

## **ABSTRACT**

**RESEARCH PAPER:** The Effect of Mortality Salience on Moral Judgment

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The theory of moral intuitionism views moral judgment as emotion-driven, universal, and evolutionarily-derived. Expanding on that theory is the idea that all moral judgment stems from five foundations of moral intuition: harm, reciprocity, ingroup, hierarchy, and purity. Terror management theory proposes that individuals are motivated to adhere to a cultural worldview in order to prevent the anxiety that comes from the thought of death. The present study will consider the effects of exposure to death anxiety, as seen in terror management theory, on moral judgments. Participants were assessed for their political orientation, exposed to a mortality-salient manipulation, and then answered questions about moral violations. The results were analyzed using a multivariate analysis of variance. Results showed no effect for the mortality salience manipulation and some significant effects for political orientation. The implications of the lack of significance of the mortality salience manipulation were discussed, along with the implications for understanding the differences in moral judgments shown by liberals and conservatives.