



Why Are We Worried?

The Role of Religion and Out-Group Bias in Predicting American Fears

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Abstract

The experience of worry is associated with a host of negative outcomes. This study analyzes the role of religion and out-group bias in predicting worries or fears often associated with an “other.” Using 2014 data from the Chapman Survey of American Fears, we examine the predictors of fear of personal violence, worries about a terrorist attack, and concerns that immigrants bring disease to the United States. Some religious measures are predictive of fears of personal violence and terrorism. Certain out-group bias measures are predictive of fear of terrorism and concerns about disease-carrying immigrants. Religion can exacerbate and reduce worries, as can sentiments about an “other.”

Keywords: religion, worry, fear, out-group, identity

Introduction

There is a notable body of research centered on the emotional and cognitive state of worry (see Boehnke et al.). The question of worry is salient, in part, because of its relationship to other negative states such as anxiety (Dar and Iqbal; Eysenck and Van Berkum), depression (Starcevic), and overall lowered well-being (Schwartz and Melech). The fear and apprehension experienced when one is worried has the clear potential to create, or exacerbate, negative outcomes.

This study, however, considers those factors that predict worries. In particular, we address those worries that involve social groups often marked as “other.” We examine predictors of fear of personal violence, worries about a terrorist attack, and concerns about disease-carrying

immigrants.¹ Considering the high level of religiosity of the U.S., we consider the role that religious identity plays in predicting worries. We also consider the impact of social capital, including religious service attendance and generalized trust, for potentially reducing fears and worries. Indeed, a fair amount of research has shown that religious behavior and belief can produce positive well-being outcomes, though the findings are complex (see Ellison, Burdette, and Hill; Ellison et al.). Finally, given that our measures of worry and fear represent a social “other,” we analyze the role of symbolic racism in predicting worries.

Literature Review

Worry

According to Boehnke et al., worry is a negative cognitive experience that involves an *object* whose state is threatened and a *domain* of life. Worries have an affective aspect that “consists of the degree of disturbance elicited by the perceived discrepancy” (751) between the desired state of that object and its actual state. The object of one’s worries can be micro, involving fears about oneself or close others, or macro, involving concerns about society or the larger world. The domain of life can include areas such as one’s health and safety, social relations, achievement, finances, and the like (Schwartz and Melech). Furthermore, worry centers primarily on fears and concerns about the threat of future events (Dar and Iqbal).

Worry has been demonstrated to impact well-being. For example, several studies have shown worry to be correlated with anxiety (Dar and Iqbal; Eysenck; Eysenck and Van Berkum; Roemer, Molina, and Borkovec; Salters-Pednault et al.). Worry is also related to, and sometimes co-occurs with, depression (Starcevic; Starcevic et al.). In a cross-country study, Schwartz and Melech found that worry correlated with lower life satisfaction, more sadness, and less happiness. Importantly, however, these negative outcomes only related to micro-worries. The researchers found a slight tendency for those who engaged in macro-worries to report better subjective well-being. Other studies have shown worry to be related to emotional disruption and interference in daily activities among children and adolescents (Caes et al.). Finally, one study found that worry negatively related to family functioning (Kelly and Paolini).

The literature clearly demonstrates that worry is related to a variety of negative outcomes, although the findings are complex. As described above, worry is related to, but does not necessarily predict, these negative states. In addition, the findings from Schwartz and Malech demonstrate that while worries regarding oneself or close contacts (micro-worries) are related to lowered well-being, concerns about the wider society or world (macro-worries) may be related to better well-being. The present study is interested in those factors that may predict both micro- and macro-worries. While much of the worry literature centers on cognitive and personality factors for their relationship with worry, this study considers the *social* factors that

¹ We use the term “worry” predominantly in this study, but we also use the terms fear and concern, as these are the precise terms used in our dependent measures. We acknowledge that there are some differences between these concepts (see Levy and Guttman), but we feel that the overall experience of anxiety and apprehension captured in our dependent measures are adequately represented by the overarching concept of “worry.”

may predict fear and worry and is particularly interested in factors that predict worries or fears associated with a social out-group. The following sections briefly address the theoretical frameworks that inform our study: Social Identity Theory, Social Capital Theory, and the Theory of Symbolic Politics.

Social Identity Theory

Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory is primarily concerned with the impact that in-group identity has on intergroup relations. According to this framework, social categories have the potential to shape one's identity, and they do so in a context in which identity is constructed in relation to an "other," or, out-group. Furthermore, in-group identity can be strengthened when there is perceived resource competition between one's group and another group. Intergroup differentiation is influenced when one internalizes their group membership into their self-concept, when the social situation facilitates the evaluation of relevant attributes, and the out-group is perceived as a relevant comparison group creating pressures to highlight in-group distinctiveness. When these conditions exist, the stage is set for out-group rejection, discrimination, and hostility.

Religion is one of those social factors often incorporated as a salient aspect of group membership and identity. Ysseldyk, Matheson, and Anisman argue that religion may provide a unique source of social identity because it is grounded in a distinct sacred worldview, is experienced within a community of believers, and is often the most salient group identification individuals possess. In light of Tajfel and Turner's framework, it is possible that those who are identified as highly religious may be more worried or fearful about events or phenomena that are perceived to involve a group that is different, and thus, threatening because of their difference. Indeed, a fair amount of research has shown that religious in-group identity is associated with racial prejudice and ethnocentrism (see Hall, Matz, and Wood).

Those who identify as strongly religious may view those who are not religious, or do not share their religious worldview, as being fundamentally different in terms of moral and ethical standards. Thus, they may worry about the potential for harm from those less religiously directed. Research by Grasmick et al. found that religious fundamentalists tend to emphasize the importance of character and, thus, view those who commit crimes as having immoral character. Highly religious people may be more fearful of crime than less religious people because they view criminals as having fundamentally different, or even nonexistent, moral frameworks. Thus, the following hypothesis:

H1: Those who identify as strongly religious will be more fearful of personal violence than those who identify as less or not religious.

Those who identify as strongly religious, particularly in the United States, where over 70 percent of adults identify as some form of Christian (Pew 2015), may view other religious groups as out-groups. For those who identify as highly religious, frequent media coverage of Islamic terrorism may generate negative sentiments toward Islam and Muslims and, consequently generate fear regarding terrorism. Thus, the following hypothesis:

H2: Those who identify as strongly religious will be more worried about a terrorist attack than those who identify as less or not religious.

Pew (2017) reported that roughly 32% of Americans feel it is important to be Christian to be truly American. However, among those for whom religion plays a “very important role in daily life,” 51 percent reported the same. Those who identify as strongly religious may see immigrants, particularly those assumed to be non-Christian, as “other.” Because immigrants may be viewed as threatening to the American culture, religious framework, and way of life, fears of contamination may predominate. Thus, the following hypothesis:

H3: Those who identify as strongly religious will be more worried about immigrants bringing disease to this country than those who identify as less or not religious.

Social Capital Theory

The concept of social capital has been articulated by several theorists and is generally defined as the resources embedded in the structure of social networks (Bourdieu; Coleman; Putnam). The resources gleaned from network ties include social support, reciprocity, and trust, and can produce a variety of positive outcomes for those involved. For example, Helliwell and Putnam found that various forms of social capital, including family, neighborhood, community, and religious ties, were all associated with better physical health, happiness, and life satisfaction. This study considers social capital for its potential to reduce or assuage worries and fears.

Tsai and Ghoshal further articulate two key dimensions of social capital: structural and relational. The structural dimension highlights the importance of social interaction among network members to obtain important information or other resources. The relational dimension refers to assets such as trust and trustworthiness that are developed within networks. Framed by social capital theory, we expect that being active in a religious community provides emotional support and comfort, potentially reducing fear and worry. Following Tsai and Ghoshal’s framework, regular interaction among churchgoers means the structural dimensions of social capital can provide emotional support in an uncertain and fear-inducing world.

Thus, the following hypotheses based on the benefits of the structural dimension of social capital:

H4: Those who attend church more often will be less fearful of personal violence than those who attend less often or do not attend.

H5: Those who attend church more often will be less worried about a terrorist attack than those who attend less often or do not attend.

H6: Those who attend church more often will be less worried about immigrants bringing disease to this country than those who attend less often or do not attend.

Regular churchgoers may also benefit from the relational dimension of social capital in that they are embedded in a community of like-minded believers that generates trust, comfort, and reciprocity. It may be that those who possess higher levels of trust experience less worry and fear over future events. Based on the benefits gleaned from the relational aspects of social capital, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H7: Those with lower levels of trust will be more fearful of personal violence than those who are more trusting.

H8: Those with lower levels of trust will be more worried about a terrorist attack than those who are more trusting.

H9: Those with lower levels of trust will be more worried about immigrants bringing disease to this country than those who are more trusting.

Symbolic Racism

According to the theory of Symbolic Racism (also referred to as Symbolic Politics), individuals develop prejudicial attitudes about racial “others” through the process of childhood socialization. These learned perspectives carry over into adulthood and influence one’s views on a variety of race-based political issues and policies. According to symbolic racism, a real threat is not necessary to generate opposition to policy believed to unfairly benefit racial and ethnic minorities. Due to childhood socialization, the underlying prejudicial attitude is all that is needed to foment hostility toward race-based policy (Kinder and Sears). Indeed, research has established that symbolic racism, rather than actual threat or competition, is predictive of policy preferences (Sears and Henry).

While symbolic racism theory centers on racial resentment that affects policy attitudes, we extend this framework to worry or fear about events associated with a racial “other.” Further, the worries that are the focus of this study – criminal victimization, terrorism, and disease-carrying immigrants – can be tied to policy responses in which race or ethnicity is often a central component of the public discourse. For example, “tough on crime” responses from politicians often play upon the public’s perception that racial and ethnic minorities are the greatest criminal threat in society (Pickett et al.). Similarly, fear of terrorism can be used to justify militaristic and heightened security responses (Gadarian; Skitka et al.). Finally, restrictive immigration policy often reflects fears of ethnic “others” (Citrin et al.; Esses et al.).

In light of symbolic racism theory, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H10: Those who give blacks, immigrants, and Muslims lower ratings will be more fearful of personal violence than those who rate them more highly.

H11: Those who give blacks, immigrants, and Muslims lower ratings will be more worried about a terrorist attack than those who rate them more highly.

H12: Those who give blacks, immigrants, and Muslims lower ratings will be more worried about immigrants bringing disease to this country than those who rate them more highly.

Given studies that show different racial and ethnic minorities are often grouped together and subject to similar levels of prejudice (see Parillo and Donoghue), we predict that attitudes toward blacks, immigrants, and Muslims will be similarly predictive of fears and worries.

Data and Methods

This project uses national data from the 2014 Chapman Survey of American Fears, Wave 1. The data were collected by GFK (Knowledge Networks) for Chapman University in April

2014. Respondents were recruited using random-digit-dialing procedures, and includes non-institutionalized adults 18 years of age or older. The final sample consists of approximately 1,572 respondents (Chapman University).

Dependent Variables: Micro- and Macro-Level Fears or Worries

The first dependent variable, “fear of violence,” measures a micro-level fear or worry, as it based upon respondents’ fear of personal violence. Respondents were asked, “How afraid are you of being victimized in the following ways?” Response categories were based on Likert-scale responses and include “very afraid, afraid, somewhat afraid, and not at all afraid.” Responses to the crimes of mugging, murder, and random shooting were combined into an index that measures fear of being a victim of personal violence. The Cronbach’s Alpha score for the index was .877. The response categories were reverse-coded so that higher scores indicate more fear of being victimized by violent crime.

The next two dependent variables capture worries about macro-level events that impact society or the world at large. The first measure asks how worried respondents are about a terrorist attack. Respondents were asked, “How worried are you that the following natural/manmade disasters or events could occur in the United States in the next 25 years . . . a terrorist attack?” Response categories were on a Likert-scale and include “very worried, worried, somewhat worried, not at all worried.” Response categories were reverse-coded so that higher scores indicate more worry about a terrorist attack.

The second measure asks how they feel about the impact of immigrants. Respondents were asked, “Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about immigrants: immigrants bring diseases into the United States.” Response categories were on a Likert-scale and include “strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree.” Response categories were reverse-coded so that higher scores indicate more agreement that immigrants bring disease.

Independent Variables

Social Identity Theory. To capture how strongly one identifies with their religion, we use a measure based on the question, “How religious do you consider yourself to be?” Response categories were, “not at all religious, not too religious, somewhat religious, and very religious.” Higher values indicate stronger religiosity.

Social Capital Theory. To capture the structural dimensions of social capital (Tsai and Ghoshal), we use a measure based on how often the respondent attends religious services. There are eight response categories ranging from “never” to “more than once a week.” The higher values indicate more frequent attendance.

To capture the relational aspects of social capital (Tsai and Ghoshal) we use a measure based on the question, “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in life?” The response categories were dummy coded such that “1” represents those who feel “you can’t be too careful in life,” and “0” indicates those who responded that “most people can be trusted,” or, “it depends.”

Symbolic Racism Theory. We include three measures for symbolic racism. To capture racial bias, we use a rating scale for three social groups: blacks, immigrants, and Muslims. The rating

scale asks respondents “How would you rate the following groups of Americans?” Respondents can choose a number between 1 and 100, with higher scores indicating higher ratings.

Control Variables

We control for several sociodemographic factors. Race is coded so that “1” represents White and “0” represents all other racial groups.² Education is a categorical measure with four response categories ranging from “less than high school” to “Bachelor’s degree or higher.” Higher values indicate more education. Household income comprises five categories ranging from “less than \$19,999” to “\$100,000 or more.” Higher values indicate higher income. Gender is dummy coded so that “1” reflects female and “0” reflects male. Age is a continuous measure. Political preference is a 9-item categorical measure ranging from “extremely conservative” to “extremely liberal.” Higher values indicate stronger liberal views.

Finally, we also control for religious affiliation. We chose to use religious affiliation as a control, rather than a measure of social identity, because studies have shown that religious commitment and sentiment, rather than affiliation, may be more salient as a predictor of a variety of attitudes and beliefs (see Smidt et al.). Indeed, researchers have argued that the variation within religious affiliations precludes a unified perspective or worldview, thus, not likely a key social identity (see Wuthnow). We created three dummy variables to reflect the three largest religious categories selected: Protestant, Catholic, and Christian (neither Protestant or Catholic). “Other religion” and “no religion” are coded as “0.”

Findings

Descriptive Findings: Dependent Variables

Table 1 reports the descriptive findings for our study sample. Regarding the dependent variables, the mean score for fear of personal violence was 1.78, indicating a moderate fear of violent crime. About 46 percent of the sample are worried or very worried about a terrorist attack. Finally, about 37 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that immigrants bring disease to the country.

Descriptive Findings: Independent Variables

In terms of religious identity, the mean score was 2.64 which means the average respondent is somewhat religious. The mean score for service attendance was 4.02 indicating the average respondent attends a few times per year. About 38 percent of respondents feel most people cannot be trusted.

Regarding racial bias, the mean score for blacks was 68.89 indicating moderate to high ratings for blacks. The mean score for immigrants was 57.06 indicating moderate to low ratings for this group. Finally, the mean score for Muslims was the lowest at 50.37.

² Whites comprised 73% of the sample. The racial categories for blacks, Latinos, and Asians had so few cases that the decision was made to group all racial and ethnic minorities into the comparison category.

Table 1. Sample Descriptives

	Mean/Percent	St. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Dependent Variables				
Fear Personal Violence	1.78	.79	1.00	4.00
Terrorist Attack	.46			
Immigrants Bring Disease	.37			
Control Variables				
White	.73			
Degree	2.86		1.00	4.00
Family Income	3.44		1.00	5.00
Female	.50			
Age	50.26	16.83		
Political Preference	3.73	1.45	1.00	7.00
Protestant	.38			
Catholic	.25			
Other Christian	.10			
Theoretical Variables				
How Religious	2.64		1.00	4.00
Service Attendance	4.02		1.00	8.00
Most Can't be Trusted	.38			
Thermometer – blacks	68.89	24.85	0.00	100.00
Thermometer – immigrants	57.06	27.76	0.00	100.00
Thermometer – Muslims	50.37	30.46	0.00	100.00
N = 1524				

Descriptive Findings: Sociodemographic Variables

Our findings for socio-demographics show that 73 percent of the sample is white, average level of education (2.86) is just beyond high school, average family income (3.44) is just over \$59,999, half the sample is female (.50), average age is just over 50 years (50.26), and average political preference (3.73) is conservative, tending toward moderate.

Finally, in terms of religious affiliation, 38 percent of respondents are Protestant, 25 percent are Catholic, and 10 percent consider themselves some other type of Christian.

Regression Analyses

Fear of Personal Violence. Table 2 presents the findings for the linear regression predicting respondents' fear of personal violence. Regarding our theoretical variables, those who identify as more religious and those who feel most people cannot be trusted are more fearful of personal violence. Religious service attendance and symbolic racism measures show no relationship to fear of personal violence.

Table 2. Linear Regression, Fear of Personal Violence

	Beta	St. Error
Theoretical Variables		
How Religious	.073*	.028
Service Attendance	-.030	.011
Most Can't be Trusted	.122***	.041
Rating – blacks	-.035	.001
Rating – immigrants	-.068	.001
Rating – Muslims	-.042	.001
Control Variables		
White	-.173***	.045
Degree	-.084**	.022
Family Income	-.012	.015
Female	.180***	.039
Age	-.085**	.001
Political Preference	.112***	.015
Protestant	.002	.058
Catholic	.031	.059
Other Christian	.019	.075
Adjusted r square		.142

In terms of our control variables, whites, those with higher levels of education, and older respondents are less fearful of personal violence. Women and those identifying as more politically conservative are more fearful of personal violence. Family income and religious affiliation measures show no relationship.

Worries About a Terrorist Attack. Table 3 presents the logistic regression findings predicting worries about a terrorist attack. The findings from our theoretical variables show that those who identify as more religious are more likely to worry about a terrorist attack than those who are less religiously identified. Higher religious service attendance predicts less worry about a terrorist attack than lower attendance levels. Finally, in terms of our symbolic racism measures, those who rate immigrants more highly are less likely to worry about a terrorist attack.

Regarding our control variables, whites and those with higher levels of education are less likely to worry about a terrorist attack. Those with higher incomes, older respondents, and Catholics are more likely to worry about a terrorist attack.

Concerns About Immigrants Bringing Disease. Table 4 presents the logistic regression findings predicting concerns about immigrants bringing disease. Our findings show that none of the measures for social identity and social capital are significantly predictive of attitudes about immigrants. However, two of our symbolic racism measures are significant. Those who rate immigrants and Muslims more highly are less worried about immigrants bringing disease to the country.

Table 3. Logistic Regression, Worry about a Terrorist Attack

	Exp (B)	St. Error
Theoretical Variables		
How Religious	1.336***	.081
Service Attendance	.905**	.031
Most Can't be Trusted	1.228	.117
Rating – blacks	1.004	.003
Rating – immigrants	.994*	.003
Rating – Muslims	.996	.003
Control Variables		
White	.672**	.128
Degree	.838**	.062
Family Income	1.105*	.045
Female	1.214	.110
Age	1.007*	.003
Political Preference	.959	.042
Protestant	.928	.166
Catholic	1.506*	.170
Other Christian	.960	.214
Nagelkerke r square		.085

In terms of our control variables, whites are more concerned than other racial groups that immigrants bring disease, but those with higher levels of education and those who tend toward a liberal political view are less worried about this issue. Finally, those who affiliate with Christian groups besides Protestant and Catholic are more worried than other religious groups, or the non-religious, about immigrants bringing diseases.

Discussion and Conclusion

This project sought to investigate the determinants of worries or fears among Americans, particularly those that relate to a potential racial or ethnic “other.” Current events have shone light on these groups, and media treatment has sometimes been alarmist, possibly generating or exacerbating fears surrounding these groups. Recent media focus, sometimes quite negative, on the Black Lives Matter movement, immigrant-related issues and policies, and terror attacks by extremist Muslim groups such as the Islamic State all have the potential to stoke the worries and fears of the public. This project considered the role of religion to potentially aggravate, or minimize, fears and worries. In addition, we wondered what role racial bias might play in these fears. Our findings show complexity in these relationships.

First, regarding micro-level fears or worries, our hypothesis that a strong religious identity would enhance fears was not supported. Indeed, those who identify as strongly religious were less fearful of personal violence. However, this finding is in line with a study by Greenfield and Marks who found that religious identity was associated with improved psychological well-

being. Considering their findings and social identity theory generally, it may be that when one strongly identifies with their religion, they glean a sense of a valued social identity, which contributes to positive psychological well-being, thus leading to less fear and worry. Our findings suggest this is a strong possibility. A strong religious identity may serve as a buffer against micro-level fears.

Table 4. Logistic Regression, Immigrants Bring Disease

	Exp (B)	St. Error
Theoretical Variables		
How Religious	1.164	.090
Service Attendance	.944	.034
Most Can't be Trusted	1.111	.128
Rating – blacks	1.002	.003
Rating – immigrants	.978***	.003
Rating - Muslims	.993*	.003
Control Variables		
White	1.376*	.145
Degree	.812**	.069
Family Income	.958	.049
Female	.906	.123
Age	1.000	.004
Political Preference	.781***	.049
Protestant	1.168	.188
Catholic	1.202	.192
Other Christian	1.998**	.235
Nagelkerke r square		.244

Notably, our hypotheses regarding social capital theory were only partially supported. Religious service attendance had no impact on fears about personal violence. Generalized trust, however, significantly reduces fear of violence. This was in line with our expectations, as well as previous research demonstrating the positive outcomes associated with trust (Helliwell and Putnam). Those who have a sense that most people can be trusted likely worry less about harm from strangers on the street.

Also notable is the lack of a relationship between any of our symbolic racism measures and fear of crime. Attitudes toward blacks, immigrants, and Muslims showed no significant relationship to fear of personal violence. This is surprising given studies showing blacks and Latinos are more likely to be presented as criminals than positive role models (Chiricos and Eschholz) and the general association between racial and ethnic minorities and crime (Chiricos, Mcentire, and Gertz). In addition, given the relationship between prejudice shown toward one out-group and prejudice shown toward other out-groups, we expected sentiment toward Muslims to also be predictive. However, our expectations were not supported. It may

be that our measures do not accurately tap into stereotypes that could trigger fears of crimes. Future research should employ other measures of sentiment toward racial and ethnic groups that may be more closely related to fear of crime.

Second, our findings about macro-level worries also showed complexity. Our hypothesis predicting a relationship between a strong religious identity and greater worries about terrorism was supported. Considering social identity theory, those who see themselves as highly religious may perceive intergroup conflict between themselves and terrorists, often identified as Muslim. It may be that terrorism and Islam are so closely associated in the public imagination, that simply the term “terrorism” alerts individuals to the idea of Islam, a religious framework sometimes viewed to be in direct conflict with Christianity.

Our hypotheses regarding social capital were partially supported in that those who have more frequent church attendance are less likely to worry about a terrorist attack. Again, this supports previous research that demonstrates improved well-being associated with social support networks. In addition, it may be that religious service attendance exposes adherents to messages about tolerance and empathy toward out-groups. Future research could qualitatively investigate messaging from religious leaders about terrorism and differing religious ideologies and its impact on fear and anxiety.

Interestingly, one of our symbolic racism measures was predictive of worries about terrorism. Those who rate immigrants more highly are less worried about terrorism. This may also be a fruitful area for future research. Studies could investigate the conflation of immigrants and terrorism in the public imagination. Another area for investigation is our finding that Catholics, compared with all other religious groups and the non-religious, are more worried about a terrorist attack.

Finally, our hypotheses regarding social identity and social capital as predictors of concerns about immigrants bringing disease were not supported. Although some research has shown a relationship between measures of religious identity and attitudes toward immigrants (Davidson and Garcia; Knoll), we did not find the same. However, previous studies have examined attitudes regarding access to social services, education, citizenship, and the like. This study specifically examined concerns about disease-carrying immigrants. While religious edicts may contain messages about social justice for immigrants, messages challenging specific stereotypes about immigrants may not be part of the discourse.

Not surprisingly, attitudes toward immigrants was significantly predictive of concerns about disease. Those who rate immigrants higher are less likely to have these concerns. Interestingly, the same was true for sentiments toward Muslims. As stated previously, future research should consider the relationship between attitudes toward immigrants and those toward Muslims. Our findings suggest that these groups are easily associated with each other and, likely, subject to related stereotypes and assumptions. Another finding for future studies is that those who affiliate with another Christian affiliation (besides Catholic or Protestant) are nearly twice as likely to be concerned about disease-carrying immigrants than other religious groups or the non-religious. There may be something unique about this particular religious affiliation that bears further investigation when it comes to concerns about “others.”

Overall, we conclude that some religious factors – identification and behavior – are related to fears and worries. In some instances, these can be helpful for reducing worry or fear, in others, they can exacerbate these states. A strong religious identity appears to reduce micro-worries but increase macro-worries. In light of research showing that macro-worries are not always related to negative outcomes (Schwartz and Malech), future research should delve into this complexity. It is possible a strong religious identity relates to broader global concerns, such as terrorism, that are indicative of universal interests that have impact beyond oneself.

Not surprisingly, symbolic beliefs, in some cases, are important predictors of worries and concerns related to racial or ethnic out-groups. This suggests much work is to be done to challenge stereotypical cultural narratives about key out-groups in society. There is a role to play here by entertainment and news media to humanize the images and stories about racial and ethnic minorities. In addition, religious authorities can add to the conversation by emphasizing compassion and empathy regarding marginalized minority groups. These efforts can have important impacts on individual well-being, and, decrease conflict between social groups in society.

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