

**Right-Wing Authoritarian and Explicit Prejudice Attitude Responses to the Paris Terror Attacks: A Within-Subjects Analysis**

Journal:	<i>Terrorism and Political Violence</i>
Manuscript ID	FTPV-2019-6962.R1
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Authoritarianism, Prejudice, Attitudes, Terrorism, Reactive Liberals

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## Right-Wing Authoritarian and Explicit Prejudice Attitude Responses to the Paris Terror Attacks: A Within-Subjects Analysis

### Abstract

When a terror attack occurs people appear to be prepared, in the short term, to be more accepting of authoritarian sanctions against outgroup members, particularly if sanctions are targeted against members of the outgroup perceived as responsible for the attack. The current study examined 42 British participants' scores on measures of Right wing authoritarianism (RWA) and explicit prejudice (EP) before, within 36 hours of, and one year after the November 2015 Paris terror attacks. As higher scores on RWA measures have been linked to considering the world as dangerous and threatening, and desiring that authority control and punish transgressors of societal norms, and higher EP scores have been linked to negative perceptions of outgroups, we hypothesized that participants' scores on both measures would increase immediately after the terror attack. Analyses showed small but significant increases in RWA and EP scores immediately after the attacks, particularly for those initially scoring lower on these measures, but scores on both measures had returned to baseline levels one year later. These findings from a within-subjects sample support recent between-subjects research suggesting that RWA and EP attitudes are impacted in the short term by reported terrorist attacks.

### Introduction

Whilst terror attacks by individuals or groups to promote causes or instill fear have occurred throughout history, the immediacy of contemporary media in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (e.g., social media, 24-hour rolling news channels) has the ability to thrust this terrorism, wherever it may be occurring in the world, into the lives of those unaffected directly by the attacks. These attacks may potentially influence attitudes towards groups perceived to be linked to the perpetrators of the attack, particularly if the group is already stigmatized within society.<sup>1</sup> The current study sought to examine attitude changes occurring directly after the November 2015 Paris, France terror attacks in participants from a neighboring country (the United Kingdom) on two scales previously linked to psychological ideological trait perceptions of outgroups; explicit

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<sup>1</sup> Agustin Echebarria-Echabe, and Emilia Fernández-Guede (2006). 'Effects of terrorism on attitudes and ideological orientation', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 36, 259-265.

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3 prejudice (EP) and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA).<sup>2</sup> By measuring participant responses on  
4 these scales within 36 hours of the attacks and comparing with their responses six weeks prior we  
5 were able to analyse the potential influence these attacks may have had on attitudes, finding small  
6 but significant increases in EP and RWA scores immediately after the attacks, particularly for  
7 those who had scored lower on the measures prior to the attack. As the majority of previous  
8 research in this area has been carried out with different participants before and after terrorist  
9 attacks have taken place (between-subjects analysis) the current findings provide further evidence  
10 relating to the influence of such terror attacks on attitudes, and provide one of the first measures  
11 of within-subjects analysis on the topic area directly relating to immediate attitudinal shift  
12 following a terror attack.  
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### 22 **Terrorist attacks, media, and attitudes**

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24 When faced with a potential threat, or reminders of threats, people display attitudes and  
25 behaviors that are designed to psychologically protect them. Uncertainty-identity theory suggests  
26 that at times of uncertainty individuals will identify with groups that provide a level of entitative  
27 identity, giving a stability to their social surroundings.<sup>3</sup> Under threatening circumstances people  
28 may resort to attitudes that provide cognitively rigid thinking and, in times of threat, show  
29 support for policies and leaders that endorse more authoritarian measures.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is  
30 important for us to understand how people react when faced with a reported terrorist attack that  
31 threatens them not just in terms of geographical proximity but is also perceived as a threat to their  
32 values and cultural identity. The past several years have provided Western Europe and the United  
33 States of America with the opportunity to examine the impact of Islamic terror attacks on these  
34 attitudes given the increased number of high-profile attacks carried out within them (e.g., the 9/11  
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46 <sup>2</sup> Leanne S. Son Hing, Greg A. Chung-Yan, Leah K. Hamilton, and Mark P. Zanna (2008). 'A two-dimensional model  
47 that employs explicit and implicit attitudes to characterize prejudice', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*,  
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49 Bob Altemeyer (1988). 'Enemies of freedom: Understanding right-wing authoritarianism'. San Francisco: Jossey-  
50 Bass.

51 John Duckitt (2001). 'A dual-process cognitive-motivational theory of ideology and prejudice', *Advances in*  
52 *Experimental Social Psychology*, 33, 41-113.

53 <sup>3</sup> Michael A. Hogg, David K. Sherman, Joel Dierselhuis, Angela T. Maitner, and Graham Moffitt (2007). 'Uncertainty,  
54 entitativity, and group identification', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 43:1, 135-142.

55 <sup>4</sup> George A. Bonanno, and John T. Jost (2006). 'Conservative shift among high-exposure survivors of the September  
56 11th terrorist attacks', *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 28:4, 311-323.  
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3 attacks in the USA; the 7/7 attacks in the UK; and the Charlie Hebdo attacks in France),<sup>5</sup> and the  
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5 November 2015 Paris terror attacks provided the catalyst for the current study.

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7 At 9.16pm on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2015 reports started to emerge from Paris of  
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9 suspected terrorist attacks taking place. In total these coordinated attacks across the French  
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11 capital resulted in the deaths of 130 people and injuries to a further 368, all in the space of just  
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13 over three hours. Almost from the start of the attacks information and images were broadcast via  
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15 news channels and social media; use of platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, in addition to  
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17 mainstream news media (which also used footage and images obtained from social media)  
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19 ensured that wide coverage of the attack was transmitted across the globe, both 'live' and in the  
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21 immediate aftermath. Reports during the attacks immediately suggested that they were being  
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23 carried out by Islamic extremists, following a pattern of coordinated multiple-terrorist attacks that  
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25 have been witnessed in previous instances (e.g., London 2005; Mumbai 2008). The majority of  
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27 attacks by groups such as Islamic State have been targeted against fellow Muslims in Middle  
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29 Eastern countries;<sup>6</sup> however, recent research on terrorism reporting in the United States suggests  
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31 a disproportionately high media coverage of attacks by Muslim perpetrators, particularly when  
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33 the attacks take place in Western countries.<sup>7</sup> Whilst links to organizations and motives of the  
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35 terrorists may vary across these attacks, the perception of Islamic extremism as being dangerous  
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37 to Western society can become a unifying ideological driver in people's thinking of their own  
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39 safety when faced with this threat from 'others'.<sup>8</sup> For example, in a study of a large New Zealand  
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41 sample population it was found that greater exposure to the news was associated with more  
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43 negativity towards Muslims regardless of participant political orientation, suggesting that  
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45 negative media portrayals may have a widespread impact.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, an attack such as that

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43 <sup>5</sup> National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) (2019). 'Global Terrorism  
44 Database'. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/access/>

45 <sup>6</sup> Michael Jetter (2017). 'The effect of media attention on terrorism'. *Journal of Public Economics*, 153, 32-48.

46 Statista Research Department (2019). 'Terrorist attacks in 2018, by country'. Statista

47 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/236983/terrorist-attacks-by-country/>

48 START. 'Global Terrorism Database'

49 <sup>7</sup> Erin M. Kearns, Allison E. Betus, and Anthony F. Lemieux (2019). 'Why Do Some Terrorist Attacks Receive More  
50 Media Attention Than Others?', *Justice Quarterly*, DOI:

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52 <sup>8</sup> Diana Rieger, Lena Frischlich, and Gary Bente (2017). 'Propaganda in an insecure, unstructured world: How  
53 psychological uncertainty and authoritarian attitudes shape the evaluation of right-wing extremist internet  
54 propaganda', *Journal for Deradicalization*, 10, 203 - 229.

55 <sup>9</sup> John H. Shaver, Chris G. Sibley, Danny Osborne, and Joseph Bulbulia (2017). 'News exposure predicts anti-Muslim  
56 prejudice', *PLoS ONE*, 12:3, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0174606>

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3 carried out in Paris would undoubtedly attract a high level of media attention,<sup>10</sup> and this could  
4 make people consider their own safety and security even though they were not directly involved  
5 in the attack itself. Research carried out after the 7/7 London bombings found that people were  
6 likely to accept increased security even when it resulted in a reduction in civil liberties, at least in  
7 the short term.<sup>11</sup>

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11 To understand why people may think and behave differently in the aftermath of a terrorist  
12 attack it is necessary to consider the potential theories that underpin the psychological research  
13 on the topic, and this paper will focus upon two of the most prominent theories in the  
14 psychological literature on intergroup attitudes, whose measures have also been utilized in  
15 several of the studies into the psychological impact of terrorist attacks; *prejudice* and *right wing*  
16 *authoritarianism*.

### 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 **Explicit Prejudice and Right Wing Authoritarianism**

25 Stereotyping has been defined as “beliefs about the attributes typically possessed by  
26 members of a social group”<sup>12</sup> and the stereotypes that we hold about a group of people may  
27 influence our subsequent judgment of individuals’ behaviors and how they relate to the group.  
28 Personal beliefs that have been formulated by a person’s own experiences and their exposure to  
29 prevailing cultural attitudes can influence these judgments. These stereotypes will then influence  
30 the pre-judgments (prejudices) that we make about other people. These prejudices may be  
31 implicit (beyond conscious awareness) or explicit (available to conscious awareness).<sup>13</sup> Whilst  
32 still an area of contention in the literature, it appears that these prejudice attitudes are somewhat  
33 malleable, with changes in a cultural or environmental context making them susceptible to  
34 change, at least in the short term.<sup>14</sup>

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45 <sup>10</sup> Michael Jetter (2019). ‘More bang for the buck: Media coverage of suicide attacks’. *Terrorism and Political*  
46 *Violence*, 31:4, 779-799.

47 <sup>11</sup> Carlos Bozzoli and Cathérine Müller (2011). ‘Perceptions and attitudes following a terrorist shock: Evidence from  
48 the UK’. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 27, S89-S106. doi:10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2011.06.005

49 <sup>12</sup> Alice H. Eagly and Amanda B. Diekmann (2005). ‘What is the problem? Prejudice as an attitude-in-context’, in John  
50 F. Dovidio, Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.), *On the nature of prejudice: Fifty years after Allport*. Hoboken,  
51 NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 19-35.

52 <sup>13</sup> Son Hing, Chung-Yan, Hamilton, and Zanna. ‘A two-dimensional model that employs explicit and implicit  
53 attitudes’, 971-987.

54 <sup>14</sup> Nilanjana Dasgupta (2013). ‘Chapter Five – Implicit attitudes and beliefs adapt to situations: A decade of research  
55 on the malleability of implicit prejudice, stereotypes, and the self-concept’. *Advances in Experimental Social*  
56 *Psychology*, 47, 233-279.

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Alongside prejudice, examination of how ideological beliefs such as right wing authoritarianism (RWA) may be influenced by terrorist attacks have also been a focus of recent research. Examination of how individuals may respond to threat and uncertainty in society has been well documented since initial concepts of the ‘authoritarian personality’ and ‘fascism scale’ in the 1950s.<sup>15</sup> Whilst the notion of personality as an explanation for authoritarianism has now largely disappeared from contemporary research there is still a need to understand why people make the judgments that they do in threatening times. Therefore, research into the authoritarian personality and subsequent development of the RWA typology moved away from explanations of personality and toward a concept of ‘attitudinal clusters’.<sup>16</sup> These three clusters are: *Authoritarian submission* to authorities perceived to be legitimate; *Authoritarian aggression*, directed toward people or out-groups and perceived to be sanctioned by the authority; and *Conventionalism*, a high adherence to those social conventions perceived to be endorsed by society and authority, with people who score higher on these attitude measures more likely to endorse punitive sanctions against transgressors. A reformulation of the clusters and adaptation to incorporate social dominance orientation<sup>17</sup> has enabled a dual process model to be created that appears to capture separate elements of right wing political and ideological attitudes.<sup>18</sup> According to Duckitt and Fisher these attitudes underpin people’s “... evaluative beliefs about the nature, structure, and organization of society and about individuals’ proper roles, conduct, and place within and in relation to society and other important social groups.”<sup>19</sup>

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At this point it is important to recognize that the term ‘right wing authoritarianism’ may be somewhat of a misnomer. It has been suggested that RWA may apply to all group members who feel that their group is under threat and not just those with already conservative (right wing)

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44 Brian S. Lowery, Curtis D. Hardin, and Stacey Sinclair (2001). ‘Social influence effects on automatic racial prejudice’. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(5), 842-855.

45 Norbert Schwarz and Fritz Strack (1991). ‘Context effects in attitude surveys: Applying cognitive theory to social research’. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 2(1), 31-50.

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<sup>15</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford (1950). ‘The authoritarian personality’. Oxford: Harpers.

<sup>16</sup> Bob Altemeyer. ‘Enemies of freedom’.

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<sup>17</sup> James Sidanius and Felicia Pratto (1993). ‘The inevitability of oppression and the dynamics of social dominance’, in Paul M. Sniderman, Philip E. Tetlock, and Edward G. Carmines (eds.), *Prejudice, politics, and the American dilemma*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 173-211.

<sup>18</sup> John Duckitt. ‘A dual-process cognitive-motivational theory of ideology and prejudice’, 41-113.

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<sup>19</sup> John Duckitt and Kirstin Fisher (2003). ‘The impact of social threat on worldview and ideological attitudes’. *Political Psychology*, 24:1, 199-222.

views.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, it has been argued that supporters of left wing ideologies such as Maoism and Stalinism possess many of the same attitudes regarding authoritarianism and that RWA should be thought of as an attitude toward authority rather than a specific type of authority.<sup>21</sup> This suggests that authoritarianism is a general psychological mechanism that can be applied to all people within a group. It may be that threatening circumstances lead many people to embrace more conservative, authoritarian attitudes, using simple but rigid cognitive solutions to deal with the threat. Findings after the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 terrorist attacks in the USA indicated that death anxiety and desire for preservation of familiar existing social institutions ('system threat') were strong predictors of political conservatism.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, priming people with mortality salience appears to increase conservative support.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, it is also likely that the dimensions of ideological attitudes may also be flexible and influenced by social context. This would suggest that world events, particularly when salient and potentially threatening to the individual, may influence people on these dimensions. In the case of RWA, the dual-process model suggests that motivation for social cohesion and collective security are important to people, with those who score high on RWA appearing to have distinct social schemas of the world as a dangerous and threatening place.<sup>24</sup>

### Post terror-attack measures

Due to the unpredictable and unique nature of each terrorist attack it is difficult for any researcher to plan a coherent research methodology to fully explore the psychological mechanisms that are activated by such an event. Those that have been carried out directly around such an attack have often been fortuitous in their timing, with data collection for related research studies taking place across a period of time when such an attack occurs. For example, this

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<sup>20</sup> Jost Stellmacher and Thomas Petzel (2005). 'Authoritarianism as a group phenomenon'. *Political Psychology*, 26:2, 245-274.

<sup>21</sup> Michael H. Crowson, Stephen J. Thoma, and Nita Hestevold (2005). 'Is political conservatism synonymous with authoritarianism?' *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 145:5, 571-592.

<sup>22</sup> John T. Jost, Jack Glaser, Arie W. Kruglanski, and Frank J. Sulloway (2003). 'Political conservatism as motivated social cognition', *Psychological Bulletin*, 129:3, 339-375.

<sup>23</sup> Mark J. Landau, Sheldon Solomon, Jeff Greenberg, Florette Cohen, Tom Pyszczynski, Jamie Arndt, Claude H. Miller, Daniel M. Ogilvie, and Alison Cook (2004). 'Deliver us from evil: The effects of mortality salience and reminders of 9/11 on support for President George W. Bush', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30:9, 1136-1150.

<sup>24</sup> Ryan Perry, Chris G. Sibley, and John Duckitt (2013). 'Dangerous and competitive worldviews: A meta-analysis of their associations with social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism', *Journal of Research in Personality*, 47:1, 116-127.

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3 enabled between-group comparisons of explicit prejudice to be carried out around the time of the  
4 murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by an Islamic extremist, showing higher prejudice  
5 reported by participants examined after the murder.<sup>25</sup> Using a similar methodology, measures of  
6 prejudice and social dominance orientation (SDO) around the time of the Charlie Hebdo attack in  
7 Paris in 2015 also found that prejudice increased after the attack but that this was not the case for  
8 measures of SDO.<sup>26</sup> Examination of cultural worldviews also found increases in prejudice  
9 towards Muslims after the Charlie Hebdo attack.<sup>27</sup> Others types of study have systematically  
10 utilized waves of data produced by social surveys,<sup>28</sup> or controlled for time after the attack, with  
11 similar findings relating to increases in explicit prejudice.<sup>29</sup> Each of these studies has provided a  
12 valuable insight into psychological processes underlying attitudes that may be affected by a  
13 terrorist attack. In particular, a study of over 2,000 people six weeks before and one month after  
14 the 2005 London bombings, examining moral foundations of prejudice and political orientation,  
15 identified not only an increase in prejudice towards Muslims after the attack, but also that this  
16 increase was larger for those with a liberal political orientation than for those with a conservative  
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33 <sup>25</sup> Enny Das, Brad J. Bushman, Marieke D. Bezemer, Peter Kerkhof, and Ivar E. Vermeulen (2009). 'How terrorism  
34 news reports increase prejudice against outgroups: A terror management account', *Journal of Experimental Social  
35 Psychology*, 45:3, 453-459.

36 <sup>26</sup> Medhi Cochu, Christelle Maisonneuve, and Benoit Testé (2016). 'The "Charlie-Hebdo" Effect: Repercussions of the  
37 January 2015 Terrorist Attacks in France on Prejudice toward Immigrants and North-Africans, Social Dominance  
38 Orientation, and Attachment to the Principle of Laïcité  
39 [L'effet « Charlie-Hebdo » : Répercussions des attentats de Janvier 2015 en France sur les Préjugés à l'égard des  
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41 Review of Social Psychology*, 29:1, 50-58.

42 <sup>27</sup> Armelle Nugier, Elodie Roebroek, Nolwenn Anier, Emmanuelle P. Kleinlogel, Armand Chatard, and Serge  
43 Guimond (2016). 'The Psychological Effects of Terrorism are Moderated by Cultural Worldviews [Les Effets  
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46 <sup>28</sup> Tobias Böhmelt, Vincenzo Bove, and Enzo Nussio (2019). 'Can terrorism abroad influence migration attitudes at  
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48 Sylvain Brouard, Pavlos Vasilopoulos, and Martial Foucault (2018). 'How terrorism affects political attitudes: France  
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50 Athina Economou and Christos Kollias (2019). 'Security preferences of EU citizens: Do terrorist events affect  
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52 Bruno C. Silva (2018). 'The (non)impact of the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks on political attitudes', *Personality and  
53 Social Psychology Bulletin*, 44:6, 838-850.

54 <sup>29</sup> Magnus Lindén, Fredrik Björklund, and Martin Bäckström (2018). 'How a terror attack affects right-wing  
55 authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and their relationship to torture attitudes', *Scandinavian Journal of  
56 Psychology*, 59:5, 547 - 552.

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3 orientation.<sup>30</sup> These findings are in keeping with the *Reactive Liberals Hypothesis* which suggests  
4 that conservatives constantly feel threatened by the world and so are less likely to respond to  
5 specific events with a sizeable shift in attitudes; however, those who are more liberal before the  
6 event are more likely to respond with increased prejudice, closing the gap between liberals and  
7 conservatives in their prejudicial attitudes immediately after the event.<sup>31</sup> This would appear to be  
8 at odds with the traditional threat literature that suggests that those who are already high in  
9 authoritarianism are more likely to respond to threats than those who are low.<sup>32</sup> However, a  
10 recent meta-analysis of 134 samples from 16 countries found a significant association between  
11 threatening events such as terrorist attacks and a move towards conservatism.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the  
12 ability to explore whether the psychological constructs that underpin such shifts in attitude is an  
13 important element of understanding people's responses to terror attacks.  
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## 24 **Current study**

25 If people feel a general sense of threat from the information that they are receiving in the  
26 immediate aftermath of an attack it is likely that overall RWA scores will increase. As those who  
27 score lower on the RWA scale are likely to be of a more liberal world view we would also expect  
28 that, in line with the Reactive Liberals Hypothesis, these changes would largely occur within  
29 those scoring lower on the RWA scale than from those higher on the scale, as those who are  
30 higher already see the world as dangerous and so the terror attack merely vindicates their  
31 attitudes rather than exacerbates them.  
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38 Our measure of explicit prejudice for the current study was not specifically targeted at  
39 Muslims, focusing more upon race and general immigration. Whilst two of the previous studies  
40 in this area of research specifically examined prejudice towards Muslims,<sup>34</sup> two other studies  
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45 <sup>30</sup> Julie Van de Vyver, Diane M. Houston, Dominic Abrams, and Milica Vasiljevic (2016). 'Boosting belligerence: How  
46 the July 7, 2005, London Bombings Affected Liberals' Moral Foundations and Prejudice', *Psychological Science*,  
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52 <sup>33</sup> John T. Jost, Chadly Stern, Nicholas O. Rule, and Joanna Sterling (2017). 'The politics of fear: Is there an  
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54 Uncertainty: The Underpinnings of Conservatism, 324-353.

55 <sup>34</sup> Nugier, Roebroek, Anier, Kleinlogel, Chatard, and Guimond. 'The Psychological Effects of Terrorism', 77 – 84.  
56 Van de Vyver, Houston, Abrams, and Vasiljevic. 'Boosting belligerence', 169-177.  
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3 explored a more global outgroup prejudice under a terror management theory.<sup>35</sup> In all studies it  
4 was found that there was an increase in prejudice and, where measured, that prejudice reverted to  
5 initial levels over time, suggesting that explicit prejudice is somewhat malleable and subject to  
6 change dependent upon situational factors.  
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10 Whilst much previous research on political conservatism and right wing authoritarianism  
11 has focused upon priming and scenarios, or survivors of terror attacks some time after the event,<sup>36</sup>  
12 there had been little research prior to the 2015 Paris terror attacks examining RWA attitudes in  
13 the immediate aftermath of an event that potentially exacerbates people's perceptions of the  
14 world as a threatening place. This has started to change, with a number of research studies  
15 providing data regarding attitudes relating to prejudice, RWA and SDO.<sup>37</sup> However, no data  
16 appears to exist showing the direct effect on a within-subjects population that examines the  
17 immediate impact upon people's attitudes at the time of the event compared to their attitudes  
18 shortly before. Due to research that we were carrying out into prejudice type and political  
19 ideology we found ourselves in a position to compare RWA and EP data pre and post the terror  
20 attacks that took place in Paris in November 2015. Given the scale of the attack and the  
21 immediate media coverage that it received, both in mainstream and social media, we predicted  
22 that this would increase people's overall RWA scores as they considered the world to be a more  
23 dangerous place. Similarly, given the findings from other studies regarding prejudice and  
24 terrorism, including terrorism-related news, we predicted that explicit prejudice levels would also  
25 increase immediately after terrorist attacks.  
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41 <sup>35</sup> Das, Bushman, Bezemer, Kerkhof, and Vermeulen. 'How terrorism news reports increase prejudice against  
42 outgroups', 453-459.

43 Cohu, Maisonneuve, and Testé. 'The "Charlie-Hebdo" Effect', 50-58.

44 <sup>36</sup> Bonanno, and Jost. 'Conservative shift among high-exposure survivors of the September 11th terrorist attacks',  
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46 Landau, Solomon, Greenberg, Cohen, Pyszczynski, Arndt, Miller, Ogilvie, and Cook. 'Deliver us from evil', 1136-  
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50 43:6, 964-971.

51 <sup>37</sup> Cohu, Maisonneuve, and Testé. 'The "Charlie-Hebdo" Effect', 50-58.

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53 Brouard, Vasilopoulos, and Foucault. 'How terrorism affects political attitudes', 1073-1099.

54 Economou and Kollias. 'Security preferences of EU citizens', 445-471.

55 Silva. 'The (non)impact of the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks on political attitudes', 838-850.

56 Lindén, Björklund, and Bäckström. 'How a terror attack affects right-wing authoritarianism', 547 - 552.  
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3 H1: There will be an increase in Explicit Prejudice (EP) scores immediately post-attack

4 H2: There will be an increase in Right Wing Authoritarian (RWA) scores immediately post-  
5 attack  
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8 H3: The increase in RWA scores will largely be found in those initially scoring low on RWA  
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## 10 11 12 **Method**

### 13 **Participants**

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15 Measurements of EP and RWA levels had initially been collected from British  
16 undergraduate psychology students participating in an unrelated study for course credit taking  
17 place October 2015. The 109 participants in that study who had completed measures of EP and  
18 RWA were invited via email to take part in a further study 12 hours after the Paris terror attack  
19 and 42 participants did so (female = 32, male = 10;  $M_{age} = 26.38$ ). No reward was offered for  
20 taking part in this study. The 42 participants who had completed the measures at Times One and  
21 Two then took part in a related study, again measuring EP and RWA, in October 2016 (Time  
22 Three) with course credit offered for participation.<sup>i</sup>  
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### 30 **Design**

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32 Analyses were carried out using within-subjects Analysis of Variance, with time of  
33 measurement (Time One: six weeks before attack; Time Two: immediately after attack; Time  
34 Three: one year after attack) as the independent variable. Analysis was carried out separately on  
35 the dependent variables of participant RWA and EP scores.  
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### 41 **Materials**

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43 At all time-points participants completed a measurement of explicit prejudice<sup>38</sup> and a  
44 short version of the right wing authoritarian questionnaire.<sup>39</sup> The adapted version of the EP  
45 questionnaire was a 15-item measure with responses ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7  
46 (*strongly disagree*). Higher scores indicated higher prejudice levels. Some questions were reverse  
47 scored to prevent participants from developing a response set. Questions included 'There are too  
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53 <sup>38</sup> Lorella Lepore and Rupert Brown (1997). 'Category and stereotype activation: Is prejudice inevitable?', *Journal of*  
54 *Personality and Social Psychology*, 72:2, 275-287.

55 <sup>39</sup> Ingrid Zakrisson (2005). 'Construction of a short version of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale',  
56 *Personality and Individual Differences*, 39:5, 863-872.  
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3 few Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) MPs and measures should be taken to address  
4 this', and 'Those immigrants who do not have immigration documents should be sent back to  
5 their countries' (reverse scored). The RWA questionnaire was a 15-item measure with responses  
6 ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicated higher levels of  
7 authoritarianism, with some questions reverse scored. Questions included 'There are many  
8 radical, immoral people trying to ruin things; society ought to stop them', and 'Situations in  
9 today's society would be improved if troublemakers were treated with reason and humanity'  
10 (reverse scored). Cronbach's alpha for questionnaires across the study were .79 for RWA and .86  
11 for EP, suggesting good levels of internal consistency. At Times One and Three (October 2015  
12 and October 2016) participants also completed an Implicit Association Test as a measure of  
13 implicit prejudice in a laboratory setting after completing the questionnaires.<sup>40</sup>  
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## 24 Procedure

25 At Time One participants were asked to complete online questionnaire measures of EP  
26 and RWA as part of a study into implicit and explicit prejudice. Data collection was carried out  
27 during two weeks at the beginning of October 2015 with consent and debrief explaining that we  
28 were examining the interaction between implicit and explicit prejudice and associated attitude  
29 measures, including RWA. All data collected were stored against participant unique identification  
30 numbers.  
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36 At 9.16am on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2015 (exactly 12 hours after the Paris attacks  
37 started to be reported) an email was sent to all participants who had taken part in the study at  
38 Time One inviting them to take part in an online attitudes and beliefs study (email invitations are  
39 a standard operating procedure of the School of Psychology and so this did not differ from  
40 normal practice for this study). Participants accessed the study through the university online  
41 experiment management system and completed both questionnaires (implicit measurement of  
42 prejudice was not carried out).<sup>ii</sup>  
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48 The study remained open to participants until 9.16pm on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November (48  
49 hours after the attacks) to ensure immediacy of attitude was controlled for. A question was then  
50 sent to all participants via email asking if they had been aware of the Paris attacks at the time of  
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55 <sup>40</sup> Anthony G. Greenwald, Debbie E. McGhee, and Jordan L. K. Schwartz (1998). 'Measuring individual differences in  
56 implicit cognition: the implicit association test', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74:6, 1464-1480.  
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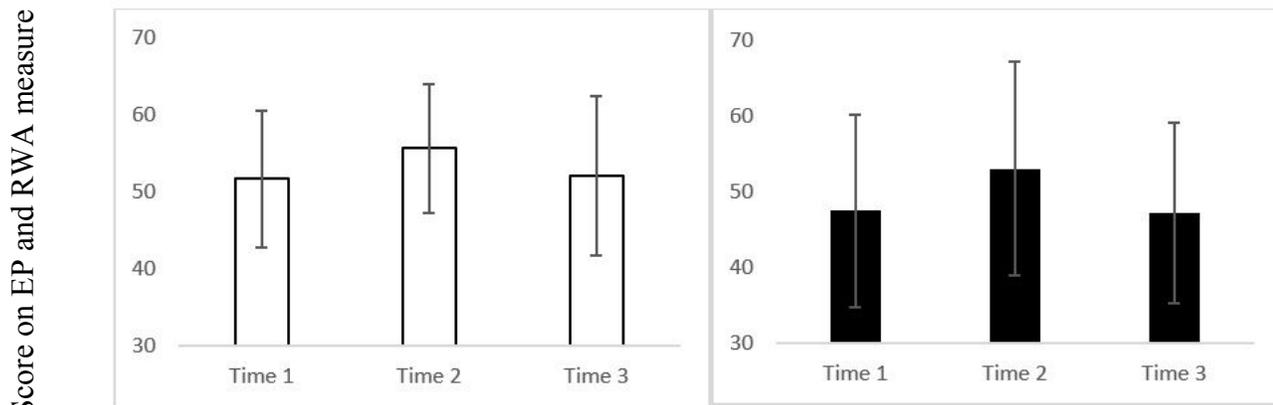
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3 completing the questionnaires (all indicated that they had been). A debrief was then released  
4 explaining the nature of the Time Two study. At Time Three, during the final two weeks of  
5 October 2016, online RWA and EP questionnaires were completed as part of a study examining  
6 media influence and prejudice. To ensure equivalence with Time One and Time Two data  
7 collection RWA and EP questionnaires were completed before all other tasks. Finally, unique  
8 identification numbers were used to match participant responses across all three time points.  
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## 18 Results

19 RWA response data from the 42 participants were analyzed using within-subjects analysis  
20 of variance for Time One (October 2015), Time Two (within 48 hours of Paris attack) and Time  
21 Three (October 2016). Analysis showed a significant effect of time,  $F(2, 82) = 3.34, p = .04$ ,  
22 with mean RWA scores of 51.62 ( $SD = 8.91$ ) at Time One, 55.62 ( $SD = 8.39$ ) at Time Two, and  
23 52.00 ( $SD = 10.38$ ) at Time Three (see Figure 1). There was a significant quadratic trend,  $F(1,$   
24 41) = 10.05,  $p = .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .2$ , over the mean values for each level. RWA scores at Time  
25 Two were significantly higher than Time One ( $p = .02$ ) and Time Three ( $p = .01$ ), with no  
26 difference between Times One and Three ( $p = .85$ ).  
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33 Participant EP responses at the same time points as for RWA were analyzed using within-  
34 subjects analysis of variance. This showed a significant effect of time,  $F(2, 82) = 3.45, p = .02$ ,  
35 with mean EP scores of 47.45 ( $SD = 12.78$ ) at Time One, 53.00 ( $SD = 14.17$ ) at Time Two, and  
36 47.17 ( $SD = 11.88$ ) at Time Three (see Figure 1). There was a significant quadratic trend,  $F(1,$   
37 41) = 7.39,  $p = .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .15$ , over the mean values for each level. EP scores at Time Two  
38 were significantly higher than Time One ( $p = .04$ ) and Time Three ( $p = .02$ ), with no significant  
39 difference between Times One and Three ( $p = .91$ ). As can be seen in Figure 1, this shows that  
40 both EP and RWA were significantly higher immediately after the terrorist attack.  
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Figure 1. RWA (left) and EP (right) mean scores as a function of time



To calculate differences between low and high EP and RWA participants at Time One a dichotomous split was performed on the data. Low scores on EP were 48 and below (lowest score = 21) whilst scores of 49 and above were categorized as high EP (highest score = 74). For RWA the split was performed at scores of 51 and below leading to a low RWA categorization (lowest score = 29) with high RWA categorization for scores of 52 and above (highest score = 68). The difference between Time One and Time Two scores was calculated for each participant and independent-samples t-tests performed between low and high groups for each ( $M_{diff}$ ). For EP, the Low group ( $M_{diff} = 14.71$ ,  $SD = 15.02$ ) showed significantly greater movement than the High group ( $M_{diff} = -3.62$ ,  $SD = 13.45$ ),  $t(40) = 4.17$ ,  $p = .001$ , whilst for RWA the Low group ( $M_{diff} = 11.10$ ,  $SD = 8.98$ ) also showed significantly greater movement than the High group ( $M_{diff} = -2.45$ ,  $SD = 8.40$ ). These findings suggest that the significant differences at Time Two from Times One and Three were driven by a greater increase in scores of those low on the measures than those scoring high on the measures at Time One.

### Discussion

The findings from the current study show that in the immediate aftermath of a terror attack (within 48 hours) people's right wing authoritarian (RWA) and explicit prejudice (EP) responses significantly increase from their pre-attack levels. However, these responses are not dramatic and appear to be driven by low scorers on these measures increasing their prejudice and RWA responses in the immediate aftermath, before reverting to their pre-attack levels later. This

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3 suggests that these attitudes are temporarily exacerbated rather than fixedly increased by such an  
4 attack. The findings are in keeping with the previous, between-subjects literature, but provide an  
5 important within-subjects validation of such findings as well as additional data regarding the  
6  
7 Reactive Liberals Hypothesis (RLH).  
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10 The overall increase in RWA scores suggests that identification with the ingroup may  
11 lead to an overall increase in acceptance of more authoritarian views in accordance with the  
12 existing literature.<sup>41</sup> However, in contrast to research carried out after the 7/7 London bombings,  
13 this increase appears to be rapid, whereas the previous findings suggested a lag of at least a week  
14 between the attack and increased acceptance of more authoritarian security measures.<sup>42</sup> Whether  
15 it be due to differences in measurement of acceptance of authority, or differences in the  
16 immediacy and increased usage of social media to follow news during the Paris attack is difficult  
17 to say, but this is an area of the research that requires closer scrutiny. Our findings do not show  
18 an increase of RWA scores by those at the top end of the scale, but instead appear to show an  
19 increase by participants who initially scored low to moderate on the RWA scale at Time 1. It may  
20 be that those higher in RWA attitudes pre-attack feel justified in their responses, negating a need  
21 for a greater authoritarian stance than they already hold, whilst those who score lower are more  
22 affected cognitively by the attack and so feel a need for a more authoritarian response, given that  
23 their initial low-authoritarian stance is faced with a real-world situation that they may consider  
24 incongruent with their current attitude. This provides support for the RLH which suggests that  
25 after such a traumatic event those with more liberal tendencies will show a greater reaction whilst  
26 those with more conservative views will react less as they feel vindicated by the events, thus  
27 closing the gap between the two types in terms of responses.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately it was not possible  
28 to measure specific political allegiances during data collection for this study due to the ethical  
29 constraints of not being able to include additional variables to those measured in October 2015  
30 and so it is not possible for us to do more than speculate regarding this with the data that we have  
31 in relation to the RLH, but this interpretation does appear to be plausible; however, the  
32 mechanisms underlying the decision-making process would need to be examined in far greater  
33 detail than could be afforded by the findings here.  
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54 <sup>41</sup> Stellmacher and Petzel. 'Authoritarianism as a group phenomenon', 245-274.

55 <sup>42</sup> Bozzoli and Müller, 'Perceptions and attitudes after a terrorist shock', S89-106.

56 <sup>43</sup> Nail, McGregor, Drinkwater, Steele, and Thompson. 'Threat causes liberals to think like conservatives', 901-907.  
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3 Similarly, the overall increase in EP scores, particularly given that the measurement  
4 questionnaire was not designed specifically to measure anti-Muslim prejudice, suggests that the  
5 assertion that overall prejudice toward outgroups as a way of defending against threatening  
6 events, found in several research studies examining other terror attacks, may be correct.<sup>44</sup> It must  
7 be recognized that it is not possible to exclude participants' interpretation of the questions as  
8 relating specifically to Muslims, which would provide support to a social identity theory  
9 explanation of the findings, as a manipulation of this questionnaire was not possible given the  
10 context of the study. It does appear, however, that the similarities between RWA and EP  
11 regarding the shift being from those in the lower end of the scores may add an additional element  
12 to the prejudice literature of being able to draw further upon the RLH. It is not the case on either  
13 measure that those high on them had nowhere to go; there was no ceiling effect at Time One and  
14 so the opportunity for those high on these measures to go even higher was available but not  
15 taken.

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17 Whilst the overall findings show a significant increase in both RWA and EP scores  
18 immediately after the Paris terror attacks, the size of the increase is of interest. One might expect  
19 that both prejudice and authoritarianism would increase dramatically, particularly for those high  
20 on these scores to begin with. However the increases, whilst significant, are not extreme and are  
21 similar to a number of the between-subjects studies carried out around similar attacks.<sup>45</sup> The  
22 finding that overall RWA and EP levels returned to baseline level at Time Three suggests that  
23 these attitudes are not sustained. Whilst the timeframe between our immediate post-event  
24 measure (Time Two) and Time Three is 10 months, raising an obvious question of when in that  
25 timeframe attitudes start to revert to baseline, the findings do at least provide evidence that the  
26 immediate attitudes displayed in the aftermath of an attack should not necessarily be taken as a  
27 true reflection of people's long-standing future attitudes. This potentially raises issues regarding  
28 between-subjects studies carried out after the event, as attitude change may dissipate soon after  
29 the event.<sup>46</sup>

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51 <sup>44</sup> Das, Bushman, Bezemer, Kerkhof, and Vermeulen. 'How terrorism news reports increase prejudice against  
52 outgroups', 453-459.

53 Cohu, Maisonneuve, and Testé. 'The "Charlie-Hebdo" Effect', 50-58.

54 <sup>45</sup> Cohu, Maisonneuve, and Testé. 'The "Charlie-Hebdo" Effect', 50-58.

55 Lindén, Björklund, and Bäckström. 'How a terror attack affects right-wing authoritarianism', 547 - 552.

56 <sup>46</sup> Cohu, Maisonneuve, and Testé. 'The "Charlie-Hebdo" Effect', 50-58.

57 Silva. 'The (non)impact of the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks on political attitudes', 838-850.

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3 It is this immediacy of responses to terrorist attacks that was the driving force behind  
4 carrying out this research study and, in our opinion, this also needs to be taken into account when  
5 considering potential political decisions that may be made as a result of terror attacks. In the  
6 immediate aftermath of such an attack there may be pressure on a government to ‘do something’  
7 in response. Therefore, we argue that it is important for those in positions of authority to  
8 recognize that policies and decisions that may impact upon outgroups are not rushed into place  
9 immediately after such an attack, even if there appears to be public support for such a move. It  
10 may be that the attitudes people hold at that time are not necessarily as prejudiced or authoritarian  
11 as those they held before, or will hold a short time later. If anything, our findings suggest that it is  
12 even more incumbent for an authority to exercise careful consideration of their actions  
13 immediately after an attack than at any other time as there is the potential for people to be more  
14 susceptible to authoritarian change, whether appropriate or not, immediately following such an  
15 event. For example, emergency legislation relating to social media in Australia after the 2019  
16 Christchurch terror attack and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announcing changes to prisoner  
17 early release legislation within days of a terror attack in Streatham, London in November 2019  
18 were greeted with immediate widespread public support, despite concerns being raised from  
19 professionals and legislators regarding potential problems and a failure to adequately scrutinize  
20 consequences of this legislation.<sup>47</sup>

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34 The current study was, by necessity, limited in scope. Due to the immediacy of the  
35 situation we had to work within a practical and ethical framework of measures with a limited  
36 pool of participants from the original (Time One) study. Therefore, measures such as political  
37 and religious affiliation data could not be collected, nor could we ask specific questions related to  
38 attitudes on terrorism or Islam. The political measures in particular would have been highly  
39 useful in being able to measure more specifically the RLH.<sup>48</sup> As we had not been measuring SDO  
40 in the Time One study there was no opportunity to measure this, although SDO has consistently

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47 BBC News (2020). ‘MPs approve emergency terror law’. BBC News, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-51482371>

48 Robert Merkel (2019). ‘Livestreaming terror is abhorrent – but is more rushed legislation the answer?’. The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/livestreaming-terror-is-abhorrent-but-is-more-rushed-legislation-the-answer-114620>

49 Peter Walker and Frances Perraudin (2019). ‘London Bridge attack: Boris Johnson ignores family’s plea not to exploit victims’ deaths’. The Guardian, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019  
50 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/dec/01/boris-johnson-election-issue-london-bridge-attack>

51 <sup>48</sup> Nail, McGregor, Drinkwater, Steele, and Thompson. ‘Threat causes liberals to think like conservatives’, 901-907.

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3 failed to show any effect in the studies that have been carried out examining the effects of  
4 terrorism on it.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, our prejudice measure was also, by necessity, limited. Measures of  
5 implicit prejudice had been carried out in a laboratory setting at Time One but we were unable to  
6 set up online implicit measures in such a short timescale for Time Two. The ability to explore  
7 explicit and implicit measures through a two dimensional model would have been informative.<sup>50</sup>  
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11 An additional limitation is the apparent focus upon purely ‘Islamic’ terrorism in the  
12 research literature covered and in our own study. This has been largely due to the focus of this  
13 research being on contemporary European terrorism, with the most high-profile attacks in the last  
14 10 years being carried out predominantly by Islamic terrorists; for a comparable non-Islamic  
15 terror attack in Europe we would have to go back to the 2011 attack by Anders Breivik.<sup>51</sup> In the  
16 USA this terror profile is extremely different, with the majority of terror attacks being carried out  
17 by non-Islamist, white terrorists.<sup>52</sup> It would therefore be highly informative in future research to  
18 examine whether terror attacks carried out by non-Islamist terrorists have the same affect upon  
19 people’s attitudes or whether they differ, on participants in the USA and also in Europe.  
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27 Finally, we fully recognize the limited conclusions that can be drawn from a sample of 42  
28 people; however, given the small sample of potential participants with which it was possible to  
29 carry out this research and the within-subjects longitudinal nature of the data collected, we feel  
30 that this limitation is outweighed by the information gained for this one study. Whilst larger  
31 analyses of between-subjects data have been carried out since the Paris attacks, the immediacy  
32 and within-subjects element of the current study provides additional data on authoritarian and  
33 prejudice attitudes, and now is a time for us to draw upon all of the data that we can; as Romano  
34 et al. have stated in their recent paper, ‘As researchers attempt to understand terrorism, even basic  
35 assumptions should not be taken for granted. Qualitative literature on the “new terrorism” needs  
36 the support of quantitative data to ensure that common perceptions are grounded in fact.’<sup>53</sup>  
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48 <sup>49</sup> Cohu, Maisonneuve, and Testé. 'The “Charlie-Hebdo” Effect', 50–58.

49 Lindén, Björklund, and Bäckström. 'How a terror attack affects right-wing authoritarianism', 547 - 552.

50 Son Hing, Chung-Yan, Hamilton, and Zanna. 'A two-dimensional model that employs explicit and implicit attitudes', 971-987.

51 Sindre Bangstad (2014). Anders Breivik and the rise of Islamophobia. Zedbooks: London.

52 START. 'Global Terrorism Database'. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/access/>

53 David Romano, Stephen Rowe, Robert Phelps, and Greg Simons (2019). Correlates of terror: Trends in types of terrorist groups and fatalities inflicted. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 5(1), p.14, 1584957.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2019.1584957>

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3 In conclusion, the findings from this paper suggest that right wing authoritarianism and  
4 explicit prejudice, two psychological constructs that play an important role in how we perceive  
5 and judge groups and individual members of those groups in society, are increased significantly  
6 in the immediate aftermath of a terrorist attack. Whilst these increases are not extreme they may  
7 be enough to make people more accepting of authoritarian responses that control groups and  
8 behaviors seen as contributing to potential terror acts in the future. Our data also suggests that it  
9 is those who may possess more liberal views that could be more affected after an attack, leading  
10 to them scoring higher on measures of right wing authoritarianism. However, in all cases these  
11 attitudes appear to be temporary and dissipate to pre-attack levels over time. Whilst the current  
12 research was fortuitous in its timing through being able to measure these constructs pre and post  
13 the Paris attacks, the within-subjects nature of this research hopefully provides additional insight  
14 into the indirect effects of terror attacks on members of society. It may appear somewhat  
15 distasteful and ethically challenging to suggest that data should be collected from participants on  
16 measures relating to prejudice, right wing authoritarianism, social dominance, and other potential  
17 attitude constructs in order for researchers to gain data from these participants immediately after  
18 terror attacks in the future; however, as long as studies are designed and carried out appropriately,  
19 the information gathered could prove highly beneficial in helping to understand the impact of  
20 terrorist attacks on individuals and groups across different countries and societies.  
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35 <sup>i</sup> Comparison of October 2015 responses between the 42 participants who engaged with  
36 the study at Time 2 and the 67 who did not take part showed no significant differences on EP and  
37 RWA measures. Therefore, it appears that participants who took part at Time 2 did so based upon  
38 availability rather than specific characteristics that may have made them less likely to take part.  
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43 <sup>ii</sup> Participants were randomly allocated to RWA-first or EP-first conditions as a  
44 counterbalance. Data from each counterbalance condition were compared and no differences  
45 were found between groups and so analyses of combined data were carried out.  
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Figure 1. RWA (left) and EP (right) mean scores as a function of time

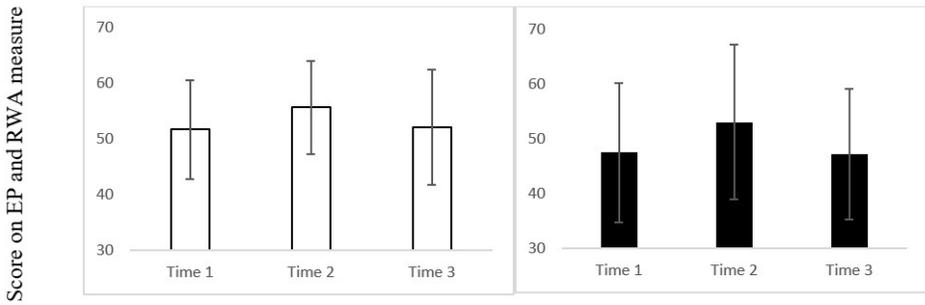


Figure 1. RWA (left) and EP (right) mean scores as a function of time

182x77mm (144 x 144 DPI)