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THE MODERATING ROLE OF MORTALITY SALIENCE: AN EXAMINATION OF

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THE MODERATING ROLE OF MORTALITY SALIENCE: AN EXAMINATION OF POLITICAL IDEOLOGY, VOTER-OUTCOME VARIABLES, AND POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS

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To Mom and Callie – Thank you for always listening and offering constant support, often late into the night/morning. My sanity is because of you.
"Never, ever give up." - Mom

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine terror management theory in conjunction with immigration and economy issue advertisements. Specifically, this study examines how voters' intent to vote for a conservative 2012 Presidential candidate, emotion toward a conservative 2012 Presidential candidate, and immigration anxiety are affected when their mortality is made salient before viewing an issue advertisement (either immigration or economy). To test the hypotheses, linear regression models were used. Most of the results reflect a non-significant interaction between political ideology and mortality salience. However, results do show one significant two-way interaction. The significant two-way interaction with positive emotion suggests that as death salient participants fall further to the right on the liberal/conservative scale, there is more positive emotion toward a conservative candidate than their non-death salient counterparts. The theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout history, political advertisements have focused on getting a particular message out to voters. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this message, while often negative, has included material that has the potential to remind voters of death, either directly or indirectly. Through reminders of death, likely voters can become vulnerable to persuasion with the information presented in these advertisements. This dissertation, utilizing Terror Management Theory (TMT) as its theoretical framework, examines how potential voters are persuaded by issue advertisement information when they are reminded of death.

Mortality Salience and Political Advertising

The main argument that documents the importance of this work concerns the intersection of TMT and political advertising. TMT focuses on the anxiety that is caused by death-related cognitions. Specifically, when individuals become aware of their own death, the inevitability of their death becomes too much for them to handle and these individuals consequently search for relief from this anxiety (e.g., Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997). There are a variety of ways individuals can look for relief; however, the most common way is to bolster their own reality, something TMT terms a cultural worldview (CWV). When individuals bolster their own CWV, they will want to associate with those who are part of their reality, while pushing away (i.e., not wanting to associate with) those who are not part of their reality (e.g., Greenberg et al., 1997). When reminded of their own death, the effects of death-related cognitions have the potential to make individuals vulnerable to persuasion (e.g., Greenberg et al., 1997), especially when viewing political advertisements.

TMT has shown that when mortality (i.e., death) is made salient, a number of political factors should be affected (e.g., Landau et al., 2004). TMT argues that individuals' deeply rooted concerns about mortality have some effect on their sense of self and their social behavior (Greenberg et al., 1997). Therefore, it can be argued that when viewing a political advertisement, individuals who have pondered death should change their cognitions and behavior associated with the political advertisement message. Specifically, when death-aware individuals view an advertisement concerning immigration, there will be a desire to defend their CWV, which has the potential to be displayed in their voting behavior.

Political advertisements often call for individuals to vote for the issue or candidate that is being promoted. Ultimately, individuals will choose to participate or not in an election through their decision to vote or not vote. Therefore, when these individuals have pondered death, their willingness to participate in an election (i.e., behavior) has the potential to be changed, especially if that person or issue for which the individuals are voting is part or not part of their CWV. TMT research concerning CWVs has shown that death salience affects feelings toward people and topics (e.g., Greenberg et al., 1997). So a candidate is part of an individual's CWV when the candidate or issue is similar to the individual (i.e., ideologically similar). Therefore, when a death-salient participant supports a candidate or issue, the support should be stronger than a non-death-salient participant supporting that same candidate or issue. Similarly, when a death-salient participant opposes a candidate or issue, the opposition should be stronger than a non-death-salient participant opposing that same candidate or issue. Political participation is defined in this dissertation as the level of intent to vote

for a conservative candidate in the 2012 presidential election. Politicians ultimately need voters to vote for either them or someone who represents the candidate's ideological beliefs. Voters do not, however, always possess the information required to participate in an election. Therefore, voters tend to use television to follow campaigns (Livingston & Markham, 2008), and this provides them with the knowledge used in voting. Often voters, especially young voters, will turn to television for cues on which issues are engaging to the public (Childers, 2007), and, therefore, which issues the public should care about.

While there is promising research on political participation, results are mixed. For instance, specific emotions (e.g., anger) tend to mobilize voters (Valentino et al., 2011), certain personality characteristics have been shown to lead to a higher likelihood of voter turnout (see Gerber et al., 2011 for review), and level of education have all been shown to have an effect on political participation (Kam & Palmer, 2011).

Research on *how* individuals will intend to vote when their death is salient is also mixed. TMT argues that liberals and conservatives should exaggerate their political leanings in order to cope with death-related cognitions. This occurs because their political beliefs are an aspect of their CWV, and when threatened, they will feel a need to defend these beliefs. However, research has shown that both conservatives *and* liberals increased their support for President Bush when reminded of 9/11 (Landau et al., 2004). However, other research has shown that conservatives have rated an out-group member (a liberal) more negatively than an in-group member (a conservative) when compared with conservatives not exposed to reminders of their own death (Greenberg, Simon, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Chatel, 1992). Interestingly, the opposite

occurred for liberals. Liberals who were aware of their own death rated a conservative less negatively relative to liberals who were not reminded of their own death (Greenberg et al., 1992). Ultimately, liberals became more liberal. But, not all studies concerning ideology and mortality salience suggest this.

Later research has shown that everyone became more conservative after 9/11, but the conservative shift was not significantly different for liberals and conservatives (Nail et al., 2009). According to Greenberg and colleagues (1992), liberals should have become more liberal and conservatives more conservative, but the means (i.e., averages) were almost identical between the two. This could be attributed to the fact that researchers were unable to control for other things that may have changed in the world in addition to 9/11; however, lab experiments have shown that conservative shifts can be attributed to manipulated threats (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2004; Landau et al., 2004; McGregor, Nail, Marigold, & Kang, 2005; Rosenblatt, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Lyon, 1989). This dissertation intends to seek out a more definitive answer about the effects of mortality salience and political advertising, featuring unemployment and illegal immigration, on conservative and liberal voters.

Anti-Illegal Immigration Advertisements

Currently, unemployment in America is at 8.2% ("The Unemployment Situation", 2012). Therefore, issues that are often tied to America's unemployment problems, such as immigration reform, should produce enough emotion to influence voting behavior, especially when voters are vulnerable to persuasion due to their awareness of their own death. Furthermore, this emotion could be transferred to *actual* illegal immigrants. Because voters are viewing issues that deal with ethnicity, there is a

strong possibility that these advertisements will produce negative attitudes toward immigrants due to the existential anxiety individuals feel when they become death aware. This occurs because when individuals become aware of their own death, a desire to defend their CWV will be ignited (e.g., Greenberg et al., 1997). Illegal immigrants are not Americans and are therefore not part of an American CWV. So when death-aware individuals who are part of the American culture are confronted with immigrants (i.e., non-Americans), there will most likely be a higher level of anxiety produced than in individuals who are confronted with illegal immigrants and are not death aware. Abraham and Appiah (2006) shared this view by showing that non-death-aware participants who view racial photos will often hold racial stereotypes. As previously mentioned, the CWV hypothesis of TMT states that when death is salient, individuals will cling to those individuals most like them and derogate (i.e., push away) those individuals who are unlike them (e.g., Greenberg et al., 1997). Because TMT has not been studied in conjunction with television issue advertisements, the next sections delve into illegal immigration and the role of television issue advertisements in illegal-immigration reform.

Illegal Immigration

Illegal immigration is an issue that has to deeply concerned Americans. Americans seemed to be worried mostly about the increased likelihood of Latino individuals' citizenship being questioned, not only by law enforcement but by every American, leading to widespread discrimination against Latinos as well as other immigrants (Hansen & Holstege, 2010). Furthermore, Americans were worried that laws like the Arizona and Alabama immigration laws (laws that some argue encourage

racial profiling) would only bring more racism toward immigrants, specifically Latinos (Hansen & Holstege, 2010). Additionally, more Democrats than Republicans and more women than men perceived this type of discrimination to be problematic (Hansen & Holstege, 2010). However, 43% of Americans in a poll (out of 616) felt this law did not increase Latino discrimination and believed the law was constitutional and should be enforced (Hansen & Holstege, 2010).

A Pew Research Poll (2010) stated that overall, 59% of Americans approved of the new Arizona immigration law. A more recent and similar law in Alabama has been passed. While the majority of Americans agree with the new immigration laws, a fair amount of Americans still disagree (41%). Because of this controversy, several interest groups have produced issue advertisements to be aired on television as an attempt to sway Americans to the anti-immigration side of the argument. There has been a lack of research regarding the effects of issue advertisements in political communication and other research areas. With the current concerns regarding illegal immigration, the implications of these issue advertisements must be given scholarly attention.

The Role of Television Advertising on Illegal-Immigration Reform

Television political advertising increases political information awareness for voters (Kaid, Fernandes, & Painter, 2011). It plays a pivotal role in the dissemination and opinion formulation of specific political issues, such as immigration reform. Television political advertisements are the main way in which political campaigns attempt to persuade voters (Goldstein & Ridout, 2004). Campaigns and political action committees (PACs) use issue advertisements to create relationships with voters regarding specific political issues (Goldstein & Ridout, 2004). Even though political

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parties sometimes do not sponsor issue advertisements, PACs, which often affiliate themselves with political parties, sponsor these advertisements (Grigsby, 2012). The more advertisements shown by PACs affiliated with specific political parties, the more familiar the parties' issues will become to voters. Consequently, people are more likely to vote for familiar political parties, such as Republican and Democrat versus lesser known parties such as grass roots parties (Polsby, Wildavsky, Schier, & Hopkins, 2012). Furthermore, television fosters viewer perceptions that there is an intimate connection between themselves and the people they come to know through television (Hellweg, Pfau, & Byrdon, 1992).

Conclusions

Chapter 1 has included a justification of this work that can be summarized as follows: 1) This dissertation intends to gain a more definitive answer regarding conservative and liberal voters when mortality is salient by analyzing the intersection of TMT and political advertising. 2) The application of TMT to political advertising is important because when individuals view a political advertisement after their mortality is made salient, they have the potential to be affected cognitively (i.e., more easily persuaded) in the following outcome variables when compared with non-mortality-salient participants: intent to vote for a conservative 2012 presidential candidate, emotion toward a conservative candidate, and immigration anxiety.

Chapter 2 will focus on an extensive literature review of political advertising and issue advertisements. This chapter will also provide the history of TMT, which will serve as the theoretical framework for this project as well as generate several hypotheses. Chapter 3 will include a detailed description of the method, experimental

design, and procedure. Chapter 4 will hold the results of this study. Chapter 5 will be an

in-depth discussion of the results as well as the implications for TMT and political

communication research. This chapter will also provide the limitations to this

dissertation and will include directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The idea that mortality-salience reminders can affect voters when viewing political advertisements is just beginning to be investigated. Because of the cognitive changes that which occur when individuals are reminded of their own death, the relationship between existential anxiety (what occurs when individuals are reminded of their own death) and political advertising is an interesting and worthy relationship to learn about for both political communication and terror management theory. The following pages will delve into the theoretical background surrounding existential anxiety, the history of political advertising, and issue advertisements; as well as examine the implications of existential anxiety on these types of advertisements with regard to several voter-outcome variables.

Terror Management Theory

TMT describes how people react to existential anxiety through subscribing to a CWV (Greenberg et al., 1997). Therefore, this section first discusses the elements of TMT, and then considers existential anxiety and how it relates to the field of communication, the psychology behind existential anxiety, the history of TMT, and TMT research as it relates to the dependent variables used in this project.

Elements of TMT

Mortality salience. Mortality salience is the heart of TMT. In TMT research, to make mortality salient, traditionally when asked, individuals will ponder their own death by writing two essays about the thoughts that are aroused when thinking about their own death. Additionally, individuals will write about what they think will happen to them after they die (e.g., Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1997). However,

subliminal (e.g., Arndt, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1997) methods are sometimes used. It is at this time that their existential concerns begin to emerge (Pyszczynski et al., 1997). A wide variety of human behavior seems to be affected by making mortality salient. Therefore, research has led to theoretical analyses of these underlying psychological processes (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 2005). These processes include emotion and affect, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. It is through these psychological processes that the problem of death exerts its effect (Pyszczynski et al., 2005).

Mortality salience began to receive special focus when Florian and Mikulincer (1997) investigated a multidimensional approach to fear of personal death with TMT. What they found led to the knowledge we rely on today regarding making mortality salient in TMT experiments. Their results indicated that the effects of mortality salience depend on what aspect of death is made salient, the aspect of death most feared, and the type of judged social wrongdoing (Florian & Mikulincer, 1997). Florian and Mikulincer's (1997) results showed that after existential anxiety was found, the most severe judgments of social wrongdoings occurred when there was a fit between these three factors: what aspect of death was made salient, the aspect of death people most feared, and the type of judged social wrongdoing. While all TMT studies in the beginning made death salient, Florian and Mikulincer (1997) focused on the multiple effects of existential anxiety, which research until that point had not investigated. Research continues to investigate the multiple effects of existential anxiety (e.g., Pyszczynski et al., 2005; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, & Maxfield, 2006).

Once people experience existential anxiety, two types of defenses take place: proximal and distal. When death thoughts are activated and become conscious, proximal defenses are initiated (Arndt, Cook, & Routledge, 2004). After individuals psychologically process these thoughts (e.g., doing everything in their power to change the subject), proximal defenses amend the need for further attention to death-related concerns (Arndt et al., 2004). These proximal defenses then spread to constructs that are associated with the individual's culturally prescribed investments in meaning (Arndt et al., 2004).

Both proximal and distal defenses have helped scholars understand the management of existential fears and unconscious cognitive processes more generally, as well as how existential needs have affected the core social behaviors that characterize the human experience (Arndt et al., 2004). However, the extent to which these defenses take place are dependent on an individual's CWV.

Cultural worldviews. Cultural worldviews serve the fundamental psychological function of providing the basis for death transcendence (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2000). It is these reminders of mortality that stimulate the bolstering of one's own worldview (Solomon et al., 2000), and unconscious fears about death, which have motivated the adherence to one's own cultural beliefs (Arndt et al., 1997). For instance, an early study investigating the different mortality-salience manipulations and their effects on cultural worldviews found that both subliminal and standard mortality-salience manipulations led to more favorable views of people who agreed with their CWV and less favorable views about those who challenged their worldview than when compared with controls (Arndt et al., 1997). It is important to note that only death

stimuli produced these effects (Arndt et al., 1997), and based on the Arndt et al. (1997) findings, the death stimuli do not necessarily need to be subliminal. Cultural worldview defenses can also be invoked when individuals are faced with other types of adverse events (e.g., pondering a difficult choice). Cultural worldviews have been measured using pro- and anti- American essays, allegedly written by foreigners (e.g., Greenberg et al., 1992). Participants read these essays and then rated the favorability of the authors. Death-salient participants will rate a foreigner's essay lower than those who are not death salient due to the need for death-salient participants to bolster their own worldview (Solomon et al. 2000).

Death reminders produce an exaggerated need for the anxiety-buffering properties of CWVs (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2004). In turn, CWVs have the potential to be bolstered when presented with threatening (anything not part of their CWV) people or behaviors (Solomon et al., 2004). In other words, when mortality is made salient, people have the potential to turn to their CWV for guidance on how to react to those individuals who are not part of their culture. Ultimately, when death-salient individuals choose to bolster their CWV, the bolstering action will act to reduce the accessibility of death-related thoughts (Solomon et al., 2004). Just as they will turn to their CWV for guidance, these individuals will also cling to those closest to them.

Overall, the existence of people with differing beliefs threatens an individual's primary basis of psychological security (Solomon et al., 2000). When alternative views are presented, the psychological security that the CWV provides is threatened. This occurs because individuals, when death aware, can minimize their existential anxiety by bolstering their own reality (Solomon et al., 2000). Therefore, individuals respond by

derogating the sources that threatens their psychological security (Solomon et al., 2000). Even though TMT has more than 20 years of psychological research support, the theory still has specific implications in the field of communication.

Terror management theory has the potential to be utilized in the field of communication. Specifically, TMT provides a meta-theoretical framework, which ultimately can fuse a diverse range of communication theory perspectives (Miller & Landau, 2005). For example, this dissertation uses individuals' existential anxiety to examine whether they can be persuaded to vote a specific way. In addition, TMT could be used to examine the effects of health epidemic-related news stories. Furthermore, TMT could be combined with mass communication theories such as framing to examine whether how a message is framed can have an effect on individuals when mortality salience is manipulated. Even though the field of communication will use TMT to examine its own set of variables, this theory will remain heavily rooted in the social psychological tradition.

The Psychology of TMT

Individuals have a drive to fight for survival in the world in which they live; however, mortality is unavoidable. Terror management theory acknowledges these desires of humans as well as the intellectual advances that make humans unique, especially their capabilities for temporal thought and self-consciousness (Solomon et al., 2004). Terror management theory also helps to explain how the need for meaning and value emerges from a biological heritage and the role of the culture that serve these needs (Solomon et al., 2004).

Terror management theory has implications that penetrate almost every field and discipline, including political advertising. While research has extensively examined political attitudes (Chatard, Arndt, & Pyszczynski, 2010) and political ideologies (Nail & McGregor, 2009), study of specific mortality-salient voter effects while viewing issue advertisements has been untouched. Terror management theory is important to pair with political advertising because TMT is consistent with evolutionary ideas. TMT fits with what individuals know about cultures past and present, and has generated a large body of empirical support within social psychology (Solomon et al., 2004) as well as in many other fields and disciplines.

Terror management theory addresses several existential-awareness issues. When mortality is salient, individuals have three choices; they can focus on the inevitability of their death, on their desire to live, or they can change the subject and not focus on either (Koole, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2006). When individuals are faced with their own death, an increase in existential anxiety (inevitability of death) or a decrease in existential anxiety (desire to live) has the potential to generate existential awareness (Koole et al., 2006). When individuals feel isolated and rejected, they will have a higher level of existential anxiety than individuals who have a desire to feel connected with others (Koole et al., 2006).

When individuals feel as though they have a great deal of freedom, they will have lower levels of existential anxiety than those who feel trapped and oppressed (Koole et al., 2006). When people feel free to do and think as they please, a higher amount of cognitions are allowed to develop.

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Terror management theory assumes that psychological equanimity (i.e., calmness) requires a shared set of beliefs about reality (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1998). This set of beliefs promises safety and the transcendence of death to those who meet the standards of value (Solomon et al., 1998). When individuals have psychological equanimity, there is less existential anxiety when faced with mortality reminders because they rely on their CWV as an affirmation (Solomon et al., 1998). One of the first TMT studies focused on this idea.

In 1989, the first evidence for TMT began to emerge. Rosenblatt and colleagues (1989) designed six experiments that tested the following proposition: Because negative reactions toward moral transgressions are rooted in the implicit threat to CWV, reactions should be intensified when people are reminded of the issues from which their worldview serves to protect them. This study allowed researchers to further show the importance of CWV on existential anxiety. Overall, these experiments provided support for TMT hypotheses concerning reactions to those who deviate from cultural standards (Rosenblatt et al., 1989). Research has consistently shown this to be the case (e.g., Greenberg et al., 2001; Hayes, Schimel, & Williams, 2008).

History of TMT

Terror management theory is based on Ernest Becker's (1974) ideas about existential anxiety. Becker (1974) divided his thoughts about existentialism into four parts. First, he states that humans live in a terrifying world. Humans not only tear each other apart daily, but nature is angry, often destroying what it creates (Becker, 1974). In a difficult world where many are overwhelmed by the inevitability of death, it is simply

too much to deal with after a challenging life. This can lead to denial and existential anxiety.

Existential anxiety is derived from the evolutionary perspective. This perspective depicts humans as animals who have evolved from earlier species (Solomon, Greenberg, Schimel, Arndt, & Pyszczynski, 2004). From this perspective, cultures are products of human thought and action, and have resulted from adaptations over the course of evolution (Solomon et al., 2004). Through this lens, individuals think about death and react to existential anxiety in ways that have been adapted throughout time. For example, in the wild all animals fight to survive. Some are successful, while others are not. As animals (including humans) have evolved, this trial and error of survival is tested and adapted after failures. Therefore, the evolutionary perspective takes into account past trials and errors as reasons why humans cope the way they do with their anxiety. Becker (1974) developed some of his ideas from this perspective.

Becker (1974) contended that one of our basic motivations as humans is the need to control this anxiety by denying the terror of death. Existential anxiety stems from the fact that humans are ultimately helpless and abandoned in a world where they *will* die (Becker, 1974). They need to control this anxiety in order to be able to live a fulfilling life. This idea is derived from the cognitive perspective, which depicts humans as information-processing systems. In contrast to the evolutionary perspective, proponents of the cognitive perspective believe humans deal with existential anxiety in a mechanical, logical manner, having more to do with cognitive processing than with adaptation for survival. While they are animals that have adapted through survival failures, humans have more complex cognitive processing abilities than other animals.

This ultimately enables humans to be better at survival. With higher cognitive processing abilities, humans are able to *adapt* to situations cognitively, therefore having an increased ability to deal with existential anxiety. These perspectives served as the background for Ernest Becker (1974) to develop his own ideas about existential awareness. These ideas would eventually become the foundation for TMT.

Becker (1974) stated because this fear is an overwhelming fear, humans attempt to keep it unconscious. Humans try to deny their mortality (Becker, 1974). However, when this does not work, humans start relying on the defense mechanisms of their personality. This is termed "character armor." Character armor allows people to attempt to bargain with God and themselves in an attempt to gain immortality. For instance, people may believe that living a good moral life will ultimately delay their death. They use this as a bargaining tool with God. As stated by Becker (1974), "we repress our bodies to purchase a soul that time cannot destroy; we sacrifice pleasure to buy immortality; we encapsulate ourselves to avoid death. And life escapes us while we huddle within the defended fortress of character" (p. XIII). Since humans all want to ultimately transcend death and be heroic, cultures must provide an intricate symbolic system that is covertly religious (Becker, 1974). Because there are often several religions within one culture, religion can lead to conflict. Becker (1974) stated that any ideological conflicts within cultures are holy wars (i.e., battles between immortality projects). Last, Becker stated that all human conflicts are life-and-death struggles, and the root of humanly caused evil is due solely to the need to achieve a heroic self-image and deny mortality (Becker, 1974). Now that the background of TMT has been

discussed, it is important to delve further into the dependent variables being utilized in this dissertation.

The Contexts of TMT Research

Emotion and Affect

An individual's affective state and an individual's specific emotions have been shown to have an effect on existential anxiety. For instance, the treatment of phobias (i.e., fears) acknowledges the problems of existential meaning (Strachan, Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 2001) and can persuade an individual to forgive more easily (Schimel, Wohl, & Williams, 2006). Additionally, the treatment of phobias can negate mortality-salience effects (Dunkel, 2009). All types of emotions, including negative emotions, can be evoked by political advertisements. Specific emotional responses, such as disgust or fear, can lead to larger affective responses that come as individuals deal with their existential anxiety (e.g., Dunkel, 2009; Shehryar & Hunt, 2005).

Specifically fear, an emotional response, has been shown to be an effective persuasive tool when mortality is made salient, but only when the fear appeals, such as death, contain a consequence for not agreeing with the message (Shehryar & Hunt, 2005). Fear appeals are tools used in persuasive messages that are intended to arouse fear (Shehryar & Hunt, 2005). For instance, when the fear appeals contain fear of arrest or serious injury as a consequence, individuals have been shown to maintain what they believe to be the socially acceptable attitudes, such as not drinking and driving (Shehryar & Hunt, 2005). Research has also shown that existential awareness can lead people to forgive violent individuals (Schimel, Wohl, & Williams, 2006) and has shown that CWV bolstering does not lead to increased anxiety sensitivity (Kosloff et al., 2010).

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CWV and Culture

The idea that an individual should feel valued in his or her own culture is a fundamental TMT concept. For instance, when Americans are affiliated with a winning team, they often feel a sense of belonging and worth (Dechesne, Greenberg, Arndt, & Schimel, 2000). Additionally, when mortality is made salient, team success is a prerequisite for sports fan affiliation to buffer against existential anxiety (Dechesne et al, 2000). CWV disruption often results in unmanageable anxiety requiring compensatory actions, which may produce destructive consequences (Salzman & Halloran, 2004). Ultimately, the motive for individuals to recover, adapt, and bolster traditional cultures may be understood in the context of the anxiety-buffering function provided by a CWV (Salzman & Halloran, 2004).

When an individual's CWV is threatened, he or she will attempt to bolster it (Solomon et al., 1998). Furthermore, these psychological processes provide convincing evidence of the central role of terror management mechanisms in effective human functioning (Salzman & Halloran, 2004). It is the desire to bolster their CWV that allow humans to adapt easily to difficult situations, including when dealing with existential anxiety. For instance, Van der Zee and Van der Gang (2007) compared affective responses to a diverse versus a homogeneous work team and predicted that people would show more negative and less positive affective reactions to a diverse, as opposed to a homogeneous team. Results indicated that a lower well-being is associated with cultural diversity (Van der Zee & Van der Gang, 2007). Additionally, there was less positive affect to a diverse rather than a homogeneous team environment (Van der Zee & Van der Gang, 2007). Van der Zee and Van der Gang (2007) argued that emotionally

stable individuals are well equipped to handle the increase in threat posed by mortality salience, even in a context of high cultural diversity.

Minority Groups

Mortality salience can affect how individuals choose to deal with minority groups and their opinions. This section focuses, therefore, on TMT research as it relates to minority groups as well as how this affects an individual's view of social norms. For instance, when mortality is salient, illusions regarding minority groups were shown to be much stronger than control conditions (Lieberman, 1999). These illusions most often encompass negative thoughts and feelings toward a minority group (Lieberman, 1999). For instance, an example of an illusion would be the feeling that illegal immigrants are taking American jobs, a position that is argued in the immigration advertisement used in this dissertation. Therefore, maintaining a meaningful view of reality, including with minority groups, is a key prerequisite for dealing with existential anxiety (Landau, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Martens, 2006).

Research has looked at the possibility that existential concerns have subtle effects on a cognitive bias that may contribute to prejudice and discrimination, termed the "illusory correlation" (Lieberman, 1999). The illusory correlation occurs when observers exaggerate the correlations between two types of events, or when they perceive an association between two unrelated events (Lieberman, 1999). Lieberman (1999) examined this notion through two studies. Results supported the notion that mortality salience will increase the strength of the illusory correlation (Lieberman, 1999). Overall, this research provides evidence about the effects of mortality salience on the perceptions of fictitious minority groups (Lieberman, 1999). Additionally, this

research indicated that worldview violators might elicit more extreme worldview defense reactions if the violators are distinctive in multiple ways, such as race, gender, or ethnicity (Lieberman, 1999). These results have been replicated by several other scholars (e.g., Dechesne et al., 2000; Kazen, Bauman, & Kuhl, 2005).

How individuals view minority groups can be tied to their perceptions of social norms. Furthermore, existential awareness can play an important role in our perceptions of these norms. When mortality is salient, individuals are more likely to exclude targets that look more like out-group than in-group members (Castano, 2004). These can be referred to as minority group members. When mortality is salient, individuals have a greater preference to conform to the opinions of others that are a part of their in-group (Renkema, Stapel, & Yperen, 2008). In general, people want to support in-groups. It is the motivation to restore a sense of general control that increases inclinations to support social in-groups (Fritsche, Jonas, & Fankhanel, 2008).

Ultimately, mortality salience can lead to an increase in strivings for group affiliation (Wisman & Koole, 2003). These effects are so strong that even when group affiliations force participants to attack their own worldview, mortality salience still leads to an increased need for affiliation (Wisman & Koole, 2003). This follows TMT, because people strive for close relationships in their lives. However, all of these effects are dependent on the salience of the social norms of the individual (Jonas et al., 2008). For instance, if a group is not on people's radar of relevancy, they will most likely ignore this group.

Death-aware individuals work to reduce their existential anxiety by humanizing those who belong to their own groups (Vaes, Heflick, & Goldenberg, 2010). This falls

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in line with an individual's CWV. For instance, research has shown that those individuals in the minority (e.g., Republicans when there is a Democratic president) when reminded of their own death have increased need to believe others share their worldview (Pyszczynski et al., 1996).

Politics

Political ideologies provide a buffer against existential anxiety (Anson, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2004; Jonas & Greenberg, 2004). In the 2004 election, research suggested Bush's re-election might have been facilitated by unconscious concerns about mortality in the aftermath of 9/11 (Cohen, Ogilvie, Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2005). This should not come as a surprise; many advertisements in the 2004 election showed images of the 9/11 attacks (Cohen et al., 2005).

Interpersonal security (social acceptance) has the potential to be threatened when mortality is salient. Therefore, interpersonal security could play an important part in understanding the role existential anxiety plays in political decisions. For instance, interpersonal security has been shown to encourage reliance on nurturing and compassionate values for coping with existential fear (Weise et al., 2008). Weise and colleagues (2008) further argued that individuals choose what helps eliminate the existential anxiety. According to Weise and colleagues (2008), these individuals will choose whatever provides maximal security for themselves at the specific moment of the threat.

Mortality salience has been shown to affect individuals' ideological leanings. For instance, research has shown that when threatened, liberals reverted to "in-group"

conservative thinking (Nail et al., 2009). Nail and colleagues (2009) found that when mortality was salient: 1) liberal students' in-group favoritism (i.e., views similar to Bush's) increased, becoming as pronounced as conservatives, 2) liberals showed much more conviction in their attitudes toward capital punishment and abortion than conservatives did, and 3) liberals became more staunchly unsupportive of homosexuals than conservatives were. Furthermore, research has shown that in the aftermath of 9/11, both liberals and conservatives reported more conservative attitudes (Nail & McGregor, 2009). Moreover, research has also shown that mortality salience increased regard for charismatic candidates who held the same political ideology as the individual, rather than just any charismatic candidate or conservative candidate (Kosloff, Greenberg, Weise, & Solomon, 2010). These ideas need more investigation in a time when America has a Democratic president. This dissertation will examine what may happen to political ideologies when mortality is made salient during a Democratic president's term.

Most of the political research has focused on short-term effects of existential anxiety; however, recent research has begun to examine the long-term effects of mortality salience, specifically on changes in political views. For instance, Chatard and colleagues (2010) indicated that over time the death of loved ones leads to a long-term polarization of political attitudes and opinions: conservatives become more conservative and liberals more liberal (Chatard et al., 2010). The findings also indicated that political attitudes and opinions are extremely stable over time (Chatard et al., 2010). People, especially conservatives, reinforced their political views as they progressed through their life cycle--which could explain why conservative attitudes in the Chatard et al. (2010) study are more strongly endorsed among older people than younger people

(Chatard et al., 2010). However, while it is possible that the results of the Chatard et al. (2010) study could be due to a cohort effect, more research needs to be done in this area to examine the differences between older and younger voters. Now that TMT has been discussed, it is important to understand the history of television and political advertising and how it relates to TMT research.

Television and Political Advertising

In the early 1950s nearly four million Americans owned television sets with 69 television stations available (Gorman & McLean, 2003). In 1959, these numbers rose to 44 million Americans, and the number of stations grew to 609 (Gorman & McLean, 2003). The first presidential political television advertisement is considered to be Eisenhower's 1952 advertisement, "I Like Ike" (Lilleker, 2006). This advertisement highlighted Eisenhower as the ideal president. Later, advertisements such as "Ask the General" served as a platform for Eisenhower's stance on certain political issues (e.g., Republican issues, Korean War). Since then, the political television advertisement has received more attention from voters (Kaid, 2004).

In 1964 Lyndon B. Johnson's campaign produced the "Daisy Girl" advertisement, which depicted a nuclear explosion. This advertisement implied that if the viewer voted for Barry Goldwater, the nation would risk a nuclear attack, and that Goldwater might start a nuclear attack against another country. This was shown in the advertisement as a vivid portrayal of innocence being destroyed by evil. In 1984, Walter Mondale released an advertisement entitled "Arms Control 5." Like Johnson's "Daisy Girl", Mondale's advertisement advocated the control of nuclear weapons. The advertisement began with children singing and playing while nuclear weapons were

being launched into space. Mondale informed individuals that Ronald Reagan was planning to house nuclear weapons, something the ad termed "killer weapons in space." Furthermore, Mondale stated, that should such an attack occur, there would be no time to wake a president. The advertisement not only had the potential to induce mortality salience in voters, it also attempted to evoke fear regarding the "killer weapons." More recently, in 2004 a political action committee (PAC) named Progress for America Voter Fund produced an advertisement entitled "Start It, Finish It" which showcased images of terrorist attacks all over the world, ending with the 9/11 attacks. This advertisement stated that the job would not be finished, that terrorism would not be defeated under the stewardship of John Kerry.

Because terrorism is a threat that remains front and center for Americans, there is no indication that political advertisements will stop using mortality reminders as a persuasive tactic. Mortality salience has also made its way into immigration-reform advertisements. For instance, in 2008 Ron Paul released "Immigration," showing images of Mexicans crossing the border; it painted a dark picture of Mexicans taking health care and jobs from Americans. If Americans lost their jobs and health care, Americans could not be productive members of society, something that goes against the "American Dream" idea, upon which America is built. Therefore, mortality salience in political advertisements has the potential to be highly persuasive to voters because of the vulnerability to persuasion that occurs when existential anxiety is present.

Political Advertising

Political advertising is a vital element of successful campaigns (Sinclair, 1995), and television is one of the dominant sources for candidates to communicate to voters

(Franz, Freedman, Goldstein, & Ridout, 2008; Kaid & Davidson, 1986). In fact, political advertisements have been shown to affect the attitudes, behavior, and thinking of voters (Benoit, Leshner, & Chattopadhyay, 2007; Joslyn, 1981; Kaid, 1981). Therefore, candidates should use television when they want to convey feelings, holistic images, and general impressions to their voters (Manheim, 1991). However, campaigns should not use television when they are attempting to convey ideas, policies, or rationales (Manheim, 1991). Political advertising is best used to evoke emotions and to spark interest in voters (Manheim, 1991). These emotions have the potential to be intensified when an individual's mortality is salient.

There has been a history of political advertisements requesting television airtime, but not always enough available time to air them (Smith, 2010). This puts stations in a difficult position because they must be willing to sell equal airtime to all candidates running in a race--airtime that is often very expensive (Smith, 2010). For instance, in 1970, approximately 2 million dollars was spent on political advertisements; in the 2010 midterm election, however, this number rose to 4.55 billion dollars (Bachman, 2010). It has not only become more expensive to air political advertisements, the number of networks available to air these advertisements has also increased.

Today, the four broadcast networks not only compete with each other as they did in 1950, they also compete with cable channels, such as Fox News and CNN (Comstock & Scharrer, 2005). With this competition come more possibilities for political advertisements to be shown. While the amount and cost of political advertising has

increased, the ideas regarding construction of political advertisements have roughly remained the same.

Throughout its history, there have been two defining characteristics of political advertising. The first characteristic is the ability of the source to control the message, something that is considered to be the greatest advantage (Kaid, 1999). For instance, regardless of which network airs the political advertisement, the candidate has complete control over what message gets disseminated through the political advertisement to voters; the network can't change the message, only air it. The second characteristic of political advertising is the delivery of a message through the channels of mass communication (Kaid, 1999). The political message is dependent on the medium on which it runs.

Political advertising has specific functions. One function is name identification; voters do not vote for people or issues they do not recognize (Janda et al., 2012). For instance, the more times people view a political advertisement, the more likely they will recognize what is being presented in the political advertisement. In a campaign setting, television is ideal (Farnsworth & Lichter, 2012). Another function of political advertisements is candidate image. Political advertisements are targeted to specific voters, even though these voters may ignore the advertisements, especially when they are negative (Gadarian & Lau, 2011). For example, just because a candidate wants to target stay-at-home moms does not mean that stay-at-home moms will see the advertisement (e.g., stay-at-home dads or college students may see the advertisements). Political advertisements also function to attack opponents (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991). Political advertising serves as a defense, or a response to an attack (Johnson-

Cartee & Copeland, 1991). After examination of the characteristics and functions of political advertising, scholars began to take note and study these different phenomena.

Academic studies of political advertising have focused on several areas. First, research has examined issue and image advertisements (e.g., Garramone, 1983; Johnston & Kaid, 2002; Kahn & Geer, 1994). Researchers have also investigated the messages that speak to the more desirable characteristics of candidates or causes, as opposed to those that raise questions and seek to generate doubt about the characteristics of rival candidates or causes, positive versus negative (e.g., Atkin & Heald, 1976; Basil, Schooler, & Reeves, 1991; Pinkleton, Um, & Austin, 2002). Last, Kaid (2004) states that research has looked at advertisements that direct attention to various other personal or political matters, such as emotion or partisanship (e.g., Brader, 2005; Lang, 1991). Now that we have examined the characteristics of the television medium and presented a brief introduction to political advertising, the next section will delve into issue advertisements.

Issue Advertisements

This dissertation utilizes the Jamieson (2000) definition of an issue advertisement "communication whose principal purpose is to promote a set of ideas or policies" (p. 125). Specifically, issue advertisements transmit messages that are to be comprehended *and* felt (Geiger & Reeves, 1991). Issue advertisements first gained scholarly attention in the mid-1970s with the Mobil Oil crisis (Crable & Vibbert, 1983). During this crisis, there was a shortage of oil, and long lines at service stations (Crable & Vibbert, 1983). Because issue advertisements were being used to promote positions about the oil crisis, corporations were allowed complete control over the message,

escaping the media gatekeeping function that is usually present (Salmon, Reid, Pokrywczynski, & Willett, 1985). Often these corporations will fund the interest groups that run the issue advertisements. In fact, corporations have used issue advertisements to convey not only issues but also political messages as they did after 9/11 (Connolly-Ahern & Kaid, 2002). Those advertisements that featured images from 9/11 also had the potential to evoke existential anxiety in consumers. Interest groups are also used by corporations to persuade voters to adopt their public policy views, such as immigration reform ideas. For instance, Kaid, Tedesco, and Spiker (1996) looked at the controversy of adopting NAFTA; and West, Heith, and Goodwin (1996) examined Clinton's health care plan. Regardless, nonprofit groups have the greatest credibility of all these interest groups (Hammond, 1987). However, the nonprofit groups often cannot compete financially with the large corporations that are looking to produce issue advertisements as well.

It does not matter whether it is an election year or a non-election year, issue advertisements sponsored by interest groups, often called PACs, penetrate our daily lives (Jamieson, 2000). An organization becomes a PAC when it has received or spent more than one thousand dollars for the purpose of influencing a federal election ("Federal Campaign Finance Laws", 2008). Super PACs are PACs that may raise and spend an unlimited amount of money to independently support or oppose candidates ("Federal Campaign Finance Laws", 2008). While these groups are not allowed to coordinate directly with candidates or political parties, they can support specific candidates and issues ("Federal Campaign Finance Laws", 2008). Political advertisements that were once seen every two to four years during an election season

are now seen year-round (Jamieson, 2000). These advertisements are not promoting a specific candidate, they are arguing for a specific issue, such as immigration or health care.

The issue of campaign spending through PACs is controversial because it positions concerns about free speech against concerns about corruption and inequality. Recently, two Supreme Court decisions have changed the way PACs act financially in campaigns. The first 5-4 decision, *Citizens United V. Federal Election Commission,* ruled that corporations and unions have the same political speech rights as individuals under the First Amendment ("Summary of the *Citizens United V. Federal Election Commission* Case", 2010). This decision called into question laws in 24 states that currently have some kind of ban on unions and corporations using their general treasury for election expenditures ("Summary of the *Citizens United V. Federal Election Commission* Case", 2010). After this decision was made in January 2010, large amounts of corporate spending were anonymous and heavily tilted toward Republicans, overturning a provision of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 ("Summary of the *Citizens United V. Federal Election Commission* Case", 2010). In response to the Citizens United decision, Representative Donna Edwards introduced H.J.Res.78, which if enacted, would become the 28th amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This amendment clarifies the authority of congress to regulate and restrict the political activity of corporations, including but not limited to contributions in support of or in opposition to a candidate for public office, but does not limit newspapers from endorsing candidates ("Overturning Citizens United", 2011). The second Supreme Court decision, *Speechnow.org V. Federal Election Commission,* states that contributions made to

groups can now be independent expenditures and cannot be limited in the size and source of contributions to the group. Therefore, super PACs can now raise funds from corporations, unions, and other groups, and from individuals, all without legal limits.

While there are issue advertisements on issues such as immigration and education reform, these are mostly in the minority. Issue advertisements tend to cover the hot-button issues of an election, such as abortion and the economy. Historically, issue advertisements have been mostly negative (Johnston & Kaid, 2002). In the 1996 election, twenty-four organizations sponsored issue advertisements and spent between $135 and $150 million (Jamieson, 2000). However, by 1997 and 1998, seventy-seven groups were spending between $275 and $340 million (Jamieson, 2001). In addition, these advertisements utilized more attack statements than other types of advertisements (Jamieson, 2001).

While issue advertisements are expensive, the effects of these advertisements are not fully understood by scholars. Scholars and others do not often agree on their success. Some believe these advertisements are a powerful lobbying tool that can shape policy debates; others continually point to "failed" campaigns when interest groups did not affect legislation (Jamieson, 2000), while others contend that issue advertisements are ineffective (West, 1998). Issue advertisement scholars believe that the interest groups that produce these advertisements have clear partisan objectives, which are often difficult to discern from the advertisement (West, 1998). However, issue advertisements are not to blame for the suspected ineffectiveness.

The amount of direct influence on voters is still relatively unknown, and research regarding influence with mortality salience is unexplored. However, research

does take a stand regarding opinions. Opinions about issues are stable once they have been established (Kepplinger, 1991). While this political opinion research is still in progress, the influence of issue advertisements is starting to increase. Currently, research is lacking on the influence of issue advertisements (Pfau, Holbert, Szabo, & Kaminski, 1999). Therefore, this project aims to examine specific variables tied to the influence of issue advertising when mortality is salient.

Intent to Vote

This dissertation examines how likely a voter is to vote for a conservative presidential candidate in the upcoming 2012 election. Voting for a specific candidate or issue is the easiest way for a citizen to make his or her voice heard. Without citizen votes, issues would not be turned into laws and politicians would not be voted into office. Political advertising has the potential to help voters decide which candidate to vote for through its ability to convey issues and images of candidates. For instance, voters (often late deciders) exposed to political advertising would contemplate voting as the message suggests, for or against a particular candidate or issue (Bowen, 1994; Cundy, 1986; Kaid & Sanders, 1978; Mulder, 1979).

This dissertation examines intent to vote for a conservative candidate in the 2012 presidential election after death is made or not made salient and after participants view an issue advertisement. Research has shown that a candidate who is willing to discuss issues will receive a more favorable evaluation from voters (Kaid & Sanders, 1978), which could lead to a higher intent to vote for that candidate. However, when voters are aware of their own death, voting for a

particular candidate or issue could be affected. The anti-immigration advertisement used in this dissertation focuses on illegal immigrants being the reason for American job loss. When issue advertisements are negative (e.g., anti-immigration), individuals who are death-aware should be affected differently than those who are not death aware, due to a heightened defense of an individual's CWV (e.g., Arndt et al., 1997; Solomon et al., 2000). All advertisements in this dissertation are negative; each attacks President Obama and his policies. In both the economy and immigration advertisements, President Obama's number is given as the one to call and complain about American jobs being taken. While the anti-immigration advertisement focuses on illegal immigrants being the cause of American job loss, the economy advertisement focuses on President Obama being the cause of American job loss.

When the issue advertisement is not affiliated with a candidate, like the advertisements used in this dissertation, the positive or negative evaluations should transfer to a political ideology or to a candidate associated with the voters' ideological beliefs. For instance, if a conservative individual has a negative evaluation of legalizing all illegal immigrants, that negative feeling should transfer to a candidate supporting the issue (most likely a liberal candidate). When mortality is salient, individuals will gravitate to those most like themselves (i.e., ideologically similar), therefore attempting to eliminate their existential anxiety (Mikulincer, Florian, & Hirschberger, 2003). Death-aware participants viewing an issue advertisement, regardless of content, should not have the effect research has traditionally shown. If this advertisement is

negative and voters' mortality is salient, people will be inclined to vote for those

candidates who share their ideology. While both mortality-salient and non-

mortality-salient participants may lean toward their preferred candidate based on

their ideological beliefs, mortality salience should make these effects stronger.

More research is needed on political advertising effects on voter behavior in

response to specific political issues because the current results are mixed. Some

studies show that specific issues do affect voter behavior (Rabinowitz, Prothro,

& Jacoby, 1982), but none look at the effects when mortality is salient.

When mortality is salient, individuals should have a stronger intent to

vote for candidates whose issues align with their political ideology than with

their non-death-salient counterparts, especially with moderates leaning one way

or the other. While research has shown that mortality salience has been shown to

push death-salient participants in a conservative direction (e.g., Nail et al.,

2009), this dissertation looks at mortality-salience effects during a Democratic

president. The conservative effect of 9/11, as argued by Nail et al. (2009), may

have been due to the threat being external to the United States and therefore

emphasized the subordinate American identity more than the partisan identity.

This occurs because when mortality is made salient, individuals should derogate

a source that goes against their CWV (Pyszczynski et al., 1997). Since this

dissertation focuses on political ideology as an aspect of an individual's CWV,

the source that voters will derogate is the candidate that is against the voter's

political ideology. Furthermore, when candidates, regardless of ideology,

represent issues that do not align with a particular individual's ideology, that individual will be less likely to vote for that candidate. Thus, it is predicted:

> H1: As individuals' ideology is self- reported to be more conservative, there will be a higher intent to vote for a conservative presidential candidate in 2012 after viewing a pro-attitudinal (conservative) advertisement for death-salient-participants when compared with non-death-salient participants.

Emotion

The way that a political advertisement makes people feel can have a profound effect on how they think about political candidates and political parties. However, when issue advertisements are viewed and when mortality is salient, positive emotions can quickly turn negative because of the cognitive changes that occur when existential anxiety is present. This can have an effect on voters.

A voter's emotion can play a central role in his or her political decision-making processes. The theory of affective intelligence states that as long as anxiety is not too high, the following occurs: 1) emotion comes before thought, 2) emotional appraisal has an effect on awareness and behavior, and 3) individuals rely on habits and alternatives to make decisions (Marcus, Neuman, & Mackuen, 2000).

Research has shown that emotion isn't an end state, but it's a beginning state (LeDoux, 1996; Panksepp, 1991). It is not until individuals "think" do they develop labels for the emotions they are feeling (Marcus et al., 2000). Typically,

individuals rely on what's been learned to bring success in the past; individuals rely on these habits without much consideration (Marcus et al., 2000). In fact, the surveillance system relies on habitual routines and environmental feedback (Marcus et al., 2000). It argues that emotion is a cognitive process and helps explain how people form political judgments (Marcus et al., 2000). If what individuals experience is similar to their expectations, they will feel calm; however, if they experience what is against their expectations, there will be anxiety. Because the advertisements presented in this dissertation will be "matches" for conservatives and "mismatches" for liberals, there will be a diverse range of individuals feeling calmness or anxiety. Therefore, political ideology plays a key role in the emotion individuals feel toward a candidate. In fact, partisanship has been shown to be strongly associated with feelings about candidates (Marcus et al., 2000).

While emotion measures usually do not measure cognition, the very nature of TMT suggests cognition. Because emotion has been shown to precede cognition, this dissertation primes individuals to "think" about their emotions toward a candidate. By doing this, this dissertation can examine emotion through the cognitive context of existential awareness and TMT. Additionally, individuals will rely on their ideology due to priming effects. Essentially, emotions are used by voters as an alternative judgment and are short-term (Marcus et al., 2000). Emotions give individuals summary evaluations that tend to dominate their decisions; emotions are necessary to gain their attention and make them capable of changing positions (Marcus et al., 2000).

Emotion plays a couple of roles in politics (Marcus, Wood, & Theiss-Morse, 1998). It is the foundation for such things as partisan affiliation formed early in life (Marcus et al., 1998). Also, emotion plays a role in the behavior of the swing voter, who may use emotion as a reaction in place of ideologically grounded issue positions (Marcus et al., 1998). The following positive emotions were used in this project: peaceful, happy, elated, and cheerful. The following negative emotions were used in this project: angry, annoyed, fearful, and ashamed.

Positive emotions. Happiness has been described as the state of gaining or making progress toward what one desires (Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991). There are many discrete emotions that are associated with happiness (Dillard & Peck, 2001). The emotions used in this dissertation that are associated with happiness are peaceful, elated, and cheerful. These emotions and happiness are used to represent positive emotion in this project. While our own cognitions and perceptions can influence how much happiness we experience, people usually experience happiness when achievement, the presence of familiar objects, or the reduction of negative affect has occurred (Izard, 1977; Tomkins, 1962). When happiness has occurred, feelings of confidence, expansiveness, and openness will have occurred (Nabi, 2002). Nabi (2002) has stated that, consequently, happiness promotes trusting and sharing behavior.

Most research on happiness has focused on it as mood rather than an emotion (Nabi, 2002). That research suggests that happy moods are associated with simple, heuristic, and creative processing with little attention to detail (see

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Schwarz, Bless, & Bohner, 1991 for review). Humor is often used in advertising to put audiences in a happy state and has been found to be persuasive when it is associated with low involvement, or feeling-oriented products (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). And it has been maintained that humor persuades through its distracting influence (Markiewicz, 1974; Sterntal & Craig, 1973). When humor is offensive or inappropriate, however, research has shown that it may be counterproductive to persuasion (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). Research has shown that messages that evoke happiness also provoke judgments of effectiveness (Dillard & Peck, 2001). This supports previous research, which stated that happy individuals are more accepting of almost any sort of advocacy (Brentar, Dillard, & Smith, 1997).

Negative emotions. Fear occurs when a situation is perceived as threatening to people's psychological or physical selves and it is involuntary (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 1984); fear can either be innate or learned (Izard, 1977). When fear is experienced, individuals have a tendency to escape from whatever threatens (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994). If this desire for protection is realized, avoidance behavior will often result (e.g., Frijda, 1986).

While fear-appeal research is extensive (see Eagly & Chaiken, 1993 for review), meta-analyses of the empirical research on fear appeals suggests that it is positively correlated with both attitude and behavior change, even though age has been shown to moderate the relationship between attitude and behavior

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change (Boster & Mongeau, 1984; Mongeau, 1998). In political advertising, attitudes and behaviors have the potential to be affected when voters feel fearful.

It is important to note that just because a threat is present, does not mean fear will be elicited (Witte, 1992). Fear appeals have been defined by Witte (1992) as containing three components: an elicitation of fear; the presence of a threat; and a response, where the desired response is to avoid the threat. However, too great of a threat can hinder the effectiveness of the message, though the reaction will vary from culture to culture (Witte et al., 2001). Furthermore, if the threat is not found relevant, protective action will not be taken (e.g., Sulfaro & Crislip, 1997). Therefore, when political advertisements elicit fear in voters, the advertisements have an obligation to make the fear appeal relevant (Curnalia, 2007). While this dissertation is not examining fear appeals in the advertisements used here, the notion that voters may be fearful and consequently want to turn away from the message when ideology is salient, is an important scholarly investigation. In an applied context, campaigns do not want voters to turn away from the message, but turn *toward* it.

Anger is generally elicited when individuals are faced with obstacles interfering with demeaning offenses against themselves or loved ones or with goal-oriented behavior, and is often a function of cultural conditioning or social learning (e.g., Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991). The discrete emotion, annoyance, is often associated with anger and is also examined in this dissertation (Dillard & Peck, 2001). When individuals are aroused with anger, there is a focus to attack the anger source (e.g., Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991). Anger has even been

associated with constructive problem solving, but the impulsiveness associated with extreme anger may be counterproductive (Averill, 1982). The way anger is evoked has different effects on individuals. For instance, intentionally induced anger correlates positively with persuasive outcomes, whereas unintentionally induced anger (often in response to guilt and fear appeals) correlates negatively with attitudes (e.g., Dillard & Peck, 1998). Unintentionally elicited anger has been assumed to be directed at the message creators when receivers believe they were being manipulated (Nabi, 2002).

Research has shown anger was aroused in response to the film *JFK,* that anger associated with accepting conspiracy theories regarding President Kennedy's assassination (Butler, Koopman, & Zimbardo, 1995). However, Nabi (1998) found that anger arousal caused closer information processing for unfamiliar topics under uncertain conditions. Recently, the Anger Activism Model emerged, proposing that the angrier people become after reading a message, the more likely they will be to attempt to "fix" the situation if the situation is relevant (Turner, 2007). Furthermore, this model predicted that anger could facilitate greater persuasion if the audience reading the persuasive message is pro-attitudinal (Turner, 2007). So, the goal of campaigners should be to diffuse the anger in the counter- attitudinal individuals while introducing the other sides of the issue in an attempt to turn the counter-attitudinal to the pro-attitudinal (Turner, 2007). Ultimately, anger can lead to negative evaluations of others (Bower, 1991). Furthermore, emotion and reason have the ability to work hand in hand (Turner et al., 2001). Therefore, anger appeals are one method to

get audiences to read a message carefully, respond favorably, and act with force (Turner, 2007). With this being said, examining anger evoked from political advertisements is an important area of research.

When an individual feels ashamed, it has been argued that the shame arises from guilt (Dillard & Peck, 2001). Guilt occurs when there has been a violation of an internalized moral, ethical, or religious code (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Lindsay-Hartz, DeRivera, & Mascolo, 1995), and is usually experienced in the context of an interpersonal relationship, and serves a relationship-enhancing function (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996). When individuals feel as though they have done something wrong, the feeling of guilt will often cause individuals to make reparations for the harm done (Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991; Lindsay-Hartz et al., 1995). Consequently, individuals feel ashamed about their actions. If guilt is evoked at moderate levels, it can enhance the attainment of persuasive goals (Coulter & Pinto, 1995). Unintentionally elicited guilt can also have this effect (Dillard & Peck, 1998). But when messages are designed to evoke high levels of guilt instead of evoking guilt, the messages can evoke high levels of anger and can ruin persuasive success (Coulter & Pinto, 1995; Pinto & Priest, 1991).

Emotions and political advertising. The emotional impact of advertising has been studied for years (e.g., Batra & Ray, 1985; Thorson & Friestad, 1989). It is believed that emotion does impact voters. In a political setting, people who are emotionally engaged are less likely to make rational decisions (Janis & Mann, 1977). Hart (1994) has stated, "the simple fact is that

people feel things about politics; the complicated fact is that they feel them in often confusing ways" (p. 18). Reasoning regarding our political choices is rooted not only in personal emotion but also in personal beliefs (Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991).

When citizens reason politically, feelings play an integral role in the efficiency of the reasoning (Sniderman et al., 1991); and when mortality is salient, these feelings are stronger than when mortality is not salient (Greenberg et al., 1997). When death-salient individuals view a counter- or pro-attitudinal political advertisement, their ideological views are reinforced. This occurs because these individuals are buffering their existential anxiety by attempting to maintain psychological equanimity. Therefore, those feelings, tied to ideological beliefs, are also reinforced. People's emotions about the advertisement can easily be transferred to political behavior.

The type of advertisement and the emotion it elicits can have an impact on voter behavior. For instance, emotional commercials are better recalled than non-emotional commercials (Friestad & Thorson, 1985). Emotional advertisements that elicit both positive and negative affect are remembered better than those that elicit one or the other (Friestad & Thorson, 1985). In addition, negative advertisements make voters feel distressed and upset (Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, & Wood, 1995; Marcus et al., 1998). Specifically, fear in political advertisements makes people and events memorable (Jamieson, 1992; Marcus et al., 2000). This fear, which often results in anxiety, will

stimulate political involvement (Marcus et al., 1998). When mortality is salient, these effects will become stronger and more pronounced according to TMT.

Death-aware individuals will rely on their political ideology (an aspect of their CWV) when viewing issue advertisements. Those advertisements that are against their political ideology will evoke more negative emotions toward a conservative candidate than they will for those non-death-aware individuals who are of the same political ideology. Those advertisements that are in agreement with an individual's political ideology will evoke more positive emotions toward a conservative candidate than the advertisements will for non-death-aware individuals who are of the same political ideology. Therefore, the presence of positive emotions should alleviate the presence of negative emotions. Thus, it is predicted:

> H2: As individuals' ideology is self- reported to be more conservative, there will be more positive emotions toward a conservative candidate after viewing a pro-attitudinal (conservative) advertisement for death-salient participants when compared with non-death-salient participants.

> H3: As individuals' ideology is self- reported to be more conservative, there will be less negative emotions toward a conservative candidate after viewing a pro-attitudinal (conservative) advertisement for death-salient participants when compared with non-death-salient participants.

Immigration Anxiety

Racism and immigration are two issues that often are discussed together. Those who are against immigration are often told they are being racist (Cohen,

Humphries, & Mynott, 2002). In fact, statutes like the Arizona and Alabama immigration laws discussed in Chapter 1 have the potential to make Americans fearful of non-Americans. This fear can be defined as "immigration anxiety." With immigration receiving more media attention, this can lead to a higher immigration anxiety among Americans. In addition, when an individual's mortality is salient, immigration anxiety should be stronger.

When voters view an issue advertisement about a different race, they should have some negative views toward this group when mortality is salient (Greenberg et al., 1997); and when this issue advertisement is about a particular race or ethnic group (e.g., Mexican immigrants) about which they hold negative views, the advertisement should serve as a reinforcement (Wong, Harvell, & Anaz, 2010). For example, after Hurricane Katrina, the dynamics of race/ethnicity and negative feelings toward immigrants drove negative beliefs about those who relocated to their area (Shelton & Coleman, 2009). After citizens viewed media coverage, they held stronger negative racial attitudes than those held by citizens who did not view the media coverage (Haider-Markel, Delehanty, & Beverlin, 2007). Individuals who are death aware will have stronger negative views than those individuals who are not death aware.

Those who hold negative immigration attitudes will often also have racial resentments (Ayers, Hofstetter, Schnakenberg, & Kolody, 2009). These resentments have been shown to transfer to other situations where immigrants are involved (Ayers et al., 2009). For instance, if an individual holds negative

immigration attitudes, this negativity has the potential to transfer to things such as political advertisements.

Traditionally, as individuals view political issue advertisements, they will rely on their political ideology when deciding how to vote in an election. But when death-aware individuals are asked about the entry of immigrants into their country, there should be a high level of anxiety regardless of political ideology or advertisement message. When individuals are faced with those unlike themselves (an out-group), they will be against these individuals, regardless of the issue (Kosloff et al., 2010). Therefore, making mortality salient in individuals should only increase the number and strength of these attitudes.

Regardless of the issue, when death-aware individuals are asked about immigrants, their desire to reinforce their CWV (American culture) will lead them to have more negative attitudes toward out-groups, as well as a higher level of immigration anxiety than those non-death-aware individuals. However, ideologically conservative people viewing a pro-attitudinal advertisement will have higher anxiety than liberals viewing a counter-attitudinal advertisement. This is the case because liberal individuals value diversity (Galston, 1991). When examining ideologically death-aware individuals, as participants fall further to the right (toward conservatism) on the liberal/conservative scale, those who are death aware will have higher immigration anxiety than those who are not death aware. Consequently, because the immigration message is designed to make immigration salient, those death-aware individuals viewing an

immigration advertisement should have a higher level of immigration anxiety than those individuals viewing an economy advertisement. Thus, it is predicted:

H4: As individuals' ideology is self- reported to be more conservative, there will be higher levels of immigration anxiety after viewing a pro-attitudinal (conservative) advertisement for death salient participants when compared with non-death-salient participants.

H5: The difference in immigration anxiety (as predicted in H4) will be more pronounced in the immigration advertisement condition than the economy condition.

Overall, the impact mortality salience can have on voter behavior and attitude is profound. An individual's political ideology (cultural worldview) can be an anchor for voters to make their decisions based on their attitudes about specific candidates and parties with regard to immigration reform and America's troubled economy.

Chapter 3: Method

The goal of this dissertation is to examine the moderating effect of mortality salience on the relationship between political ideology and numerous voter-outcome variables. To test the hypotheses, an experiment was conducted with a 2 (mortality salience: yes, no) x 2 (message: immigration, economy) experimental design. This chapter discusses the procedure, participants, and measures used in the experiment.

Procedure

The experiment was done via an online survey website Qualtrics (see Appendix B for the survey). Participants ($N = 294$) were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions (1. death salient/immigration advertisement; 2. death salient/economy advertisement; 3. no death salience/immigration advertisement; 4. no death salience/economy advertisement) when they accessed the experimental study website. The group sizes were as follows: 1. $N = 79$, 2. $N = 90$, 3. $N = 66$, 4. $N = 59$. Groups three and four served as the control groups because this project examines the differences between the death-salient (groups one and two) and the non-death-salient (groups three and four) conditions.

Once consenting to participate in the study, participants completed a short section of demographic questions: sex, year in school, age, and political ideology. Participants were then instructed to complete Section 2 of the survey. First, participants completed the mortality-salience manipulation. If participants were assigned to the control condition, they did not receive a mortality-salience manipulation, and were instructed to write about taking examinations. Mortality

salience was manipulated using two open-ended questions that reminded

participants of their own mortality (Greenberg et al., 1992). One question read,

"Please briefly describe the emotions that the thought of your own death arouses

in you," and the other read, "Jot down, as specifically as you can, what you

think will happen to you as you physically die and once you are physically

dead." Those in the control condition were instructed to answer parallel

questions concerning taking an examination (Arndt et al., 1997). One question

read, "Please briefly describe the emotions that the thought of taking an exam

arouses in you," and the other read, "Jot down, as specifically as you can what

will happen to you when you take an exam and after you have taken the exam."

Participants completed a distractor task between the mortality-primed

message and the mortality-salience manipulation. This distractor is needed

because, directly following a mortality-salience manipulation, a participant will

experience proximal terror management defense; the fear is immediately salient

(Greenberg et al, 1992). When a distractor task is given, participants will not be

focused on their existential fear (Greenberg et al, 1992). Once an appropriate

duration of time has passed, participants' death thoughts will not be in the front

of their mind; therefore, participants will experience a distal terror-management

defense (Greenberg et al, 1992). A recent meta-analysis suggests a 10-15 minute

delay (Burke, Martens, & Faucher, 2009). The distractor sections were timed by

Qualtrics to ensure at least a 10-minute delay between the mortality salience

manipulation and viewing the message. Participants were not allowed to

continue until they spent the appropriate time on the distractor tasks. In the

distractor portion of the survey, participants were asked to read a short literature

passage and answer content related questions about the passage. Additionally,

participants were instructed to complete a second distractor task, a word search

puzzle. Participants were then instructed to complete the death manipulation

check (a death thought accessibility measure), which comprises a series of word

stems. Both the control and the experimental conditions completed the

manipulation check. This is necessary to examine whether there were significant

differences between the control and experimental groups (e.g., the experimental

group should have significantly more death-salient words than the control

group).

All participants were then shown a storyboard version of either a 30-

second pro-conservative immigration advertisement or a 30-second pro-

conservative economy advertisement (see Appendix A). The group that

produced the advertisements used in this project supports issue positions that are

traditionally anti-liberal, typically producing advertisements such as those that

are against providing amnesty to illegal immigrants ("What is the Coalition for

the Future American Worker?", 2011). In the advertisements used in this

dissertation, the economy advertisement, which features the current lack of

American jobs, stresses an Obama-caused declining economy, a view that the

majority of conservatives would most likely hold. Liberals most likely feel the

cause of the declining economy is not due to Obama, but to outstanding

circumstances, such as previous administrations. The immigration advertisement

focused on illegal immigrants taking American jobs. Furthermore, this

advertisement focused on the idea that President Obama wants to grant amnesty to the current immigrants who are in the United States illegally. By stating this, the advertisement alluded to the fact that the immigrants that would be granted amnesty would continue to take jobs away from Americans. These ideas drove the conservative ideology home for voters; and mentioning President Obama in the advertisement merely drove the point further home for conservatives. The advertisement featured was produced by the Coalition for the Future American Worker (CFAW). This group states that it is an umbrella organization comprising of professional trade groups, population/environmental organizations, and immigration reform groups ("What is the Coalition for the Future American Worker?", 2011). The group further states that its purpose is to represent the interests of American workers and students in the formation of immigration policy ("What is the Coalition for the Future American Worker?", 2011). Additionally, this group states it wants to find solutions to ensure that employers can easily gain access to the workers they need ("What is the Coalition for the Future American Worker?", 2011).

Storyboard versions of the advertisements were used in an effort to maintain control over the message. A candidate or third-party sponsor would not produce similar enough advertisement messages to warrant using two separate advertisements (one addressing the economy, and one addressing illegal immigration). The researcher needed to choose one advertisement where the issue could be easily manipulated while the rest of the message remained unchanged. This allowed the researcher to test the effects of an immigration

issue advertisement versus an economy issue advertisement. Storyboards were the best option to allow for this manipulation. For example, in both advertisements, the storyboard photos were the same. Additionally, both advertisements were focused on President Obama and job loss. The differences between the advertisements lay in the cause of the job loss (the immigration advertisement focused on illegal immigration as the cause of the job loss, whereas the non-immigration advertisement focused on President Obama and Congress as the causes of job loss). Additionally, research has successfully used storyboards in the past (e.g., Krasno & Green, 2008; Sulkin & Swigger, 2008).

The immigration advertisement was used because it featured information about illegal immigrants taking American jobs. In addition, the immigration advertisement featured foreigners (illegal immigrants), which allowed the researcher to examine the notion of CWV. While hypotheses 4 and 5 directly addressed the notion of illegal immigrants through levels of immigration anxiety, all hypotheses tested the notion of CWV. By examining specific voter-outcome variables regarding how an individual would react to a conservative presidential candidate in 2012, individuals will choose how to react based on their ideology, an aspect of CWV. By examining an individual's bolstering of his or her CWV, this dissertation tested terror management theory's CWV hypotheses through an individual's ideology. The economy advertisement was used as the topic for the non-immigration advertisement because it did not mention illegal immigrants. President Obama and the economy would also be

relevant to college students. Furthermore, this topic did not deal with foreigners to the extent that immigration does.

After viewing the storyboards, participants were guided to Section 3. They were asked to state their intent to vote for a conservative 2012 presidential candidate who supports the messages in the advertisement (immigration or economy). Section 3 also instructed participants to inform the researcher of the positive and negative emotions they "think" they feel toward a conservative candidate. Next, participants were given a set of items that measured their immigration anxiety. Last, participants were asked to enter the required information for course credit and thanked for their participation in the study.

Participants

The undergraduate students participated in exchange for course credit/extra credit. Participant ages ranged from 18-49; and 62.9% of participants were female ($N = 294$).

Measures

Political ideology. Political ideology was assessed using a 5-point scale (see Nail, Harton, & Decker, 2003). Similar measures have been shown to validly assess political ideology (e.g., Jost et al., 2006; Landau et al., 2004; Nail et al., 2003). Participants were asked to mark the label that best described their political point of view and self-identified as "liberal" or "conservative" based on a continuum ranging from 1. very liberal to 5. very conservative ($M = 3.32$, *SD* = .92). See Appendix B, Section 1 #4 for specific question wording.

Intent to vote. Voting intention ($M = 43.79$, $SD = 36.06$) was measured using a 0-100% scale (see Meirick & Pfau, 2005). Participants were instructed to indicate their intent to vote for a conservative candidate in the 2012 Presidential election with 0% being no intentions of voting and 100% being full intentions of voting. See Appendix B, Section 3, # 7-8.

Emotion toward candidates. Participants' positive and negative emotions were measured using four negative emotions and four positive emotions (Dillard & Peck, 2001). Emotions are often felt before cognition; however, it is not until individuals "think" do they develop labels for the emotions they are feeling (Marcus et al., 2000). In fact, the surveillance system argued that emotion is a cognitive process and helped to explain how people make political judgments (Marcus et al., 2000). Because emotion has been shown to precede cognition and because the very nature of TMT suggests cognition, individuals were primed to "think" about their emotions toward a candidate. By looking through this lens, this dissertation examined emotion through the cognitive context of TMT, as argued in Chapter 2. While emotion and TMT have been studied together, the two topics have not been examined in the context of political advertising. Therefore, this dissertation began an exploratory investigation on how emotion could be measured in the cognitive context of TMT and political advertising.

These measures were on 5-point response scales. While the question was asked differently than Dillard and Peck (2001) originally posited, the emotion scales were the same. Additionally, emulating Dillard and Peck (2001), the

valenced emotion measures were combined to create two factors: positive and negative emotions. The four negative emotions used were angry, annoyed, fearful, and ashamed. Participants were asked to state how they feel when they think of voting for a conservative candidate. The four negative emotion scores were averaged to create an overall negative emotion score. These four items produced good reliability (α = .89; M = 1.79, SD = .94). The four positive emotions used were peaceful, happy, elated, and cheerful; they also produced good reliability (α = .83; M = 2.72, SD = 1.08). The four positive emotion scores were averaged to create an overall positive emotion score. These response scales ranged from 0 = none of this feeling to 4 = a great deal of this feeling. See Appendix B, Section 3, # 9 for specific question wording.

Illegal immigration anxiety. Participants' anxiety toward immigrants was measured using an adapted scale from Stephen and Stephen (1985) that asks participants how they would feel if they had to interact with an illegal immigrant on a 10-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (extremely). This measure represents a hypothetical situation, as most individuals would not know for certain if an immigrant is illegal. Each item featured a new feeling. The following feelings were used: apprehensive, uncertain, worried, awkward, anxious, threatened, comfortable, trusting, friendly, confident, safe, and at ease. See Appendix B, Section 3, # 10-21 for specific question wording. The positive immigration anxiety items were reverse coded and reliability was assessed for the full measure featuring both positive and negative immigration anxiety items. However, when combined, reliability was much worse (α = .59) than if only the

54

negative immigration anxiety items had been used. Therefore, this dissertation only utilizes the negative immigration anxiety measure to assess immigration anxiety. The reliability for the negative immigration anxiety measure was good ($\alpha = .89$; $M = 4.96$, $SD = 2.25$). The six negative anxiety scores were averaged together to create an overall negative anxiety score.

Death Thought Accessibility

A death thought accessibility variable was created using a summed variable of three items. In the experimental group, participants who did not create any death-related words failed the manipulation check and were deleted ($n = 50$). In the control group, participants who created 3 death-related words failed the manipulation check and were deleted ($n = 2$). An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the total number of death-salient words in mortality salient and non-mortality-salient conditions. There was a significant difference in the scores using the three items for mortality salient ($M = 1.28$, $SD = .47$) and not mortality salient ($M = .94$, $SD = .66$) conditions; $t(286) = 4.890$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the mortality-salience manipulation was successful.

A three-item measure was utilized to assess the mortality-salience manipulation. Due to researcher error, the full six-item measure was not used. Historically, reliability is not reported for the death thought accessibility measure; however, because the full measure was not utilized in this dissertation, the question of whether the six-item measure is reliable cannot be examined at this time. There were instances when mortality salience significantly interacted with other variables (knowledge and positive emotion). Therefore, it can be

argued that mortality salience was manipulated; however, because the full six-item measure was not used due to researcher error, the smaller three-item death thought accessibility measure could not reliably detect death salience.

Participants were instructed to complete word stems with the first word that came to mind. Traditionally, a 25-item measure is used with 6 items having the potential to be completed as death-related words. But due to a researcher error, only a 12-item measure was presented (see Appendix B for specific details). Within the 12-item measure, 3 items had the potential to be completed as death-related words.

Chapter 4: Results

Before the data analysis, all cases with missing data were eliminated from the data set ($n = 37$). The deleted participants were removed throughout the data collection process to ensure an accurate data set. The accuracy of the data set was important to confirm that the data collected provided enough participants to acquire the desired statistical power. The time it took to complete the experiment should have been between 15 minutes and one hour. All participants not falling into this interval were deleted ($n = 34$). Participants' time spent on the survey was rounded to the nearest whole number ($M = 36.42$, $SD = 11.464$). Because specific sections were timed (distractor tasks), at minimum participants should have spent 15 minutes on the study. The online survey was unable to assess the exact time spent on the distractor tasks. Therefore, those who did not spend at least 15 minutes on the study did not complete the study and were eliminated. Additionally, participants who did not complete the survey, leading them to not complete the information for course credit, were deleted ($n = 3$). Participants who failed to create any of the three possible death-related words in the experimental group failed the manipulation check and were deleted ($n = 50$). Participants who created all three of the death-related words in the control group also failed the manipulation check and were deleted ($n = 2$). All participants failing the manipulation check were deleted from the analysis. After the deletions, there were a total of 294 participants and the group sizes were as follows: 1. $N = 79$, 2. $N = 90$, 3. $N = 66$, 4. $N = 59$, whereas groups three and four served as the control groups and groups one and two served as the experimental groups.

The analysis reported in the results chapter uses the ordinary least squares regression procedure articulated by Aiken and West (1991). First, all of the necessary variables were averaged and the independent variables (political ideology and experimental condition) were centered (score minus mean). The interaction term was correlated with the main effects. Therefore, Aiken and West (1991) suggest centering variables because this mathematical method will lower the correlation between the main effects and the interaction term. Once all of the necessary variables were centered, the interaction term was produced. The interaction term consisted of the product of the centered independent variables of interest (i.e., political ideology and experimental condition). All variables were entered into the regression model in a single block.

Aiken and West (1991) suggest specific procedures for additional probing of significant interactions. Ultimately, the goal of the researcher is to plot the significant interaction so the interaction can be understood in more detail. The first step was to reorganize the regression equation to show the regression of a single dependent variable on political ideology at levels of the experimental condition (Mortality salience vs. No mortality salience). This allowed the researcher to determine the simple slope, that is: the relationship between a dependent variable on political ideology at a single value of the experimental condition (Aiken & West, 1991). In order to do this, the researcher must choose values for the independent variables (Aiken & West, 1991). For this research, there were only two values for the experimental condition, so those two values were chosen. For the continuous independent variable, the researcher must choose three values. Cohen and Cohen (1983) suggest using three specific values: value one is one standard deviation below the centered mean, value two is the centered mean, and value

three is one standard deviation above the centered mean. Once these values are chosen, they were substituted into the revised equation. These values were plotted to graphically show the significant interaction.

In summary, there was only one interaction (political ideology x MS vs. no MS) that was significant for the dependent variable positive emotion toward a conservative candidate. The predicted two-way interaction was not significant for the dependent variables intent to vote for a conservative 2012 presidential candidate, negative emotion toward a conservative candidate, or immigration anxiety. Additionally, the predicted three-way interaction was not significant for the dependent variable immigration anxiety. This chapter covers the hypothesized results.

Hypothesized Results

The first hypothesis stated that as individuals' ideology is self-reported to be more conservative, there will be a higher intent to vote for a conservative presidential candidate in 2012 after viewing a pro-attitudinal (conservative) advertisement for death-salient participants when compared with non-death-salient participants. To address the first hypothesis, intent to vote for a conservative presidential candidate in 2012 was regressed on political ideology, experimental condition, and the interaction between the two. The overall model explained 2.4% of the variance of intent to vote for a conservative presidential candidate in 2012. $F(3, 289) = 3.37$, $p = .019$ (see Table 1).

Table 1

Regression Analysis for Intent to Vote for a Conservative 2012 Presidential Candidate

	B	SE	β	Prob.
Constant	44.92	2.11	-	< .001
Ideology	-3.90	2.32	-.10	.093
Experimental Condition	-11.33	4.21	-.16	.007
Interaction	2.64	4.62	.03	.568

Notes. A high value for ideology represents conservatism, whereas a low score represents liberalism. Experimental condition is a dichotomous variable with high values representing the mortality-salience condition. The interaction is ideology x experimental condition. The adjusted R^2 states that the model explained 2.4% of the variance of intent to vote. $N = 293$.

The interaction between political ideology and experimental condition was not a significant predictor of intent to vote for a conservative presidential candidate in 2012 ($B = 2.64$, SE $= 4.62$, $p = .568$). Therefore, there is no support for the first hypothesis.

The second hypothesis stated that as individuals' ideology is self-reported to be more conservative, there will be more positive emotion toward a conservative candidate after viewing a pro-attitudinal (conservative) advertisement for death-salient participants when compared with non-death-salient participants. To address the second hypothesis, positive emotion toward a conservative candidate was regressed on political ideology, experimental condition, and the interaction between the two. The overall positive emotion model explained 29.2% of the variance of positive emotion for a conservative candidate. $F (3, 289) = 39.72$, $p < .001$ (see Table 2).

Table 2

Regression Analysis for Positive Emotion Toward a Conservative 2012 Presidential
Candidate

	B	SE	*β*	Prob.
Constant	2.71	.05	-	< .001
Ideology	.60	.06	.51	< .001
Experimental Condition	.04	.11	.02	.696
Interaction	.24	.12	.10	.045

Notes. A high value for ideology represents conservatism, whereas a low score
represents liberalism. Experimental condition is a dichotomous variable with high
values representing the mortality-salience condition. The interaction is ideology x
experimental condition. The adjusted R^2 states that the model explained 28.5% of the
variance of positive emotion. $N = 293$.

The interaction between political ideology and experimental condition was a

significant predictor of positive emotion toward a conservative candidate ($B = .238$, SE

$= .12, p = .045$. Upon further investigation of the interaction effect for the mortality-

salient condition, conservative ideology is positively related to positive emotion toward

a conservative candidate (see Figure 1). For mortality salient participants, as

conservatism increases so do their positive emotion toward a conservative candidate.

For non-mortality-salient participants, as conservatism increases so do positive emotion

for a conservative candidate, but at a slower rate than mortality-salient participants.

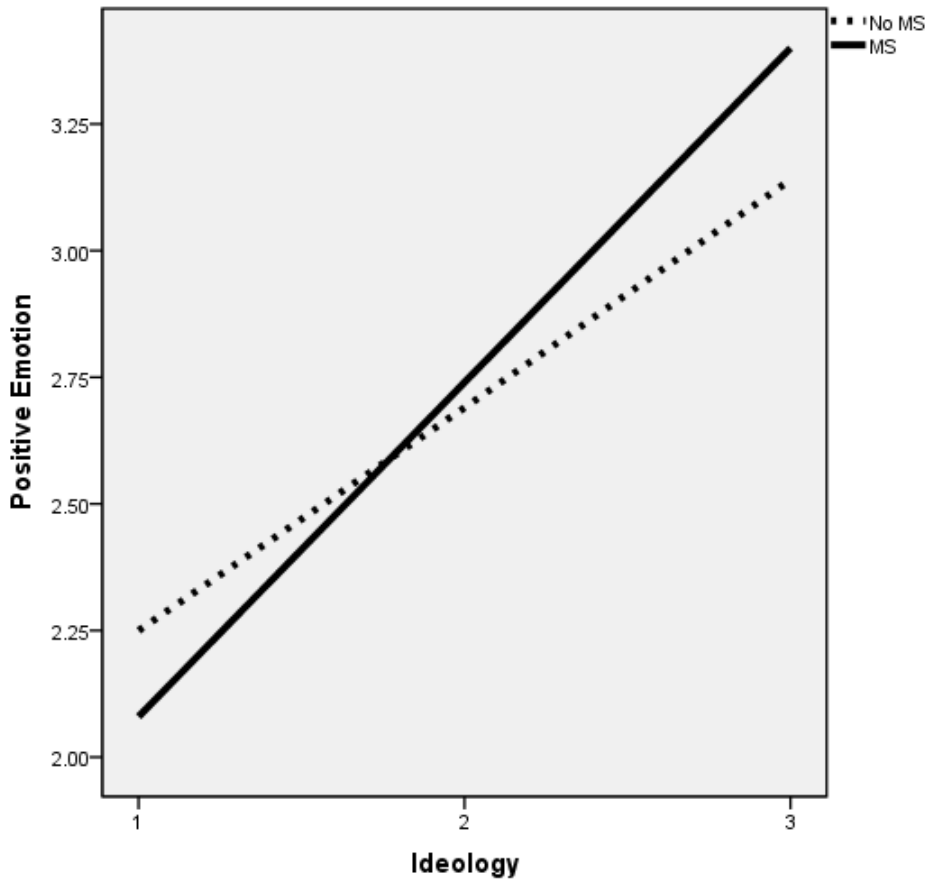Therefore, hypothesis two was partially supported.

Figure 1. Interaction between ideology and experimental condition on positive emotion towards a conservative candidate. In this figure for ideology, 1 = liberal, 2 = moderate, and 3 = conservative.

The third hypothesis stated that as individuals' ideology is self-reported to be more conservative, there will be less negative emotion toward a conservative candidate after viewing a pro-attitudinal (conservative) advertisement for death-salient participants when compared with non-death-salient participants. To address the third hypothesis, negative emotion toward a conservative candidate was regressed on political ideology, experimental condition, and the interaction between the two. The overall negative-emotion model explained 29.5% of the variance of negative emotion. F $(3, 289) = 40.405, p < .001$ (see Table 3). The interaction between political ideology

and experimental condition was not a significant predictor of negative emotion ($B = -.137$, $p = .184$). Therefore, hypothesis three was not supported.

Table 3

Regression Analysis for Negative Emotion Toward A Conservative 2012 Presidential Candidate

	B	SE	β	Prob.
Constant	1.78	.05	-	< .001
Ideology	-.54	.05	-.52	< .001
Experimental Condition	.15	.09	-.08	.109
Interaction	-.14	.10	-.07	.184

Notes. A high value for ideology represents conservatism, whereas a low score represents liberalism. Experimental condition is a dichotomous variable with high values representing the mortality-salience condition. The interaction is ideology x experimental condition. The adjusted R^2 states that the model explained 28.8% of the variance of knowledge. $N = 293$.

As individuals' ideology is self- reported to be more conservative, there will be less negative emotion toward a conservative candidate after viewing a pro-attitudinal (conservative) advertisement for death-salient participants when compared with non-death-salient participants.

The fourth and fifth hypotheses concerned immigration anxiety. Hypothesis four stated that as individuals' ideology is self-reported to be more conservative, there will be higher levels of immigration anxiety after viewing a pro-attitudinal (conservative) advertisement for death-salient participants when compared with non-death salient participants. To address the fifth hypothesis, immigration anxiety was regressed on political ideology, experimental condition, and the interaction between the two. The fifth hypothesis stated that the gains in immigration anxiety (as predicted in H4) would be more pronounced in the immigration advertisement condition than in the economy

condition. To address these hypotheses, immigration anxiety was regressed on political

ideology, experimental condition and political advertisement (immigration vs.

economy), along with the necessary two-way and three-way interactions. The overall

model explained 4.9% of the variance of immigration anxiety; $F (7, 281) = 2.05, p =$

.049 (see Table 4). The interaction between political ideology and experimental

condition was not a significant predictor of immigration anxiety ($B = 1.84, p = .30$).

Therefore, hypothesis four was not supported.

The interaction between political ideology, experimental condition, and political

advertisement was not a significant predictor of immigration anxiety ($B = -2.92, p =$

.408). Therefore, hypothesis five was not supported.

Table 4

Regression Analysis for Immigration Anxiety

	B	SE	β	Prob.
Constant	29.80	.81	-	< .001
Ideology (I)	2.91	.88	.197	.001
Experimental Condition (E)	.03	1.61	.001	.984
Political Ad (P)	.31	1.61	.011	.847
I x E	1.84	1.76	.062	.298
E x P	.16	3.21	.003	.960
I x P	.57	1.77	.019	.746
I x E x P	-2.92	3.52	-.049	.408

Notes. A high value for ideology represents conservatism, whereas a low score represents liberalism. Experimental condition and political advertisement are dichotomous variables, whereas a high value for experimental condition represents the mortality-salience condition and a high value for political advertisement represents the economy advertisement condition. The adjusted R^2 states that the model explained 2.5% of the variance of immigration anxiety. $N = 289$.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The moderating role of death salience on the relationship between ideology and voter-outcome variables was shown to be inconsistent throughout this study. While one result yielded a significant interaction (positive emotion), most were non-significant. This suggests that, while death salience did seem to play a role, it is a role difficult to pin down based on these results. There are two overarching issues that could have led to the inconsistent results: 1) The online nature of the study could have led to weaker distal defenses. 2) Participant ideological strength may have been weak. First, it is important to discuss how the online nature of the study could have played a role in the results.

The online nature of the study could have led to inconsistent results. In order to achieve what previous research has deemed as the ideal delay of 10-15 minutes (Burke et al., 2009), the distractor task section of the online study was timed. At minimum, participants spent 10 minutes completing a word search puzzle and reading a novel passage. The online survey tool hid the continue button until 10 minutes had passed. During the period which participants could not continue, they may have been doing other activities (e.g., thinking about other issues, watching television) while waiting for the button to appear. In doing these other activities, participants may have lost track of time. Consequently, death-aware participants may have spent longer than the expected 10-15 minutes on the distractor task section. However, Qualtrics was not set up to record time spent on the distractor tasks. If more time (past 15 minutes) was spent on the distractor tasks doing other activities, the distal defenses may not have worked properly. While the researcher did delete participants that spent less than 15 minutes

and more than one hour completing the study, it is still possible that a significant amount of time was spent on the distractor tasks. For instance, if participants spent 50 minutes completing the study, they could have spent 10 or 30 minutes on the task. However, the researcher was unable to tell exactly how long each participant spent on the distractor tasks. Therefore, it is possible that participants may have spent more time than what was expected (no more than 15 minutes) on the distractor tasks. By spending more time on the tasks, the death salience for participants may have been weaker than if it would have been the recommended 10-15 minutes spent on the distractor tasks. Once the 15 minutes had passed, participants may not have needed to buffer their existential anxiety. By spending too much time on a distractor task, participants may have no longer felt the existential anxiety that may have once been present upon the death manipulation. This could have led some death-salient participants to have little to no mortality-salience effects; thus making the experimental group similar to the control group. However, the weakened distal defenses only help to explain part of the problem. The ideological strength of the participant may also have led to the inconsistent results.

The participants' ideological strength may have been low because the sample included young voters only. Furthermore, because ideology was self-reported, participants may have been unaware of what their ideological position was. TMT research has recently shown that political views are reinforced throughout life when the death of a loved one is salient; therefore, attitudes are stronger in older people than in younger for conservatives (Chatard et al., 2010). While the Chatard et al. (2010) study focuses on mortality salience through the death of a loved one, it can be stated that the death salience of oneself would produce stronger polarization of political ideology

because being aware of death is what has traditionally produced CWV defenses amongst death-salient individuals. The messages were designed to be counter-attitudinal for liberals and pro-attitudinal for conservatives. However, the sample consisted of young voters at the beginning of their political journey. Therefore, participants' ideology may not have been strong enough for them to be used as an existential anxiety buffer, a defense of their CWV (i.e., Chatard et al., 2010). If participants had used their ideology as a buffer, there would have been more attention paid to the message. As more attention is paid to the message, there would be a significant difference between the experimental and control groups. Next, this chapter will delve into a discussion of each of the hypotheses.

Intent to Vote

The first hypothesis predicted that as individuals' ideology is self-reported to be more conservative, there will be a higher intent to vote for a conservative 2012 presidential candidate after viewing a pro-attitudinal (conservative) advertisement for death-salient participants when compared with non-death-salient participants. This was predicted because TMT research states that when death-aware individuals are confronted with views that are part of their CWV, those views will not be derogated; in fact those views will be welcomed (Arndt et al., 1997; Solomon et al., 2000). In this case, participants viewing a pro-attitudinal message will have a desire to vote for the person associated ideologically with the message viewpoint. Therefore, the more conservative people are, the more likely they are going to vote for a conservative presidential candidate in 2012.

The main issue with the non-significant results of this hypothesis could have been the ideological strength of participants. The young participants in this study may not have strongly associated with their claimed ideology as research suggests (e.g., Chatard et al., 2010); therefore, it could be stated that when made death aware, these participants most likely would not feel a need to defend their ideology when faced with opposing ideological views. If existential anxiety was present, this could have led death-aware participants to choose other aspects of their CWV to buffer their existential anxiety (e.g., religion). However, it has been argued that participants may have spent too long on the distractor tasks, leading them to having little to no existential anxiety at the time they continued the survey. With the possibility of all of these issues working together, it seems highly plausible that mortality salience might not moderate the relationship between political ideology and intent to vote. This has important implications to the future of TMT.

These results may suggest that not all opposing viewpoint messages work to ignite a derogation of source (i.e., choosing to not vote for a candidate of a different ideology). TMT argues that *any* opposing viewpoint should be enough to ignite CWV defenses (Arndt et al., 1997; Solomon et al., 2000), and these results suggest this may not be the case when intending to vote for a conservative candidate. For instance, liberals were presented with a counter-attitudinal message but no differences were found between the experimental and control groups; this suggests that the ideological aspect of a liberal's CWV may not have been defended. Furthermore, ideology might not be as strong of an aspect of a CWV to be used as an effective existential anxiety buffer leading participants to not feel a need to defend their ideology (an aspect of their

CWV), and in this case not desiring to vote for a candidate with opposing viewpoints. As mentioned before, this questions whether individuals will choose an aspect of their CWV (i.e., ideology) or their entire CWV to defend. It may be that TMT needs to begin to address the nuances of an individual's CWV and how inclined the individual would be to defend it when asked how likely they would be to vote for a political candidate.

While the interaction was not found to be significant, there was a main effect for mortality salience and intent to vote. However, Table 1 in Chapter 4 showed that there was a negative relationship between mortality salience and intent to vote meaning that as participants become more death salient, intent to vote for a conservative presidential candidate in 2012 decreases. Death salience should have made intent to vote stronger for conservative participants and weaker for liberal participants. However, the results showed that mortality salience moved the entire sample in a liberal direction.

Research has shown that when an existential threat was present, liberals have reverted to "in-group" conservative thinking, specifically liberals having views similar to George W. Bush's (Nail et al., 2009). Similarly, Nail & McGregor (2009) found that after 9/11, both liberals and conservatives reported more conservative attitudes. Both of these studies occurred during a conservative president's (Bush) reign. To date, no TMT studies have examined "in-group" ideological shifts during a Democratic president's reign. However, this dissertation did just that. The mortality salience main effect showed that mortality salience moved the sample in a liberal direction. Because this dissertation was completed during a Democratic president's term, it could be argued that this project lends further support that when death-salient participants are presented

with an existential threat, they will revert to "in-group" thinking, regardless of what the "in-group" ideology is at the time.

The online nature of the study brings up important methodological concerns with TMT. First, the ideal 10-15 minute distractor window only accounts for the proximal defenses that occur if *at least* 10 minutes are spent not thinking about death. However, the theory does not account for what happens *after* 15 minutes have passed. While this dissertation does not examine what occurs past the ideal distractor task delay window, the results provide a notion that something might be occurring cognitively past 15 minutes that affect the existential anxiety that was once present. These results may suggest that the longer individuals spend on the distractor tasks (or other activities, such as talking on the phone or watching television), the more possible it is that the existential anxiety once felt is no longer present. Therefore, the theory must begin to examine at what point past 15 minutes does existential anxiety go dormant and is no longer affecting cognitive processes.

Second, it is not common for voters to see advertisements and then immediately make a political decision. Therefore, when contemplating the role of death salience in political advertisements, it is important to note that there would most likely be a longer amount of time between the death salience presented in advertisements and the time a political action is taken regarding the advertisement. If existential anxiety is not present past 15 minutes, it questions how effective mortality salience in political advertisements would be to real voters in an actual election, especially when the advertisements have the potential to evoke death thoughts (e.g., 9/11 images). However, research has not examined whether political advertisements have the potential to produce existential

anxiety. Therefore, future political communication research must examine the utility of mortality salience in real world viewing of political advertisements and voting.

Positive Emotion

The second hypothesis was partially supported. It was predicted that as individuals' ideology is self-reported to be more conservative, there will be more positive emotion toward a conservative candidate after viewing a pro-attitudinal (conservative) advertisement for death-salient participants when compared with non-death-salient participants. The results show mortality salience does have a significant moderating effect on the relationship between political ideology and positive emotion toward a conservative candidate. However, this significant difference between the experimental and control groups was only significant for moderate conservatives and conservatives. There were no significant differences found between the experimental and control groups for moderates, moderate-liberals, or liberals. As mortality-salient participants reported themselves as being conservative, there was a sharp increase in positive emotion toward a conservative candidate. Additionally, for the control group, there was a slightly slower increase in positive emotion toward a conservative candidate as the conservatism of the participants increased. In other words, the evidence from the current study indicates mortality salience triggered liberals to have less positive emotion toward a conservative candidate than non-death-aware liberals. The evidence from the current study also indicates that death-aware conservatives would have more positive emotion towards a conservative candidate than non-mortality-salient conservatives. Last, this evidence suggests that death-aware conservatives held more positive emotion

toward a conservative candidate than a death-aware liberal (see Figure 1 from previous chapter).

To further understand the interaction, a simple effects analysis was done using procedures outlined by Preacher (2006). This procedure transforms values into z-scores, where -1 are liberals, 0 are moderates, and +1 are conservatives. First, the analysis indicated there were no significant differences between the experimental and control groups for liberals, moderate-liberals, and moderates. However, there were significant differences between the experimental and control groups for moderate-conservatives and conservatives. Specifically, the simple effect analysis indicated at values above .37 on the liberal/conservative scale that the differences between the experimental and control group were significant ($p < .05$). This point (.37) was slightly below the midpoint to one standard deviation above the mean for the liberal/conservative measure. It is important to first discuss the significant differences between the experimental and control conditions for moderate-conservatives and conservatives (values above .37), and then examine why there were no significant differences for moderates, moderate-liberals, and liberals.

Moderate Conservatives and Conservatives

Research has shown that when individuals build reasoning regarding their political choices, the reasoning is rooted in personal emotion *and* personal beliefs (Sniderman et al., 1991). Therefore, when individuals rationalize their political choices, their feelings will play an integral role in the efficiency of their reasoning (Sniderman et al., 1991). When mortality is salient, these feelings are stronger than when mortality is not salient (Greenberg et al., 1997). The messages used in this study were designed to

make ideology salient to all participants. Consequently, when death-aware individuals were made aware of their existential anxiety, it was expected they would use their ideology to buffer their anxiety. This was expected because when death is salient, individuals tend to push away ideals that are dissimilar to their own, while pulling in those ideals that are similar to them (Arndt et al., 1997; Solomon et al., 2000). By using ideology as a buffer, conservatives and moderate-conservatives (i.e., those individuals viewing a pro-attitudinal message) should have had 1) more positive emotion toward a conservative candidate than liberals and 2) more positive emotion toward a conservative candidate than toward non-death-aware conservatives. The results indicate this to have occurred.

The overarching issues presented at the beginning of this chapter (i.e., weakened distal defenses and weakened participant ideological strength) seemed to not have an effect on extreme conservatives' positive emotions. Therefore, simply seeing the word conservative may have been enough to evoke positive emotions among moderate-conservatives and conservatives. Furthermore, while weakened distal defenses may have been present, the fact that it was a pro-attitudinal message for moderate-conservatives and conservatives may not have had as strong an effect as if the message had been counter-attitudinal.

Moderates, Moderate-Liberals, and Liberals

Because the messages used in this study were designed to make ideology salient, it was expected that death-aware moderates, moderate-liberals, and liberals would use ideology as a buffer when faced with thoughts of their own death. It was predicted that as death-aware participants fell further to the left (toward liberalism) on the

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liberal/conservative scale, there would be less positive emotion towards a conservative candidate than non-death-aware participants. This was predicted because when mortality is salient, individuals will push away ideals and people dissimilar to them while pulling closer those ideals that are similar to their own (Arndt et al., 1997; Solomon et al., 2000). However, there were no significant differences between the experimental and control groups for moderates, moderate-liberals, and liberals.

As was argued for other hypotheses, it is possible that the ideological strength of the participant could have played a role in the non-significant findings. Participants viewing a counter-attitudinal message should already have had less positive emotions than those who viewed a pro-attitudinal message. When death becomes salient, those presented with a counter-attitudinal message should experience less positive emotions than someone who is not death salient because the death-salient person will feel the need to push away the opposing viewpoint (Arndt et al., 1997; Solomon et al., 2000). However, if participants did not feel strong in their ideology, then they would not feel a need to defend it. Therefore, even if there would have been weakened distal defenses, the ideological strength of the person would be the primary factor affecting their level of positive emotions toward a candidate with an opposing viewpoint, not weakened distal defenses.

The results of this study show that for the dependent-variable positive emotion, there were no significant differences between liberals, moderate-liberals, and moderates, suggesting some kind of interference with existential anxiety and this voter-outcome variable. Participants have used emotion as their basis for political choice rationalization (Sniderman et al., 1991). Therefore, the message may have needed to be

much more ideologically conservative for everyone (other than extreme conservatives) to recognize it as an ideologically conservative message. This lends further support to the notion that TMT must consider aspects of CWV defenses when used as an existential anxiety buffer. Furthermore, it may have been that participants were not very politically aware.

Currently, TMT focuses heavily on counter-attitudinal views (e.g., Arndt et al., 1997; Solomon et al., 2000). With that being said, TMT should reconsider the role mortality salience plays in extreme *pro*-attitudinal views. There may be a point for extreme viewpoints (either pro- or counter-attitudinal) that mortality salience would not make positive emotions any more or less positive.

Negative Emotion

The third hypothesis was not supported. The results do not show mortality salience having a significant moderating effect on the relationship between political ideology and negative emotion toward a conservative candidate. The third hypothesis predicted that as individuals' ideology is self-reported to be more conservative, there will be a less negative emotion after viewing a pro-attitudinal (conservative) advertisement for death-salient participants when compared with non-death-salient participants. This was predicted because, when an individual is death-aware, he or she will have a desire to push away those messages and people that are not part of their CWV. Therefore, conservatives should have had less negative emotions and liberals should have had more negative emotions when compared with controls. This was argued to occur for two reasons. First, the message was designed to make ideology salient. So when confronted with existential anxiety, all death-aware participants should

have relied on ideology to buffer their existential anxiety. Second, TMT research has shown that death-aware individuals who are presented with ideas counter to their own will choose to derogate that source and be less likely to process a message from that source (Arndt et al., 1997; Solomon et al., 2000). Therefore, when liberals were asked about their negative emotions toward a conservative candidate, it was expected that liberals would have more negative emotions (i.e., a way of derogating the source) than non-death-aware liberals.

Interestingly, while there were significant differences between the experimental and control groups for positive emotions toward a conservative candidate, this was not the case for negative emotions toward that same candidate. The significance for positive emotions toward a conservative candidate and the lack thereof for negative emotions for that same candidate could have occurred because of the emotions used. Certain emotions can cause individuals to run toward a message (e.g., peaceful), whereas emotions like fear and disgust can cause individuals to run away from a message (Dunkel, 2009). While the positive emotions used (peaceful, happy, elated, and cheerful) may not necessarily cause an individual to run toward a message or candidate, it certainly would not cause someone to run *away* from the message. Individuals typically like being around people and things that make them feel peaceful, happy, elated, or cheerful. On the other hand, the negative emotions used (angry, annoyed, fearful, and ashamed) are emotions that, when felt in the real world, would most likely cause a person to want to turn away from the message. Individuals typically do not choose to be around people or things that make them feel angry, annoyed, fearful, or ashamed. While this may help to explain why there were significant differences

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between positive emotions toward a conservative candidate, it does not help to explain the greater issues at play that may have led to the lack of significant differences between the experimental and control groups for negative emotions toward a conservative candidate. Similar to the other hypotheses, the two overarching issues presented at the beginning of this chapter could play a role in the non-significant findings with negative emotion. However, the idea that negative emotions may work differently than positive emotions may have played a larger role in the non-significant findings.

It was expected that reactions to positive and negative emotions would be similar when mortality salience was moderating the relationship between emotion and political ideology. However, no significant differences were found with negative emotions. As was argued for the other hypotheses, the notion of certain aspects of CWVs not working as existential anxiety buffers may play a role in negative emotions as well as other voter-outcome variables. Similar to what occurred with positive emotion, it may be possible that because participants may not have been using ideology as an existential anxiety buffer, mortality salience may not have had an effect on whether an individual would have more or fewer negative emotions. While there has been TMT research suggesting certain emotions (e.g., disgust) negate TMT effects (Dunkel, 2009), a group of positive or negative emotions has not been addressed by TMT research until now. These results suggest that when examining a *group* of emotions on extreme viewpoints, terror management effects may work differently than what has been previously predicted.

Immigration Anxiety

Two-way interaction. The fourth hypothesis was not supported. The results do not show mortality salience as having a significant moderating effect on the relationship between political ideology and immigration anxiety. The fourth hypothesis predicted that as individuals' ideology is self-reported to be more conservative, there will be higher levels of immigration anxiety after viewing a pro-attitudinal (conservative) advertisement for death-salient participants when compared with non-death-salient participants. This was expected because when death-aware individuals were asked about immigrants, their desire to defend their CWV (e.g., American culture) should have been reinforced, leading death-aware individuals to have more negative attitudes toward out-groups, such as immigrants (Greenberg et al., 1997). Consequently, when death-aware individuals were asked about interacting with immigrants, they should have had a higher level of immigration anxiety than their non-death-aware counterparts. Additionally, those death-aware individuals who were ideologically conservative (i.e., those viewing a pro-attitudinal advertisement) should have had a higher level of immigration anxiety than those death-aware individuals who were ideologically liberal (i.e., those viewing a counter-attitudinal advertisement). This was expected because ideologically liberal individuals value diversity (Galston, 1991), which makes them more likely to welcome those who are different from them. However, there were no significant differences found between the experimental and control groups. Because this hypothesis dealt explicitly with CWV defenses, one of the first focuses of TMT, it could be stated that while weak ideological strength of the participant may have led death-

aware participants to not feel as though they need to defend their ideology, weakened

distal defenses could have been the primary reason for the non-significant differences.

Because this hypothesis specifically addressed the notion of CWV defenses

when a death-aware individual was faced with an opposing CWV, TMT must begin to

address the effects of spending longer than the required 15 minutes on the distractor

tasks (i.e., weakened distal defenses). The results of this hypothesis (as well as others)

went against what TMT has argued for 20 years. As online studies become more the

norm in research, TMT must begin to account for the point at which death salience goes

away, so that researchers can control for this potential problem when conducting TMT

studies online.

Three-way interaction. The fifth hypothesis was not supported. The results do

not show that mortality salience has a significant moderating effect on the relationship

between political ideology, political advertisement (immigration or economy), and

immigration anxiety. The fifth hypothesis predicted that the gains in immigration

anxiety (as predicted in H4) would be more pronounced in the immigration

advertisement condition than the economy advertisement condition. Referring back to

what was argued for the fourth hypothesis, when asking death-aware individuals about

immigrants (i.e., non-Americans), the desire to defend their CWV (e.g., American

culture) was reinforced. Therefore, death-aware individuals should have had more

negative attitudes toward out-groups, such as immigrants (Greenberg et al., 1997).

However, half of the death-aware individuals viewed an economy advertisement,

whereas the other half viewed an immigration advertisement. The immigration

advertisement was designed to explain how illegal immigrants are taking American

jobs. Additionally, this advertisement became more pro-attitudinal as individuals moved further to the right (i.e., conservative) on the liberal/conservative ideology scale. By making ideology *and* immigration salient, the immigration advertisement should have produced more immigration anxiety for conservatives than for liberals. This is because liberals value diversity (Galston, 1991), and therefore will be more open to the idea of giving immigrants a chance to work in America. However, there were no significant differences found between the experimental, control, immigration, or economy groups. Similar to the fourth hypothesis, weakened distal defenses could have played a role in the non-significant results.

The idea of competing CWVs should be further examined by political TMT research. It may be that ideology is not a reliable existential anxiety buffer and political TMT research needs to investigate why. Also, the notion of how strong an opposing viewpoint message needs to be should also be examined. This research suggests that a message containing information about illegal immigrants taking jobs was not enough to ignite the most basic CWV defenses, though previous TMT research suggests that it should have been.

<center>**Limitations**</center>

While there was one partially supported hypothesis (positive emotion), there were three limitations to this study. If these limitations had been addressed prior to the study, it may have yielded more significant results. The three limitations are as follows: 1) the messages were not pre-tested, 2) using young voters may have led to weak ideological strength and low political awareness, and 3) there may have been weakened distal defenses due to longer than normal time spent on the distractor tasks.

First, the immigration and economy messages were not pre-tested for ideological and issue salience. Because of a lack of pre-testing, it is possible that they were not strong enough to evoke a CWV defense for ideology in some participants. Furthermore, the use of jobs and immigration in the immigration advertisement could have led to issue confusion among participants viewing the immigration advertisement.

Second, the use of young voters as a sample could have led participants to not feel strongly about their ideology (e.g., Chatard et al., 2010). If participants did not feel strongly about their ideology, they most likely would not use it as an existential anxiety buffer and, therefore, not feel the need to defend it when faced with an opposing ideological viewpoint.

Last, the possibility of participants spending too much time on the distractor tasks leading to weakened distal defenses is a limitation that should be controlled in all TMT studies, and especially in online studies. The threat of weakened distal defenses should be controlled so that researchers can examine the impact existential anxiety has on cognitions. Once distal defenses are no longer present, existential anxiety cannot be examined. By limiting the maximum amount of time an individual spends on the distractor tasks, researchers can ideally control for the possibility of weakened distal defenses.

Future Research

The results of this dissertation provide important insights into where future TMT and political communication research should go. First, throughout this chapter, the notion that the nuances of CWVs may not be as predictable when being used as existential anxiety buffers is important to understand. Furthermore, when there are

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competing CWVs, what an individual chooses as his or her primary existential anxiety buffer is not easily predictable. Therefore, future TMT research must address the notion of competing CWVs as well as the nuances of CWVs and how they are used as existential anxiety buffers. By examining the role of extreme views on CWV defenses, TMT can gain a better understanding of the relationship between extreme viewpoints and mortality-salience effects.

Second, political communication research needs to investigate the utility of mortality salience in political advertisements. Because political decisions are often not made directly following the viewing of a political advertisement, it is questionable as to how useful mortality salience is in political advertisements since there is a time (still undetermined) when mortality salience effects are no longer present. Furthermore, TMT research needs to investigate at what time past 15 minutes are mortality-salience effects no longer present. Last, TMT should investigate how strong a message needs to be to ignite CWV defenses. By testing a variety of messages at different strengths, TMT research can begin to understand the relationship between strength of message and CWV defenses.

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Appendix A: Storyboards

Figure A1: Immigration Advertisement

Actor: "President Obama is doing next to nothing to address the millions of illegal immigrants that flood our country. In fact, President Obama has stated he wants amnesty for those illegal immigrants in the United States. Consequently, American jobs are on the decline. There has been a reduced work site enforcement of immigration laws by 60%. When caught, illegal workers are just released so they can go take another job."

Narrator: "Call President Obama and tell him to secure our borders."

Figure A2: Economy Advertisement (Non-Immigration)

Actor: "President Obama is doing next to nothing to address the need for jobs in our cities. In fact, President Obama has actively worked against creating new jobs. To repeat, there has been a large reduction of jobs in our cities. Consequently, jobs are on the decline. Once laid off, when workers are rehired, they are rehired with reduced wages."

Narrator: "Call President Obama and tell him to stop killing our jobs."

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Section 1 (Demographics)

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your age in years? _____ **(Age)**

2. What is your sex? **(Sex)**

 ____ Male ____ Female

3. What is the highest level of college you have completed? **(Education Level)**

 ___ Freshman ___ Sophomore ___ Junior ___ Senior

4. Please mark the label below that best describes your political point of view: **(Political Ideology)**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Very Conservative

Section Two (Mortality Salience Manipulation)

<u>The Projective Life Attitudes Assessment (MS)</u>

This assessment is a recently developed, innovative personality assessment. Recent research suggests that feelings and attitudes about significant aspects of life tell us a considerable amount about the individual's personality. Your responses to this survey will be content-analyzed in order to assess certain dimensions of your personality. Your honest responses to the following questions will be appreciated.

1. PLEASE BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE EMOTIONS THAT THE THOUGHT OF YOUR OWN DEATH AROUSES IN YOU.

2. JOT DOWN, AS SPECIFICALLY AS YOU CAN, WHAT YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN TO <u>YOU</u> AS YOU PHYSICALLY DIE AND ONCE YOU ARE PHYSICALLY DEAD.

<u>The Projective Life Attitudes Assessment (No MS)</u>

This assessment is a recently developed, innovative personality assessment. Recent research suggests that feelings and attitudes about significant aspects of life tell us a considerable amount about the individual's personality. Your responses to this survey will be content-analyzed in order to assess certain dimensions of your personality. Your honest responses to the following questions will be appreciated.

1. PLEASE BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE EMOTIONS THAT THE THOUGHT OF TAKING AN EXAM AROUSES IN YOU.

2. JOT DOWN, AS SPECIFICALLY AS YOU CAN, WHAT YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN TO <u>YOU</u> AS YOU WHEN YOU TAKE AN EXAM AND AFTER YOU HAVE TAKEN THE EXAM.

Please read the following short passage from a novel and answer the questions below it.

(Distractor Task 1)

The automobile swung clumsily around the curve in the red sandstone trail, now a mass of mud. The headlights suddenly picked out in the night—first on one side of the road, then on the other—two wooden huts with sheet metal roofs. On the right near the second one, a tower of course beams could be made out in the light fog. From the top of the tower a metal cable, invisible at its starting-point, shone as it sloped down into the light from the car before disappearing behind the embankment that blocked the road. The car slowed down and stopped a few yards from the huts.

The man who emerged from the seat to the right of the driver labored to extricate himself from the car. As he stood up, his huge, broad frame lurched a little. In the shadow beside the car, solidly planted on the ground and weighed down by fatigue, he seemed to be listening to the idling motor. Then he walked in the direction of the embankment and entered the cone of light from the headlights. He stopped at the top of the slope, his broad back outlined against the darkness. After a moment he turned around. In the light from the dashboard he could see the chauffeur's black face, smiling. The man signaled and the chauffeur turned of the motor. At once a vast cool silence fell over the trail and the forest. Then the sound of the water could be heard.

The man looked at the river below him, visible solely as a broad dark motion flecked with occasional shimmers. A denser motionless darkness, far beyond, must be the other bank. By looking fixedly, however, one could see on that still bank a yellowish light like an oil lamp in the distance. The big man turned back toward the car and nodded. The chauffeur switched off the lights, turned them on again, then blinked them regularly. On the embankment the man appeared and disappeared, taller and more massive each time he came back to life. Suddenly, on the other bank of the river, a lantern held up by an invisible arm back and forth several times. At a final signal from the lookout, the man disappeared into the night. With the lights out, the river was shining intermittently. On each side of the road, the dark masses of forest foliage stood out against the sky and seemed very near. The fine rain that had soaked the trail an hour earlier was still hovering in the warm air, intensifying the silence and immobility of this broad clearing in the virgin forest. In the black sky misty stars flickered.

How do you feel about the overall descriptive qualities of the story?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

not at all   somewhat   very

descriptive   descriptive   descriptive

Do you think the author of this story is male or female?

_____ male   _____ female

Word Search Puzzle **(Distractor Task 2)**

Circle as many words as you can in the puzzle below.

Book	Computer
Desk	Phone
Movie	Train
Paper	School
Grass	Beer
Music	Actor

```
S  R  E  T  U  P  M  O  C  O
W  P  H  O  N  E  R  E  E  B
A  M  U  S  I  C  P  Z  S  N
B  T  N  R  O  T  C  A  S  K
B  M  R  K  S  E  D  E  A  O
R  F  O  A  G  O  L  B  R  O
E  L  G  V  I  Z  B  O  G  B
P  A  N  U  I  N  E  L  W  Q
A  G  T  A  B  E  T  G  D  O
P  S  C  H  O  O  L  N  I  T
```

We are interested in seeing how well you can complete word stems. Please complete the following by filling letters in the blanks to create words. Please fill in the blanks with the first word that comes to mind. Write one letter per blank. Some words may be plural. Thank you.

(Death Thought Accessibility Measure[1])

1. BUR _ _ D

2. PLA _ _

3. _ _ OK

4. WAT _ _

5. DE _ _

6. MU _ _

7. _ _ NG

8. B _ T _ LE

9. M _ J _ R

10. P _ _ TURE

11. FL _ W _ R

12. GRA _ _

---

[1] The full measure was not used due to researcher error. The potential death salient words were used for the reliability analysis (Q1, Q5, and Q12). Therefore, the remainder words were used as filler (Q's 2-4 and 6-11).

INSERT STORYBOARD HERE

Section Three

1. What is the likelihood that you will vote for a conservative candidate in the 2012 Presidential election? (Respond 0 – 100%) **(Intent to vote measure 1)**

_____ %

2. When I think of voting for a conservative candidate, I think: **(Emotion measure 1-8)**

Angry   0 (none of this feeling)   1   2   3   4 (a great deal of this feeling)

Peaceful   0 (none of this feeling)   1   2   3   4 (a great deal of this feeling)

Annoyed   0 (none of this feeling)   1   2   3   4 (a great deal of this feeling)

Happy   0 (none of this feeling)   1   2   3   4 (a great deal of this feeling)

Fearful   0 (none of this feeling)   1   2   3   4 (a great deal of this feeling)

Elated   0 (none of this feeling)   1   2   3   4 (a great deal of this feeling)

Ashamed   0 (none of this feeling)   1   2   3   4 (a great deal of this feeling)

Cheerful   0 (none of this feeling)   1   2   3   4 (a great deal of this feeling)

Please describe how you would feel if you had to interact with an illegal immigrant.

(Immigration Anxiety Measure)

3. I would feel **apprehensive** if I had to interact with an illegal immigrant.

1 (not at all)   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 (extremely)

4. I would feel **uncertain** if I had to interact with an illegal immigrant.

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely)

5. I would feel **worried** if I had to interact with an illegal immigrant.

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely)

6. I would feel **awkward** if I had to interact with an illegal immigrant.

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely)

7. I would feel **anxious** if I had to interact with an illegal immigrant.

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely)

8. I would feel **threatened** if I had to interact with an illegal immigrant.

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely)

9. I would feel **comfortable** if I had to interact with an illegal immigrant.

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely)

10. I would feel **trusting** if I had to interact with an illegal immigrant.

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely)

11. I would feel **friendly** if I had to interact with an illegal immigrant.

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely)

12. I would feel **confident** if I had to interact with an illegal immigrant.

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely)

13. I would feel **safe** if I had to interact with an illegal immigrant.

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely)

14. I would feel **at ease** if I had to interact with an illegal immigrant.

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely)

Thank you for your participation in this research study. Please complete the following questions to receive course credit.

Name:

Instructor:

Course:

Section: