Beyond tokenistic solidarity in the wake of the Christchurch terrorist attacks: Insights from psychology, and practical suggestions for action

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The Christchurch terrorist attacks of March 15th, 2019 revealed the deadly consequences of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment. In the wake of the attacks, there were vast outpourings of support and inclusion towards Muslims from the non-Muslim community in New Zealand and Australia. In the absence of concrete action aimed at reducing Islamophobia, and making society a safer, fairer, and more inclusive place for Muslims, however, the promise of such messages cannot be fulfilled. In the current paper we outline the need for allyship with Muslims, and highlight issues associated with acts of tokenistic inclusion. We recognize barriers to engaging in solidarity, before discussing practical suggestions for solidarity that those wishing to support Muslims may take.

On March 15th 50 Muslims were killed in a brutal terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand. The attacks were carefully and callously planned, perpetrated across two Mosques as Muslims set to prayer and reflection. This act of terrorism sent shock waves across the world, showing the deadly power of White supremacy, and bringing into sharp focus the sometimes frightening climate in which Muslims in the West currently live (and in this case, were murdered). Across New Zealand and Australia (and indeed, the Western World), White and non-Muslim peoples rallied in the thousands, to express their shock, grief, and anger – publicly countering the message sent by the terrorist. Messages were generally simple, emphasizing points such as: *we are sorry*, *you should have been safe*, *you are welcome*, and *we are one* ("Christchurch shootings: New Zealand falls silent for mosque victims," 2019). The first author of this manuscript has noted that around Brisbane, Australia (where both authors live), mosques are still being inundated with flowers. A vast body of individuals clearly wish to express solidarity with Muslims. The examples listed above represent *symbolic* solidarity. Those posting messages on Facebook or leaving flowers are trying to send a social message of inclusion; a message that is both necessary and valued. In the current paper, however, we argue that support for Muslims in the West must move beyond symbolic solidarity to concrete action. In the absence of concerted, deliberate, inclusive, and sometimes effortful action, symbolic solidarity risks becoming tokenistic. In the following paper we outline why this is the case and make practical suggestions for how to act as allies to Muslims in the West.

Emoting in the wake of the Christchurch terror attacks

We are strongly embedded in, and influenced by, the groups to which we belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These include large scale categories such as the nation we reside in, our ethnicity or race, and our religion. We look to these groups to figure out how to think, feel, and behave, and are deeply connected to them; our group memberships help make up who we are. This means that we often feel emotions in response to what happens to our group, even if we are not personally involved (Mackie, Maitner, & Smith, 2009; Mackie, Silver, & Smith, 2004). We can be moved to tears of joy if our rugby team wins (common for New Zealand, less so for Australia), or feel proud when a fellow countryperson wins an Oscar. Group based emotions can also be negative: following the Christchurch terror attacks many non-Muslim New Zealanders and Australians, as well as White people in general, expressed feelings of guilt, grief, and anger.

As might be expected, experiencing negative emotions is unpleasant, and people are often motivated to act to relieve them (Yzerbyt, Dumont, Wigboldus, & Gordijn, 2003). The messages of solidarity shown by non-Muslims to Muslims after the attacks then, likely not only reflect a general desire to explicitly define the group norm (e.g., "We are a nation that likes Muslims"), to reject the terrorist, and to support the Muslim community, but also to express and purge negative emotion.

There is evidence to show that this can work. People who receive social support after crying report experiencing catharsis, and gain a new understanding of the event that caused them to cry (Bylsma, Vingerhoets, & Rottenberg, 2008). Consequently, it is possible that those who expressed grief and anger in the wake of the attacks and received support and thanks may have experienced alleviation of distress, signalling the end of an emotional experience. The problem with this is that 1) for Muslim people, the distress is ongoing, and 2) these attacks did not occur in a vacuum, and the societal factors that give rise to Western Islamophobia, White nationalism, and intergroup violence have not been eliminated.

Ongoing, active solidarity is needed

Muslim people living in the West face substantial levels of prejudice and discrimination. A meta-analysis from 30 countries in Europe reveals that antipathy towards Muslim people is higher than prejudice towards "immigrants" in general, and that prejudice towards Muslims was substantive well in advance of 2001 (Strabac & Listhaug, 2008). On September 11, 2001 members of the terrorist group Al-Qaeda coordinated a series of attacks in the United States. Attacks were widely condemned by Western Muslim groups (Hashmi, n.d.; Kurzman, 2018). Despite this, following the attacks, hate crimes against Muslims in the U.S. increased by 1600% from the previous year (Selby, 2018). In 2016, the year of the U.S. presidential election, the numbers of attacks on Muslims on record

for that year surpassed the number of attacks on Muslims the year following 9/11 (Kishi, 2017). The issue of Islamophobia is not just one relegated to the U.S., however. The week after the Christchurch terrorist attacks, hate crimes against Muslims rose by 593% in the United Kingdom, 89% of which made direct reference to the New Zealand attacks (Dodd, 2019).

Returning to New Zealand, there is evidence that media coverage of Muslim people may be contributing to anti-Muslim sentiment in New Zealand. Shaver, Sibley, Osborne, and Bulbulia (2017) found that the number of hours people report watching the news every week was related to increased anger and prejudice towards Muslims. This was true regardless of people's education, age, gender, socio-economic status, and political orientation. This finding may reflect the unbalanced treatment of Muslims in the media. For example, in the U.S. violence by Muslims receives 357% more media attention than violence by non-Muslims (Kearns, Betus, & Lemieux, 2019). In sum then, Islamophobia is prevalent across the Western World, and if anti-Muslimness and xenophobia are pervasive we need pervasive solidarity.

Symbolic support matters, but is not enough

In the face of such widespread Islamophobia, symbolic support may help to set a less prejudiced societal norm, increasing the extent to which prejudice is seen as unacceptable, and communicating a message of inclusion. This matters a lot, as exposure to prejudice is linked to distress and ill-health (for reviews see Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014; Yip, 2018), and messages of acceptance may help to counter these ill effects on Muslims (and eventually even reduce the amount of prejudice Muslims are exposed to). Words and gestures of support, however, are only one part of the solution. If our actions do not move beyond these gestures, they are tokenistic. Tokenism has been defined as the symbolic inclusion of certain groups to give an *appearance* of diversity, in the absence of actual behaviour that promotes diversity (Grant, 2017). In this case, tokenistic solidarity would be the symbolic inclusion of, or solidarity with, Muslim people, in the absence of further action that makes society a fairer, more inclusive, safer space for Muslims.

Symbolic solidarity offers a promise of fair treatment and equity that simply cannot be fulfilled without concerted effort and change in society. To understand this point, we invoke a comparison with an interpersonal relationship. Imagine a situation where a man finds out that his romantic partner has been unfaithful (the offence). His partner apologizes for the offence vociferously, hugs him, and swears undying love and future fidelity. Two months later the man finds out that his partner has continued to cheat on him. At first glance, it may seem that this interpersonal example has little to do with a complex intergroup situation, but as we highlighted earlier, what happens at the group level is deeply meaningful and impactful at the personal level. In both the case of the cheating partner and the tokenistic ally, the words offer comfort and safety, but the actions allow an environment of threat to flourish. Past intergroup research also suggests that (unfounded) expectations of fair treatment from majority group members can have a sedative effect on minority group members, reducing their support for collective action to address inequality (Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2010). The message, for the ally (or the cheating partner, for that matter), is to follow through on promises with action. Hands-on allyship and solidarity, however, is hard. A practical look at how to move beyond tokenistic solidarity must acknowledge this, and deal with the problem head on.

Barriers to active allyship and solidarity

The flowers and messages of support offered to Mosques and Muslims after the March 15th terrorist attacks reveal a large body of support for Muslims in New Zealand and Australia, and indeed across the world. Given this, it might be imagined that concrete activism and improved social conditions for Muslims in the West will naturally follow. This is unlikely to be the case, however. Activism is generally difficult, and there are countervailing pressures that will make it easier for potential allies to express support and move on, rather than engage in creating actual change. As illustrated above it is vital that pervasive long-term solidarity is deployed. Long term solidarity involves not overlooking, but rather, overcoming the normal barriers associated with being an ally, which we outline below.

Dealing with interracial (or interreligious) issues is stressful

Many White people in Western nations are highly motivated to appear non-prejudiced when interacting with minority group members (Richeson & Shelton, 2007; Shelton, 2003). In general, while minority group members struggle to be respected in intergroup interactions, members of majority groups are concerned about being liked (Shelton, 2003). In part because of this, some studies suggest that majority group members get nervous and uncomfortable when meeting members of minority groups (Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001). In one study White participants showed increased cardiovascular reactivity when interacting with a Black confederate (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel, & Kowai-Bell, 2001). Richeson and Shelton (2007) similarly found that Whites are concerned with appearing prejudiced. They carefully monitor feelings, behavior, and thoughts when around non-White people, leaving them feeling depleted after interracial interactions. White people also display anxiety about discussing racial issues, especially if they think that they are going to have to discuss these issues with people of color (Marshburn & Knowles, 2018). It should be noted that discomfort in interracial interactions is also evident for minority group members (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999), and as discussed in a later section, is just one part of the burden minority group members face in majority group spaces. This body of research highlights how intergroup interactions can be uncomfortable and stressful for those that engage in them.

While Muslims do not represent a homogenous ethnic group, they are often non-White. In New Zealand a large percentage of Muslims are Indian and Middle Eastern (Ward, 2011); in the United States, the largest racial subset are Black (Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017). Muslims also often have visible markers of Muslimness (e.g., wearing a *hijab*). There is also considerable evidence that non-Muslim people feel nervous about interacting with Muslim people or issues specifically (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011; Velasco González, Verkuyten, Weesie, & Poppe, 2008). Consequently, one barrier to engaging in meaningful solidarity with Muslims is likely to be stress and anxiety about what to do and say, and how to behave. Like most anxieties or fears, exposure is important.

There is evidence that people who have more positive contact with Muslims (Hutchison & Rosenthal, 2011), or read narrative fiction with Muslim protagonists (Johnson, Jasper, Griffin, & Huffman, 2013), experience less intergroup anxiety. Thus, the more we engage with Muslim people and their experiences (as told by Muslims, not the news; see Shaver et al., 2017), the less stressful and anxiety provoking these interactions will become.

People often dislike those who stand up to prejudice and discrimination

In general, people who draw attention to inequality and injustice are often disparaged. People who confront prejudice are often seen as complainers and exaggerators, and may face social costs for speaking up (e.g., exclusion and teasing (Shelton & Stewart, 2004)). People who attribute negative outcomes to discrimination are also liked less than those who do not make these attributions (Garcia, Reser, Amo, Redersdorff, & Branscombe, 2005). In general, it is much more comfortable to think of our world as just and fair, and by extension it is uncomfortable and unpleasant to confront the grim realities of social inequity (Lerner, 1980), particularly when our group is benefiting from it (e.g., Lowery, Knowles, & Unzueta, 2007). This research highlights the fact that there will likely be social costs of confronting prejudice towards Muslims. People find it hard to conceive of their world, let alone themselves, as being prejudiced or contributing to harm to another group. It is OK to be scared about the social consequences of confronting prejudice; this is a normal part of becoming an ally, and indeed, ongoing solidarity. The important thing, however, is that personal fears do not prevent important and concrete allyship.

We will get things wrong, and be criticized for it

One social consequence of engaging in allyship not previously discussed is the fact that no ally is perfect – all people engaging in solidarity based action will make mistakes, and be criticized for them. The problem is that we typically see ourselves as good and moral, and there is evidence that the same is true at the group level. In fact, it is more important to us that groups to which we belong are seen as moral than either sociable or competent (Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007). When our group has

treated another group poorly we are motivated to restore our group's moral image. We may do this, for example, through a group apology or a gesture of remorse. One problem, however, is that we are sensitive to any criticism of these gestures of goodwill. A series of Australian studies found that when intergroup apologies were rejected, people felt morally damaged, and consequently withdrew their support for reconciliation (Barlow et al., 2015). It is easy to see the obstacles we face as allies; if we engage in helping, we will make mistakes, and if we are called out on the mistake, we will be inclined to withdraw our support. Furthermore, if we are rejected or criticised, the emotional pull will be to reposition ourselves as victims (e.g., stating: "I was trying to help!"). It is easier thinking about ourselves and our group as being victimized, rather than being the perpetrator of a wrong (Bar-Tal, Chernyak-Hai, Schori, & Gundar, 2009).

The vital thing here is not avoiding mistakes (it is impossible), but persevering through them. If you belong to a majority group (e.g., are a White New Zealander or Australian) it is likely that you might be especially sensitive to criticism about doing the wrong thing when it comes to race or religion. White people in the West, as the dominant majority group, are not used to thinking about their own race. Consequently, even small reminders of whiteness, racial privilege, or lack of consideration for people from other groups, can feel like severe attacks (DiAngelo, 2018). Again, the easiest path is to shy away from situations that remind you of your race, and position as part of a dominant majority group (i.e., your privilege). Two common responses are to: 1) deny the existence of privilege, or 2) distance oneself from the group (e.g., by stating: "I don't really see myself as White", or "I just see everyone as an individual") (Knowles, Lowery, Chow, & Unzueta, 2014). The problem with either approach is that in the absence of a fair society, both responses contribute to ongoing inequality. The final option is to work to increase intergroup equity (Knowles et al., 2014). In this case, this would involve working to ensure that Muslims are included, safe, and respected in our societies.

Activist burnout is rife

For the reasons listed above, as well as many others, people who engage in long term activism are prone to burnout

(Gorski & Chen, 2015). This burnout can result in disengagement from the movement or cause for which they are fighting (Klandermans, 2009). Other causes of burnout include stress, feeling overworked, and experiencing failure, as well as working in a culture that demands selflessness, and the resultant lack of self-care (Gorski & Chen, 2015). People have outlined the symptoms of activist burnout as the deterioration of physical and emotional wellbeing, and feelings of disillusionment and hopelessness (Gorski & Chen, 2015). Engaging in genuine solidarity with a group that is disenfranchised can be hard and draining. Again, this is normal, and a cost most often born by the disenfranchised themselves. Consequently, acknowledging the strain that solidarity can take is important. We know from clinical psychological research that acknowledgement and labelling of difficult emotions helps people to cope (Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda, & Lillis, 2006; Hayes, Pistorello, & Levin, 2012). We recommend this alongside ensuring that you engage in appropriate self-care.

The draw of inaction is strong

Not all barriers to engaging in genuine solidarity concern the difficulty of talking about or engaging with inequality, or even being an activist. There is also the fact that we live busy and stressful lives, and the temptation will often be to procrastinate, and leave the difficult work of inclusivity to another day. Leaving aside work, family, and health commitments, there is Netflix, Facebook, Tinder, gaming, socializing, and so on, all of which offer us immediate gratification or distraction from otherwise uncomfortable realities. Solidarity requires prioritizing allyship – at least some of the time. Here, we believe that the concrete actions that can help to overcome procrastination, such as setting small and tangible goals, may be useful (Owens, Bowman, & Dill, 2008; Wieber & Gollwitzer, 2010).

Overcoming barriers is important and possible

The aim of this section is not to provide a laundry list of reasons *not* to participate in meaningful solidarity. Rather, we aim to normalize the difficulties associated with activism, and in doing so, give people the capacity to recognize issues that they may go through, and advocate for self-compassion and resilience in the face of such barriers. Research suggests that developing a strong and consolidated

activist identity is a good predictor of engaging in collective action. More generally, group-based identification is protective, and enhances wellbeing (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Haslam, Reicher, & Levine, 2012; Jetten, Haslam, Cruwys, & Branscombe, 2018).

Further to this, those who have a conviction that there is a moral issue at stake, or are angry about inequality, are again likely to feel compelled to act (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Identification, moral conviction, and anger over injustice in this tragedy are all seeds that have been sown for the development of strong, effective allyship. People are enraged about the attacks and acknowledge that a great moral violation has occurred. The next step is translating this energy into creating a society in which Muslims are safe and included, and not just seen as outsiders to be tolerated. Of course, an easy alternate option would be to withdraw from the situation or stay silent. Doing this, however, is far from apolitical; it is deciding to lay the onus of both the tragedy and societal change at the feet of Muslims. Muslim people (and minority group members in general) do not have the luxury of disengaging with prejudice and Islamophobia and are often put in the position where they have to defend themselves, their religion, their group, and their existence. As we know from the Civil Rights Era in the U.S., to bring about equality for those most vulnerable in our society, true solidarity and engagement is needed.

Impact on minority people

Members of minority groups are rarely, if ever, insulated from race-based or minority-based stress (Jones & Norwood, 2017). They are perpetually reminded of their minority status, whether through being the only member of their group in their workplace or school (e.g., being the only Muslim academic in a department), being repeatedly asked to define and defend their group, (e.g., "Yes, I am a Muslim woman. I choose to wear a headscarf, and for me it represents freedom and faith, not oppression"), or facing race or religion based stereotyping, aggression or prejudice (Jones & Norwood, 2017). Minorities in general have a heightened sense of their visibility in majority spaces. Research shows that they feel social isolation in these spaces, as well as the pressure to assimilate, and to perform emotionally, resulting in psychological

burnout (Erickson & Ritter, 2001; Evans, 2013; Evans & Moore, 2015; Gustafson, 2008; Kanter, 2008; Krimmel & Gormley, 2003; Wingfield & Alston, 2013). To be accepted by mainstream society, additional expectations are placed on minority group members. They are expected to behave more morally than majority group members in the same circumstances (Fernández, Branscombe, Saguy, Gómez, & Morales, 2014).

Muslim people in the West are keenly aware of religious discrimination, and societal anti-Muslim sentiment (Rippy & Newman, 2008). As many Muslim people in the West are also immigrants, these stressors are often combined with the pressure of adapting to a new culture. Lower levels of English proficiency and recent immigration are associated with depression in young Muslim women in the US, for example (Khuwaja, Selwyn, Kapadia, McCurdy, & Khuwaja, 2007). Post 9/11 Muslim youth in the West have reported feeling that they have to hide their Muslim identity in order to fit in, or police themselves and other group members in order to be seen as a "good" Muslim by non-Muslim people (Sirin & Fine, 2007).

There is also evidence to suggest that Islamophobia is gendered. Muslim women are more likely to be the victims of anti-Muslim hate crimes in Australia, the UK, and the U.S., than are Muslim men (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009; Dreher, 2006; Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010; Perry, 2014). Muslim men, on the other hand, are stereotyped as being violent, threatening, sexist, and dangerous to women (Ewing, 2008). Muslim women who wear a *hijab*, *niqab*, or *burqa* are instantly identifiable as Muslim. These articles of dress are often portrayed as threatening, oppressive, dangerous, or "othering", particularly in media depictions (Bullock & Jafri, 2000). Given the rates of hate crimes Muslim women in the West face, as well as the prejudice associated with their dress, they have a fear of violence and harassment, and a reduced sense of belonging. These fears restrict their freedom of movement in public spaces; Muslim women report being hesitant to go out alone because of Islamophobia (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009; Kwan, 2008; *Listen: National consultations on eliminating prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians*, 2004; Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria Inc., 2008) In addition to all of this, Muslim people who publicly challenge Islamophobia and inequitable

treatment will face the same derogation that any disadvantaged group member faces when attributing outcomes to prejudice.

From the rates of hate crimes reported by Muslims, to the everyday stressors associated with Islamophobia, to the terrorist attacks of March 15, it should now be evident that choosing *not* to stand in solidarity with Muslims amounts to acceptance of a society in which Muslims are excluded and targeted. Again, the support shown by swathes of non-Muslim New Zealanders and Australians suggests that there is an appetite for solidarity. Below we outline 13 practical suggestions (see Figure 1) for how to act as a practical ally to Muslims.

Practical Suggestions

It can be confusing trying to work out how to best act as an ally. Advantaged group members may have ideas about how to support disadvantaged groups, for example, but this may not align with how these disadvantaged groups want to be supported (Droogendyk, Wright, Lubensky, & Louis, 2016; Louis et al., 2019). Below we offer practical suggestions for inclusivity that move beyond tokenism to create structural change that impacts the everyday lives of Muslims. Before we begin, a few caveats are necessary. The list below is not exhaustive, and where possible you should ask minorities how they can be accommodated. Creating lasting structural change is a long-term endeavour, and one that many others have written about more fully (e.g., Louis, Barlow, & Greenaway, 2012; Louis et al., 2019). It is our hope, however, that the implementation of even a few of these suggestions might provide relief and support for Muslims in the West. We also note that none of the actions listed below is intended to replace symbolic support, but rather to be implemented in concert with it. Finally, we recognise that many of the suggestions require sacrifice, or changing something about your behaviour, program, or structure.

1. For Children & Adolescents

According to a poll by *The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding*, 43% of Muslim families with kids in K-12 schools report they have a child that has been a target of bullying because of their faith – a quarter of the time, the bully was an adult (Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017). This rate is compared to 23% of Jewish children, and 6% of Catholic children

that report being bullied because of their faith. Negative stereotypes of Islam are often also targeted at Muslim children, who are keenly aware of being different from their peers (Ramarajan & Runell, 2007). Here we make suggestions to help children and adolescents:

1a. Talk to your children

If you are expressing open Islamophobia, or stereotyping and othering Muslims in the home, it is likely that your child will adopt these attitudes and take them to school. Outside of this, however, children exist in a society in which Muslim people are routinely dehumanized (Viki, Osgood, & Phillips, 2013). Thus, it is possible that while parents assume a lack of prejudice and Islamophobic bullying, it may exist. In this instance, it is not enough to *not* display prejudice. Rather, it is important to talk clearly and openly about the inclusion and acceptance of Muslims, as well as standards of behaviour. There is some evidence that parenting factors can contribute to the development and cessation of bullying (Cohn & Canter, 2003; Hazlerr, Carney, Green, Powell, & Jolly, 1997; Smith, Twemlow, & Hoover, 1999), and thus intervening in the home may be successful.

1b. Include Muslim Narratives

One way that schools can be more inclusive of Muslim students is through representation of Muslim narratives and experiences through literature in school libraries, and books assigned for readings. As parents, you may buy books with Muslim protagonists for your children and read these stories to them. Donating books to school and public libraries that centre Muslim stories is another practical way of increasing diversity. A list of books representing such stories is provided here (Murlas, 2019). Girls of the Crescent, an American non-profit organization, aims to increase diversity and representation by collecting books with female Muslim main characters and donating them to school districts and libraries in the U.S (Nasiri & Nasiri, 2019). To our knowledge neither New Zealand nor Australia currently has an organization akin to Girls of the Crescent, and thus another act of solidarity might be to create one.

1c. Inclusion of Muslim Teachers and Administrators

Another way to ensure Muslim representation and inclusion at school is to be inclusive and open to Muslim teachers. We are aware, however, that in New Zealand, only 1% of the population identifies as Muslim (Ward, 2011), and so not all schools will have a full-time Muslim teacher, Muslim administrator, or a Muslim person on the school board. If this is the case, Muslim voices can still be included in schools. A first step might be to encourage or be open to Muslim volunteers. There may be, for example, local Muslim professionals or parents (or both!) who would be willing to come and talk to children about their work. Meaningfully including a diverse range of people in positions of leadership and expertise may serve to humanize Muslims, show Muslim role models, as well as send a clear message of inclusion of Muslims to both Muslim and non-Muslim children.

1d. Ramadan Lunch space

During the month of Ramadan (note that the dates change year to year, see below), kids from the age of nine can start to fast. Recess and lunch hours can be challenging for children, as they can be singled out for not eating. In addition to ensuring that there is diverse religious education that lets non-Muslim children learn about Ramadan, we suggest creating a space – an unused classroom for example – for Muslim kids, and others who want to join, to do crafts, read, or nap during breaks.

2. For Academic & Organizational Settings

As stated above, public spaces (including workspaces) can often feel hostile or isolating to Muslim people in the West. There are simple and concrete steps you can take, however, to make your workplace more welcoming for Muslims.

2a. Halal dietary restrictions

Many Muslims observe halal dietary restrictions. Including halal meal options at cafeterias and canteens, and at special, catered events, will not only allow Muslims to eat, but also send a message of respect and inclusion.

2b. Alcohol

Muslims generally do not drink alcohol and may find it inappropriate to attend events where intoxicants are served. The interpretation and implementation of this ruling varies; some will not attend an event at all if alcohol is served, while others will attend but need to be at a table where alcohol is not consumed. This presents a challenge for office parties, networking and social activities, as it is normative in New Zealand and Australia for these events to include alcohol.

If you have Muslim colleagues or students at your event, a simple solution is to ask what they are comfortable with. Depending on their comfort-level it may be possible to set up sober tables at events, or to not serve alcohol for the first portion of the event, or to create networking and social opportunities throughout the year that are alcohol free (e.g., if Friday evening drinks occur fortnightly, a non-alcoholic morning tea could be organized on alternate weeks). Initiatives like this need not disrupt work events serving alcohol, but rather simply ensure that there are opportunities for Muslim and non-Muslim colleagues to mingle, collaborate, and enjoy functions together.

2c. Prayer Space

Muslims typically pray 5 times daily. For the many who work and learn in spaces that do not accommodate them, they end up praying in empty corridors, car parks, behind buildings, or in restrooms. Aside from these spaces not being quiet or clean, it often draws the attention of passers-by. There have been reports of law enforcement being called in response to praying Muslims, whose behaviour is interpreted as "suspicious activity" (Armstrong, 2015; Salinger, 2016)

We suggest providing a clean, quiet, and safe space for Muslims and people of other faiths to pray and meditate. Ideally, prayer spaces would be provided as long-term spaces in organizations, but such spaces are also needed in the short term to ensure Muslims are safe and comfortable. For short-term events like conferences and day seminars hotels will often provide prayer spaces if asked, and some even have prayer rugs. Note that these spaces need not exclusively be used for prayer. A quiet and clean space, such as an empty meeting room that can be used for prayer would also do. Having prayer spaces at schools, universities, businesses, conferences, and so on, sends a message of inclusion and provides a practical space for Muslims to conduct their prayer.

2d. Handshaking, hugging, and touch

Some Muslims (and Orthodox Jews) follow theological rulings that don't allow for touching people of another gender, outside of one's immediate family. This practice is not related to sexism, or antipathy towards other

genders (Nazeer, Cila, Lalonde, & Mirnajafi, 2018) but is rather to do with etiquette, respect, modesty, and humility. If you meet a Muslim (or Orthodox Jew), simply ask, "Do you shake hands?" If they say no, try not to take this personally, remembering that it is a religious custom rooted in respect. Think about how you can warmly greet them without touch (an enthusiastic hello always works well!). While it may seem strange at first to ask if someone shakes hands, given how normative handshaking is in the West, it will become more natural over time. Think of it as obtaining consent before reaching out to touch someone – be it hugging or shaking someone's hand. Including this information in workplace cultural training is another way of making institutions inclusive spaces for Muslims.

2e. Recognition of holidays

While holidays are governmentally mandated for Christian traditions such as Easter and Christmas, Muslims often have to work through holy celebrations. Recognition of Muslim holidays is important in the workplace as it both signals inclusivity and allows people to take time off. Returning to the example of Ramadan (for which no time off is required bar the day that marks the end of Ramadan, known as *Eid*), organizations may benefit by recognizing this period. It may be possible to ensure that work retreats, or energetic work activities are planned (where possible) when Muslim employees are not fasting. Note, the Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar meaning the dates rotate every year – so if *Eid* is in June one year, it may not be in June the following year.

For Children & Adolescents	In Organizational & Academic Settings	More Broadly
Talk to your children about inclusion and acceptance	Inclusion of Halal options in cafeterias and catered events	Educate yourself
Donate books with Muslim protagonists to libraries	Inclusion of alcohol free events	Speak up against Islamophobia
Representation of Muslims in schools as speakers and role models	Creating a prayer space	Push for Muslim representation in the media
Ramadan lunch spaces	Ask "Do you shake hands?" when meeting a Muslim	Complain when you see or hear Islamophobia in the media
	Recognize Muslim holidays	

Figure 1. A guide to inclusivity and practical suggestions for being an ally to Muslims

3. In General: Challenge Islamophobia

One final point of practical solidarity is that to maximize your impact, you can work to challenge anti-Muslim sentiment when you see it. Doing so can be difficult, for the reasons outlined in the barriers section, but it is worthwhile. Part of challenging systemic Islamophobia is through symbolic solidarity – modelling positive and inclusive attitudes to your social circle and beyond. Part will also involve actively challenging people and organizations when they engage in behaviour that is prejudiced or discriminatory. Small things you can do are:

3a. Educate yourself

In order to be able to factually challenge stereotypes, and counter false notions about Muslims you need to learn about Islam, Islamophobia, and Muslim people. Of course, there is no singular Muslim person, but exposing yourself to diverse Muslim stories, narratives, and points of view will be useful. An in-depth exploration of common questions about Muslims and Islam can be found here.

3b. Speak up when people express Islamophobia

People often use racial or religious slurs about Muslim people, make sweeping generalizations, or dehumanize Muslim people (Kteily & Bruneau, 2017). When confronted with this behavior you have an opportunity to speak up, defend Muslim people, express social disapproval of prejudice, and in the best case, change the mind of the person expressing prejudice. Sometimes this person will be your family, your partner, or your friend, and this can be challenging. Amnesty International has outlined how to talk to a loved one when they're prejudiced (Gillan, 2019). We also recommend this guide outlining anti-racism strategies and conversations based on psychological literature (Louis, Barlow, Greenaway, & Macchia, 2013).

3c. Agitate for increased representation of Muslim people

It is not just children's books that suffer from lack of representation of Muslim people and voices. Muslim people are often simply not depicted in Western films, TV shows, books, magazines, or even advertisements. When they are represented it is often in a negative way (e.g., as a terrorist) (Alsultany, 2012; Said, 2008; Shaheen, 2003). As highlighted earlier, exposure to negative Muslim stereotypes and tropes is linked to increased prejudice (Shaver et al., 2017), while reading Muslim narratives can reduce intergroup anxiety and prejudice (Johnson et al., 2013). If you think that your favourite show would benefit from the inclusion of a Muslim family or character, write to the producers, or start a petition. There is also a large body of films made, and books written, by Muslim creatives. You can ask your local cinema to play these films, read books by Muslim authors in your local book club, and ensure that children at your local school are being exposed to stories from a diverse (not to mention

interesting, informative, and fun) range of people. To support Muslim books, film, and media projects, you may also choose to explore crowdfunding efforts on site such as Launchgood.

3d. Complain when the media reports on Muslim affairs in a prejudiced way

In a similar vein, it can be useful to write and complain if you feel that media coverage of Muslim issues or affairs is promoting racial or religious intolerance or hatred, or bolstering stereotypes. You may make complaints to media regulating agencies (in New Zealand: The Broadcasting Standards Authority and in Australia: Australian Press Council,), report the behaviour to the human rights commission, write opinion letters, or write letters of complaint. Small changes on the way in which Muslim people are portrayed in the media may lead to large net changes in how Muslim people are treated in New Zealand and Australia, and across the Western World.

Conclusion

In the present paper we have made the case that while symbolic displays of support for Muslim people are necessary and valued, they are not sufficient to overcome pervasive Islamophobia, anti-Muslim sentiment, and social exclusion of Muslims in the West; deliberate and persistent solidarity and allyship is needed. We have outlined challenges to solidarity and allyship, and made the case for why these must be overcome. We end with practical solutions that we hope each reader will integrate into their school, workplace, and life. While such actions will take effort, it is through action that we can (and must) work together to ensure that Muslims in the West feel safe to pray, to go out and eat and shop, to study, to work, to have fun, and to be valued, equal, and included members of the nations that they call home.

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