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# Interrogating Antipodean Angst:
# New Zealand's non-Muslim majority talk about Muslims

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Psychology

At Massey University, New Zealand

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2019

**Abstract**

This study sought to address Douglas Pratt's (2010) claim that New Zealand's non-Muslim majority are experiencing "angst" in relation to a growing Muslim population. To explore this, a discourse analysis was conducted using 12 interviews with non-Muslim New Zealanders to identify how participants construct and maintain ideas surrounding Muslims. Results indicated two discourses, namely, constructing New Zealand society and constructing Muslims. Within constructions of New Zealand society, patterns of talk highlighted that New Zealand was established as a "safe haven", as well as being tolerant and accepting of different religions and cultures. Tolerance and acceptance were conditional on whether Muslims assimilated, and on participants' own security and safety. Within constructions of Muslims, gender-based oppression was created as a problematic difference compared with non-Muslims. Further, Muslims were constructed as "not terrorists, mostly" which suggests that there is a default link between Islam and terrorism. Media was also significant in talk, constructed as intentionally presenting a distorted view of Muslims. Also, in relation to media, participants constructed themselves as ignorant. Overall, the major finding of this research was a lack of angst in talk relating to Muslims. Rather, what was found were minor concerns relating to Muslim dress and some concern about safety, as well as conditional acceptance and a desire to retain social and cultural norms of what is considered "Kiwi". The concept of national identity was used to maintain power relations between those considered New Zealanders, largely Pākehā or New Zealand European, and Muslims. Covert racism, as part of a much broader pattern of talk and not specific to Muslims, was identified in this study.

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to give my thanks to those who helped, guided, and enabled me to complete this thesis.

I thank my supervisors Dr. Ella Kahu and Dr. Keith Tuffin who provided intellectual guidance, support, and encouragement during the planning and development of this research work. Your willingness to give your time generously via online meetings, in the reviewing and editing of the work, and your availablility for communication has been greatly appreciated.

My gratitude also goes to the participants who shared their thoughts, and for their time and effort. Without this, my thesis would neither have been possible nor completed.

I am thankful for the valuable contributions of friends and family who offered helpful ideas and assistance. In particular, to Mum who offered ongoing intellectual (and emotional!) support.

Finally, I express gratitude to my partner Sanjesh, who has continuously encouraged me to see the end goal, and remember why I wanted to complete this.

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