

Introduction

- Terror Management Theory (TMT): culture helps us cope with death anxiety (mortality salience) (Greenberg et al., 1986). Mortality Salience (MS) is the unconscious awareness of death.
- Mortality salience has been shown to alter behavior, such as increasing aggression towards groups that threaten one's worldview (McGregor et al., 1998).
- Mortality salience can have differing affects due to individual differences (Greenberg et al., 1992; Greenberg et al., 2001; Van den Bos et al., 2012; Mikulincer & Florian, 2000).
- Research surrounding TMT has tried to explain possible causes of militant extremism with mixed results.

Hypotheses:

- 1: Mortality salience will increase scores in Contemporary Militant Extremism (CME).
- 2: Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) will predict higher scores in Justification of Violent Acts; Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) will predict higher scores in Justification of Violence in the Name of God; neither SDO or RWA will predict scores in Sins of Western Nations

Methods and Materials

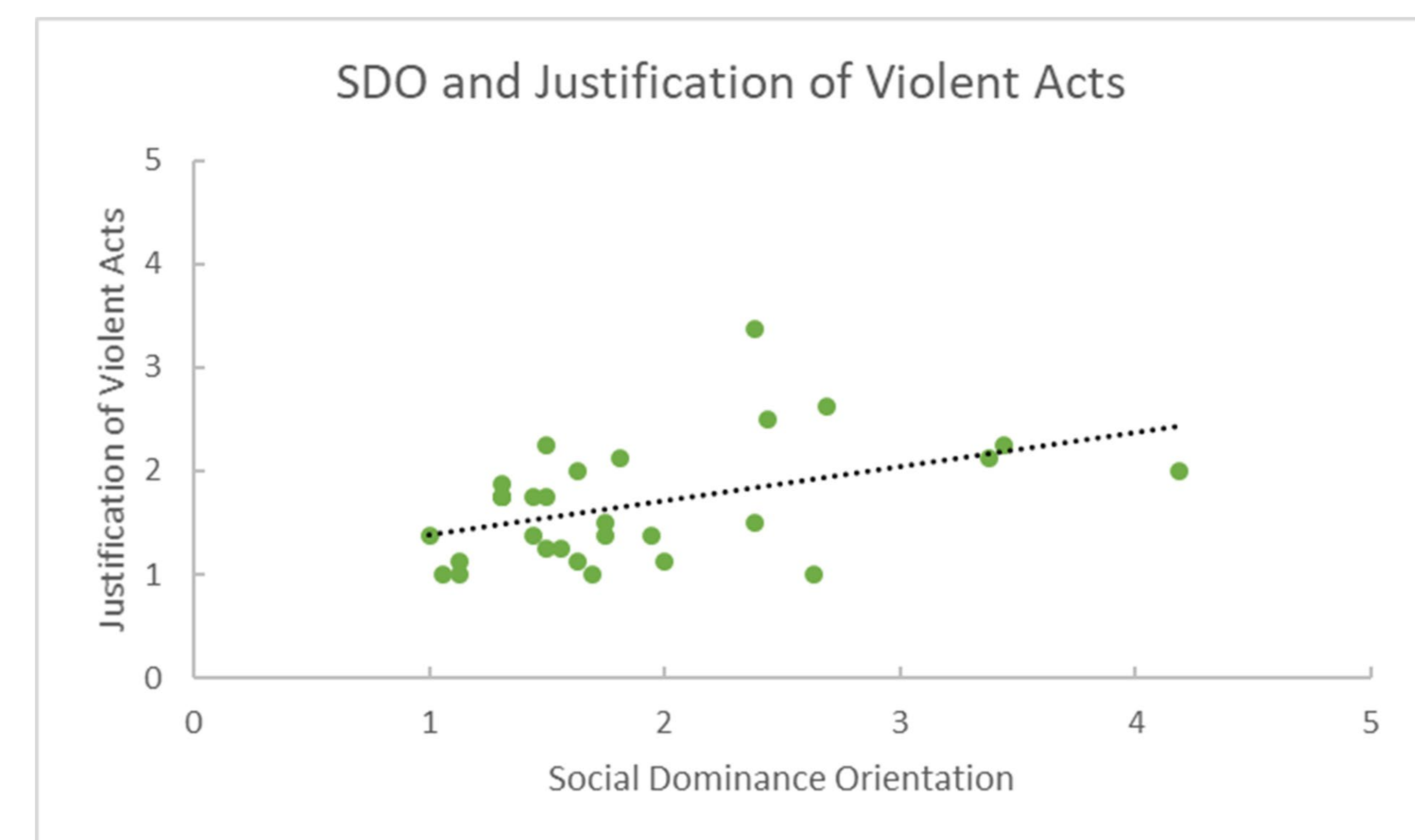
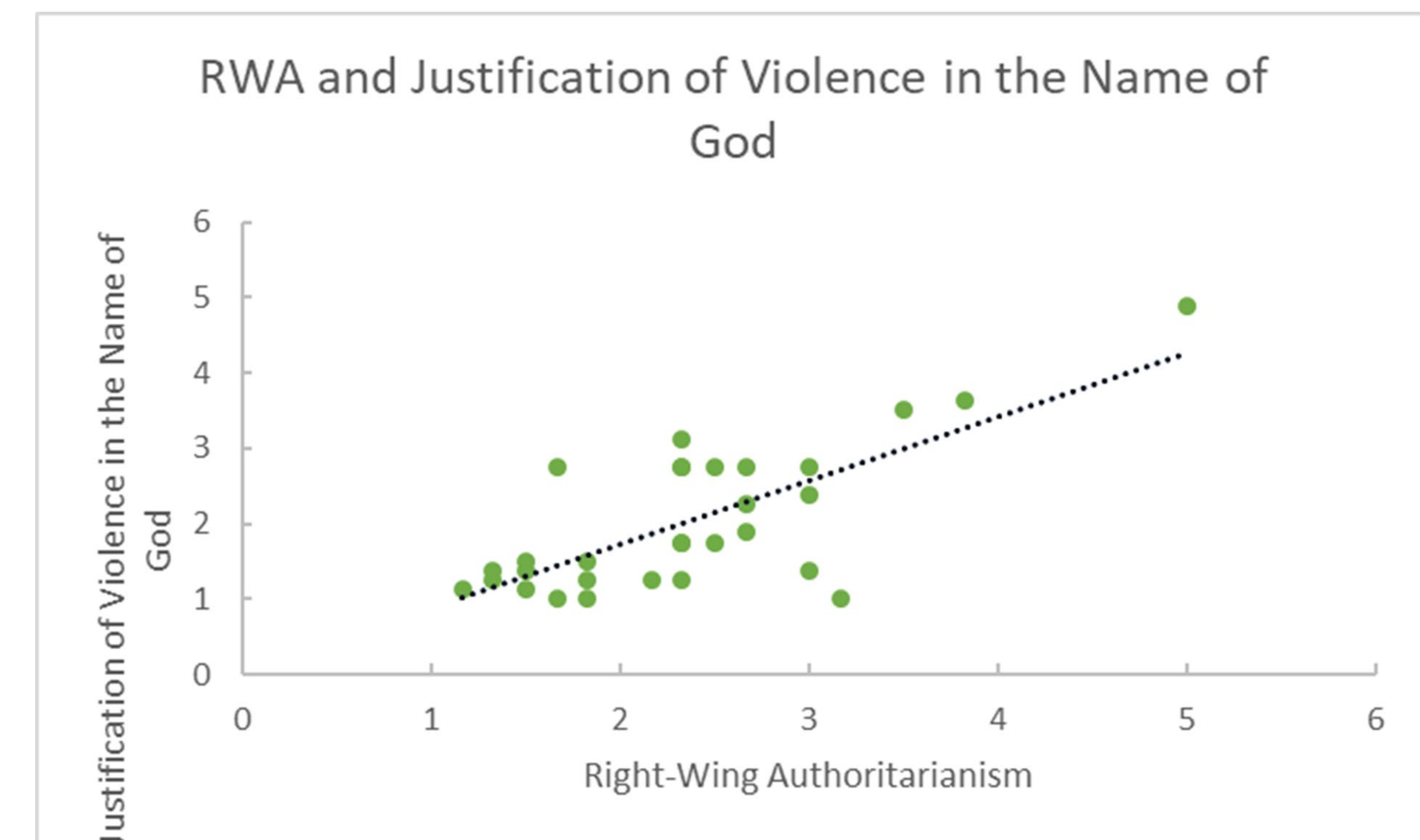
- 30 participants (19 female, 10 male, 1 other) were recruited online.
- Participants completed an anonymous online survey that contained measures of Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Social Dominance Orientation, PANAS-X, and Contemporary Militant Extremism.
- Two conditions: the mortality salience manipulation group and a control group

Results

- Across conditions, there was no significant difference in positive, $t(28) = 1.05, p > .05, g = .38$, or negative affect, $t(28) = -0.21, p > .05, g = .08$
- There was no significant difference in contemporary militant extremism between conditions, $t(28) = -0.23, p > .05, g = .09$
- SDO predicted scores in Justification of Violent Acts, $b = .44, t(28) = 2.16, p < .05$. A significant regression was found, $F(1, 28) = 6.84, p < .05, R^2 = .20$
- RWA predicted scores in Justification of Violence in the Name of God, $b = .74, t(28) = 4.27, p < .05$. A significant regression was found, $F(1, 28) = 33.99, p < .05, R^2 = .55$

Discussion

- These findings further support those of Vergani et al. (2019), in which mortality salience did not increase militant extremism
- Jonas and Fritsche (2013) found that existential threat does not necessarily always increase hostilities towards other groups
- Mortality Salience may have nuanced effects on aggressive and violent behaviors based on individual factors and differences



Contact

Griffin Kees
 Pacific Lutheran University
 Email: keesgw@plu.edu
 Phone: 253-571-9313

References

Greenberg, J., Pyszczynski, T., & Solomon, S. (1986). The causes and consequences of a need for self-esteem: A terror management theory. In R. Baumeister (Ed.), *Public self and private self* (pp. 189–212). New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Greenberg, J., Schimel, J., Martens, A., Solomon, S., & Pyszczynski, T. (2001). Sympathy for the devil: Evidence that reminding Whites of their mortality promotes more favorable reactions to White racists. *Motivation and Emotion, 25* (2), 113–133.

Greenberg, J., Sheldon, S., Mitchell, V., Pyszczynski, T., Rosenblatt, A., & Kirkland, S. (1990). Evidence for Terror Management Theory II: The effects of mortality salience on reactions to those who threaten or bolster the cultural worldview. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58* (2), 308–318.

Greenberg, J., Simon, L., Pyszczynski, T., Solomon, S., & Chatel, D. (1992). Terror management and tolerance: Does mortality salience always intensify negative reactions to others who threaten one's worldview? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63* (2), 212–220.

Jonas, E., & Fritsche, I. (2013). Destined to die but not to wage war: How existential threat can contribute to escalation or de-escalation of violent intergroup conflict. *American Psychologist, 68* (7), 543-558. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033052>

McGregor, H., Greenberg, J., Arndt, J., Lieberman, J. D., Solomon, S., & Simon, L. (1998). Terror management and aggression: Evidence that mortality salience motivates aggression against worldview-threatening others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74* (3), 590–605.

Mikulincer, M., & Florian, V. (2000). Exploring individual differences in reactions to mortality salience: Does attachment style regulate terror management mechanisms? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79* (2), 260–273.

Van den Bos, K., Buurman, J., de Theije, V., Doosje, B., Loseman, A., van Laarhoven, D., van Veldhuizen, T., & Veldman, J. (2012). On shielding from death as an important yet malleable motive of worldview defense: Christian versus Muslim beliefs modulating the self-threat of mortality salience. *Social Cognition, 30* (6), 778–802.

Vergani, M., O'Brien, K. S., Lentini, P., & Barton, G. (2019). Does the Awareness of Mortality Shape People's Openness to Violence and Conflict? An Examination of Terror Management Theory. *Political Psychology, 40* (1), 111–124. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12488>