

# Perceptions of Terrorism Threats at the 2004 Olympic Games: Implications for Sport Events

Tracy Taylor & Kristine Toohey

*A legacy of September 11, 2001, and subsequent terrorist attacks such as the Bali, (2002), Madrid (2004) and London (2005) bombings, is evidenced in the increased security measures put in place at major sport events. Heightened attention to safety management and public concern about terrorism threats and perception of risk has now become a fundamental component of the planning and risk management strategies for sport events. On the basis of appraisal-tendency theory (Lerner & Keltner, 2001), we investigated effects of anger and fear on risk judgments of 277 attendees at the 2004 Athens Olympics. Attendees who reported being fearful or feeling unsafe at the Games displayed increased risk estimates and associated concerns, whilst respondents expressing defiance and anger produced opposite reactions. Male respondents had less pessimistic risk perceptions than did females, and men were more likely than women to report that the increased security measures detracted from their Olympic Games experience. Nationality had minimal effect on perceptions of risk except in the case of the host country, with Greek respondents reporting fewer concerns for safety but greater awareness of the security measures present at the Games. The discussion focuses on theoretical, methodological and practical implications.*

*Keywords:* Terrorism, Risk, Sport Events

## Introduction

Since the terrorism attacks of 2001 in the United States of America, concerns about potential terrorism attacks at mega-sporting events has been widely speculated upon in the media. Previous concerns arising out of the Palestinian attack at the Munich Olympic Games were starkly revived by the September 11 incident. Atkinson & Young (2002) contend that sporting events, particularly those with considerable media coverage, have become 'prime targets for terrorism' (p. 55).

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Tracy Taylor is Professor and Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) at the University of Technology, Sydney, PO Box 123, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia. Kristine Toohey PhD is Professor in Sport Management at the Department of Tourism, Leisure, Hotel and Sport Management, Griffith Business School, Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus, Queensland. Email: k.toohey@griffith.edu.au

The importance of the selection of symbolic targets by terrorists has led some experts to predict that it is inevitable that a major sport event will be targeted (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2005). Due to the physical vulnerability of spectators, large sporting venues align with criteria for terrorists' targets (Whisenant, 2003). There are specific difficulties associated with the security of a large number of people who are seeking to indulge in what has been referred to as 'salubrious socialization' (Chalip, 2006) in a confined site. Alcohol consumption, combined with excitement and passionate support, provides a backdrop of related security issues even without the spectre of terrorism concerns.

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions of terrorism present at one mega-sporting event, the 2004 Athens Olympics; to determine the impact of these perceptions on the attendees' enjoyment of the event; and to assess the extent to which socio-demographic variables, such as age, gender and nationality, may affect such perceptions. Using the Olympics to study perceptions about terrorism provides us with 'cultural resources for reflecting on identity and enacting agency' (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006, p. 1).

### **Sport Events and the Threat of Terrorism**

Major sport events' global television and media coverage, such as the Olympic Games, World Cup Football and the Tour de France, have particular terrorism 'capital', due to their high public visibility, global media exposure and symbolic representation (Toohey & Taylor, 2006). Roche (2006, p. 32) noted, 'there is very little in the international televisual global village to compare with the positive and celebratory, predictably recurrent and relatively frequent character of sport mega-events such as the Olympic Games as media events'.

In concert with these widely articulated concerns about potential terrorism activity, it has been argued that the perceived risk of terrorism has kept spectators away from sporting events (Cashman, 2004). Solberg & Preuss (2005) noted that sport event tourists are especially likely to avoid a destination because of terrorism concerns. Thus, risk management of terrorism has relevance for planning sport events, not only for safety but also for positive economic outcomes, as income to the host region, generated particularly through tourism, is an expected outcome. This perception of a possible terrorist threat has also been found to influence the experience of those sporting enthusiasts who chose to attend sport events. There has been an increasing militarisation of sport facilities and events and 'urban spaces in which major sport events occur are increasingly viewed as terrain on which military tactics and weaponry are necessary to protect capital investments, control crowds, and prevent and respond to terrorist attacks' (Schimmel, 2006, p. 168).

The relatively low crowd attendance at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games has been in part attributed to terrorism fears (Pelley & Cowan, 2004). Those patrons who attended the Games experienced high-level screening with metal detectors, pat-down searches and other invasive checking techniques (Carey, 2004). These relatively intrusive safety measures could alter and potentially negatively impact attendees' experience.

Potential threats need to be taken seriously as sport events have been the target of both realised and thwarted terrorist activity.

Sport events have been targeted by terrorists on an estimated 168 different occasions from the Munich Olympic attack in 1972 through to 2003 (Carey, 2004; Pelley & Cowan, 2004; Kennelly, 2005). These have included a car bomb planted by ETA which exploded outside a stadium in Madrid in 2002 before a European Champion Leagues football semi-final match injuring 16 people (Tremlett, 2002); a plot by Islamic extremists to bomb a football stadium in Manchester in 2004 (Cardy & Russell, 2004; Manchester United dismisses reports that Old Trafford is an al-Qaida target, 2004; Agence France Presse, 2004); and, also in 2004, a bomb threat which occasioned the evacuation of approximately 70,000 fans, players and officials at a football match at Bernabeu stadium in Spain (Agence France Presse, 2004).

The increasing public debate and acts of terrorism have been accompanied by growing academic interest in measuring impacts. Reactions to threats of terrorism and the consequences of terrorism acts have recently been investigated from a range of perspectives, including: emotions and risk perceptions (Lerner *et al.*, 2003), mental health (Schuster *et al.*, 2001), post-traumatic stress disorder (DiMaggio & Galea, 2006), substance abuse (Wu *et al.*, 2006), the role of optimism (Ai *et al.*, 2006) and of emotional intelligence (Graves *et al.*, 2005), and the impact on intention to travel (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005).

Despite the growing discourse on terrorism, literature on the relationship between sport events and terrorism has been narrowly focused. The majority of research to date has focused on operational issues relating to venue security and the implementation of technologies designed to identify and deal with terrorist incidents during sporting events (Whisenant, 2003). Other research has examined the media's treatment of security issues at major sporting events (Atkinson & Young, 2002; Toohey & Taylor, 2006). A smaller number of studies have examined the impact of 9/11 on major sport event attendees at the 2002 FIFA World Cup (Toohey *et al.*, 2003), the 2002 Winter Olympic Games (Atkinson & Young, 2002), and the 2003 Rugby World Cup (Taylor & Toohey, 2006). Within these studies, the interplay of emotions and risk perceptions are evident in both community and individual responses to threats of terrorism. Mega sport events have been labelled as sites of resistance, with attendees showing defiance and resistance to the possibility of violence through their mere presence at the sporting fixture (Taylor & Toohey, 2006).

To further understand how different emotional responses affect spectators' perceptions of risk, we conducted a survey of attendees at the 2004 Athens Olympics. The study was designed to gauge the perceptions of event spectators with respect to their decision to attend the Games and the impact of security measures on their enjoyment of the events. We explored the effects of fear and anger on perceived risk of terrorism using appraisal-tendency theory (Lerner *et al.*, 2003). The paper begins with a discussion of terrorism and its links to sport and the Olympic Games and then places the 2004 Athens Olympics in context. Next, it presents the framework of appraisal-tendency theory used for the study. Finally, it presents and discusses the survey results and implications.

## **Terrorism and the Olympic Games**

In 1972, 11 Israeli members of the Israeli team were taken hostage and ultimately killed in a highly public massacre at the Munich Olympic Games. The incident commenced in the Olympic Village when eight Palestinian terrorists from the militant group Black September scaled the athlete village wall with apparent ease, invaded the athlete residence and initially killed two Israelis and took nine others hostage. Ensuing negotiations were unsuccessful and a botched rescue attempt at the airport resulted in the deaths of the remaining Israelis, along with five terrorists and one German police officer. The Games were halted for commemorative services at which the President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Avery Brundage, famously announced, 'The Games must go on'. The incident and its aftermath produced a new approach to Olympic security planning (Sanan, 1996).

Subsequently, at the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games in Canada, no expense was spared on security precautions (Sanan, 1996; Kennelly, 2005). The strict security framework developed for the Montreal Olympics, which arose from an appraisal of what went wrong in Munich, provided a basic schema for all subsequent Olympic venue security operations (Sanan, 1996). However, the tightening of security has not deterred all further terrorist attempts, as terrorists have since targeted different facets of the Games. In 1992, the Basque separatist group Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) and a Marxist group known as Grupo de Resistencia Antifascista Primo October (GRAPO) independently attempted to interrupt the Barcelona Olympic Games by bombing utilities (Sanan, 1996). Both attacks caused relatively minor inconvenience but were unsuccessful in gaining widespread media attention or disrupting the event (Kennelly, 2005).

At the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, a bomb exploded during a concert in Centennial Park. One person was killed as a direct result, another died from a heart attack, and over 100 people were injured (Diaz, 2001). The Sydney 2000 Games were not adversely affected by terrorist incidents; however, before the Games, two potential terrorist plots were foiled (Kennelly, 2005). However, soon after these Games, the nature of Olympic security dramatically changed when the world's approach to terrorism experienced a transformation as a result of the events of 9/11.

For the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games, the first Games held after the September 11, 2001 attack, security plans underwent re-evaluation and tighter security was implemented for spectators, athletes, information systems and venues. Overall, the public alarm generated by September 11 resulted in an additional \$US70 million spending on Games security, bringing the Salt Lake City security budget to around \$US500 million (Snider, 2002). Fortunately, no terrorism incidents marred the Games' celebration.

### *The 2004 Athens Games*

The Athens Olympic Games were held in August 2004 over a period of 17 days. The Games included competitions across 28 sports and involved 10,500 athletes and 5,500

team officials from 201 National Olympic Committees. Despite a range of measures taken by Games organisers to ensure a trouble-free, Games-time operation, the lead-up to Athens was fraught with international concern about insufficient security preparations. Rumours circulated that the US team would withdraw if the perceived threat of terrorism was too high (Dahlberg, 2004). The US-based Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) 'established a fully operational command post adjacent to the US embassy in Athens and pre-staged crisis response assets at three strategic locations prepared to deploy, with the consent of Greek authorities, in the event of a terrorist act' (McGee, 2006, p. 13). Despite such concerns, the Games were held without any, publicly known, major security incidents.

The security put in place for the Athens Olympics allegedly cost in the vicinity of an unprecedented \$1 billion. It included tens of thousands of trained personnel, and airborne protection and surveillance, offshore and port security, and even assistance from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Kennelly, 2005). Greece also accepted security planning, training and intelligence assistance from a new initiative, an international Olympic security advisory group, formed from representatives of a range of nations' security forces (Grohmann, 2004). The totality of employing all of these measures suggests that Athens was the most guarded Olympic Games in history (Wilson, 2004).

Even with these extensive preparations, Greek officials were continually called upon to reassure the world of their security preparedness. This was particularly evident after several incidents of domestic and international terrorism in 2004. For example, two Greek government vehicles were firebombed, coinciding with a visit to Athens from the IOC President. A local group claimed responsibility and described the attack as a protest against the Games and revenge for workers killed in accidents on Olympic construction sites. Following this, exactly 100 days out from the Games Opening Ceremony, three bombs went off in Athens, raising the possibility that some local groups intended to use the Games for political leverage (Grohmann, 2004).

Other bombings across Europe also raised alarm about terrorism threats for the Games. Of most concern was the bombing of a commuter train that resulted in the death of 201 people and injured more than 1,750 in Madrid, Spain, in May 2004. Within a week another bomb went off in regional Spain and an unexploded bomb was found on another rail line. The initial attack in Madrid was the work of a loose-knit terrorist group, allegedly linked to al Qaeda, and it was suggested that the attack was punishment for Spain's involvement in the invasion of Iraq. This led to speculation that athletes from countries with troops in Iraq could be targets at the forthcoming 2004 Athens Olympics (Rufford, 2004). Both athletes and officials raised concerns about the possibility of terrorism via the media and spoke about the emotional effects that these threats were having on their preparations (Kennelly, 2005).

### **Emotions and Risk**

Considerable research has been conducted post-9/11 to judge the emotional responses of individuals and communities to these terrorist attacks. Frederickson *et al.* (2003)

reported that following 9/11 Americans frequently mentioned feeling anger and sadness, fear and anxiety and noted that their personal sense of safety and security had been shaken by the attacks. This finding has particular relevance for sport event organisers as emotions often override probability and can lead to excessive reactions about low-probability risks of further terrorism, more than is statistically warranted (Sunstein, 2003). However, as Frederickson *et al.* (2003) found, positive emotions such as gratitude, interest, etc. are also manifest in times of crisis and these reactions can cushion resilient people against depression and assist them to cope.

Research on affective influences on judgement and choice has found a link between emotions and risk assessment. Emotions, simply put, are a response to ongoing, implicit appraisals of situations, elicited from positive or negative implications for the individual, and are reflective of specific appraisal patterns (Schwartz, 2000). These patterns, or appraisal tendencies, link emotions such as anger, aversion and enjoyment with a greater sense of certainty; and other emotions such as hope and anxiety with uncertainty. In consequence, appraisal-tendency theory suggests that fear leads people to make pessimistic judgements of future events whereas anger leads to more optimistic judgements (Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001). Lerner *et al.* (2003) argue that appraisal theory allows us to 'breakdown emotions into cognitive pieces (or dimensions) that may help to map emotions onto judgments and decision-making processes' (p. 118).

The development of performance appraisal-tendency theory represented a shift in social psychological research literature. Previously it had been suggested that people engage in more thorough and systematic information processing when they experience negative, compared to positive, mood states. The initial work of Lerner & Keltner (2000, 2001) proposed that the emotional dimension of cognitive appraisals is more complex than can be explained by simple attribution to positive versus negative mood. Instead, they argued that decisions are made based on the person's experience through direct or attendant contact. Emotions focus attention, memory and behaviour about the current task and are subsequently used to shape responses to novel situations (Wiener *et al.*, 2006).

Although designed to assist the individual response to the event that evoked the emotion, such appraisals persist beyond the eliciting situation and the person may be unaware of the ways in which that emotion has influenced decision-making (Lerner *et al.*, 1998). However, the appraisal tendency process suggests that even when a person is aware that the source of his/her emotional state is completely separate from the situation at hand, the emotion continues to affect their decisions (Loewenstein & Lerner, 2003).

Anger, for example, 'has been shown to persist past the emotion-provoking episode in the form of a residual arousal or excitation, which may then influence subsequent, unrelated decisions' (Feigenson & Park, 2006, p. 151). Fear arises from and evokes appraisals of uncertainty and lack of individual control, whereas anger arises from and evokes appraisals of certainty and individual control (Lerner *et al.*, 2004). Anger triggered in one situation can evoke a person to seek more optimistic risk estimates and risk-seeking choices in unrelated situations, whereas fear does the opposite

(Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001). Furthermore, it has been found that fear tends to make a decision-maker pessimistic and risk averse, while anger leads to more optimistic risk assessments and risk-acceptant behaviour (Lerner & Keltner, 2001).

In a nationwide (US) study on fear, anger and perceived terrorism, Lerner *et al.*, (2003) found that fear and anger altered beliefs and attitudes regarding matters of national interest and that anger was the dominant emotion across conditions. Those who experienced more anger had more optimistic beliefs and those with greater fear expressed more pessimism and across all risks. Males expressed less pessimism than did females. To extend this line of argument to the risk of terrorism at sport events, an angry individual would make different choices to travel to a sport event than a fearful one, and might be more likely to choose to attend in the first place.

The nature of terrorism and the emotional reactions it evokes are complex in nature. In consequence, the threat of terrorist attacks at an event such as the Olympic Games and the perception of attendees to this threat need to be better understood so that sport event managers can identify ways to implement effective security initiatives that do not impact negatively on spectators' emotional responses by making them more fearful. To address this issue we surveyed 2004 Athens Games attendees about perceptions of terrorism, risk and safety. The findings are interpreted using the work of Lerner *et al.* (2003), which found individuals reporting being in the anger condition have more optimistic responses than those in the fear condition. The premise here is that appraisal tendency can be used to explain how emotion may provide an informational cue to decision-making.

## **Method**

The approach adopted within this research included a study of attendees at the Athens Olympic Games using a survey instrument designed to ascertain opinions on a range of terrorism, security and safety-related issues and implemented at two previous mega-sport events (Toohey & Taylor, 2005). Questions were grouped into four categories: game and event attendance statistics; factors influencing decision to attend; security and safety aspects; and demographic information.

The purpose of the study was to ascertain attendees' perceptions about the general threat of terrorism at the Athens Games. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate if the threat of terrorism influenced their decision to attend the Games, if their experience at the Games had been impacted by concerns about safety or security, and how safe they felt during the Games. Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with safety measures at a range of venues and locations and judge whether the security measures enhanced or detracted from their experience at the Olympics. The measurements used captured subjective data that can reflect the respondents' values and attitudes. However, as argued by Ohmann *et al.* (2006, p. 137), 'perceptions have an important role in terms of community opinions of the success or otherwise of the event'.

In addition to the above, the data collected on respondents' demographic background allowed us to analyse differences in perceptions of terrorism risks, safety

measures and levels of satisfaction with security initiatives among attendee subgroups. The survey included open-ended response sections and the comments elicited from the attendees were useful in assessing emotions such as anger, aversion and enjoyment which were in turn coded as neutral, optimistic and pessimist responses.

Athens Games attendees were randomly approached for questionnaire completion during August 2004. Respondents were selected at three Olympic venue cities, namely Athens, Olympia and Thessaloniki. Surveys were conducted in English and Greek. At each location individuals were randomly stopped by a researcher, using the next person past a particular point technique, and asked if they were willing to complete a short questionnaire on aspects of the Olympic Games. Upon agreeing to complete the survey, a self-complete questionnaire was provided, or the field researcher/s completed the questionnaire via personal interview depending on the participant's preference. Of the questionnaires distributed 277 were fully completed and deemed usable.

## **Results**

The final sample comprised a larger proportion of men (70%) than women (30%). The largest groupings of respondents were from Greece (25.3%), the USA (10%), France (7.6%), the United Kingdom (5.8%) and Australia (5%). The remainder of respondents were drawn from a range of 38 other countries. A total of 23% respondents were under 25 years of age, 55.5% were between 25 and 44 years, and 21.6% were 45 years and over. Education levels were relatively high as 71.6% of respondents had more than a high school education qualification. A total of 87.2% of respondents completed the survey in English and 12.8% completed the survey in Greek.

Some 45% of respondents had attended previous Olympic Games, including Sydney 2000 (28.9%), Seoul 1998 (4.3%), Atlanta 1996 (13.7%) and Barcelona 1992 (15.5%). The top five reasons for attending the Athens Games were: 1. it is a once-in-a-lifetime experience; 2. for the social experience; 3. cheering and supporting athletes; 4. I'm a big fan of the Olympics; and 5. as part of a holiday. The average number of 2004 Olympic events attended by respondents during their time at the Games was 3.7. The profile of respondents can be seen in Table 1.

### *Perceptions*

Respondents reported that safety was not a major concern during their time at the Games. Although, respondents felt generally safe at the Games there were some differences by gender and place of residence. Table 2 presents data on the perceptions of terrorism threat by mean scores. The first column represents the answers to the question: 'How safe did you feel at the Games?' and the indicator of 'very safe' (1) to 'unsafe' (5). Respondents were asked to rate the impact of security measures on their enjoyment levels, indicating from 'negative impact' (1) to 'positive impact' (5). And the impact of threat of terrorism on their decision to attend was measured via responses ranging from 'significant impact' (1) to 'no impact at all' (5).



**Table 1** Respondent Profile

Attribute	Percent
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	30
Male	70
<i>Age group</i>	
Under 25 years	23.0
25–34 years	34.7
35–44 years	20.8
45–54 years	11.7
55+ years	9.9
<i>Place of residence</i>	
Greece	25.3
North America	12.2
France	7.6
United Kingdom	5.8
Other Europe	20.7
Australia & NZ	6.5
Asia	10.9
South America	4.4
<i>Attendance at previous Olympics</i>	
Sydney 2000	28.9
Seoul 1998	4.3
Seoul 1998	13.7
Barcelona 1992	15.5

(n = 277)

Female respondents ( $M = 2.3$ ) indicated that they felt slightly less safe than males ( $M = 2.1$ ). Respondents who lived locally reported feeling the safest ( $M = 1.7$ ) followed by those from other parts of Greece ( $M = 1.8$ ), then Australians ( $M = 1.9$ ) and Eastern Europeans ( $M = 2.0$ ). Those feeling least safe were from Taiwan ( $M = 2.6$ ), Japan ( $M = 2.7$ ) and Thailand ( $M = 2.8$ ) respectively.

In general terms, the impact of safety and security measures put in place by the event organisers were viewed neutrally by respondents, but did not detract from their Games experience. Female attendees ( $M = 2.9$ ) and respondents from outside Greece ( $M = 2.8$ ) were particularly positive about the impact of security on their Games experiences, whilst local ( $M = 3.2$ ) and Greek residents ( $M = 3.1$ ) were more negatively disposed. A consistent pattern emerged in relation to the impact of the threat of terrorism on the respondent's decision to attend the Games. Local residents were less concerned about terrorism than those from other countries. Additionally, nearly half of the respondents indicated that their family or friends indicated some concerns about their decision to come to the Olympics because of possible terrorist attacks. The majority of Greek respondents (69%) noted no such concern evidenced by their family or friends.

Airport and venue security was rated as satisfactory by the majority of respondents. However, security at accommodation sites was listed as relatively non-visible and it was noted that the visibility of security on public transport was also minimal.

**Table 2** Average Scores of Safety, Security and Terrorism Perceptions

Item	Overall Mean SD	Gender		Local Resident Mean SD	Other Greece	Outside Greece
		Males Mean SD	Females Mean SD			
How safe did you feel at the Games?	2.13 (0.99)	2.09 (1.11)	2.26 (1.20)	1.73 (0.79)	1.83 (0.51)	2.20(0.54)
How did the security and safety measures impact your enjoyment of the Games?	2.96 (0.76)	3.10 (0.93)	2.90 (0.69)	3.21(.078)	3.10 (0.62)	2.82(0.98)
What impact did the threat of terrorism have on your decision to attend the Games?	2.79 (1.16)	2.73 (0.93)	3.03 (1.06)	3.07 (1.34)	2.86 (1.29)	2.92(1.08)

The responses to the open-ended safety and security-related questions were analysed and coded for thematic review. Freehand coding was first undertaken using appraisal-tendency theory (Lerner *et al.*, 2003). It was refined further through text and Boolean search procedures. Direct quotes were then selected as representative of the themes and discourses presented. Table 3 presents the results of the fear and anger condition responses and associated comments of optimism and pessimism.

The fear-related responses clustered around themes of the ‘inevitable’ happening, that is, these respondents felt that a terrorism attack was going to happen: it was just a matter of when. They spoke about a sense that, wherever a person was in the world, they were at risk of a terrorist attack; and they noted that sport was a ‘good target’ for terrorists. The pessimistic outlook that accompanied this fear response fell into two categories: for one group the inevitability of terrorism meant that security responses were deemed to be largely irrelevant since, ‘one can’t plan for every contingency’; and, for the other respondents, this inevitability meant they expected a high priority to be placed on tighter security. The anger-related respondents were strident and defiant and their related optimism responses indicated that they felt their chances of being harmed were minimal. They were not overly concerned about the security measures employed by Games organisers.

We also asked respondents about their reactions to the safety and security measures that they experienced at the Games. Table 4 presents these results. In categorising the comments, anger condition was attributed to 68% of responses, 16% were related to fear condition, and the remainder (16%) were indifferent. Anger-conditioned

**Table 3** Fear, Anger, Optimism and Pessimism by Gender

Response tendency to perceptions of risk	Impact of emotion F = female, M = male
<b>Fear</b>	All the world is dangerous now (F) Terrorism is now unavoidable (F) Sport is a target – take precautions (M)
<b>Anger</b>	We need to stand up to terrorists (M) Terrorists have demonstrated that they will stoop to any length to ruin what we call fair play. We cannot let them succeed in their attempt to destroy our freedom (F) Look at the Madrid bombings – don't let them scare us (M) If we spend money on terrorism because we are scared then the terrorists have won (M) I am not going to bow to any terrorists (F)
<b>Optimism</b>	Chances of being harmed are small (M) There are absolutely no chances of danger to my safety (F) The Olympics are too important to be a target (M)
<b>Pessimism</b>	You just can't predict where they will be (F) Tighter security is needed at the venues (F) Unfortunately, this (terrorism) might become a fact of life for the foreseeable future (F)

respondents were more likely to react negatively to obvious security measures and be less likely to support tighter security measures, compared with the fear-conditioned respondents. Regardless of emotion, the Greek respondents were more likely to perceive the security as oppressive. Also, independent of emotion, respondents supported

**Table 4** Anger and Fear Condition Responses to Security

	Response to security
<b>Fear Condition</b>	Daunting to see machines guns but also supporting to know security is close If there had been less security I would have felt less safe Use better trained security and don't just hire at the last minute The security personnel should act professional and be serious about the checks Don't have too many US politicians in town at the same time
<b>Anger Condition</b>	Terrorism and sport should not mix, keep them separate or else the terrorist has won Too much security – Greece is safe you don't need it Beach volleyball is a happy sport – too much security is bad The whole experience of being checked at the airport, accommodation and not just the sport is too much, it's too intrusive This (the high security) is just making sport too expensive and putting it out of the reach of developing countries People are paying a large sum of money for accommodation we should not be treated like terrorists

the need for better communication about issues of security and safety and the provision of clear multi-lingual information.

## Discussion

The results of the present study suggest that 2004 Olympic Games attendees did not consider terrorism to be a significant deterrent or threat to their safety during the Games. Earlier predictions of the likelihood of terrorism at a major sport event (Atkinson & Young, 2002; Whisenant, 2003) appear to have been largely discounted by the Games attendees that we surveyed. Suggestions that the low attendance evidence at the Games events was related to terrorism (Cashman, 2004; Pelley & Cowan, 2004) were not reflected in the comments of the respondents in the present study. However, we did not survey non-attendees and therefore cannot make any generalisations about why individuals did not attend the Games. The increased security and visible safety checks (Carey, 2004) and military presence in sport facilities was taken for granted by the majority of attendees, although Greek residents found these measures more intrusive and distracting than other visitors.

Fear- and anger-related attitudes, as expressed via the respondents' comments, were related to beliefs regarding appropriate event security and safety measures and were differentiated on the basis of gender and place of residence. The place of residence differences based on whether the respondent was from the local area or an overseas visitor has implications for event managers. Anger-related responses corresponded with more optimistic beliefs and fear-related respondents expressed more pessimistic viewpoints about personal safety.

This finding about emotional responses to terrorism threats complements the research of Lerner *et al.* (2003) who elicited similar results when they tested propositions with respect of the effects of fear and anger on perceptions of terrorism against a verbal response scale and an analytical probability response scale. In applying the concept of appraisal-tendency theory to responses of attendees at the Athens 2004 Games we found that emotion exerts effects on decision-making and judgements. Consistent with previous findings (Lerner *et al.*, 2003), gender was an important factor affecting perceptions of possible terrorism threats. The comments of women were more fear-related, while men expressed more anger. Women's comments were more likely to be classified as pessimistic and indicated higher perceived risk, whereas men's comments were more likely to be associated with optimism and lower perceived risk.

Future empirical research using appraisal-tendency theory could profitably explore how and to what extent particular emotions inform decisions. What could be explored in more depth is how people feel about or interpret the source of their emotion and whether it was incidental or not to their decision-making and judgement, as this data could assist us to explain the informational effect. Extending the research to other sport events, from small- to large-scale, in different locations would provide additional data from which to place these study results into a broader perspective. Dimensions such as the size of the event, including its magnitude (i.e. the Olympics is once

every four years and for many people a once-in-a-lifetime visit); the attendee mix (local and non-local; the different nationalities represented; age and gender); and its media reach (and hence its perceived attractiveness as a terrorist target), along with location (i.e. the security risk rating of countries) could be of particular research interest.

It was beyond the scope of this study to investigate the feelings and emotions of individuals who stayed at home and did not attend the Athens Olympics, and thus we cannot draw any conclusions about non-attendees, and this is a limitation of the present research. In doing we are cognisant that our sample of attendees may be inherently biased toward less risk-adverse people in the first instance, as they were the ones who chose to attend the event. Furthermore, it is noted that the timing of the data collection in relation to its proximity to the most recent significant terrorist attack, is a consideration not fully explored or explained in the context of this study. Appraisal-tendency suggests that emotional responses carry over into subsequent decisions; given the likelihood that intensity of emotions would decrease over time it would be likely that the impact of the emotion on decisions would impact over time as well.

## **Conclusion**

Horne & Manzenreiter (2006, p. 19) predict that that security issues are likely to come more to the fore in production of sport mega-events as, 'heightened concerns about risk ... will form a substantial research theme in future studies of sport events'. This study has instigated research into this topic in relation to event spectators and provided a framework for thinking about associated emotions and risk. The responses of the 2004 Athens Games attendees to terrorism threats have implications for the analysis of risk management and for spectators' expectations of safety and security provisions at major sport events.

The safety preparations of the Games organisers were generally well-received, although local residents were less enamored of the restrictions that accompanied the increased security measures at sporting venues than were overseas visitors. This is consistent with other findings (Taylor & Toohey, 2006) and suggests that the institution of a public relations campaign in the city hosting the event to educate local residents about changes to their normal event security procedures should be considered.

The existence of a distinctive 'culture of fear' in contemporary societies has been the centre of much public discussion and debate. Sport events may provide one site of resistance to this reactive emotion as some attendees used their presence as a form of defiance and a physical statement supporting the separation of sport and politics. Consistent with appraisal-tendency theory, individuals who displayed anger tendencies, rather than fear, have seen their attendance at sport events as a means by which to optimistically deal with the situation. Individuals displaying fear-conditioned responses also attended the Games; however, they placed a greater reliance on good safety and security to feel comfortable with their attendance. Further research into emotional responses at sport events is needed to better explore the underlying complexities and relationships of the various reactions.

This project has provided further information on perceptions of terrorism amongst sport tourists through studying these occurrences at one specific sport event and one host location, the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. There is need now for further research to be conducted to build a more extensive and expansive body of data and knowledge. Such information would be of use to sport event organisers and managers so that the issues raised can be addressed during the planning and implementation of the event. It is suggested that future studies consider the adoption of multi-method approaches, including the conduct of surveys, interviews and media analyses to gain perceptions from a range of different stakeholders, not just attendees.

Future Olympic Games and major sport event organisers should be cognisant of different market segmentations and the differing perceptions of terrorism, safety and security that were demonstrated in the present study. The next Olympic Games will be held in Beijing in 2008 and the plans for the Chinese city's Olympic Village include the intensive presence of telecommunication technologies whereby the entire Village will be 'an e-community, with the existence of an on-line square devoted to all activities related to digital interaction . . . that also guarantees safety with CCTV and sophisticated surveillance systems' (Muñoz, 2006, p. 185). It remains to be seen if continued predictions of terrorism at a major sport event (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2005) will lead Games attendees at the next Olympics in Beijing to feel any more trepidation than was expressed by the Athens attendees.

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