Sympathy for the Devil: Evidence that Reminding Whites of their Mortality Promotes More Favorable Reactions to White Racists[1]

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Terror management research has often shown that after reminders of mortality, people show greater investment in and support for groups to which they belong. The question for the present research was whether or not this would extend to Euro American investment in their identification as White. Although it seemed unlikely that White participants would directly exhibit increased identification as Whites, we hypothesized that mortality salience would increase sympathy for other Whites who expressed racial pride or favoritism toward Whites. In support of the hypothesis, a White person expressing pride in his race was viewed by White participants as particularly racist relative to a Black person who does so in Study 1, but was deemed less racist after White participants were reminded of their own mortality in Study 2. Similarly, in Study 3, White participants rated an explicitly racist White employer as less racist when they were reminded beforehand of their own mortality. The results were discussed in terms of implications for affiliation with racist ideologies and terror management defenses.

According to terror management theory, because of the unique human awareness of our vulnerability and ultimate mortality, to function securely each of us must live out our lives imbedded in a culturally derived conception of reality that provides structure and meaning to our subjective experience and allows us to feel like we are

significant, enduring contributors within the context of this meaningful reality. As many theorists have noted (e.g., Brewer, Manzi, Shaw, 1993; Lifton, 1983; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), group identifications play a major role in people's sense of who they are and in how good they feel about themselves. Thus, a person's group identifications should play a significant role in how people manage their concerns about mortality. Based on this idea, the present studies were designed to test the hypothesis that reminders of mortality would increase the favorability of White participants' reactions to other Whites who express White pride or engage in racist actions.

TERROR MANAGEMENT THEORY AND RESEARCH

Terror management theory (for a more thorough exposition of the theory and the research it has generated, see Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997; Solomon et al., 1991) is derived largely from the writings of cultural anthropologist Becker (1962, 1973, 1975). Becker theorized that as a result of human abilities to think abstractly, temporally, and in a self-conscious manner, humans have a propensity for fear and anxiety beyond that of other animals. We know that our lives are finite and this knowledge, in combination with our instinctual drive for survival, gives us a unique potential to be terrified; we are aware of so many possible mortal dangers and that no matter how many of these we dodge as we maneuver through the many minefields of life, sooner or later, the end will come.

As a result of this sticky situation, humans are uniquely susceptible to experiencing anxiety even in the absence of imminent danger. Consequently, to function with minimal anxiety, Becker theorized that we control this immense potential for anxiety by immersing ourselves in a shared psychological construction that gives life meaning, order, and a sense of permanence, and offers the hope that our existence is in some way not temporary, that death can be transcended. Means of transcending death vary considerably from culture to culture and depending on one's culture, might be termed secular (e.g., amassing great fortunes or erecting large monuments like pyramids or skyscrapers) or religious (e.g., the afterlife promised in some form by most of the world's religions). Regardless, the theory proposes that faith in one's culture and its ideologies serves to manage the terror springing ultimately from concerns about death.

While faith in one's cultural worldview appears vital to human functioning, so too is self-esteem—the feeling that one is living up to cultural standards. In fact, faith in a cultural belief system may not do much to provide psychological equanimity if one does not feel valued and secure within the cultural system. Cultures do not profess to confer immortality to those who do not meet their standards. Thus, terror management theory posits that we need both a firm belief in a meaningful conception of the world, as well as a belief that we are important members of this world. In this way we are best able to deny death and acquire the sense of security, protection, and immortality that cultural worldviews offer.

Because of this uniquely human process which allows us to deny death and to minimize the terror associated with it, these symbolic cultural constructions, our worldview and self-worth, take on great psychological importance.

A large body of empirical work has supported terror management theory's basic contention that self-esteem and faith in one's cultural worldview serve to buffer people against death-related fears. The anxiety-buffering function of self-esteem has been supported in a number of studies in which participants whose self-esteem was experimentally boosted or dispositionally high responded to physical threats and death-related stimuli with less self-reported anxiety, defense, and physiological arousal than those participants with lower self-esteem (e.g., Greenberg et al., 1993; Greenberg, Solomon, et al., 1992). Complementary support for the terror management role of self-esteem has been provided by recent studies showing that reminders of mortality motivate self-esteem striving (Taubman Ben-Ari, Florian, & Mikulincer, 1999; Goldenberg, McCoy, Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 2000). For example, Taubman Ben-Ari et al. (1999) found that individuals for whom driving skill was an important source of self-esteem became more bold in their driving behavior following mortality salience. Thus, despite the potential harm this behavior entailed, such participants were willing to take risks in order to maximize their self-esteem following mortality salience.

Evidence for the terror management function of cultural worldviews comes from studies showing that reminders of mortality (mortality salience) lead to increased need for faith in, and affiliation with, one's worldview. In this work, people are typically asked to think about their own death or another topic and then given an opportunity to defend their own cultural belief system; mortality salience participants routinely display intensified allegiance to such belief systems (for a review, see Greenberg et al., 1997). For example, participants for whom mortality is salient, versus participants in a control condition, rate people who support their own culture more favorably, view people who challenge their culture more disparagingly (e.g., Rosenblatt, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Lyon, 1989), show hesitance to use cultural objects in inappropriate ways (Greenberg, Simon, Porteus, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1995), and are likely to distance from foreigners (Ochsmann & Mathay, 1996). These effects have been replicated in various laboratories and in several different countries (e.g., Nelson, Moore, Olivetti, & Scott, 1997; Canada: Baldwin & Wesley, 1996; Israel: Florian & Mikulincer, 1997; Germany: Ochsmann & Mathay, 1996; and the Netherlands: Dechesne, Greenberg, Arndt, & Schimel, 2000).

Lending convergent support to the underlying theoretical analysis, participants have been reminded of death in a variety of ways. For instance, in some studies, subliminally exposing participants to the word "dead" elicited cultural worldview defense (e.g., Arndt, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1997; Dechesne, Janssen, & van Knippenberg, 2000). Other studies have shown similar defensiveness when in close proximity to a funeral home (Pyszczynski et al., 1996),

after watching fatal accident footage (Nelson et al., 1997), and after people complete fear-of-death scales (Greenberg, Simon, Harmon-Jones, et al., 1995). Furthermore, these effects of mortality reminders appear to be unique to thoughts of death as opposed to thoughts of other aversive topics (e.g., Baldwin & Welsely, 1996; Greenberg, Simon, Harmon-Jones, et al., 1995; Rosenblatt et al., 1989).

Taken together, these lines of work suggest that mortality salience increases identification with, and pride in, one's ingroup. One recent series of studies broached this issue more directly in the context of fan affiliation with sports teams (Dechesne et al., 2000). The first study of this research found that after mortality salience, Dutch participants were more favorable to the Dutch National soccer team and espoused greater optimism with regard to a future match between their team and the German National team. Similarly, in the second study, after mortality salience, American participants tended to identify more strongly with their university football team just prior to the beginning of the season.

The basic question underlying the present research is, would mortality salience similarly increase identification with the White ingroup? Of course, as the twenty-first century begins, except for Neo-Nazi and Aryan nation types, White Americans are unlikely to openly endorse strong identification with the White ingroup. Therefore the strategy we used to determine whether mortality salience does have such an effect on White identification was to assess White participants' reactions to other Whites who express White pride or engage in discrimination against non-Whites. Specifically, the first two studies were conducted to assess the hypothesis that although a White who expresses racial pride generally would be reacted to negatively by fellow Whites, mortality salience would encourage fellow Whites to react more positively to such an individual. The third study assessed the hypothesis that although White participants would typically react more negatively to a White employer who engages in racial discrimination than to a Black employer who does so, mortality salience would encourage less negative reactions to the White racist.

WHITE PRIDE

As social identity theory and research, as well as even a casual consideration of history and current events indicate, people commonly derive feelings of pride from their national and ethnic identities. Within the United States, there have been explicit movements encouraging individuals to take pride in their membership in a wide variety of groups. These movements typically concern groups that have been victims of discrimination, for example, Black power, gay and lesbian pride, the grey panthers. Of course, virtually every ethnic group which has immigrated to the United States has taken pride in its heritage, including people of European descent not currently considered to be targets of discrimination (although, in fact, they have been at times), for example, Irish Americans and Italian Americans.

In general, these feelings of pride seem to be framed as positive affirmations of one's own heritage rather than as assertions of superiority over some other group. But in the United States, there seems to be one glaring exception to this, and that is White pride. Perhaps because there is really no specific cultural heritage associated with a White group identity (e.g., Germans and French are both considered White and yet have historically disavowed any link between each other), when people emphasize their White identity, it typically seems to be to assert separation from and superiority to members of other groups.

A particularly tragic example of this is the Columbine killers, Dylan Kleebold and Eric Harris. Bullied by and alienated from the popular groups at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, these upper middle class White teenagers seemed to be drawn to Neo-Nazi ideas, and on one Spring day in the year 1999, entered the school and proceeded to kill 13 people. Indeed, people who openly express White pride seem invariably to be those alienated from the mainstream culture—KKK members, skin-heads, and White supremacists—people trying to grab onto some basis for feeling good about themselves when conventional avenues such as successful careers and relationships are not working well for them. Consequently, the vast majority of people who avow White pride seem also to explicitly avow racism.

THE ASYMMETRY HYPOTHESIS

In this sense, there is a likely asymmetry in how White Americans will view people who claim to be proud to be White as opposed to people who claim to be proud to be members of other groups, such as African Americans. Specifically, the racially proud White person will tend to be viewed as more racist than the racially proud Black person. However, if mortality salience generally increases identification with the ingroup, then perhaps after mortality salience, White Americans would no longer view a White who expresses pride in being White as more racist than a Black person who expresses pride in being Black.

Studies 1 and 2 were designed to test these ideas. In Study 1, following an initial study unrelated to these issues, we simply asked White participants to read an essay supposedly written by a fellow student about something important to that student. They all read the same essay about the student's pride in their group and sense that their group needs to stand up and assert its value. However, for half the participants, the student was White and referred to Whites, whereas for the other half, the student was Black and referred to Blacks. The participants were then asked to indicate how racist they thought the student was, and how much they liked the student. We expected that participants would find the White student more racist and probably less likeable than the Black student. Should this hypothesis be supported, we could then assess in Study 2 whether mortality salience moderates these perceptions.

STUDY 1

Method

Participants

Thirty-six (29 female and 7 male) introductory psychology students at the University of Arizona participated for partial course credit.

Procedure

The four or five participants working in separate cubicles had already completed an initial study on social influence irrelevant to present purposes. The experimenter, blind to conditions, entered each cubicle and told the participants that as a final task, we were doing a pilot study to assess impressions of others. Consequently, participants were asked to read an essay on a topic of personal importance written by another student and provide their impressions of this student. All participants received the same handwritten essay, but half the time it referred to Whites, and the other half of the time it referred to Blacks. Typed instructions on a cover sheet informed the participants that this was a pilot study of how people form impressions and that they should read and answer questions about the author of the following essay, which was one of many written by fellow students about something they were proud of. The essay read as follows:

> I am proud to be a White [Black] man in this world. My group has put up with way too much over the years. I realize that some of my people have done some bad stuff, but we always seem to get the short end of the stick. Sooner or later, that's got to stop. Too many White [Black] people feel ashamed of who they are. Yet we have accomplished so much. I think its time to stand up with pride and defend our rights. Its time to assert our heritage and secure our place in the world now and in the future.

On the page following the essay, the participants were asked three questions: How much do you like the person who wrote this essay? How much would you like to meet the person who wrote this essay? and To what extent do you think the author of this essay holds racist beliefs? (all on scales from 1 = *not at all* to 9 = *extremely*).

Results and Discussion

T-tests were conducted to assess differences in reactions to the White and Black pride essayists. Consistent with our predictions, the White pride essayist was judged more racist than the Black essayist, $t(36) = 2.27$, $p < .03$ (Ms = 7.17 & 5.44, respectively).[6] Participants also indicated that they liked the Black pride

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[6]Initial analyses for this study and for Study 2 included sex as a variable but because no significant effects were found, it is not discussed further.

essayist more than the White essayist, $t(36) = 3.37$, $p < .002$, ($Ms = 4.6$ & 2.3, respectively), and that they desired to meet the Black essayist more than the White essayist, $t(36) = 1.89$, $p < .07$ ($Ms = 5.17$, & 3.61, respectively), although this difference only approached significance.

STUDY 2

The results provided clear evidence of an asymmetry in impressions of racism as a function of expressed racial pride. The White essayist was viewed as significantly more racist and was liked significantly less than the Black essayist. The results of Study 1 supported the asymmetry hypothesis and provide a basis for assessing our first terror management hypothesis, that the White pride target would be viewed as less racist by Whites following mortality salience. Thus, in Study 2, we asked participants to think about their own death or an aversive control topic (dental pain), and then, following some filler tasks, had them read and respond to the same essays used in Study 1. We expected that while control participants would exhibit the asymmetric pattern shown in Study 1, mortality salient participants would not find the White pride essayist to be more racist than the Black pride essayist.

Method

Participants

The participants were 43 introductory psychology students (19 males and 24 females) at the University of Arizona who participated for partial course credit. The participants were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (mortality salience: death vs. dental pain) × 2 (race of target: Black vs. White).

Procedure

Four or five participants were brought into the main room of the laboratory and were told the study concerned personality. The experimenter told participants they would be filling out some personality measures, engage in a self-disclosure task (which was for a separate purpose irrelevant to the present study except as a delay), and then do some pilot tasks. After reading and signing a consent form, participants were asked to go to a cubicle and fill out the personality packet inside, and were assured of the anonymity of their responses. The packet consisted of a filler questionnaire (the social desirability scale; Crowne & Marlowe, 1964), the mortality salience or dental pain salience items, and the PANAS-X (Watson & Clark, 1992) to assess any affective reactions. In the mortality salience condition,

the participants filled out the same 2-item questionnaire used in many previous terror management studies. The two items were (1) Please briefly describe the emotions that the thought of your own death arouses in you and (2) Jot down, as specifically as you can, what you think will happen to you as you physically die and once you are physically dead. In the dental pain salience condition, parallel items concerning dental pain were used. After then completing a self-disclosure exercise that served as a delay and distraction usually necessary to reveal the defensive consequences of mortality being made salient (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, Simon, & Breus, 1994), the Experimenter entered each cubicle and provided the same instructions and packet that were utilized in Study 1. Upon completion, participants were thoroughly debriefed, thanked, and given their credits.

Results and Discussion

Three 2×2 ANOVAs were used to analyze the data. The results for perceived racism revealed only the expected interaction, $F(1, 39) = 7.02$, $p < .02$ (cell means are displayed in Table I). Pairwise comparisons showed that, replicating the results of Study 1, in the dental pain control condition, the White essayist was judged significantly more racist than the Black essayist, $t(43) = 2.18$, $p < .05$, whereas in the mortality salient condition, the means were nonsignificantly in the opposite direction, $t(43) = 1.27$, $p < .25$. In addition, the White essayist was judged as less racist in the mortality salient condition than in the control condition, $t(43) = 2.22$, $p < .05$. Ratings of the Black essayist did not differ across conditions, $t(43) = 1.23$, $p < .25$, although there was a trend for participants to rate the Black essayist as more racist when mortality was salient. An ANOVA performed on the liking item revealed only a main effect of race, $F(1, 39) = 6.05$, $p < .02$, indicating that participants liked the Black target more than the White target. The Mortality Salience $\times$ Race interaction was not significant ($p > .30$); however, the pattern of means for the White target was in the predicted direction such that

Table I. Cell Means for the Mortality Salience by Race of Target Interaction on Perceptions of Racism, Liking, and Desire to Meet the Target in Study 2

	Mortality salient		Dental pain salient	
	Black	White	Black	White
Racism	6.46 (2.25)	4.90 (3.05)	5.00 (2.59)	7.56 (1.01)
Liking	5.18 (1.40)	4.36 (2.20)	4.83 (1.90)	2.89 (1.69)
Desire to meet	3.64 (2.54)	4.36 (3.20)	4.50 (2.20)	4.67 (3.16)
N	11	11	12	9

Note. Higher numbers reflect higher attributions of variable in question. Standard deviations are presented in parentheses.

mortality salience increased liking for the White target ($M = 4.36$) relative to dental pain salience, $t(43) = 1.80$, $p < .07$. We also performed an ANOVA on the desire to meet item, which revealed no significant main effects or interactions (all ps $> .50$).

Affect. A 2 (mortality salience) $\times$ 2 (race of target) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed on the affect subscales of the PANAS-X (Watson & Clark, 1992) to assess whether the mortality salience treatment affected participants' mood. No multivariate effects approached significance (all ps $> .44$). In addition, univariate tests on the most conceptually relevant types of affect (positive affect, negative affect, fear, sadness, & self-assuredness) also revealed no significant effects (all ps $> .44$).

The results of Study 2 provided support for the primary hypothesis. Mortality salience led Whites to view a fellow White who expressed racial pride as less racist than they otherwise would. Given the penchant for racism that seems to be characteristic of organizations that encourage White pride, this may be one of the more chilling effects of mortality salience found to date. Interestingly, the pattern was only weakly shown for liking and did not emerge at all for desire to meet the target. Inspection of the means in Table I suggests that the absence of a significant interaction on liking may have been due to reluctance on the part of mortality salient participants to report low liking for the Black target. This may reflect White particpants' resistance to openly expressing dislike for a Black person, even under mortality salient conditions. Schimel et al. (1999) similarly found that Whites would only derogate a Black after mortality salience if the Black behaved in a clearly counterstereotypic manner.

As for the desire to meet item, the standard deviations for this measure across the conditions were relatively high, ranging from 2.2 to 3.1. This may reflect the ambiguity of the item. A desire to meet someone may indicate a desire to express disgust toward the person, liking for the person, or a general curiosity concerning what the person is like. In any case, this item did not support the hypothesis.

Clearly though, the participants saw the White pride advocate as less racist if their own mortality was salient, and this is a potentially disturbing finding. Of course, intensified ingroup identification need not be a bad thing, and, as noted earlier, it often is viewed as a good thing in the context of historically oppressed groups. It is possible, then, that when mortality was salient, the White participants interpreted the White pride statement in a positive way, not as indicative of White supremacist beliefs but as a more benign identification with one's own racial designation. We suspect however that the findings reflect something more pernicious—an increased sympathy for (if not attraction to) a racist ideology of White superiority and a need to reassert that superiority. The research question then is: would mortality salience increase sympathy for a White who explicitly engages in discrimination against Blacks?

STUDY 3

Study 3 was designed to test this hypothesis. In this study, we manipulated mortality salience, and then had White participants read a summary of a legal case in which a White or Black male supervisor was found guilty of discrimination in hiring practices and who was quoted as justifying such practices. Participants were asked to evaluate this explicitly racist person and suggest the length of a jail sentence they thought he should receive. Based on the foregoing analysis and evidence, we expected that the White racist would generally be reacted to more negatively than the Black racist in the control condition, but that mortality salience would reduce the negativity of reactions to the White racist.

Method

Participants

The participants were 51 introductory psychology students at the University of Arizona who participated in exchange for partial course credit. Because our hypothesis was specific to White participants, only White participants' data were analyzed. Hence, five participants were excluded from the analysis because they were non-White. In addition, two participants were excluded because they indicated suspicion about the case file, leaving a total of 44 participants (9 males and 35 females). Participants were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (mortality salience: mortality vs. dental pain) $\times$ 2 (race of target: Black vs. White) factorial.

Procedure

Between two and five students participated in each experimental session. Upon entering the laboratory, the experimenter told participants that the objective of the study was to investigate how "different personality characteristics are related to people's perceptions of justice." For this reason, participants were told, they would be asked to first fill out a packet of personality questionnaires. Then they were to read a court case file "previously evaluated by real . . . judges in a court of law" and to "impose a sentence" on the guilty defendant. Participants were assured that all their responses would be anonymous. At this point, participants each entered an individual and private cubicle where they read and signed a consent form.

Once the consent forms were signed, the packet of personality questionnaires containing the first independent variable manipulation was presented. As in Study 2, an open ended questionnaire about either death or dental pain was embedded in the packet. Other than this, the packets were identical for all participants, and were composed of two filler questionnaires preceding the crucial death or dental pain manipulation, and two questionnaires following the manipulation.

The two forms following the manipulation (the PANAS-X; Watson & Clark, 1992; and a filler form asking participants about their sleeping and waking habits) not only served to bolster the cover story by adding to the legitimacy of the personality packet, but also served as a delay and distraction.

When each participant completed the set of forms just described, he/she was given one of two versions of a court case file and an attached questionnaire. This court file was the second independent variable. In one version it was made clear that the defendant, "Robert Davis," was White and guilty of discriminating against Blacks, and in particular, against the plaintiff, "Darnell Jackson." In the other version the defendant was instead Darnell Jackson, Black, and guilty of discriminating against Whites, and in particular, against the plaintiff, Robert Davis. The arguments given in the case file were based on several quotes from David Duke, an avowed racist and former leader of the Klu Klux Klan, which were taken from a report in a local newspaper in Tucson. The file was divided into three paragraphs. The first two gave a summary of the case and the defendant's argument, and were exactly the same, except that where "Darnell Jackson" and "Black" appeared in one, "Robert Davis" and "White" appeared in the other (see Appendix). In order to maintain the file's plausibility, the third paragraph, describing the defendant's argument, differed depending on the version. In the White racist condition the paragraph read

> Davis initially denied the allegations made against him and pled not-guilty to the charges, but after a lengthy trail he changed his plea to guilty—and he testified that "Whites face massive discrimination from the nations growing population of minorities. Affirmative action is just reverse discrimination. Many Black employees are hired because they are Black, but they are simply not as qualified as White workers in the field."

The Black racist version read

> Jackson initially denied the allegations made against him and pled not-guilty to the charges, but after a lengthy trial he changed his plea to guilty—and he testified that "Blacks face massive discrimination from the nation's population of White-Americans. Affirmative action laws aren't enough because Whites hold the power in this country. Time and time again, White employees are promoted because they are White even though Black employees are more qualified and experienced."

After participants read the court file, they completed the attached questionnaire that included the dependent measures. Participants were asked to rate on an 11-point scale, the extent to which they thought the defendant was guilty of discrimination and the extent to which they thought the defendant held racist beliefs. The form also asked participants to "take the role of a judge" and assign a jail sentence from between 0 and 36 months to the defendant.[7] Participants were then thoroughly debriefed and given course credit for their participation.

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[7]A fourth question was included for the first 27 participants asking them to assign a fine to the defendant. This question was dropped from the dependent variable, however, because it appeared to create confusion in conjunction with the request to assign a jail sentence. We also felt that it was unlikely that if participants were to punish the defendant by giving him a fine, they would also punish the defendant by assigning him to spend more time in jail.

Table II. Cell Means for the Mortality Salience by Race of Target Interaction on Guilt of Discrimination, the Extent to Which the Target Holds Racist Beliefs, Jail Time, and Perceptions of Racism Composite in Study 3

	Mortality salient		Dental pain salient	
	Black	White	Black	White
Guilty of discrimination	9.64 (1.63)	7.18 (1.53)	8.55 (1.44)	9.36 (1.36)
Holds racist beliefs	8.73 (2.28)	7.55 (2.70)	7.27 (2.20)	9.00 (1.48)
Jail sentence	8.54 (7.76)	6.09 (7.27)	9.00 (8.49)	11.91 (11.63)
Composite	0.26 (0.57)	−0.48 (0.81)	−0.15 (0.49)	0.37 (0.44)
N	11	11	11	11

Note. Higher numbers reflect higher ratings of variables in question. The composite is the mean of the *z*-scores for the three variables. Standard deviations are presented in parentheses.

Results and Discussion

Perceptions of Racism

To assess the hypothesis that mortality salience would reduce Whites' negativity toward a White racist, we created a composite measure of the extent to which participants' viewed the target as guilty of racist hiring practices. To create this composite measure, we first performed a factor analysis on the three racist items: amount of time the target should spend in jail, perceptions of racism, and perceptions of discrimination. A principle components analysis revealed that all three items loaded highly on a single factor, .650, .557, .785, respectively, with an eigenvalue of 1.35. We then converted participants' scores on the three items to *z*-scores, summed them, and divided by the number of items (3) to form a single composite of perceptions of guilt toward the target. ANOVA performed on this composite measure revealed a significant interaction, $F(1, 40) = 12.33$, $p < .001$ (Table II presents the means for the individual items and the composite).[8]

Pairwise comparisons revealed that for the White target, mortality salience reduced ascriptions of guilt toward the target relative to dental pain salience, $t(44) = 3.38$, $p < .001$. For the Black target, mortality salience led to slightly

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[8]We also performed ANOVAs on the three individual items asking participants the extent to which the target is guilty of discrimination, holds racist beliefs, and how much time he should spend in jail. As the means in Table II indicate, the results for the individual items generally paralleled the findings for the composite, although the interaction did not approach significance for the jail sentence. Specifically, the ANOVA on the discrimination item revealed only the predicted interaction, $F(1, 40) = 13.17$, $p < .001$. The same ANOVA performed on the extent to which the target holds racist beliefs also revealed only the expected interaction, $F(1, 40) = 4.77$, $p < .05$. The ANOVA on how much time participants thought the defendant should spend in jail revealed no main effects or interactions ($Fs < 1.35$). This may have resulted in part because of the extreme variability in participants responses on this item. It may also be that most of the participants were reluctant to assign jail time for this particular type of offense; whereas the maximum jail time could have been 36 months, the highest cell mean was under 12 months.

higher perceptions of guilt, $t(44) = 1.61$, $p < .10$, but this difference was only marginally significant. Pairwise comparisons also showed that within the mortality salience conditions, participants rated the White target as less guilty of racism than the Black target, $t(44) = 2.93$, $p < .01$. Consistent with Studies 1 and 2, pairwise comparisons revealed that within the dental pain salience conditions, participants viewed the White target as more guilty of racism than the Black target, $t(44) = 2.07$, $p < .05$.

Affect

As in previous mortality salience studies, we included the PANAS as a filler questionnaire following the mortality salience manipulation to serve as a delay. To assess whether the effects of mortality salience were mediated by mood, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance on the various subscales of the PANAS. As in Study 2, no multivariate effects approached significance (all ps $> .20$). Univariate tests on the types of affect that might be aroused by thoughts of mortality (positive affect, negative affect, fear, sadness, & self-assuredness) also revealed no significant effects (all ps $> .35$).

Study 3 provided clear evidence that mortality salience led to a reduction in the harshness of reactions to the White racist. In contrast, mortality salience tended to increase the negativity of reactions to the Black racist. Looked at differently, when mortality was not salient, the White racist was judged *more* harshly than the Black racist, but when mortality was salient, the White racist was judged *less* harshly. These findings are consistent with the findings of Study 2, but add to them by showing that the mortality salience-induced increase in White sympathy extends beyond a White pride advocate to an explicit White racist.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research was guided by the idea that when White people are reminded of their mortality, they will intensify their ingroup identification as Whites. However, because of the stigma attached to White identification, we designed the present research to assess this idea indirectly by testing the hypothesis that mortality salience would increase White participants' sympathy for a White racist. Across three studies, our hypotheses were supported. In all three studies, in the control conditions, the Black racist target was judged less harshly than the White racist target. This supports the idea that most Whites generally shun expressing sympathy for White pride or racism. However, as expected, in Studies 2 and 3, we found that mortality salience completely reversed this effect. Specifically, following mortality salience, the White pride advocate and the White racist were rated less negatively than his Black counterpart.

These findings are consistent with other evidence that mortality salience intensifies positive ingroup identification. However, they differ from typical mortality salience effects in one interesting way. Typically, mortality salience exaggerates a preference which is already exhibited to some extent in the control condition, for example, preference for a pro-U.S. essayist over an anti-U.S. essayist. However, in these studies, mortality salience reversed the preference in the control conditions. One previous set of studies showed a similar pattern. Schimel et al. (1999) found that in a control condition, a counterstereotypic Black (a studious, scholarly chess player) was preferred by White participants over a stereotypic Black (a violent, beer guzzling player). However, after mortality salience, the stereotypic Black was preferred over the counterstereotypic Black. When combined with the present study, a consistent picture emerges. Under normal conditions, Whites espouse a preference for counterstereotypic Blacks and a disdain for White racists, but under mortality salient conditions, they actually prefer Blacks who confirm negative stereotypes of them and are particularly tolerant of Whites who express racist beliefs or behavior.

Are these Effects a Result of Terror Management Needs or Self-Esteem Needs?

Theorists and researchers have commonly suggested that enhanced ingroup identification and derogation of outgroup members may be motivated by a desire to defend or bolster self-esteem (e.g., Allport, 1954; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Fein & Spencer, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Although there is some empirical support for this idea, considering its long history and popularity, it is actually quite limited, and none of it has shown enhanced White racism following self-esteem threat. Yet it remains reasonable to suggest that when self-esteem is threatened, people may both enhance their identifications with positive ingroups to bask in reflected glory and derogate outgroups to facilitate self-esteem bolstering downward social comparisons. Thus we should entertain the possibility that the present results reflect such a process rather than a response specifically to a reminder of one's mortality. However, for a number of reasons, we do not think this is a likely alternative explanation for the present findings.

Terror management theory explicitly acknowledges that people do have a need for self-esteem and will defend it when threatened (e.g., Becker, 1962; Greenberg et al., 1986; Solomon, et al., 1991); in fact the theory was developed to answer the question of why people work so hard to defend their self-esteem and their belief systems. The theory's answer, in short form, is that self-esteem and the worldview upon which it is based buffer anxiety ultimately stemming from the human awareness of mortality. The mortality salience paradigm was

developed to assess this analysis of the underlying function of self-esteem and worldview defense. According to the theory, the potential for terror resulting from our knowledge of death is ever-present but kept at bay by the cultural worldview and sense of self-worth within the context of that worldview. The logic of the research paradigm was that if this analysis is correct, then reminders of mortality should intensify worldview and self-esteem bolstering, just as direct threats to these constructs would. The fact that other things besides reminders of death can also increase self-esteem and worldview defense or contribute to outgroup derogation is actually quite consistent with terror management theory; these are the phenomena the theory was developed to explain (cf. McGregor, Zanna, Holmes, & Spencer, 2001).

Of course, the experimental evidence (in contrast to historical and anthropological evidence regarding death denial beliefs, etc.) for terror management theory is based largely on what death reminders have been found to do. If the reminders of death used in these studies also threaten self-esteem or are no more potent than reminders of other negative things, questions about interpretation of this evidence would warrant serious consideration. However, the existing body of evidence indicates otherwise. First, thoughts of other aversive topics presented in parallel form to the mortality salience treatment used here (e.g., pain, failure, paralysis, social exclusion, giving a speech in public, worries after college) have consistently failed to show the same effects as mortality salience. If you are thinking that none of these is inevitable or as bad as death, we agree; that is precisely why the theory grants such great psychological import to mortality.

Second, these reminders of mortality do not seem to behave like threats to self-esteem: unlike self-esteem threats, reminders of mortality consistently do not lead to physiological arousal or the conscious experience of negative affect (see, e.g., Arndt & Goldenberg, in press). Furthermore, it is not clear how or why the typical mortality salience treatment would threaten self-esteem (although there is of course variability, respondents typically write that they don't fear death and that their soul will float to heaven after death). Third, theoretically predicted effects have been found with a variety of alternative ways to remind people of death, ranging from proximity to a funeral home to subliminal death primes (for a review, see Greenberg et al., 1997). It seems implausible to argue that subliminal presentation of the word "dead" or proximity to a funeral home constitutes a threat to self-esteem. Although the present studies didn't employ these particular treatments, there has been strong convergence between studies using them and the current treatment. For example, Dechesne et al. (2000) recently reported two studies showing a very similar effect—bolstering of ingroup identification—using subliminal death primes. Fourth, a variety of studies converge on the conclusion that mortality salience effects are triggered not by the conscious contemplation of death per se, or by self-esteem threat, but rather by an increase in the accessibility of death-related thought outside of consciousness; in fact, when such thoughts are

in focal attention, other types of defenses occur (for a review of this evidence, see Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1999).

As a final, conceptual point, we would suggest that the knowledge of mortality is a uniquely potent psychological threat because it is the one future event that inevitability undermines the satisfaction of all human desires. Whatever one believes to be the most basic human motivational concern, whether it is survival or belonging, meaning or identity, self-worth, competence, self-integrity, control or pleasure, they are all eliminated by death, and so, this ultimate psychological problem has to be continually managed.

> *Brutus*: . . . That we shall die, we know; 'tis but the time
> And drawing days out, that men stand upon.
>
> *Cassius*: Why, he that cuts off twenty years of life
> Cuts off so many years of fearing death.
>
> *Brutus*: Grant that, and then is death a benefit:
> So are we Ceasar's friends, that have abridg'd
> His time of fearing death.
>   Shakespeare (Julius Ceasar, Act III, Scene I, Ridley, 1962, p. 48)

Implications of These Findings for Understanding Prejudice and Aggression

These studies converge toward a particularly chilling effect of the human concern with mortality. They suggest the possibility that some Whites in American culture become attracted to White supremacist beliefs and organizations to serve terror management needs. The theory suggests that people most likely to do this would be individuals who are not sustaining faith in the prevailing mainstream meaningful belief system or who are not deriving sufficient self-esteem from such a worldview.

On the Supposed Dark Side of High Self-Esteem

This analysis runs somewhat counter to the widely cited claim by Baumeister, Smart, and Boden (1996) that people with high self-esteem may be prone to violence, though the claim is qualified by a very broad conceptualization of self-esteem that includes even those who are exaggeratedly narcissistic and defensive. Although Baumeister et al. (1996) make the point that "threatened egotism is something quite different than low-self esteem" (p. 28), it is also highly unlikely that egotistical people (narcissists), who are continually threatened and compelled to respond with viciousness, truly feel that they are valuable contributors to a meaningful world. We suggest that the type of people who need to lash out at others and who may be attracted to racist ideologies are those who strongly desire to feel valuable but lack the worldview and sense of social validation necessary to sustain such self-worth. This analysis is consistent with Karen Horney's

theorizing about genuine self-esteem versus defensive self-inflation (Horney, 1937) and recent work showing that people with unstable self-esteem or narcissistic tendencies and children displaying defensive egotism are prone to hostility and aggression (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Kernis, Grannemann, & Barclay, 1989; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998; Salmivalli, Kaukianinen, Kaistaniemi, & Lagerspetz, 1999).

On the Columbine Massacre

Although it is necessarily speculative to apply these ideas to historical events, it certainly seems that the Columbine killers had this unfulfilled desire to feel good about themselves. On April 20, 1999, after months of careful planning, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris entered Columbine High School and killed 13 people in a shooting spree. These teenage mass murderers were deemed misfits in a vicious social universe that exclusively valued good looks and athletic prowess. They were routinely tormented by the popular guys, taunted as "losers" and "faggots," and ignored and/or scorned by the girls whose attention they sought. They conversed in German, used a variety of ethnic slurs, and expressed hostility toward a variety of outgroups. In their journals, Harris and Klebold both wrote of being socially rejected and their consequent lack of self-esteem (Wilkinson & Hendrickson, 1999). That this was the likely impetus for their brutal outburst is manifestly evident from the suicide note left by Eric Harris after the massacre: "By now, it's over. If you are reading this, my mission is complete. I have finished revolutionizing the neoeuphoric infliction of my internal terror. Your children who have ridiculed me, who have chosen not to accept me, who have treated me like I am not worth their time are dead. THEY ARE FUCKING DEAD" (April 19, 1999).

On Nazi Germany

Becker (1973, 1975) took this analysis much further and proposed that the rise of Nazism, the prototypic White supremacist movement, was facilitated by the loss in meaning and self-worth the German people had suffered because of the humiliating political and economic consequences of World War I. Hitler and his cronies provided a new meaningful worldview in which Aryans could re-establish their self-worth and connection to a death transcending, heroic movement and nation, one which espoused pride in one's heritage and superiority over other peoples of the world (e.g., Hitler's proclamation in *Mein Kampf* that a German youth's "entire education and development has to be directed at giving him the conviction of being absolutely superior to the others" (as cited in Fromm, 1965, p. 249).

On Combating the Appeal of Racism

If this analysis is valid, and we are serious about combating racist proclivities, then we should begin promoting the idea that it is important for both societies and individuals to do a better job of helping people sustain their meaningful view of the world and their value within that worldview. We should also consider the possibility that we can reduce racist tendencies by helping people cope with their mortality concerns through education, workshops, and therapies that encourage direct confrontation with their fears.

Further Research Directions

Of course, much more research will be needed to fully assess the possible role of terror management concerns in affiliation with racist ideologies and groups and what can be done about it. The present studies are just a preliminary step. For example, because we studied only typical college students, it would be especially useful to examine people who fully embrace racist ideas to see if the theoretically specified process and attributes really seem to contribute to their actions. Also, because we used only White participants, we don't know whether similar effects would occur in other groups. One difference we would expect is that in most other groups, we would not see a relatively more positive reaction to the outgroup in the nonmortality salient conditions. We think that is an unusual aspect of White identification in contemporary American culture caused by White awareness of historical and contemporary discrimination against minority group members in the United States, and the "culture guilt" engendered by it (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998).

It would also be important to assess whether these mortality salience-induced tendencies extend to actual behaviors either supporting White supremacist organizations or opposing members of non-White outgroups. The weaker effect in Study 2 on liking as opposed to perceived racism suggests, however, that this may not necessarily be the case. Recent research in fact shows that after mortality salience people often disidentify with a group they belong to if negative characteristics of that group are salient (e.g., Arndt et al., 2001; Dechesne et al., 2000). Therefore, in most people, terror management concerns may foster racism predominantly in a covert and insidious manner, consistent with contemporary conceptualizations of modern and aversive racism (see e.g., Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998; Sears & Jessor, 1996). Perhaps for the average White American, concerns about mortality do not lead to overt support of racist ideologies, but do lead to greater tolerance for them. Thus, while most White Americans do not explicitly espouse a connection with or liking for White surpremacists, they may, as a result of their terror management needs, nevertheless be sufficiently sympathetic to allow these ideologies to thrive.

Hopefully continued work on these and related issues will add a useful piece to the puzzle of understanding racism in its many forms.

APPENDIX: DARNELL JACKSON [ROBERT DAVIS] v. ROBERT DAVIS_[DARNELL JACKSON]

Case Summary

This is a case involving discrimination brought by the plaintiff, Darnell Jackson, [Robert Davis] on February 11, 2000. The claim is that the defendant, Robert Davis [Darnell Jackson], has repeatedly blocked Mr. Jackson [Robert Davis] from promotion to senior management positions at the Northrop Grumman plant in Long Beach, California. Mr. Jackson [Robert Davis] has been employed at the plant for 15 years and cites a pattern of discrimination involving performance evaluations, assignments, training, promotions, transfers, and hiring practices.

Summary of the Plaintiff's Argument

The plaintiff, Mr. Jackson [Davis], claimed that after being assigned a lead position in the construction of some of the plants most sophisticated aircraft, he was denied a promotion, directed to train the worker promoted ahead of him, and then transferred to another department. His testimony was accompanied by several witnesses claiming that since Davis [Jackson] began his supervisory position 5 years ago, experienced Black [White] workers have been up for promotion, but that newly hired, less qualified White [Black] applicants have always advanced to the top jobs in the company.

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