they stressed the importance of whether or not they lost a family member to determine if they were allowed to grieve. As "outsiders", they felt it was of greater importance to support those who had lost family members to the attacks than being supported themselves.

He Is a Terrorist: "the tables had turned"

In discussions about the perpetrator, participants stressed the importance of labelling him a "terrorist". They described their rationale for using this specific term as a means through which dominant discourses around Muslims as terrorists could be challenged.

Participants referred to the collective memory of the events and news media coverage that followed the September 11th attacks as the catalyst which reinforced the association between the term "terrorist" and Muslims. Despite those attacks occurring almost 20 years ago and in a different country, participants discussed how Muslims in NZ continued to "suffer" and bear the backlash in their daily lives. Further to this reasoning, some participants highlighted the inconsistencies in global news media's reporting between incidents carried out by Muslims and those carried out by non-Muslims. They described how non-Muslim perpetrators, such as white men, were often described in apolitical terms, such as "shooter", accompanied by contextualizing information such as their mental health difficulties or adverse childhood experiences. The "privilege" of this sort of reporting was said not to be afforded to so-called Islamic terrorists:

> Terrorists can only be Muslims; it can never be the other way around. And we always had, in America especially, you'd have this thing where if a Muslim does an attack, it's called a "terrorist attack" … but if a white person had done something similar, it would be classed as, "the guy is mentally ill or they're just not right, they need help, et cetera".

> It's always that, that white privilege… making everyone else from other cultural backgrounds, religions, simply a terrorist, even if they weren't. ("Fatima")

Participants were clearly aware of the way terrorists were represented depending on their identity, and some participants pointed to the Prime Minister's statements as a powerful challenge to dominant discourses around terrorism. Referring to Jacinda Ardern's statement from the evening of the 15th of March 2019 and her subsequent framing of the perpetrator as a terrorist, one participant described the relief she felt in Ardern's choice of words:

> Stereotypes negatively affect a certain population of people, whether it be cultural or religious… And in NZ, it's 99% of the population is not Muslim. And to have someone confront that ideology, the ideology which is being passed around for so many years around the world, that only Muslims can be terrorists, and have someone of such high authority challenge that idea was empowering to see. That made us realize that it felt as if the tables had turned, that we were finally getting a voice ("Fatima")

However, not all the participants saw the Prime Minister's position similarly. One participant referred to the fact that Prime Minister Ardern had refused to repeat the perpetrator's name, seeing this as an example of how Tarrant benefited from "white privilege", something not afforded to so-called Muslim terrorists. This participant, "Ibrahim", insisted on naming Tarrant to highlight that a white man with a European name carried out the attacks, not a Muslim with an Arabic name. His deliberate effort to name the attacker was done so to counter stereotypes of terrorists being exclusively Muslims.

In summary, the theme of labelling the perpetrator as a terrorist was highlighted as an important element in several participants' interviews. They saw the framing of the March 15th

attacks as an opportunity to counter the harm that had been done to the global Muslim population from years of associating Muslims with terrorism. With the backing of the Prime Minister, some participants felt that labelling Tarrant as a terrorist would significantly alter the direction of terrorism discourses and challenge widely held stereotypes of terrorists.

It Needs to Be Seen as Part of Islamophobia and Racism: "Just hatred towards Muslims"

When discussing the reasons behind the attacks, almost all participants believed that they occurred because the terrorist felt hatred toward Muslim people. They highlighted the targeted nature of the attacks as evidence of this claim. Those who were aware of the terrorist's manifesto referred to its anti-Muslim ramblings as corroboration of the fact that these attacks were "purely against Muslims". This hatred towards Muslims was sometimes termed by participants as "Islamophobia" and contextualized within broader discourses of global anti-Muslim prejudice.

Several aspects of the March 15th terrorist attacks were often highlighted as evidence that these attacks stemmed from a specific hatred toward Muslims. Participants noted the terrorist targeting two Islamic centres – where only Muslim worshippers would gather – as evidence of his anti-Muslim motivations. Mosques were described by "Fawad" as a place that held religious significance to Muslims, in which Muslims could practise their religion "freely" and wherein worshippers "should be guaranteed safety". Hence, by choosing to attack such a religiously significant location where only Muslims gathered, many participants concluded that hatred of Muslims entirely drove the terrorist's motivations.

The juxtaposition of two Islamic centres within Christchurch, a region of NZ that has a predominantly European population and whose very name exemplifies its Christian settler origins, was highlighted as a significant feature by one participant who hypothesized the terrorist's choosing of these locations for his attacks:

> I mean the name is "Christ" and then "Church", right? And then you've got a masjid in there. I feel like he's pissed. Like I feel like he's pissed off that in a somewhat pretty European place in New Zealand, South Island, Christchurch, that there are people with this identity who are practicing it here and maybe he feels like we're not entitled to that… you know, Christchurch is Christchurch, you know. It's not Mecca or Medina. It's Christchurch. Maybe he's pissed. ("Zara")

In addition to carrying out the attacks at two mosques, the timing of the attacks was also noted as a particularly significant feature that exemplified the terrorist's anti-Muslim motivations. As the attacks were carried out on a Friday afternoon, a holy day of the week during which large numbers of worshippers attend weekly congregational prayers, this further evidenced his specific hatred of Muslims to some participants. Some participants believed that the terrorist specifically chose this day to ensure mass causalities. As "Zara" stated, "Friday's a holy day. That's horrible. The guy who did it, he would've known it was a holy day". In a similar vein, another participant also noted the significance of Fridays and added a point about how busy Jumu'ah prayers can become:

> I think all the non-Muslims don't really understand how Islam works, like they don't realize that Friday is such a big deal. Like, the number of people who go for Jumu'ah namaaz [prayers], like, it gets packed. Like, you have to pray outside sometimes, like, it's crazy. But I don't think people realize how many people were really there. ("Saima")

Hence, both the act of carrying out the attacks on masjidain and choosing Friday, where attendance is highest, was understood by participants to signify the hatred Tarrant possessed towards the Muslim community. His actions were interpreted as attempting to kill as many

Muslims as possible in Christchurch and intending to "wipe out" a Muslim identity by instilling fear among all Muslims. "Zara" expanded on this idea by stating:

> If he [Tarrant] sees Muslim people are not praying anymore due to this incident, he's gonna be like, "oh great like I won" you know. There will be no more adhan. No more prayer on Fridays for these people, you know. ("Zara")

Prior to carrying out the attacks, Tarrant also published a manifesto online. A few participants noted they had read this manifesto as it was not made illegal to access in NZ until a week after the attacks. After reading this document, "Jamal" concluded that the terrorist's actions could only be driven by hatred towards Muslims, "From like, reading that it just seemed like just hatred towards just like… Just hatred towards Muslims or just, you know, minorities."

For many participants, the March 15th attacks were a clear example of the racism present – yet often ignored – in NZ. Although the March 15th attacks were the first of their kind in NZ, in which Muslims were exclusively targeted in a mass shooting, many participants insisted that this was not an isolated or "one-off" event. They often explained that they had made sense of the March 15th attacks as an event that brought forth the otherwise "hidden", "subtle", or "indirect" racism, including anti-Muslim racism, which existed in NZ far earlier than March 15th 2019. Some participants described countless experiences they had had themselves or had heard from Muslim friends and family, which led to their assessment that the terrorist attacks were indeed an example of NZ's problem with racism. For example, "Farah" elaborated on the pervasiveness of racism in NZ that affects various communities:

> There's also a lot of people who deny that racism exists. And then there's like all the subtle racism that goes on and that's been like such a part of Kiwi culture that is been

> unchecked for so long that it just kept growing as well… I guess it's just like little comments about hijab, like when I've noticed going out with my mum, or like, "go back to your own country" or like [being told to] "speak English". Yeah things like that… I guess people just refusing to recognise you… a woman who wears hijab, you're just associated with 9/11. Like the mindset was really narrow…Sikhs, for example, so they go through it too. So, they would see a Sikh man associate the word terrorist with him as well, for example. So, the racism I think is widespread. It's everywhere. I know that in South Auckland a lot of my friends go through it all the time, especially coming into uni or just in between our communities when they'll say, "oh the Pasifika community are lazy", you know typical stereotypes. Um yeah it's everywhere. ("Farah")

Participants' insistence upon situating the attacks within anti-Muslim racism, or Islamophobia, points to the deep political significance these events had for them. Participants emphasised the anti-Muslim political motivations of the perpetrator and often suggested that it arose precisely out of the racism that they felt had been largely ignored in NZ. In the context of Muslims having historically been framed as perpetrators of terrorism and now becoming its exclusive victims, participants saw these attacks as an opportunity to draw attention to the Islamophobia that they, their families, and communities had long been dealing with in NZ.

The Root Cause Was White Supremacy and Settler Colonialism: "Tangata Whenua have experienced this for, you know, 180 years, even longer"

In addition to describing the attacks as representative of the Islamophobia present in NZ, some participants situated this anti-Muslim racism in the broader context of settler colonialism and the notion of white supremacy. They saw these historicised social factors as crucial contributors to Tarrant's Far Right ideologies. They aimed for the experiences of Muslims on

March 15th to be connected with the experiences of other racialised groups, including Māori, the indigenous people of NZ.

Some participants evidenced their claim that the terrorist's motivations were fuelled by racism and white supremacist logic by referencing aspects of his manifesto. They discussed how they had read his commentary on Nazi Germany, the Bosnian Genocide, and the Great Replacement Theory, which highlighted to them the extent to which he was motivated by a brand of Islamophobia that was to do with more than just anti-Muslim prejudice but a belief in the supposed superiority of white racial bodies.

When referring to the notion of white supremacy as informing the terrorist's ideology, several participants also added that they had connected the attacks to the process of settler colonialism. Settler colonialism, which one participant described as one group having assumed superiority and imposing their worldviews over another group, was sometimes described as the "root issue" from which anti-Muslim racism and white supremacy stemmed and what ultimately resulted in the emboldening of the terrorist to carry out the attacks. One participant rather poignantly highlighted the apparency of settler colonialism's role in contributing to the attacks. He was asked why he thought the attacks happened and responded with an air of cynicism:

> What's new in settler colonial nation? I think Tangata Whenua [Māori] have experienced this for, you know, 180 years, even longer. ("Abdul")

Similarly, "Ibrahim" whose family came from a country that had also been colonised, explained how this experience had informed his understanding of the terrorist's entitlement to carry out the attacks in NZ:

> "Ibrahim": So, it's that superiority, right. So, I come from a place which was 200 years under colonial rule. And it's that superiority that, "look we'll come to your country, we'll tell you how to run your place, like we know how to do it better". That's superiority.
>
> Bilal: How did that come into play? Like, how is that relevant for the March 15th attacks?
>
> "Ibrahim": So, for March 15th, it's white supremacy, right? It's supremacy, "we're better than that race. These people are to take our jobs, they do not have the right to exist". Or, they do not have the right to be at our land our privileged land, the land [of the] long white cloud… And that was a whole colonial mindset

Evidently, to many participants, the March 15th terrorist attacks were a pronounced example of the racism present in NZ society. They believed its links to white supremacy and colonialism were undeniable. However, many expressed feeling agitated when witnessing how the significance of these factors was often ignored or minimised in post-attack analyses. One participant, "Fawad", expressed a sense of urgency in needing to connect the attacks with white supremacy given its prevalence in NZ society and was frustrated when he witnessed the side-lining of such discussions post-March 15th:

> Some others are politicizing the event saying, "Oh, Jacinda's just doing this for her own political gain. She just wants a job in the UN, this is why she's doing it". And it just really frustrates me because they're taking the attention off the true problem behind the event, they're taking away from the fact that this was actually a white supremacist attack. And this is still very much prevalent in NZ. ("Fawad")

Participants often referred to the phrase popularised after the attacks, "This is Not Us", as a demonstration of NZ's denial to accept that the attacks stemmed from broader factors such as racism, white supremacy, and colonialism. Although intended to be a message of reassurance, many participants took this as a continued undermining of the problem:

> "Ibrahim": I think what else, it's fragility, I feel like just NZ as a country is so fragile that we always want to offload our problems, and we never want accountability… We love that one, "this is not us", while creating the environment for something like that to happen. But then, straightaway, "that's not us, we're not racist. Shit that's not New Zealand". You know. So, I feel like on a, on a societal level, every single person caused that attack.

"Ibrahim" went on to describe how the broader social context of New Zealand had contributed to the attacks. In retort to the slogan of "They Are Us", he stated, "When you look at it, the environment of what caused March 15 then, this *is* us [emphasis added], you know. We harboured that environment, we fostered that environment, as a society". In this way, the attacks were seen to be reflective of the racism foundational to contemporary NZ society, yet often swiftly denied.

Efforts to divorce the March 15th attacks from its political underpinnings and the context of settler colonial violence from which it emerged were exemplified rather clearly in another participant's experience with a staff member at her school. "Jerry" shared her experience of being asked by her school's leadership team to write and present a speech to her school on the Friday following the attacks. "Jerry" expressed wanting to use this opportunity to share her perspectives with a large audience of her peers. However, in preparing for the speech, a senior member of "Jerry's" school offered to proofread her speech and suggested she remove her

statements that connected the attacks to colonial violence experienced by Māori in NZ. She reflected in the interview that this was likely because he wanted her to keep the speech "civil":

> In my original speech… I had said, I'd kind of put in a paragraph of saying, "you know… we thank you to the… local iwi and to the [Māori] unit who have shown the support. You know, this is something that you have dealt with for years, for decades, for centuries, you know… we feel supported that Māori are supporting us in this time, after years of going through this on your own". [The attack was] a symptom of a deeply rooted issue in our society… Just general racism and white supremacy, you know, stemming all the way back to colonialism, these are all symptoms of the issue... But, I think to keep it sort of civil to some extent… I decided to remove it. ("Jerry")

Participants' efforts in connecting the perpetrator's Islamophobic motivations to white supremacy and settler colonialism further highlighted that they viewed the events of March 15th as a deeply political phenomenon. Participants wanted to ensure a politically and historically informed analysis of the attack was formed to counter the dominant discourses surrounding NZ's supposed peaceful race relations and allied themselves to the struggle of indigenous people in NZ.

Coping Strategies and Resources

This final category of themes outlines how and where participants found comfort and support following the March 15th attacks. The initial themes capture typical sources of support, such as friends, community, and the public. Later themes in this section reveal participants' utilisation of political methods and strategies to cope with the aftermath of the attacks, particularly their faith and identities as Muslims.

The Public Was Caring but Their Support Was Temporary: "she rescheduled my test, that meant a lot"

Participants described how they were offered support after the attacks and noted that the gestures they witnessed from their schools and universities and the wider NZ helped them to feel less alone in their grief. However, in many cases, they felt much of this support was temporary, and some of it even tokenistic.

Those participants of school age in 2019 described a range of supportive events within their schools after the attacks occurred. Events included school-wide assemblies, public demonstrations of solidarity, and fundraising events to support families of the shuhada. Participants spoke of the positive psychological effect of such events immediately following the attacks. To some, these events and gestures meant that they – and, by extension, the wider Muslim community – were not alone in bearing the weight of the grief of losing so many community members to a terrorist attack. One example that "Saima" recalled was witnessing women teachers at her school wearing the hijab, allowing her to feel "recognised". At another school, "Jamal" described how much he appreciated seeing 51 roses to memorialise the victims, leaving him with "faith in humanity".

Several participants mentioned that professional support was made available through their schools and that they found this helpful. In some cases, they described how their schools' counsellors made themselves more available or organized additional counsellors to be available at school in a drop-clinic arrangement. Interestingly, the supportiveness of the counsellor was not necessarily contingent on their utilization of the service, but rather knowing that they were available was enough for participants to feel supported. Accordingly, "Fatima" stated, "I never

really went to any of those sessions. But just knowing that there was support if I needed it was important."

The participants who were university students at the time of the attacks also shared how a range of gestures on the part of their universities and university peers allowed them to feel less alone after the attacks. "Nargis" recalled attending a lecture after the attacks and seeing university students wearing hijabs as a demonstration of solidarity, noting their intention of wanting to reassure Muslim women that they were not alone after the attacks as an exceptionally caring gesture. She also spoke of Muslim students' associations receiving messages with offers from other university students to carry out everyday tasks in case Muslim students were feeling fearful of going out. Other examples of responses in a university context that were perceived to be caring included the explicit mentioning of the university's anti-discrimination policies during the beginning of semesters and flexibility around deadlines. Participants described that having these measures allowed them to focus on engaging in opportunities that would facilitate their coping, such as being with friends and family, without needing to worry about handing in schoolwork or preparing for university tests:

> There was one lecturer, who I forgot who it was, but she talked about [the attacks] and she was like, "if you guys ever wanna talk about anything then you can" and I did talk to her… And because I wanted to go to the mosque, it was on Friday for our test, it was just after the attacks, she rescheduled my test. That meant a lot, yeah. ("Farah")

On the other hand, "Ibrahim", a university student, recalled feeling burdened by his university when "six days on from losing 51 people in your community, you're here trying to educate the [university] about what's racism, what's a terrorist", taking him away from more pressing needs in the aftermath of the attacks. Similarly, other participants shared their accounts

of being put into positions whereby they were asked to help the non-Muslim community understand the impact and significance of what had happened. For example, "Jerry" spoke about being asked to organise a school-wide assembly to commemorate the attacks and "Nargis" and "Samura", who were involved with the Muslim Students' Association, received an influx of emails and requests from their universities immediately after the attacks requesting guidance. "Samura" described how difficult he found this experience of balancing his own emotions and the responsibility of helping others:

> …at the same time, we have a role to play, it's very difficult to actually manage that role… Because you're struggling yourself, but you need to also do the things that other people require… So, it's one of those things where you need to come to terms with what has happened. That's the first thing, so that you can progress [but] you've got to come to terms that the whole world is looking at you. It was what it felt like. ("Samura")

In line with this sentiment, some participants felt that the support from their universities or the public was only temporary, sometimes tokenistic, and even disingenuous. They provided rationales for why they were sceptical of kind gestures, often drawing on histories of being ignored as Muslims. In some instances, participants described how support for Muslims regressed once again into intolerance and bigotry. This led them to view some supportive actions as just being window dressing, covering over the long-standing practices of exclusion and bigotry directed at Muslims. For example, "Maia' noted her university's gesture of hosting a public Jumu'ah prayer in a large, central facility shortly after the attacks took place was merely a "one-off" gesture as previous concerns to provide adequate facilities for Muslim students to pray were ignored. She also viewed women wearing the hijab as them "trying to resolve the guilt" they held about ignoring or not helping earlier. Similarly, Jamal felt his university's memorial

event of the attacks was a "publicity stunt in a way" because prominent public figures were given platforms to speak. In contrast, Muslim students were largely left out of organising the event.

Other participants, such as "Maia", noted how quickly national discussions in the media and online about the March 15th attacks had moved on. She described how support from the public was "only a moment" and not something that was "going to keep happening". Similarly, "Jerry" stated:

> I feel like the support has kind of died down, in some ways. And so, it's kind of like, you know, it was all talk for like a solid year, there was a lot of support, and then suddenly, it's kind of been forgotten. ("Jerry")

"Fawad" elaborated on how he noticed a shift in the tone of online comments about the attacks within two years. He described that the support for NZ's Muslim community came on "all of a sudden" following the attacks, but within just two years after the attacks had occurred, he was beginning to sense that the general public had turned once again turned against Muslims. "Fawad" stated, "I've literally read these comments, "why don't they just get over?" And "how much more do they want?" They're not allowing Muslims to grieve… it's just been two years.". He went on to draw comparisons between the differential response he had noticed to those affected by the Christchurch earthquakes more than 10 years ago and Muslims affected by the mosque attacks a mere two years ago and felt he was "forced to get over it" otherwise people would be "sick" of hearing about Muslims' concerns. Rather concerningly, "Saima" recalled reading comments online that went as far as stating it was in fact a good thing that Muslims had been killed.

This theme captured how participants largely felt supported by the caring gestures of their schools, universities, and the wider public in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. At a time when their community had been exclusively targeted in a terrorist attack, and participants were feeling isolated and fearing further victimisation, being met with kind gestures of solidarity and understanding allowed them to feel less alone. However, several participants described feeling unsupported as they were expected to lead others and provide direction and guidance to non-Muslims. Some participants even appeared to be sceptical towards "tokenistic" gestures of solidarity, particularly from institutions and people by whom they had previously been ignored. Their scepticism was also related to the anti-Muslim prejudice which had only momentarily disappeared in the immediate aftermath of the attacks and re-emerged less than two years on.

Counsellors Who Listened, but There Aren't Enough Who Get Me: "I thought about maybe going to see someone to talk about it, but... there's not much diversity"

There were a relatively small number of participants who had sought professional counselling support following the March 15th attacks. Those who had sought professional support expressed the view that being listened to was one factor that allowed them to manage the grief associated with the attacks. More specifically, they felt that this aspect was the single most important feature of professional support:

> We had counsellors come from all around Auckland, to come and assist the Muslim students whenever they needed… just having someone that I could talk to and have someone just to listen was the most important thing for me at the time. ("Fawad")

Similarly, "Asma' described how she participated in group sessions at school facilitated by an external organisation. She felt relieved she felt knowing that people were listening and that she had the chance to talk:

> I loved that [group], which is great. It was such a good experience for me. I think I joined that actually in Year 12, we just sat in a group, and then we just started talking about what happened. It was, it was good. It was relieving to know that people were listening, and that I had a chance to talk. ("Asma")

However, for other participants, the lack of opportunity to talk about their feelings concerning the attacks was mentioned. Some participants, such as "Ayesha", felt that "there was no space to talk about how you felt". For these participants, professional support was not made readily accessible by the institutions they belonged to, or they were occupied with roles and tasks supporting others, which meant they could not tend to their own needs. Additionally, some participants noted that they did not utilise the counselling supports that had been made available to them as they felt professionals would not understand their context, background, religion, or experiences:

> You're given the opportunity to go talk to counsellors. But what's the point? Like, you go and talk to a counsellor who's never experienced something like you experienced and like, they just don't understand… And that's why I never went because I was like, "Yes, it hurt" but I was like, "what's the point talking to those people when like they won't even understand what I'm going through?". ("Saima")

This doubt that counsellors could understand what it meant to be Muslim was supported by those who had sought professional help. Some participants reported feeling exhausted by the need to explain the nature of being Muslim before actually getting into the issues for which they were seeking support:

> Yeah, it's hard to have a talk with a counsellor when you have to, like, explain the backstory to every little thing. You know, just something as simple as, I don't know, Ramadān or something, you kind of have to explain things before you can actually talk about what you want to talk about. ("Jerry")

Some participants contrasted their reluctance to see counsellors with their willingness to participate in the research interview. They attributed this difference to knowing that the research interview involved someone who shared and understood their religious background. In fact, almost all participants described how aspects of the interview had had a "therapeutic" effect on them or allowed them to view their responses and reactions to the attacks in a different light, thus making better sense of their experiences.

This theme reflected the benefit a small group of participants found from seeking professional support following the attacks. However, the majority felt that non-Muslim therapists' lack of insight into their lived experiences as Muslims in the West hindered them from accessing professional support. Participants felt the therapeutic benefits of counselling were outweighed by the laborious need to explain mundane aspects of their experience.

Having Understanding Friends Helped: "staying around my close friends really helped me through that time"

Among the most commonly cited sources of support for participants following the attacks were their friends and peers. These supports included close friends, peers at school, other young people from within the Muslim community, and non-Muslim peers. These supports were accessed through various mediums, in person, at school, online, and through community groups. Participants felt that sharing a similar age with the person from whom they were seeking support allowed them to feel comfortable as they would be understood. As "Fatima" stated, "obviously,

talking to someone your age is a lot easier than talking to someone who's 20, 30 years older than you.".

Being met with supportive messages and gestures from their peers upon returning to school on the Monday immediately following the attacks comforted participants, despite their fears of being in public. One participant, "Fawad", described feeling overwhelmed after witnessing his peers organize school events to commemorate the attacks only one week after they took place. Among the events and gestures of his peers during that week, he remembered a younger peer making badges with supportive messages which teachers and peers wore, noting it was a "powerful" gesture in his eyes that helped him realise school was his "comfort zone".

Along the lines of supportive gestures from peers, another participant recalled her experience of receiving flowers from her close, non-Muslim friend when she went to school. This gesture, which according to her, transcended their religious and ethnic differences, helped her cope with the attacks:

> I think, immediately what really helped me was when my friends came to my house and gave me that card and gave me flowers and I took them to the mosque. Just seeing that even though we are ethnically and religiously different, there are people in the community that are that are willing to help everyone get through, even if they weren't directly affected. That was really helpful. ("Aaliyah")

In fact, for several other participants, the support from their friends who were not necessarily Muslims but knew about Islam and Islamic practices was perceived to help cope with the attacks. For example, "Farah" shared the following about her friends, two of whom were not Muslim, that allowed her to seek their support: "Because I feel like I'm safe with [them]. They know

about my family, my religion, because they've been around for a long time and they're the friends that know that I'm Muslim So that's why I felt like I could reach out to them". Additionally, another participant recalled that his non-Muslim friends who were of a similar ethnicity could relate to the attack due to experiencing a similar process of racialisation:

> They understand that it was almost an attack to them as well, because while they may not be Muslims, they're also minorities… So, they were also part of the minority thing so they would fully understand where I'm coming from. ("Fawad")

Involvement with youth groups was also noted as an avenue through which some participants felt they could cope with the attacks. Within these settings, participants felt the expression of their experiences was facilitated, notably among other similarly aged and like-minded individuals, allowing them to "come to terms" with the attacks. The paucity of such settings that cater to participants' needs, however, was noted as "Ayesha" stated, "I'm one of the lucky people that goes to youth [where] we talk about us".

For "Marwa", the most supportive comments came from her online networks. She recalled being informed of the attacks by a group of online peers who checked on her to ensure she was safe. She attributed the supportiveness of this group to the fact that they lived in the United States and were accustomed to school lockdown procedures following bomb threats and shootings. In her words, these non-Muslim friends from the United States "knew what to say, they knew what was going on, and they were really nice about it." She added that her online friends' familiarity with terrorist attacks allowed her to easily explain what she had been experiencing in NZ with the assumption that they would understand. Being listened to and understood was the most supportive aspect of her peers' support following the attacks.

In a similar vein, "Saima" noted that the very act of being listened to by her peers allowed her to feel accepted. Being listened to – as opposed to talked at – meant she felt her experiences of the discrimination Muslims faced were validated: "Like, they just like listened. And like, acknowledged that like, Muslim people are treated bad".

Being able to talk to peers was particularly important to participants, given the constraints they expressed about being able to talk to family members. One participant, "Jamal", for example, described that his parents had grown up in a different country, which led him to feel that they would not understand the pressures and expectations he experienced as a young Muslim in NZ. Thus, he felt he could not talk to them about his feelings when the attacks happened. Similarly, another participant described how her role as the eldest sibling meant she could not discuss her feelings with her younger siblings because they looked up to her. She also reported not being able to talk to her parents about her experience of the attacks as they, too, relied on her and that she did not want to burden them further.

This theme captured the value participants placed on peer support following the March 15th attacks. Specific qualities of peer support were described, such as friends understanding their perspective and allowing them to feel safe, which led to participants seeking their support. Their peers understanding of their Muslim identity was seen to be especially important to participants. Parents, on the other hand, were not considered people whom participants could go to because they would not understand the social reality of Muslim youth.

Being Around My Muslim Community: "that sense of oneness helped me cope with everything"

Some participants described how being around other Muslim youth following the attacks was helpful for their coping. While surrounded by others in their community, participants

described being able to make better sense of their own experiences of the attacks, allowing them to feel less alone in their grief and engage in collective religious rituals. Being around other Muslims also allowed participants to support others experiencing similar grief, facilitating their own coping. For some participants who felt separate from some form of a Muslim community earlier in their lives, the March 15th attacks brought them closer to a Muslim community, again alleviating feelings of isolation and exclusion.

The collective nature of how the various Muslim communities of NZ experienced the attacks was rather poignantly exemplified through "Marwa's" analogy of being on a boat with a friend. To her and other participants, not only were the attacks a shared experience among Muslims, but in having gone through this experience together, members of Muslim communities in NZ were, in fact, drawn closer together following a traumatic event:

> If you are with a friend, and you were both sitting in a boat and the boat capsized, that was an experience that you shared together, and you can talk about it later. The friendship that you have with that person, I think, would be stronger, because you know, you've been through that together, right? ("Marwa")

This sentiment of the attacks leading participants to opportunities that often resulted in forming new relationships and friendships and strengthening existing relationships was reiterated across several interviews. How this happened looked different for each participant. Some attended community-organised events where they made connections. Others attended the mosque more frequently and established relationships with other Muslims. One participant, "Asma", shared her journey of connecting to a Muslim community following the March 15th attacks. When introducing herself at the interview, she confessed, "to be honest, my whole life, I've never really been in the Muslim community." Despite having regularly attended Madrassah (Islamic

education classes) over a number of years, a context where she was regularly surrounded by other Muslim women, she did not feel a sense of community. Rather, her summary of the experience was, "I have been to Islamic classes, but I've never experienced that thing of having a Muslim community.". For "Asma", it seems that the March 15th attacks served as a catalyst that brought her closer to her Muslim peers. She responded to a question about what changes she noticed after the March 15th attacks in how she perceived herself as part of a community by stating:

> I think I became, I did feel like a community, I guess. Like my Muslim friends and stuff, we became a lot more closer. We had common ground, I guess you could say… I have a lot of Muslim friends now who we still talk about things that are happening in the world, and you know, we invite each other to iftar [breaking of the fast meal], and stuff like that. ("Asma")

As someone who had had little engagement with the wider Muslim community before the attacks, witnessing Muslims come together at various events and taking part in these events was "life-changing" for Asma. As she put it:

> [The masjid] had a day when they were commemorating the lives that were lost I think a few days after the event. There were so many Muslims that came… because all the Muslims were together, it was a really uplifting experience that, you know, I've never experienced anything like that before. ("Asma")

This sentiment of finding belonging was also shared with "Fatima", who stated, "[the attacks] made more connected than I was before". Another participant, "Marwa", recalled that witnessing the gathering of Muslims led her to realise what it means to be a Muslim in NZ.

During these gatherings, she could connect with other Muslim youth and identify similarities in her experience with other Muslims. This process allowed her to locate her own experience as a young Muslim into a broader context and identify the phenomenon that is being a young Muslim person in the West:

> Yes, actually, I feel like that [the attacks] was one of the things that made me realize that being a Muslim in NZ is something because that was one of the times when, like the community came together a lot, right… And so, it made me realize that there's a lot of people, again, who like, share the same experiences. And it was one of the things that helped me realize that, you know, there is an identity that I have here that I can connect it to NZ, in some strange way, that made me feel more at home here. Because there were so many other people who were also were exposed to the same things, who went through the same things that the Muslim community in NZ, I think, opened up to each other more. ("Marwa")

She went on to articulate how connecting with other Muslim youth at the mosque helped her realise she was not alone:

> …in a Masjid there were several other teenagers my age who went to maybe to the neighbouring schools, the same thing that was happening to me was the same thing that was happening to them. And until then, I don't think I had any conversations with people… it comes back to that thing where you're like looking for people that share similar experiences. ("Marwa")

By discussing their experiences with other Muslim youth, participants felt connected to others, depicted by "Fatima" as a "sense of oneness". She stated that being united as a Muslim community, particularly among other youth, "that helped me cope with everything."

Participants described that in addition to the act of being together with other Muslims, which was comforting on its own accord, engaging in collective religious practices, such as praying and making du'a, was also helpful for coping as it allowed them to feel a sense of safety. These practices were valued as they allowed Muslims to congregate where they could support one another while also utilising religious-based coping mechanisms. "Asma" noted that engaging socially and religiously with other Muslims "made the pain a bit less because you're not dealing with it by yourself.". "Nargis" also shared a similar experience:

> I think if anything for the most part I saw more people, like, praying and coming to prayers. I know there were lots of du'a [individualised prayer] made like in congregation together at multiple points in the day which was really amazing to see and it didn't happen often. But like you know coming together as a community and like praying together and like comforting each other in that sense. I know there were lots of like hugs in the prayer room and lots of supporting one another. There was a lot of that. ("Nargis")

This theme captured how the March 15th attacks led to participants forming relationships with other Muslim youth and developing a shared sense of community. For participants not so immersed in Muslim culture or community, the attacks facilitated a sudden and pressing reason to connect, finding their own identity within it, and having this reinforced by their peers. Connecting with their Muslim community and identity following the March 15th attacks allowed some participants to feel less alone and more capable of coping with the attacks as they were surrounded by others sharing the same experience as them.

Growing Closer to My Faith: "those attacks kinda restored my Imaan, my faith"

In addition to finding a Muslim community, many participants noted the specific role that Islamic practices played in their coping with the attacks. Participants described how Islamic rituals, beliefs, and meaning-making processes enabled them to "get through" the attacks. Interestingly, for some participants, March 15th attacks led to a shift in their imaan (faith), such that they felt more connected spiritually.

The practice of making du'a and praying was among the most commonly described rituals that participants used following the attacks. Du'a was utilised in different ways. Some participants described making du'a for the shuhada, as is customary in Islamic practice when someone passes away. Others described using du'a as a means to ease their own concerns around feeling fearful and unsafe. They described pleading to Allah subhanu wa'tala (SWT) for such a tragedy not to occur again. Moreover, in making du'a, they intended to provide spiritual support to the victims' families because they could not provide instrumental support as young people living in Auckland. In turn, offering this spiritual support to the shuhada made them feel comforted.

Related to the practice of du'a is the Islamic concept of khair (destiny), which was often referred to by participants as a key concept through which they made sense of the attacks, and it was this concept that allowed participants to accept what had taken place. This eased participants' worries and questions about why the attacks happened in the first place, as it was now seen to be a part of Allah's (SWT) plan, or a form of destiny:

> Why it happened, how it happened. Like it's really easy to, you know, propose these questions, but again the concept of destiny is that it was going to happen type of thing. Like we wish it didn't, but it did, and it happened to those people. ("Nargis")

In relation to this notion of destiny, Nargis mentioned that the Islamic concept of Allah (SWT) not bestowing upon someone a challenge that they cannot manage made it "slightly easier to deal with" the attacks. Also, using the above concept of khair, "Nargis" applied this to finding herself in a leadership position at her university during the time of the attacks. Despite feeling overwhelmed with the additional workload she had to take on as a result of the attacks, she stated:

> I think [my friend] said something to me, and she was like, "how interesting that the first semester you're on as president, you're tasked with this?"… those words gave me a lot of strength where I was like you know, I've been put in this space because I can deal with it. ("Nargis")

"Samura", on the other hand, described being envious of those who had died in the attacks because the circumstance under which they died meant that, from an Islamic perspective, they were among the highest form of martyrs, and through this method of dying, they were ensured paradise in the hereafter:

> I thought how lucky they are because they've being given something that we are… trying to achieve. It's a very weird position to have, like, trust me, I very rarely verbalize this, but I envy them. Because they got to Jannah… They would have passed away in this manner which is specific, like it's a specific type of passing away that Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala clearly mentions… they're amongst the first people to enter Jannah at the end. And so, I took it a very spiritual way. ("Samura")

Another participant noted that what allowed her to accept that the attacks had indeed occurred and that they could occur again was the notion of Muslims expecting hardship in the

worldly realm. According to her meaning-making, struggling is a part of being a Muslim and so with that comes events such as the March 15th attacks, where Muslim's faith is tested. Related to this idea was the notion discussed by some participants who saw the attacks as Allah (SWT) sending a message:

> Just think about this: you're in NZ, this event took place in your lifetime, the whole, every single circumstance up until that point, and afterwards, is specifically for you to see in your worldview…. Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala specifically chose us in NZ to send a message… maybe this attack was brought along to flip the tables to challenge the definition and stereotypes of people, not just to NZ, but all around the world. ("Samura")

Islam also provided participants with prophetic examples from which they could make sense of their own experiences and be provided with a template on how to respond. As "Samura" described, referring to the Prophet Muhammed's (peace be upon him [PBUH]) life allowed him to contextualise his experience and find ways how to respond.

"Jamal" described his experience of having his Islamic faith "restored" after the attacks took place. He recalled that before March 15th 2019, he would pray each of the five daily prayers only after being prompted by his mother. During the first 18 years of his life, he described himself as feeling "disconnected" from his faith. When the attacks happened, however, and his parents were overseas on holiday, his mother was not around to prompt him to pray. During this period, he suddenly felt compelled to pray of his own volition. According to "Jamal", on the 15th of March 2019, after hearing about the attacks, he engaged in prayer for the first time because he wanted to:

> Like nobody was telling me to pray… that was like the one of the very, first times where I prayed out of like my own faith. After that, I was very much, I was lot more connected to my faith. I would pray more, just like nobody telling me to. ("Jamal")

He went on to reflect on the absurdity of the notion that it had taken a terrorist attack for him to grow closer to his faith and engage more often in Islamic practices. When asked why the attacks restored his faith, "Jamal" admitted:

> Maybe it was just this fear that you know, we can just be taken away like that, you know, just like the unexpectedness of 51 people losing their lives. Mothers, fathers, kids. And I think it gave me that realization where, if I died today, then I will not be pleased with myself, God would not be pleased with me. And yeah, I think that day I was like, I need to get on my shit. ("Jamal")

The notion of the terrorist attacks serving as a reminder to participants of the temporal nature of worldly life was reiterated by "Samura". He shared a more detailed explanation of how the attacks led him to re-evaluate aspects important in his life. The attacks led him to reflect and "refocus" on how he spends his time, the values he holds, and his purpose:

> Post March 15th you tend to value things that are for the akhira [hereafter]. You tend to value you like your salaah [prayer], you be a bit more focused, and you be a bit more careful about not doing things that are blatantly wrong. You try to, just a bit, you know, you sort of reemphasize your religion in your life… So, I will say 100% for me March 15 was a very big religious event – for me personally – because it refocused the world. And it made sure that what was supposed to be front and centre came back. ("Samura")

Similarly, when "Abdul" was asked to elaborate on what he meant by the attacks leading him to "get closer to deen [religion]", he shared that he had become more vulnerable with Allah (SWT) and begun to appreciate the role religion plays in his life. Much like "Jamal", he noted this process was not forced upon him but rather a conclusion he arrived at on his own accord. He attributed the attacks as a precipitant for this process:

> And that's been the most gratifying thing possible for me because it's made everything much more profound. And I think the weighting that you give to deen [religion] ultimately transcends to your way of life. ("Abdul")

In contrast to those participants who reported experiencing growth in their sense of spiritual connection, two participants discussed feeling disconnected from their religion following the attacks. "Ibrahim" described his experience as a brief fluctuation in his imaan immediately after the attacks. He likened this lessening in his faith to being "blacked out" from the whirlwind of events that transpired in his life immediately after the attacks, including flying down to Christchurch and being asked to comment on the attacks in the media. Drawing on prophetic examples, he explained that such changes in faith are normal and through reconnecting with his spiritual practices, Islam "grounded" him and his imaan returned.

The experience of disconnecting from faith was more pronounced for another participant, "Farah", who admitted that the attacks left her questioning God how and why such heinous attacks were occurring across the globe. Bearing witness to the continued victimization of Muslims prior to and following the March 15th attacks left her feeling disconnected from her faith, which she identified in how infrequently she was praying 12 months after the 15th of March 2019:

> I guess I was shifting away from the religion itself. Because I was like, "it's unfair, why would God let this happen?". Yeah. So, I found myself like, after the attack happened, I was praying a lot, and then like, a year after I was just not praying at all. And that's because of the things I keep seeing… Yeah possibly cause it's too painful to identify with Islam as strongly and then keep seeing your people be killed like that. ("Farah")

"Farah" added the caveat that although she felt spiritually disconnected from her faith following the attacks, she continued to identify as a Muslim publicly and was ready to advocate on behalf of her Muslim family members. As such, she pinpointed the reduction in her faith as specifically occurring in relation to her spirituality, not her public identity.

In summary, this theme described how participants utilised Islamic rituals, concepts, and teaching to make sense of their experiences and cope with the attacks. Islam allowed participants to find solace in the face of an inconceivable trauma and served them with an avenue through which to find a higher purpose and meaning in their experience of the attacks. Moreover, this theme described how some participants grew closer to their Islamic faith. For a select few, the attacks diminished their sense of spirituality out of a sense of despondency. However, they continued to connect with their political identities as Muslims.

Becoming Proud of Being Muslim: "reaffirmed the fact that I am Muslim, and I don't want to change that even if I die"

As a result of connecting with their Muslim community and relying on Islamic practices after the attacks, many participants discovered a newfound sense of pride in their political identities as Muslims. This was a commonly reported experience. The processes through which participants came to identify more strongly and proudly with their religious identity following the attacks varied. For some, connecting with other Muslims contributed to a greater sense of

pride in their identity, while for others, the newfound pride came after witnessing Muslims peacefully respond to the attacks. Moreover, some attributed the growth of their pride in their identity to the greater visibility of Muslims in NZ society following the attacks. For some participants, the terrorist's intentions of instilling fear among Muslims was enough reason to demonstrate a greater pride in their identity.

In the months following the March 15th terrorist attacks, community events and gatherings were held nationwide in public spaces and inside Islamic centres. These events usually involved bringing people together to discuss and reflect on the attacks. Connecting with other Muslims through such events following the attacks contributed to some participants, such as "Asma" and "Marwa", understanding and gaining confidence in their Muslim identities. For example, "Asma" highlighted that partaking and witnessing the unification of factions of NZ's Muslim communities post-March 15th allowed her to gain confidence and pride in being a Muslim, all the while remaining cautious of further violence:

> When something so big happens to your people, you're like, you want to unite as one, you want to be together. And I think I became, my family and I, from experience, like we became a lot more, we wanted to be with other Muslims. We wanted to participate and stuff, we wanted to be like, together I'd say. But I think that's how we changed: we became a lot more, I'd say like being Muslim, it's like, we became confident that we are Muslims as well as being cautious. So, it is a very weird concept. We became proud that we're Muslim. ("Asma")

Being around other Muslims and experiencing the care and support they extended to one another following the attacks seemed to bolster the pride among other participants concerning their religious identities. As "Nargis" stated:

> It really made me proud to be part of the community, to see like so much so much love and so much support and so much comfort being sent around. There was definitely that sense of a strong community. I was definitely really proud to be part of the Muslim community. ("Nargis")

This sentiment was shared by another participant, "Jerry", who described how the peaceful and loving response from the families of shuhada helped cultivate a favourable perception of Muslims to broader NZ society, which contrasted the previously held negative view of Muslims, allowing her to feel pride in her religious identity:

> You're proud to be a Muslim, because this is the view that people have on Muslims now. For so long, it was the complete opposite. And now all of a sudden, there are these people who have been victims of a tragedy, and yet they're a peaceful, they are filled with love… and so, it kind of gives you a sense of pride to be a part of that. Yeah, it erases the doubts that you are other, and you feel proud of it. ("Jerry")

"Fatima" noted the forgiveness demonstrated by a victim's husband, coupled with the Prime Minister's actions of visiting masajid and speaking to Muslim communities, contributing to her increased pride in her religion.

Many participants reflected on their status as a religious minority in NZ. They speculated that this was why very little was known about Muslims and Islam as a religion before the attacks. As such, "Farah" stated that the "Muslim community here was kind of invisible". However, when the spotlight was shone upon Muslim life in NZ for weeks following the attacks through constant media coverage, some participants felt this contributed significantly towards public awareness-raising around Islam and the Muslim population in NZ. Other notable events, such as

reciting the adhan (call to prayer) in Parliament and non-Muslim women donning the hijab at public gatherings, were also pointed to as the wider NZ society coming to know who Muslims were. As these discussions around Islam and Muslims came to light after March 15th, for some participants, such as "Fawad", it facilitated an environment where they felt they could become more "explicit" in publicly identifying as a Muslim. Prior to March 15th, some purposefully kept their religious identity a secret. Similarly, in response to being asked what changes "Abdul" noticed in himself following the attacks, he described how his increased sense of pride meant he had become unapologetic in the practising of his culture and religion:

> …more proud in being Muslim. Like, me and my friends have been doing this thing whenever we go to a café, we speak in Arabi the whole time. Because again, we're trying to decolonize ourselves… It's been cool even if I'm talking to Kiwi people, I still say "Inshallah", I still say "Mashallah". Cause I'm like, "why shouldn't I? I'm not saying it for them, I'm saying it for Allah" ... So just being more unapologetic with how I practice my religion as well. ("Abdul")

Very similarly, "Maia" described how she had discovered pride in her Muslim identity, too, relinquishing the sense of fear that the terrorist hoped to instil among Muslims. She stated, "[The attacks] kind of like reaffirmed the fact that I am Muslim, and I don't want to change that even if I die. So, I was like, slightly prouder and more confident to be Muslim."

"Zara's" description of praying publicly after the attacks perhaps most clearly exemplifies how participants activated their political identities as a direct resistance to the fear the terrorist had intended to evoke amongst Muslims. "Zara" described how she had always prayed in private, but following the attacks, she decided to pray in a public space in the centre of

Auckland's central business district because she did not want to "let this guy win". For her, taking this stance was a "demonstration of faith" and a political act against the terrorist:

> …it wasn't just the act of praying, it was praying in a public space with the community. Cause I pray normally, that's easy [but] by me praying in a public space with the community it helped me… overcome this fear a little bit of being targeted. ("Zara")

In summary, this theme captured how finding community, using Islamic practices, and gaining faith in Islam led many participants to develop a newfound pride in their Muslim identities. The reclamation of their Muslim identities appears to have served as a political stance for some participants against the terrorist's motivations to "wipe out" Muslims. By proudly identifying as Muslims, participants could shield themselves against the fear that Tarrant had intended to instil among Muslim communities through his act of terrorism. This is the final theme in this section that describes where participants found support and how they coped following the March 15th attacks.

Conclusion

My analysis produced several important themes relating to the three areas of Muslim youths' experiences of the attacks that I was interested in. In relation to their reactions, the themes I constructed include being in shock, worrying about safety, feeling on edge, avoiding reminders, and fearing backlash. In relation to participants' meaning-making of the attacks, the themes I constructed included it was a personal attacks, I don't have the right to mourn, he is a terrorist, it needs to be seen as part of Islamophobia and racism, and the root cause was white supremacy and settler colonialism. Finally, the last set of themes I constructed related to participants' coping. The themes in this category included the public was caring but their support was temporary, counsellors

who listened but there aren't enough who get me, having understanding friends helped, being around my Muslim community, growing closer to my faith, and becoming proud of being Muslim.

Chapter Four: Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, I aimed to explore Muslim youths' experiences of and responses to the March 15th 2019, terrorist attacks in Christchurch, NZ. More specifically, I intended to explore their reactions and how they made meaning of the attacks. I also aimed to explore the coping resources and strategies available to Muslim youth after the attacks, including where they went for support, what they found helpful or unhelpful, and the factors impeding their coping. In this final chapter of the thesis, I discuss the key findings of my study, followed by the theoretical and clinical implications of my current findings, before considering the strengths and limitations of this research. Finally, I conclude with some brief reflections on my study's significance, including future research directions.

Key Findings

In this section of the discussion, I discuss the key findings of my research in relation to the three broad areas of Muslim youths' initial reactions to the attacks, the way they made sense of the attacks, and how they coped.

Initial Reactions to the Attacks

My research findings indicate that there are several important ways in which Muslim youth in Auckland reacted to the March 15th attacks. The first major finding is that Muslim youth who were indirectly exposed to the March 15th terrorist attacks experienced reactions of shock and disbelief and felt on edge immediately after the attacks. These reactions are supported by the findings in the extant literature on the psychological impacts of terrorism among both direct and indirect populations (Comer & Kendall, 2007; Durodie & Wainright, 2019; Herman, 1997; Huddy et al., 2003; Kaniasty & Norris, 2004; Pfefferbaum et al., 2019). It is thought that

terrorism evokes such responses, given the brutality of human-inflicted violence (Green & Lindy, 2004). By exploring these reactions in-depth through a qualitative methodology, I could draw out detailed descriptions of Muslim youths' initial reactions to the attacks revealing how they were influenced by the social and political context in which the attacks occurred.

It shocked participants that Muslims, who comprise a religious minority in NZ, were exclusively targeted in their place of worship at a time of day when masajid were crowded. This aspect of the attacks was shocking because it necessitated Tarrant acquire intimate knowledge of the sacred Islamic practice of Jumu'ah prayer. It also meant that the terrorist had known that the victims inside the masjidain were particularly vulnerable at that time. These details of the attacks intensified the fear and shock experienced by Muslim youth in the immediate aftermath.

Participants also reacted with shock because they believed terrorism did not occur in NZ, particularly not the kind that targeted minoritised communities, even though they had countless interpersonal discrimination experiences. These findings resemble what families of victims and survivors of the attacks reported to the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCOI, 2020). They, too, believed they were safe in NZ despite countless discrimination experiences. Perhaps these assumptions of safety stemmed from the prominent myth of NZ's harmonious race relations (Stewart, 2023). Regardless, it came as a shock to Muslim youth in my study when the attacks did occur. This perhaps reflects what Janoff-Bulman (1989) describes as a shattering of assumptions following trauma. As a consequence of the attacks, their belief that NZ offered them safety and security was shattered, revealing a more precarious – and perhaps dangerous – state of existence for Muslims.

My findings also offer details into various dimensions of Muslim youths' fear responses following the March 15th attacks. They feared Tarrant's actions would evoke further violence

towards Muslims in NZ from other Far Right actors. Similar reactions of heightened fear have been reported in the literature among populations indirectly exposed to terrorism (E. A. Holmes et al., 2007; Marshall et al., 2007; Metcalfe et al., 2011). In fact, Breckenridge and Zimbardo (2007) argue that evoking fear among distal populations is a characteristic feature of terrorism. Unlike other situations where there is a mass loss of life, such as natural disasters, people come to expect further violence following terrorist attacks. The dominant trauma models frame how people come to expect further victimisation as such as over-exaggerated estimations of fear, or cognitive distortions (Kutz & Dekel, 2006; Marshall et al., 2007). However, my findings challenge this idea that Muslim youth experienced distorted thinking and over-estimated the likelihood of further violence by far right actors.

The "domino effect", as one participant put it, did indeed materialise. Phillips Arps was sentenced to two years' imprisonment after sharing the live-streamed video of the March 15th attacks, to which he asked a friend to add crosshairs and a kill count, mimicking a first-person shooter videogame, Call of Duty (Lourens, 2021; Moorhouse, 2023). In 2016, he was one of several men who filmed themselves placing a box of pig heads outside Masjid Al Noor while doing Nazi salutes. Troy Dubovskiy, described by Canterbury District Commander Superintendent John Price as posing a significant threat to public safety after weapons and Nazi memorabilia were located in his home, sent concerning emails in the days after the attacks supporting Tarrant's actions (Sherwood, 2019). A year after the attacks, Sam Brittenden took a picture outside Masjid Al Noor and posted this alongside a caption on social media threatening to kill attendees at the masjid (Daalder, 2020). Another individual whom the Christchurch District Court has granted name suppression threatened to detonate a car bomb outside Masjid Al Noor and Linwood Islamic Centre on the second anniversary of the attacks. He was charged and

convicted for these actions and for distributing Tarrant's manifesto on numerous occasions (Bayer, 2021). From the international context, at least four further white supremacist attacks are reported to have occurred in 2019, all of which directly drew inspiration from Tarrant; two shootings in the United States, one in Norway, and another in Germany (Thorleifssen, 2022).

It appears then that Muslim youth were not merely overreacting or relying on cognitive distortions to assess the level of risk after the March 15th attacks. Instead, they were responding to a social reality they have had to endure collectively as Muslims in the West for several years. A social reality wherein threats of violence are common and, on several occasions, have materialised into actual violence. In this way, their reactions of fear following the attacks can perhaps be better described by Burstow's (2003) assertion that fear responses to trauma are significantly influenced by the social and political context in which they occur. She purports that for communities that have historically experienced persecution and oppression, feeling unsafe and expecting further violence is not a form of cognitive distortion. Rather, it signifies how attuned people from such marginalised communities are to a specific social reality, one that has indeed been dangerous for them (Burstow, 2003).

Participants' fears also related to the backlash that they expected to receive from the NZ public had the attacks been perpetrated by a so-called Muslim terrorist. These fears of a backlash appear to resemble those expressed by New York City's Muslim youth after 9/11 (Peek, 2003) and perhaps reflect the hate crimes experienced by Muslim and Middle Eastern communities after those attacks (Bakalian & Bozorgmehr, 2009). Thus, the fears of a backlash expressed by Muslim youth in my study appear to have been informed by the historical experiences of Muslims more globally following instances of so-called Islamic terrorism. Together, these findings concerning Muslim youths' reactions of shock and fear add significant textural detail to

current understandings of the experiences of indirect victims of terrorism. It moves beyond surface-level descriptions offered in the extant literature by suggesting how the political context in which terrorism occurs and the historical context of the victims may influence their trauma reactions.

My findings also offer insight into the role news and social media played in enhancing reactions of shock and fear to terrorism. In the case of the March 15th attacks, social media played a significant role in publicising the attacks through a live stream on Facebook and also deluging people with images and discussions related to the event (Baele et al., 2023). Many participants described that they learned about the attacks via their social media newsfeeds or through watching the events unfold on the television news. Some even witnessed portions of the recordings of the attacks. Participants clearly noted that this digital environment contributed to their shock and fear.

The literature on young people's experiences of terrorism purports that media is among the most common ways young people are exposed to terrorism (Comer & Kendall, 2007; Fremont, 2004; Pfefferbaum et al., 2019). Moreover, as the growing body of literature has consistently demonstrated, indirect victims of terrorism can experience post-traumatic symptomatology merely through indirect exposure mediated via news coverage (Schlenger et al., 2002; Silver et al., 2002: Torabi & Seo, 2004; Nellis & Savage, 2012; Pfefferbaum et al., 2003). My findings appear to indicate a similar experience among Muslim youth in Auckland; they experienced reactions associated with exposure to trauma following indirect exposure to the March 15th attacks via social and digital media.

It is also important to note that public commentary on social media relating to the attacks was experienced as distressing by Muslim youth and exacerbated their fears, with one participant

even recalling reading comments that had endorsed Tarrant's actions. The current literature describes how important digital spaces are in the lives of contemporary youth; it serves as a place where they explore their identities, connect with their peers, and engage in help-seeking (Allen et al., 2014; Buckingham, 2008; Manago, 2014). However, my findings suggest that many Muslim youths avoided digital spaces after the attacks, given the prominence of Islamophobia online, adding to the body of literature that highlights the pervasiveness of Islamophobia in Muslim youths' digital lives and the toll it takes on their mental well-being (Awan, 2010; Ayaz et al., 2022; Oboler, 2016). Saeed's (2016) contention that social media reflects social reality for Muslims may explain why Muslim youth in my study avoided digital spaces after the attacks; they sought to avoid further exposure to Islamophobic vitriol after having already experienced a white supremacist attack.

The final major finding from my research that describes Muslim youths' reactions to the March 15th attacks relates to how they engaged in avoidance. Avoidance of stimuli related to terrorism has been well-established in the trauma literature (Ben-Zur et al., 2012; Pineles et al., 2011). It is argued to be a means to prevent physiological arousal. Accordingly, it comprises one of the key diagnostic symptoms of PTSD in the *DSM-5* (APA, 2013). Avoidance has been demonstrated as a common reaction among minoritised communities following terrorist attacks (Eisenman et al., 2009) and those indirectly exposed to terrorism (Malik et al., 2022; Okay & Karanci, 2020). My findings add to this body of research by describing how Muslim youth in Auckland avoided public places, like university campuses, and religiously significant sites, such as masajid, to avoid becoming victimised by further white supremacist violence.

Making Sense of the Attacks

Meaning-making has been described in the literature as a key component of processing traumatic events, including terrorism (Jayawickreme et al., 2021; Park & Ai, 2006; Updegraff et al., 2008). My findings offer several important insights into how Muslim youth in Auckland made meaning of the March 15th attacks. As such, my research makes valuable contributions to the body of knowledge around the meaning-making processes employed by communities targeted by political violence.

First, one of the strongest findings of my study was that Muslim youth in Auckland identified with the victims in Christchurch. They felt that they, too, were among the shuhada - or at least could have been - had the attacks been in Auckland. This finding matches similar themes reported in the current literature among indirect victims of terrorism identifying with or feeling connected to direct victims (Blanchard et al., 2004; Okay & Caranci, 2020). Okay and Caranci (2020) described how participants in their study felt that their shared routines with the victims of terrorism contributed to their participants' identification process.

My findings indicate that in addition to their shared routines with the shuhada, Muslim youths' shared religious identity led them to feel personally victimised by the March 15th attacks. In other words, they felt their very identities came under attack that day. This is an important finding given the extensive youth development literature that has consistently emphasised the importance of identity in the lives of young people (Marcia, 1966; Meeus, 1996). This finding highlights how youths' identities can serve as a means to make sense of traumatic events within their broader social environments, leading to them experiencing indirect acts of terrorism as a profound attack on their sense of self.

In this way, Auckland's Muslim youth can also be understood to have viewed the March 15th attacks as a collective trauma shared amongst Muslims in NZ (Erikson, 1976). Studies conducted with religious communities that acts of terrorism have targeted report a similar meaning-making process (Ogden et al., 2000; Vogel-Scibilia, 2020), including women survivors of the March 15th attacks (Ansari & Cufurovic, 2021). Indeed, this is what it means to belong to an Ummah; there is no distinction between the self and group (Shah, 2006). Thus, when other community members were attacked, Muslim youth in Auckland experienced it as an attack on themselves and their identities.

A second major finding from my research concerning Muslim youths' meaning-making of the attacks indicates that despite feeling intimately and religiously connected to the shuhada, participants felt they did not have the right to mourn. Similar notions of feeling precluded from public grieving have been demonstrated in the literature and have been termed marginalised or disenfranchised grief (Bauwens, 2017; Doka, 1989). For example, following the September 11th attacks, people who had lost a sibling felt they were not allowed to grieve publicly as their grief was less socially legitimate than those who had lost parents or children (Bauwens, 2017). The findings of my study extend on these notions of disenfranchised grief by demonstrating this experience among Muslim youth in Auckland with no direct relatives among the shuhada of the March 15th attacks.

Muslim youth in Auckland also felt they did not have adequate opportunities to mourn as many were thrust into leadership positions, given they were sometimes the only Muslim in their social settings. This perhaps reflects their social position of belonging to a minoritised community in the West (Sirin & Fine, 2007). In effect, their own emotional experience of the event ended up taking a backseat as they were tasked with educating their peers, the institutions

to which they belonged, or the wider NZ public on Islamophobia, racism, and appropriate ways to show Muslim communities support. Other times, supporting those Muslims in Christchurch took precedence over Auckland Muslim youths' grieving processes.

Finally, my research indicates that Muslim youths' meaning-making of the March 15th attacks was firmly rooted within a socio-political framework and that this was an important part of their experience. Participants urged for Tarrant to be viewed as a terrorist as a way to challenge the Islamic terrorism discourses that had contributed to framing Muslims as terrorists (Beydoun, 2018; Jackson, 2007a; Steuter & Wills, 2010). They also wanted to broaden how the general public conceptualised terrorists so that Muslims were not seen as the exclusive perpetrators of terrorism. In this way, Muslim youth saw the attacks as an opportunity to challenge how the media has inconsistently applied the term terrorist to Muslim actors compared to non-Muslim actors (Powell, 2011). Thus, Muslim youths' meaning-making can, in fact, be understood to be a political response, one that is shaped by their politicised identities as Muslim youth in the West and the social context in which the attacks occurred (Ahmed & Ezzeddine, 2009; Bakali, 2016). To this end, my findings add to the extant literature that indicates how political activism and resistance can serve as a way of making meaning and coping with political violence (Haglili, 2020; Sousa et al., 2013; Veronese et al., 2021).

In addition to labelling Tarrant as a terrorist, my findings indicate that Muslim youth situated his actions within broader socio-political factors such as Islamophobia, white supremacy, and settler colonialism. As previously noted, several authors have concluded following their discursive analyses of Tarrant's manifesto that he was motivated by anti-Muslim racism and relied on white supremacist logic to justify his actions (Ali, 2020; Ehsan & Stott, 2020; Moses, 2019;). Similarly, other authors have commented that his actions are a further

enactment of settler colonialism in the NZ context (Poynting, 2020; Waitoki, 2019). A similar set of conclusions regarding Tarrant's motivations were also reached by the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCOI, 2020). My findings suggest, then, that Muslim youths' understandings of the attacks were informed by the socio-political contexts they occupy as Muslim youth in the West and within which the attacks occurred (Adamson, 2011; Shannahan, 2011; Sirin & Fine, 2007). Racism and Islamophobia are not new to Muslim youth, as these factors have largely shaped their social identities (Bakali, 2016; Farooqui & Kaushik, 2022; Hummel et al., 2020). When a terrorist attack occurred exclusively targeting Muslims in NZ, they connected the reasons for these attacks with the broader social context in which their identities have been shaped in NZ. This finding adds to the body of literature on the complexities of meaning-making processes among communities subject to terrorism and other forms of political violence (e.g. Barber, 2009; Hammack, 2010; Updegraff et al., 2008) while also highlighting the need for trauma to be understood as occurring within a particular social, political, and historicised context (Burstow, 2003).

Support and Coping

The findings from my research indicate that Muslim youth engaged in various forms of collective coping following the March 15th attacks and that these coping strategies were intertwined with their identities as Muslim youth, sometimes leading them to experience growth. There are several key findings concerning Muslim youths' coping that I discuss below.

First, my findings indicate that Muslim youth perceived the NZ public engaging in public gatherings, setting up memorial events and displays, and demonstrating gestures of solidarity as generally helpful. These actions allowed them to feel less alone, which is consistent with the broader literature that has suggested that social support is a valuable resource for youth following

traumatic events (Henrich & Shahar, 2008; Moscardino et al., 2010; Schiff et al., 2010). This finding is also similar to the findings of Dyregov and colleagues (2018), who reported that a perceived safety net of social support allowed family members of victims of the Utøya terrorist attacks to feel that others were there for them.

My findings also elaborate on the dimensions of social support that Muslim youth perceived to be unhelpful. Participants sometimes felt the support of NZ's public was temporary and, at times, ingenuine. They perceived university-organised gatherings, for example, as attempts by such institutions to appear to be supportive without instrumentally supporting Muslim students' needs. A similar discontentment with public support, termed "show off sympathy", has been described in the terrorism literature (Dyregov et al., 2018, p.6). Similarly, in my study, some participants felt politicians capitalised on the Muslim community's grief to promote their political campaigns. Other participants noted that gestures of solidarity, such as non-Muslim women wearing hijabs, were perhaps more strongly driven by a desire to address their guilt than to actually support Muslim women. These findings reiterate Mirnajafi and Barlow's (2019) plea to move away from symbolic acts of solidarity that risk becoming tokenistic in the wake of violent extremism. Indeed, Muslim youth appeared to seek a more profound reckoning on the part of the NZ public as this would allow them to feel safe, as opposed to "one-off" and tokenistic gestures.

In addition to these forms of social support that were perceived as temporary and tokenistic, my findings indicate how online comments demanding Muslims "get over" the attacks also left Muslim youth feeling that the public's support for them was temporary. This finding is similar to what has been previously described in the literature among victims of disasters feeling that others want them to move on from their grief too quickly or that they are

tired of hearing about the trauma (Arnberg et al., 2013; Thoresen et al., 2014). A decline in perceived public support for victims may be explained by Kaniasty and Norris' (2004) hypothesis that following an initial upsurge in social support in the wake of a disaster, there is a noticeable deterioration phase whereby people begin to process the harsh realities of the disaster, leading to a lessening in social support for victims. However, my findings suggest Muslim youth did not merely perceive a decline in social support after the attacks but also noticed the reinstatement of anti-Muslim prejudice. That is, the Islamophobia they had experienced and that which had been prominent in their lives before the attacks soon returned once public demonstrations and gatherings subsided. In effect, Muslim youth felt they were once again positioned as the other when reading online comments from non-Muslims questioning how much more *they* (Muslims) wanted from *us* (New Zealanders).

The third key finding from my study concerning Muslim youths' coping after the attacks indicates that they favoured the support of their informal social networks over formal, professional support. This pattern of help-seeking has been widely documented in the youth coping literature and further highlights the importance of peers and social networks in the lives of young people faced with terrorism (Afana et al., 2020; Bleich et al., 2003; Brough et al., 2016; Hiller et al., 2017; Michelmore & Hindley, 2012; Schonbucher et al., 2014). Participants reported that their Muslim peers were some of the most helpful sources of social support and among whom they felt comforted, understood, and safe. By extension of their religious identities, they, too, were thought to have experienced the attacks indirectly and could empathise with the participants in my study. Studies conducted with survivors of terrorism and those who have become bereaved by terrorist acts suggest that the most helpful source of social support comes from those who have shared experiences (Bauwens, 2017; Dyregov, 2018). Even non-Muslim

peers were described by participants in my study as helping participants cope, particularly if they had been subjected to similar racialisation processes as Muslims. Participants thought this allowed them to understand better how Muslims may have felt after the attacks. Thus, my findings appear to be consistent with the literature that describes the qualities of shared experience among peer networks that youth prioritise when seeking support for distress (Koydemir et al., 2010) and highlight Herman's (1997) assertion of the powerful role of the group in helping restore a sense of humanity after a traumatic event.

In the context of help-seeking for terrorism, Tatar and Amram (2008) reported that while more than two-thirds of their youth participants turned to social support after a terrorist attack, only 4% turned to mental health professionals. My research findings offer insights into why young people may not turn to mental health professionals for support after experiences of terrorism. One of the reasons participants in my study gave for their reluctance to engage in professional support was that they believed professionals would not adequately understand their experiences and contexts as Muslim youth in the West. The literature pertaining to the barriers to professional help-seeking among youth reiterates a similar notion; professionals are seen not to understand youths' experiences and are seen to lack cultural competence (Cauce et al., 2002; Gibson, 2022; McCann et al., 2016; Price & Dalgleish, 2013). Muslim communities, including those in NZ, also cite similar concerns around the cultural competency of mental health professionals, which acts as a barrier to them seeking professional support (Ali et al., 2004; Amri & Bemak, 2013; Erickson & Al-Tamimi, 2001; Shah & McGuiness, 2011).

The fourth key finding from my study concerning coping with the trauma of the attacks indicates that spiritual forms of coping were utilised and served an important role in the lives of Muslim youth. The literature on spiritual coping contends that religious frameworks and

practices can be a beneficial means of coping following traumatic events, including terrorism (Ai et al., 2005; Bleich et al., 2003; Khan et al., 2016; McIntosh et al., 2011; Ogden et al., 2000; Vogel-Scibilia, 2020;). The survivors of a terrorist attack that took place in a South African church reported using Christian practices, theology, and meaning-making to cope with the attacks (Ogden et al., 2000). Several studies with Muslim youth living in Western countries have also demonstrated the role of religious coping methods in managing acculturative stressors, including racism and discrimination (Adam & Ward, 2016; Jasperse et al., 2012; Stuart & Ward, 2018). My current findings extend on this body of research by indicating how religious and spiritual forms of coping may be a particularly relevant source of support for religious communities following experiences of terrorism-related trauma.

The religious coping literature also purports that religious forms of coping can facilitate connection to a broader religious community, thus serving as both spiritual and social forms of coping (Garcia et al., 2014; Kelly, 2007; Krause et al., 2001; Taylor & Chatters, 1988). My findings suggest that Muslim youth experienced a similar interplay between religious and social coping after the attacks. While engaging in spiritual coping methods following the attacks, such as attending Jumu'ah prayer, some Muslim youth reported that being around other Muslims made them feel comforted and safe. To this end, my findings illustrate what Kelly (2007) discusses regarding the vital role of places of worship in facilitating collective healing following traumatic events. Masajid appeared to serve a similar role for Muslim youth after the March 15th attacks, suggesting that such sites are crucial for communities healing from traumatic experiences.

The final major finding from my research indicates that Muslim youth grew closer to their religion following the attacks and that this occurred across two related but distinct domains.

First, it appears that as a consequence of experiencing terrorist attacks indirectly, Muslim youth relied on religious practices to help them cope. In turn, this brought them closer to their sense of spirituality. Most participants reported that their imaan grew after the attacks. This experience resembles what has been termed post-traumatic growth in the literature, whereby undergoing difficult and traumatic experiences can lead to some people finding deeper meaning in their lives and exceeding their pre-trauma functioning (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

Second, my analysis also suggests that the March 15th attacks led to a greater identification with their political identities as Muslim youth in the West. In this way, my findings highlight how Islam serves as a form of spirituality that brings specific practices, beliefs, and rituals and serves as a political identity for Muslim youth (Chiang, 2001; Jacobson, 1998; Modood, 2004; Shah, 2006). Accordingly, my findings illustrate the arguments of critical sociological theorists that describe youth development, particularly concerning identity formation, as a complex and fluid process that is socially mediated (McLeod & Yates, 2012; Stokes & Wyn, 2005; Wyn et al., 2012; Wyn & White, 2015). Muslim youths' identities appear to have been shaped by their social and political contexts, in this case, the March 15th attacks and their aftermath.

My findings also extend on the identity formation literature suggesting how terrorism – and perhaps other acts of racism – might paradoxically increase young people's pride in their identities. In this way, my findings appear to resemble the arguments put forth by Hammack (2010) and Barber (2009), who contend that youths' identities – particularly through its reclamation in the wake of political violence – can serve a liberatory role. In turn, they argue that this can buffer against the adverse effects of trauma. Muslim youth in my study appear to have reclaimed their Muslim identities after the attacks, serving both as a form of political resistance

against white supremacy, racism, and Islamophobia and as a means to cope with the trauma of terrorism. This is the final and perhaps most important finding from my study relating to Muslim youths' responses to the March 15th terrorist attacks.

Clinical Implications

There are several clinical implications arising from my research. First, my findings emphasise that young people can experience significant post-traumatic effects despite being geographically distant from the site of violence. Personal identification with victims of a terrorist attack – through shared religious identity or shared practices – may enhance young people's experiences of the post-traumatic effects of terrorism. Also related to the indirect effects of trauma, my findings highlight that young people's proclivity to be online, coupled with terrorists increasingly broadcasting their actions and motivations through social media, may also enhance the post-traumatic effects of terrorism. Therefore, mental health practitioners working with youth must recognise that identity and digital media may play a significant role in how young people experience and are affected by terrorism. Awareness of these factors may lead to a more sensitive approach to the needs of young people who have been indirectly exposed to terrorism.

Second, my findings indicate that it is essential for mental health professionals to deepen their understanding of Islam and Muslims to facilitate Muslim youth seeking professional help. Participants in this study repeatedly emphasised the centrality of Islam in their lives and gave clear direction on how they perceived mental health clinicians to lack this understanding. Consequently, this became a barrier to them accessing professional mental health support in the wake of the attacks. Thus, there is an onus on clinicians to enhance their understanding of Islam and its centrality in Muslim youths' sense of identity, how they cope with stress, and how they respond to trauma, as indicated in the findings of this research. Practitioners must also have a

firm understanding of Muslim youths' complex social realities and the pervasiveness of racism and Islamophobia across their various contexts. Interpersonal discrimination must not be treated as an out-of-the-ordinary experience for Muslim youth but rather seen as a common, but nonetheless damaging, experience for this group. More broadly, my findings indicate that having a mental health professional who understands the identities of the young people they support is crucial to encouraging youth to seek formal support for distress. In situations where young people feel their very identities have come under attack, as was the case in the aftermath of the March 15th terrorist attacks, this may be a significant factor.

Mental health clinicians supporting contemporary youth in the wake of terrorism must therefore ensure they consider the social and political factors underlying terrorism and how these may influence young people's experiences of terrorism. In other words, terrorism-related trauma must be viewed within a socio-political framework. Despite dominant understandings of trauma treating terrorism-related trauma as an apolitical phenomenon, the current findings highlight that for Muslim youth, politics was weaved throughout their experience, from the violence their community endured, to how they made sense of the event, to how they responded. Accordingly, mental health practitioners must put the political back into trauma work with Muslim youth and other communities victimised by terrorists to avoid decontextualising their trauma.

Finally, my findings indicate that Muslim youth found the support of their peers and religious practices helpful in coping with the trauma of the attacks. This highlights to mental health clinicians that collective coping methods may be well-suited for supporting communities in the wake of terrorism, perhaps over other approaches that take an individualistic approach. The current literature indicates that collective coping methods are preferred by communities with collectivist orientations, including Muslim communities (Abu-Raiya et al., 2011; Fischer et al.,

2010; Kuo, 2013; Ven, 2012). Thus, my research builds on this literature by highlighting the need for mental health practitioners to integrate social and religious supports into psychological therapies to ensure they adequately meet the needs of Muslim youth and other collectivist communities. However, they must also be sensitive to the diversity of such communities' needs and recognise that such approaches may not work for all.

Strengths and Limitations

As with any research, my current study has its limitations. Firstly, my participants were predominantly university students located in Auckland, NZ. Although their experiences provided insight into the experience of the attacks among the wider Muslim community, it is essential to note that their experiences may differ from those of Muslims in other regions, of different age groups, and those who are not university students. For example, Muslim youth in Christchurch may hold different perspectives of the attacks than those in Auckland, given their proximity to the attacks. Moreover, Muslim youth were interviewed two years after the attacks occurred, and this research was not finalised for another two years after they were interviewed. Thus, the meaning they give their experiences now might not be the same as what they did during their interviews. They may have had other experiences or come to know of other developments, such as Tarrant recently filing for an appeal of his convictions, that may have changed their perspectives and opinions.

Second, it is important to note that my position as a Muslim researcher may have limited the findings in some ways. As I have reiterated throughout this thesis, my personal experience of the attacks influenced why and how I conducted this specific research project. My experiences influenced how I gathered data in the interviews and the sorts of responses I had follow-up questions to versus those I did not pursue further. Moreover, as a Muslim researcher, participants

may have responded differently to me than a non-Muslim researcher. For example, if they engaged in actions that they believed to be un-Islamic or shameful, they may have hesitated to share these out of fear of being judged by another Muslim. Also, my being a male Muslim may have influenced how the young women participants in my study engaged in their interviews and may have shared different aspects of their experiences had they been interviewed by a Muslim woman given protocols around interactions between genders in Islamic culture. In short, a non-Muslim researcher, or a Muslim woman research, may have obtained different data, conducted a different analysis, and arrived at different conclusions.

Although these limitations were present, this study also had several strengths which are important to highlight. First, using in-depth interviews allowed me to hear the experiences of Muslim youth directly and understand how they experienced the attacks within their socio-political contexts. Much of the extant literature on young people's experiences of terrorism is focused on epidemiological surveys and psychiatric disorders (Khamis, 2012; Lavi & Solomon, 2005; Pfefferbaum et al., 2018). It takes a deficit-based approach to understanding the impacts of terrorism that minimises young peoples' agency and obfuscates the role of their socio-political contexts in their meaning-making of terrorism (Jennings et al., 2006; Úcar Martínez et al., 2017). My research, on the other hand, sought to understand youths' experiences of terrorism by directly talking to young people themselves, which has been argued to be essential for such research (Wyn & Harris, 2004) and offered rich and detailed insights into their experiences and responses through a qualitative research design. This was especially important in this context, given that political elements are common to both terrorism and trauma. Qualitative research was necessary to understand the socio-political complexities of such phenomena (Fossey et al., 2002). Several authors have called for further qualitative research to supplement or enrich

current understandings of terrorism-related trauma (Engdahl, 2004; Maguen et al., 2008), which my research begins to address.

Second, I believe my being a Muslim researcher enriched the data I collected. As a member of the Muslim community with a somewhat public profile, I believe this may have encouraged young people who may have otherwise been reluctant to participate in research to come forth and share their experiences, knowing that they would be interviewed by someone with whom they had some degree of familiarity. Evidently, this turned out to be the case, as in most interviews, participants noted how eager they were to participate in the research when they came across the advertisements. It also comes through in the quality of the data I obtained. Participants freely used Islamic terminology and phrases to describe their experiences throughout their interviews. This allowed them to use culturally relevant terminology and concepts to describe their experiences as Muslims. It also allowed participants to share experiences that had been difficult for them, such as feeling their faith dropped after the attacks or that they turned away from their religion.

Directions for Future Research

As the findings of this study indicate, the impacts of the March 15th terrorist attacks were felt by Muslim youth distant from the site violence. Thus, to develop a broader understanding of the impact of the attacks, further studies may be conducted with Muslim youth in other regions, perhaps even those Muslim youth in Christchurch who were not related to the shuhada, to explore how their experiences may have been the same or different to Auckland’s Muslim youth. Moreover, it may be useful to explore the experiences of Muslims at different life stages, as this study only recruited Muslim youth between the ages of 18 and 24 years old. Doing so may reveal how age-dependent factors interact with the experience of trauma and the coping methods that

are preferred. Furthermore, it may be useful to conduct further research with this group over time to explore how their views and perspectives changed over time. It may also be useful to have conducted a study of this nature immediately after the attacks (as opposed to two years later) to explore how Muslim youth made sense of the attacks immediately after they occurred and comparing this to later on, though this would have to be weighed up with ethical concerns.

Conclusion

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study that has explored the experiences of young Muslim people in Auckland following the March 15th terrorist attacks in Christchurch. Using a qualitative approach, my research findings draw attention to how terrorist attacks aimed at minoritised communities can have traumatic effects that ripple out to those geographically and relationally distant from the site of the attacks. My research has also highlighted that these kinds of attacks and their effects cannot be understood outside of the context of racism, Islamophobia, white supremacy, and settler colonialism. These social and political factors are central to such acts of terrorism and their traumatic effects on communities. Finally, my study also showed the strengths that a minoritised Muslim community in NZ could draw upon in response to an atrocity – the power of their community and their religious beliefs were central to Muslim youths' coping with the attacks.

Final Remarks

Throughout various stages of this research project, I found myself challenged and, at times, overwhelmed by the journey ahead of me. The gravity of undertaking a research project that aimed to explore Muslim youths' experiences of such an atrocious, calculated, and malevolent act of violence weighed heavy on me. I felt there was no way I could adequately capture their experiences within a single piece of research. Though as I progressed on this

journey and my findings began to take shape, and the themes I constructed told a story of hope, resilience, and determination, some of that uneasiness I felt earlier in the process settled. In fact, in making sense of Muslim youths' strength and political resistance in the face of such an unimaginable tragedy, I found strength and hope in myself. Thus, I hope that whoever reads this thesis walks away with a similar sense of inspiration. While there has been tremendous suffering at the hands of the terrorist – only some of which I have been able to capture here – there simultaneously exists a great deal of strength and resilience among Muslim communities. In reporting on both these dimensions of Muslim youths' experiences of the attacks, I hope I have been able to demonstrate that, indeed with hardship comes ease.

Appendices

Appendix A: Email/Message sent to Respondents

Assalamualaikum and kia ora

Thank you for your expression of interest in our study, *Muslim Youth Identity and Wellbeing: Making Sense of the March 15th Attacks*.

Attached with this email is the Participant Information Sheet which will give you more details about the study to help you decide whether you want to participate. If you have any questions about the Participant Information Sheet, please get in touch by responding to this email or through the dedicated phone number (**020 408 49512**) and we will be happy to have a discussion with you.

A consent form is also attached with this message. Please read this document carefully. If you have any questions about this document, please let us know.

If you would like to meet kanohi kit e kanohi (face to face) to discuss any questions or concerns, that can be arranged. Please let us know if you would prefer this.

After having read the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, should you wish to participate in this study, please sign the consent form and send it to bnas252@aucklanduni.ac.nz.

Upon receiving this signed form, Bilal will get in touch to arrange a time, date and location for your interview.

Wasalam,

Bilal, Kerry and Jay

Approved by the Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee for three years on 11/01/2021.

Reference number **AH3106.**

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

SCIENCE

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project title: Muslim Youth Identity and Wellbeing: Making Sense of the March 15th Attacks

Researchers: Bilal Nasier, Associate Professor Kerry Gibson and Associate Professor Jay Marlowe

Asslamualaikum and kia ora!

We are a team of researchers working at the University of Auckland. Bilal Nasier is Doctor of Clinical Psychology student, Kerry Gibson is an Associate Professor in the School of Psychology and Jay Marlowe is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education and Social Work. We are carrying out a research project to find out about Muslim youths' experiences of the March 15th terrorist attacks and their coping strategies.

What is this research about?

The attacks on March 15th 2019 were a particularly significant and shocking act of terrorism committed against Muslims in New Zealand. Many people described the immense grief they experienced following the attacks, even those who were outside Christchurch and had no direct links to the shuhada (martyrs) and their families. Given the unprecedented scale and nature of the attacks it is unclear what the impacts have been on Muslims, especially those outside Christchurch.

We are interested in finding out how Muslim youth made sense of the attacks, what the impact has been on their identities, and their general sense of wellbeing. We are also wanting to hear from Muslim youth about the strategies they used to cope and how they may have supported their friends, family and community following the attacks.

We hope that through this research, we can better understand Muslim youths' experiences and in turn contribute to developing appropriate and relevant supports that can assist with their wellbeing.

Who can take part in the research?

If you are Muslim, between 18 and 24 years old, have lived in Auckland for at least 5 years prior to the attacks, and do not have direct family links to any of the shuhada, we would love to hear from you.

What will taking part in the research involve?

Participating in this research involves taking part in a one off individual interview where you will be asked questions about your identity, how you made sense of the March 15th attacks and what you did to cope. The entire interview will take approximately **1-1.5hours** to complete. As a token of our appreciation, you will be offered a $50 voucher.

Given this research involves exploring sensitive topics, it may be distressing for some people. However, there are no known risks associated with this research.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

This interview will be conducted by a Bilal Nasier, a trainee clinical psychologist under the supervision of Kerry Gibson and Jay Marlowe. Interviews will be audio recorded with your permission, transcribed and stored in electronic format on a secure computer. Even if you agree to being recorded, you may choose to have the recorder turned off at any time during the interview. The transcription of the interview will be sent to you for review and you will have 2 weeks to send back any changes. It will be will then be stored for 6 years for research purposes and can only be accessed by the researchers. Your responses to the interview questions will be associated with a pseudonym to protect your privacy and identity.

Although only the interviewees' responses will be recorded, we invite you to bring whānau and family to the interview for support during the interview. If you would like to conduct the interview in Te Reo Māori, we can arrange to have an interpreter present.

Will it be anonymous?

Your responses to this study will be entirely anonymous. This means no personally identifiable information will be collected from you at any point in this study or published. All your responses will be recorded against a pseudonym so only the interviewer, Bilal Nasier, will know you have participated in this research. This file will be kept in a secure room in the School of Psychology at the University of Auckland and will only be accessible to Bilal Nasier, Kerry Gibson and Jay Marlowe. Your Consent Form will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet in the School of Psychology. Given the Muslim community in New Zealand is relatively small, there is a small chance that you can be identified based on your responses.

Who gets to decide?

You get to decide whether or not you want to be part of this research. If you decide to stop participating in the interview at any point, or want to have the audio recording paused, that is your choice. You can also decide if you do not want to answer any particular question. Once you have completed the interview, you will be sent a transcription of your interview to review. You will have 2 weeks to review and ask for changes to be made. After this 2 week period, you will not be able to make any changes.

What will happen to the research?

We would like to write up the research findings for articles or conferences so that others can find out more about young Muslims' experiences of the terrorist attacks and what they did to cope. When writing up the research we might use quotes and examples from your interview but we will make sure that these are attributed to a pseudonym. You can request to see a summary of results of this study be sent to you, should you decide to participate.

What will happen to the survey material after the research is completed?

All researchers are obliged to keep the survey information for 6 years after which it will be destroyed. We will keep this in a password protected file on a secure University of Auckland computer.

What's in it for you?

You will have the opportunity to share your experiences and your coping strategies to help contribute to research that can inform others on how best to support Muslim youths' wellbeing.

What if thinking about this subject upsets you?

Thinking about the March 15th attacks can be emotionally distressing, leaving you feeling upset or worried. At the end of the interview, you will be provided with a list of people and agencies where you can get some support if you need this.

If you require Māori cultural support, talk to your whānau in the first instance. Alternatively, you may contact the administrator for He Kamaka Waiora (Māori Health Team) by telephoning 09 486 8324 ext 2324.

If you have any questions or complaints about the study, you may contact the Auckland and Waitematā District Health Boards Māori Research Committee or Māori Research Advisor by phoning 09 486 8920 ext 3204.

Who can you to talk to if you are concerned about this study?

If you want to talk to someone else about the study you can also contact Associate Professor Kerry Gibson, at kl.gibson@auckland.ac.nz, or Professor Suzanne Purdy, Head of the School of Psychology.

For concerns of an ethical nature, you can contact the Chair of the Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee at ahrec@auckland.ac.nz or at 373 7599 ext 83711, or at Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142.

Approved by the Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee for three years on 11/01/2021.

Reference number **AH3106.**

Appendix C: Consent Form

SCIENCE

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CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Muslim Youth Identity and Wellbeing: Making Sense of the March 15th Terrorist Attacks

Researchers: Bilal Nasier, Associate Professor Kerry Gibson and Associate Professor Jay Marlowe

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A MINIMUM OF SIX YEARS

Declaration by participant:

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and have understood the nature of the research. I have had the opportunity to ask questions of the investigators and have had them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to take part in this research which will involve me participating in a 1-1.5hour interview
- I am between 18 and 24 years old
- I identify as Muslim
- I have lived in NZ in the **5 years** leading up to March 15th, 2019
- I do not have any direct family members (parents, siblings and children) who were among the 51 shuhada (martyrs).
- I do not have any direct family members (parents, siblings and children) who were present in the Linwood Islamic Centre or Masjid Al Noor in Christchurch during the March 15th 2019 terrorist attacks.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without giving reason, and to withdraw or amend my responses within 2 weeks of receiving the transcript of my interview.
- I understand that non-identifiable information will be kept for at least 6 years, after which they will be destroyed. I understand this involves secure storage via a password protected computer, located in a secure University of Auckland building.

- I **agree / do not agree** (please circle one) to have my interview audio recorded
- I **wish / do not wish** (please circle choice) to receive the summary of findings, which can be emailed to this email address: ________________________
- I **wish / do not wish** (please circle choice) to have the audio recording of my interview be sent to me, which can be emailed to this email address: ________________________
- I would like to have a female researcher present at my interview: **yes / no** (please circle one)

I, ………………………………………………………………… (please print full name) hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature:………………………………………………………………………………

Date: ……………………………

Email:……………………………………………………

Phone number: ………………………………………….

Approved by the Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee for three years on 11/01/2021.

Reference number **AH3106.**

Appendix D: Recruitment Poster

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
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Muslim Youth Identity and Wellbeing:

Making Sense of the March 15th Attacks

Assalamualaikum,

The March 15th attacks were a significant act of terrorism targeting Muslims in Christchurch, however, many people around the world, including Muslims who were not directly targeted, felt its impacts. We want to know more about the experiences and coping strategies of Muslim youth who were not directly targeted. If you are:

- **Muslim**
- **between 18 and 24 years old**
- **have been living in Auckland for at least 6 years *and*,**
- **have no direct family links to the Shuhada (martyrs) or those present in the masjids at the time of the attacks,**

we would love to hear from!

Participation will involve a 1-1.5 hour in-person interview where you will be asked a range of questions about your identity and experiences as a young Muslim. All participants will receive a $50 voucher. If you are interested, please get in touch via email or phone (SMS, Viber, Whatsapp).

Jazakallah khair

Approved by the Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee for three years on 11/01/2021. Reference number AH3106. This research is being funded by a University of Auckland Doctoral Scholarship

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Appendix E: Interview Schedule

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

General Introductions

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. Where did you go to school?
3. Where did you grow up in Auckland?
4. What do you remember about growing up in NZ?
5. What was it like being a Muslim where you were?

The March 15th Attacks

1. Where would you like to begin in relation to the attacks?
2. What do you remember from that day?
3. How did you feel when you found out?
4. Do you remember what you thought when you found out?
5. How did how you felt change over time?
6. What did you do when you found out?
7. How do you think the attacks impacted/changed you?
8. How would you describe your experience of the March 15th attacks?
9. Why do you think the attacks happened?
10. What do you attribute the attacks to?
11. What do you think of the perpetrator?

Coping Questions

1. Where did you for support after the attacks?
2. What did you find helpful/supportive?
3. What did you find unhelpful after the attacks?
4. How did you provide support to other Muslims around you?
5. Did you

Closing Questions

1. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experience of the attacks?
2. How have you found your experience of this interview?

Approved by the Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee for three years on 11/01/2021.

Reference number **AH3106.**

Appendix F: Confidentiality Agreement

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RESEARCH ASSISTANT CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Project title: Muslim Youth Identity and Wellbeing: Making Sense of the March 15th Terrorist Attacks

Names of Researchers: Bilal Nasier, Associate Professor Kerry Gibson, Associate Professor Jay Marlowe

Transcriber/Research Assistant:

I agree to provide research assistance for the above research project. I understand that the information I will have access to is confidential and I must not disclose or discuss it with anyone other than the researchers. I shall delete any research material in my possession once I have completed my task.

Name ______________________________

Signature ______________________________

Date ______________________________

Approved by the Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee for three years on 11/01/2021.

Reference number **AH3106.**

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