

INDIVIDUAL AND SITUATIONAL PREDICTORS OF RELIGIOUS PREJUDICE: IMPACT OF RELIGION, SOCIAL DOMINANCE ORIENTATION, INTERGROUP CONTACT, AND MORTALITY SALIENCE

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In this paper, we investigate both individual difference (strength of religious attitude, social dominance orientation, and intergroup contact) and situational (mortality salience) variables as predictors of prejudice against Muslims. Among religious participants, strength of religious attitude predicted prejudice, as did SDO. Among non-religious participants, SDO positively, and intergroup contact negatively, predicted prejudice. We also found that non-religious participants were more vulnerable than religious participants to the effects of mortality salience, indicating that mere religious affiliation can be an effective buffer against existential threat. We discuss these findings in terms of individual differences as predictors of prejudice and aspects of religion as buffers against existential threat, and note limitations of the study and priorities for future research.

Key words: Prejudice; Religion; Mortality salience; Social dominance orientation; Islamophobia.

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INTRODUCTION

It is well known that prejudice has many sources, ranging from societal factors such as segregation, to social-learning influences such as parental and peer attitudes, as well as to a range of individual difference measures (for reviews, see Allport, 1954; Brown, 1995). Religiosity was long assumed to be associated with reduced prejudice, because many religions encourage their followers to be tolerant and loving of their fellow human beings (Batson & Burris, 1994). However, decades of research have suggested a more complex relationship, indicating that religiosity can be associated with either increased or reduced prejudice (Allport, 1954; Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005). The aim of the present research was to clarify this relationship by proposing a new measure of strength of religious attitudes, and by investigating religion together with three other theoretically relevant social psychological variables: preference for hierarchical social relations

(social dominance orientation, SDO), intergroup contact, and existential self-related threat (mortality salience). We expected strength of religious attitudes to predict prejudice in religious individuals. We also expected SDO and intergroup contact to predict prejudice in both religious and non-religious individuals, and existential threat to predict prejudice among non-religious individuals only. We investigated these issues in the context of prejudice against Muslims, a prominent religious outgroup which is currently the focus of much attention both in research and in society at large.

Allport's seminal work (1950; 1954; 1966; Allport & Kramer, 1946; Allport & Ross, 1967) established that religiosity is a multidimensional phenomenon (comprising religion as means, religion as end, religion as quest, and religious fundamentalism) and that each dimension has a different relationship to prejudice (Batson, 1976; Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993). Although there is abundant prior research documenting the relationships among dimensions of religiosity and prejudice, two shortcomings of this research can be noted. First, the available measures of religiosity (e.g., Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004; Batson et al., 1993) are limited to the extent that they do not specify the *strength* of the beliefs that form each dimension, and that they cannot be completed meaningfully by non-religious participants. In the present research, we therefore sought to create a new measure of the *strength of attitudes toward religion*, based on work on the various dimensions of general attitude strength (including attitude importance, certainty, accessibility, and ambivalence; see Krosnick & Petty, 1995). Our aim was to design a measure of religiosity that was suited to both religious and non-religious participants. Second, there has been little consideration of how religiosity may interact with other established predictors of prejudice. When such predictors have been considered in this context, potential interactions with religiosity have not been examined (see, e.g., Rowatt, Franklin, & Cotton, 2005). The aim of the present research was to explore the roles of four social-psychological predictors of religious prejudice, three individual difference measures (strength of religious attitudes, SDO, and intergroup contact), and one situational factor, existential self-related threat.

Alongside religiosity as an individual difference measure, we measured individual differences in SDO and intergroup contact. SDO indexes the extent to which people prefer hierarchical social systems over group equality (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). People high on SDO tend to support ideologies that differentiate between groups, such as racism, nationalism, and sexism (Pratto et al., 1994, 2000), and SDO is one of the strongest individual difference predictors of greater prejudice (see Son Hing & Zanna, 2010, for a review). We also assessed individual differences in prior social contact with outgroup members, which is one of the strongest and most reliable predictors of *lesser* prejudice (see Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). We examined whether religiosity would predict prejudice when SDO and intergroup contact were statistically controlled, and whether SDO and intergroup contact would predict intolerance toward a religious outgroup among religious as well as non-religious respondents. Given that the relationships of both SDO and intergroup contact with prejudice are substantial (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Whitley, 1999), showing that religiosity predicts prejudice over and above the effects of SDO and intergroup contact would attest to the importance of considering religiosity when explaining prejudice.

We chose to investigate existential threat as a situational variable, based on the impressive evidence for terror management theory. According to this theory, what distinguishes humans

from other animals is awareness of mortality (Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997). Given humans' drive for self-preservation, awareness of mortality produces existential terror that people manage by adopting, or affirming the validity of their own, cultural worldviews (Burke, Martens, & Faucher, 2010; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). Those who live up to the standards of their worldviews are provided with either symbolic immortality (e.g., via participation in a culture that will continue to exist after one's death) or literal immortality (e.g., via beliefs in an afterlife; Solomon et al., 1991). Others who endorse worldviews that differ from one's own make salient that there is little consensus regarding worldviews, which reduces the effectiveness of one's worldview as a threat buffer (Greenberg et al., 1990). Thus, when reminded of their mortality, people may engage in worldview defense by expressing prejudice against those who contest their worldviews (e.g., Rosenblatt, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Lyon, 1989). Accordingly, in the present research, we reminded some participants of their mortality (mortality salience manipulation; see, for example, Rosenblatt et al., 1989) prior to assessing their outgroup attitudes, with the expectation that they would report more prejudice than would participants not reminded of their mortality.

The majority of research on terror management has examined the pursuit of symbolic, rather than literal, immortality in response to mortality salience, such as the derogation of individuals who hold secular worldviews that differ from one's own (for a review, see Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1997). However, due to religious beliefs in death transcendence (e.g., afterlife), religion may be more effective than non-religious worldviews in protecting people against the existential threat elicited by awareness of mortality. Indeed, religion as end has been shown to mitigate worldview defense following reminders of mortality (Jonas & Fischer, 2006). We thus hypothesized that being religious may act as a buffer against the effects of awareness of mortality (see also Vail et al., 2010), such that non-religious individuals may be more vulnerable to mortality salience effects than religious individuals. Religion may confer this buffering effect because religious individuals not only achieve symbolic immortality via the religious community to which they belong, but they are also provided with literal immortality through belief in afterlife and powerful supernatural entities (Vail et al., 2010). Religion may thus be a distinctively effective defense against existential anxiety (see also Inzlicht, McGregor, Hirsh, & Nash, 2009).

Specifically, we expected that non-religious participants who had been reminded of their mortality would report more negative outgroup attitudes than would non-religious participants not reminded of their mortality, and religious participants regardless of whether they had been reminded of mortality. We refer to this as the *buffering hypothesis*. In relation to this hypothesis, we predicted that mere affiliation with a religion (and not strength of attitude toward religion) would act as a buffer against the impact of awareness of mortality on attitudes toward outgroups. Accordingly, we predicted that mortality-salient participants who are affiliated with a religion would show a lower increase (or no increase) in prejudice as compared to non-affiliated, mortality-salient participants. Norenzayan, Dar-Nimrod, Hansen, and Proulx (2009) reported evidence consistent with this prediction, when the dependent measure assessed attitudes toward the alleged author of an essay that was threatening to participants' own worldview. In the present research, however, we attempted to generalize this finding by, first, using dependent measures that referred to the outgroup in general, and, second, by showing that the buffering effect would emerge independently of individual differences in SDO and intergroup

contact. Previous research investigating the impact of religion on terror management processes (Dechesne et al., 2003; Florian & Mikulincer 1998; Friedman & Rholes, 2007, 2008; Jonas & Fischer, 2006; Norenzayan et al., 2009; Norenzayan & Hansen, 2006) has not examined the potential role of SDO and intergroup contact.

We focused on a specific form of modern religious prejudice, Islamophobia — the fear and hatred of Islam, Muslims, or Islamic culture (Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, 1997). Islamophobia erroneously defines Islam and Muslims as monolithic, lacking “Western” values such as democracy, and supporting of terrorism (Commission for Racial Equality, 2005; Esposito & Mogahed, 2008; Halliday, 1999). Islamophobia has increased substantially since the 9/11/2001 and 7/7/2005 terrorist attacks in the U.S. and U.K. For example, in the U.K., hate crimes reported to the Islamic Human Rights Commission increased from approximately seven per week to over one hundred per week immediately after the 7/7/2005 bombings (Singh, 2006). Islamophobic attitudes in the U.K. have led to discrimination against Muslims in employment, education, and healthcare (Ansari, 2004). While Islamophobia is a multifaceted phenomenon involving perceived cultural and racial differences in addition to religious ones, we were interested in it as a modern, widespread prejudice against a religious group. We assessed prejudice against Muslims using two measures. First, we used an outgroup evaluation scale, which asked participants to report on their general feelings about Muslims. Second, we used a more detailed Islamophobia scale (Leibold & Kühnel, 2006), which includes both blatant and subtle measures of various aspects of prejudice against Muslims.

To summarize, we investigated the individual and combined power of religious attitude strength, SDO, intergroup contact, and existential threat arising from awareness of mortality as predictors of prejudice against a religious outgroup. Participants completed self-report measures of all variables in one of two conditions. In the mortality salience condition, they first completed a scale measuring death-related anxiety; the completion of this scale was intended to make participants aware of their mortality and thus influence their responses on the remaining scales. This manipulation has been used successfully in prior research. In the control condition, participants completed the same death-related anxiety scale at the end of the study; accordingly, the resulting awareness of mortality could not have affected responses on the preceding scales. We expected that religious attitude strength and SDO would predict more negative attitudes toward Muslims, whereas intergroup contact would predict more positive attitudes. In line with terror management theory, we expected that mortality salience would lead to more negative attitudes. Further, we tested the buffering hypothesis, predicting that non-religious individuals would be more vulnerable to mortality salience effects than would religious individuals.

METHOD

Design

The study had a correlational design including an experimental manipulation of mortality salience, based on the placing of a scale measuring Fear of Death (Lester, 1994) at the beginning, after collection of demographic information (mortality salience condition), or at the end of the questionnaire, after items on attitudes towards Muslims (control condition).

Participants and Procedure

Participants were 115 non-Muslim students at a British university (53 female, 62 male; mean age = 20.43, $SD = 2.19$, range: 18-32). Participants were recruited by email and via campus Christian organizations, with the incentive of a donation to a charity of their choice. They completed the questionnaire in a psychology department laboratory or in a quiet room on campus, and were fully debriefed upon completion of the procedure. The two versions of the questionnaire were interspersed in a pile of questionnaires from which each participant took one, thus assigning them randomly to one of the two conditions.

Measures

Following demographic items, participants completed the measures described below.

Fear of Death Scale. The eight-item Death Scale of the revised Collett-Lester Fear of Death and Dying Scale (Lester, 1994) was used to manipulate mortality salience ($\alpha = .81$). Participants indicated how anxious (1 = *not anxious*, 7 = *very anxious*) they were made by aspects of their death (e.g., “the disintegration of your body after you die”).

Religious affiliation. Participants selected one option from a list of 18 (e.g., Roman Catholic, Jewish). The list included options that were relevant for non-religious participants (e.g., atheist/agnostic). Responses to this item were used to identify religious and non-religious participants.

Religious attitude strength. A 19-item scale, based on the work of Krosnick and Petty (1995) and adapted from Vonofakou, Hewstone, and Voci (2007), assessed the strength of participants’ attitudes toward religion. Whereas we did not have *a priori* predictions regarding the specific factor structure of this adapted scale, we included items indexing several different dimensions of attitude strength. In particular, we assessed the importance (e.g., “How important is your religion to you personally?”), certainty (e.g., “How sure are you that your opinion about your religion is correct?”), accessibility (e.g., “Does your opinion about your religion come to mind quickly?”), and ambivalence (e.g., “How much conflict do you feel in your opinion about your religion?”) of attitudes toward religion. Participants responded using a scale anchored with 0 (*not at all*) and 6 (*extremely*).

Social dominance orientation (SDO). Participants completed a 16-item scale (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; $\alpha = .90$). Examples of the items included “Some groups of people are just more worthy than others” and “We should increase social equality” (reverse scored).

Intergroup contact. As an index of the quantity of intergroup contact, participants indicated how much contact they have with Muslims when “just chatting to people” and “over all social situations” (0 = *none at all*, 6 = *a great deal*). The two items were highly correlated, $r(113) = .82$, $p < .001$, and were averaged. As an index of the quality of intergroup contact, participants reported whether they found contact with Muslims pleasant or unpleasant (0 = *very unpleasant*, 6 = *very pleasant*) and positive or negative (0 = *very negative*, 6 = *very positive*). The two items were highly correlated, $r(113) = .81$, $p < .001$, and were averaged. We then computed a single multiplicative contact score for each participant (see Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy, & Cairns, 2009; Voci & Hewstone, 2003).

Prejudice against Muslims. On two semantic differential scales, based on the General Evaluation Scale (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997), participants reported their “general feelings about Muslims” using the following bipolar adjective pairs separated by 5-point scales: warm-cold and suspicious-trusting; $r(113) = .58, p < .001$. Ratings were coded so that higher scores reflected more prejudice against Muslims.

Islamophobia. Leibold and Kühnel’s (2006) 15-item scale ($\alpha = .80$) was back-translated from German and altered for use in Britain. Responses were given on a scale anchored with 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*), and items included “Muslims who promote their religion in Britain should be deported” and “It’s their own affair if Muslims call the faithful to prayers by loudspeakers” (reverse scored). Higher scores reflected greater Islamophobia.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

In the following analyses, “religious participants” refers to participants who reported having a religious affiliation (e.g., Roman Catholic, Jewish), whereas “non-religious participants” refers to participants who reported being agnostic, atheistic, or secular, or did not provide a response to the religious affiliation item. This was therefore a dichotomous distinction.

We first conducted a principal axis factor analysis with Oblimin rotation on responses to the religious attitude strength scale. This analysis yielded three factors with eigenvalues greater than one, with 67.83% of the variance explained. The first factor consisted of nine items relating to the certainty of attitudes toward religion and was labeled Certainty ($\alpha = .92$). The second factor consisted of seven items associated with the importance and accessibility of attitudes toward religion and was labeled Personal Relevance of religion ($\alpha = .93$). The third factor assessed the Ambivalence of attitudes toward religion with three items ($\alpha = .69$).

Means and standard deviations, together with comparisons between religious ($N = 62$) and non-religious ($N = 53$) participants, are presented in Table 1. Religious participants scored significantly higher than non-religious participants on Personal Relevance of religion ($M_s = 3.76$ vs. 2.46; $p < .001$), Ambivalence of attitudes about religion ($M_s = 3.66$ vs. 3.05; $p < .05$), and Islamophobia ($M_s = 2.39$ vs. 2.22; $p < .05$). Following these preliminary analyses, we tested, first, the importance of religiosity, SDO, and intergroup contact as predictors of prejudice and Islamophobia, and, second, hypotheses concerning mortality salience.

Predicting Prejudice against Muslims

First, we conducted a series of multiple regression analyses in which the predictors were Certainty, Personal Relevance, Ambivalence, SDO, and intergroup contact, and the criterion variables were prejudice and Islamophobia. These analyses were conducted both for the entire sample and separately for religious and non-religious participants (see Table 2).

TABLE 1
 Means, standard deviations, and comparisons between religious and non-religious participants

	Religious participants (N = 62)		Diff.	Non-religious participants (N = 53)	
	M	SD		M	SD
Certainty	3.51	1.32		3.86	1.42
Personal Relevance	3.76	1.28	***	2.46	1.23
Ambivalence	3.66	1.27	*	3.05	1.91
Quantity of contact	2.42	1.30		2.38	1.29
Quality of contact	4.23	0.93		4.08	0.90
Social Dominance Orientation	2.55	1.05		2.59	1.01
Prejudice against Muslims	2.44	0.71		2.60	0.61
Islamophobia	2.39	0.46	*	2.22	0.46

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 2
 Regression analyses for religious and non-religious participants

	Prejudice against Muslims			Islamophobia		
	All	Relig.	Non-relig.	All	Relig.	Non-relig.
R^2	.28	.29	.47	.26	.32	.49
Certainty	-.10	-.55**	.04	-.08	.00	.03
Personal Relevance	.02	.40*	-.01	.20*	.35*	-.06
Ambivalence	-.01	.17	.04	.04	-.33*	.16
Intergroup Contact	-.45***	-.39***	-.67***	-.15	.00	-.40**
SDO	.22*	.32*	.05	.46***	.48***	.36**

Note. Standardized coefficients. SDO = Social Dominance Orientation.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Prejudice. For the entire sample, the predictors explained 28% of the variance in prejudice against Muslims, with SDO, $\beta = .22$, $p < .05$, and intergroup contact, $\beta = -.45$, $p < .001$, as significant predictors. For religious participants, the variance explained was 29%, and four of the five predictors were significant: Certainty, $\beta = -.55$, $p < .01$, and intergroup contact, $\beta = -.39$, $p < .001$, were negatively associated with prejudice, whereas Personal Relevance, $\beta = .40$, $p < .05$, and SDO, $\beta = .32$, $p < .01$, were positively associated with prejudice. For non-religious participants, variance explained was 47% and intergroup contact was the only significant predictor, $\beta = -.67$, $p < .001$.

Islamophobia. For the entire sample, the predictors explained 26% of the variance in Islamophobia, with Personal Relevance, $\beta = .20$, $p < .05$, and SDO, $\beta = .46$, $p < .001$, as positive predictors. For religious participants, the variance explained was 32% and three of the five predictors were significant: Personal Relevance, $\beta = .35$, $p < .05$, and SDO, $\beta = .48$, $p < .001$, were associated with greater Islamophobia, whereas Ambivalence was associated with lower Islamophobia, $\beta = -.33$, $p < .05$. For non-religious participants, variance explained was higher (49%),

and SDO was associated with greater Islamophobia, $\beta = .36, p < .01$, whereas intergroup contact was associated with lower Islamophobia, $\beta = -.40, p < .01$.

Religion as a Buffer against Mortality Salience

Using the entire sample ($N = 115$), we next tested three *a priori* contrasts, comparing the four cells created by the 2 (participant religiosity: religious vs. non-religious) \times 2 (condition: mortality salience vs. control) design (see Table 3). Contrast 1 represented the buffering hypothesis, predicting most bias (both prejudice and Islamophobia) in the non-religious/mortality salience cell. Contrast 2 compared religious and non-religious participants, predicting more bias among the more religious participants. Contrast 3 compared the mortality salience and control conditions, predicting more bias in the mortality salience than the control cells. In these analyses, the criterion variables were prejudice and Islamophobia, both measured after the manipulation of mortality salience. Contrast 1 was significant for prejudice, $t(111) = 2.00, p < .05$. Both Contrast 2, $t(111) = 2.19, p < .05$, and Contrast 3, $t(111) = 2.21, p < .05$, were significant for Islamophobia.

We next explored whether the buffering effect on prejudice was moderated by other predictors in the model. Adopting the procedure proposed by Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan (1990; see also Aiken & West, 1991), in five separate regression models we regressed prejudice on the buffer contrast, Certainty, Personal Relevance, Ambivalence, SDO, and intergroup contact, and the interaction of the buffer contrast with each of the other predictors. All continuous predictors were mean-centered (see Cronbach, 1987). Whereas the buffer contrast remained a significant (or marginally significant) predictor of prejudice in each model, none of the interaction terms reached significance, $ps > .16$. Finally, with similar analyses, we tested the possibility that the buffering effect on Islamophobia was moderated by the other predictors: also in this case, none of the interaction terms had a reliable effect on the criterion variable, $ps > .21$.

DISCUSSION

The present research demonstrated the importance of investigating simultaneously the impact of individual difference variables and situational variables in predicting religious prejudice. We found that both types of variable were important. Across all participants, intergroup contact, negatively, and SDO, positively, were the strongest predictors of prejudice, whereas Personal Relevance of religion and SDO were the strongest positive predictors of Islamophobia. However, there were interesting differences between religious and non-religious participants. We also found support for terror management theory, showing that mortality salience increased prejudice. We then extended terror management theory by providing some evidence for the buffering hypothesis with a religious outgroup as target: non-religious participants were more vulnerable to the effects of mortality salience than were religious participants, on the measure of prejudice. For the measure of Islamophobia, however, the contrasts showing greater prejudice among the religious (than non-religious) participants and in the mortality salience (compared with control) condition were significant. We discuss these findings in terms of individual differences as predictors of prejudice and religious affiliation as a buffer against existential threat, and note some limitations and priorities for future research.



TABLE 3
 Means and contrast analyses

	Non-religious – Control	Non-religious – Mortality salience	Religious – Control	Religious – Mortality salience	Contrast 1 –1, +3, –1, –1 $t(111) =$	Contrast 2 –1, –1, +1, +1 $t(111) =$	Contrast 3 –1, +1, –1, +1 $t(111) =$
Prejudice against Muslims	2.46	2.75	2.40	2.50	2.00*	–1.26	1.56
Islamophobia	2.16	2.29	2.29	2.53	–0.36	2.19*	2.21*

Note. Contrast 1: buffering hypothesis; Contrast 2: comparison between religious and non-religious respondents; Contrast 3: comparison between mortality salience and control conditions.
 * $p < .05$.

Individual Differences as Predictors of Prejudice

Overall, our results yielded strong evidence for the role of individual differences as predictors of prejudice. The differences between religious and non-religious participants are perhaps most interesting. For religious participants, there was indeed evidence that some aspects of strength of religious attitude helped to predict prejudice towards Muslims. Personal Relevance of religion contributed, positively, to predicting both prejudice and Islamophobia. We also found that Certainty of religious attitudes negatively predicted prejudice, and Ambivalence of religious attitudes negatively predicted Islamophobia. It is particularly noteworthy that both greater certainty and greater ambivalence of attitudes toward religion were associated with less prejudiced responding, although on different measures. This apparent contradiction may be lessened by closer examination of the items assessing general prejudice against Muslims and Islamophobia. Individuals whose attitudes toward religion were certain reported feeling warm and trusting toward Muslims, potentially indicating that they had embraced religious teachings of tolerance (e.g., the Golden Rule). In contrast, individuals whose attitudes toward religion were ambivalent tended to disagree with statements portraying Islam and Muslims as socially and politically backward, while agreeing with statements portraying Islam and Muslims as admirable and compatible with Western values. This type of response may thus indicate a general liberal orientation, both politically and concerning religion. However, among this subgroup of respondents non-religious predictors were also evident, with SDO positively predicting prejudice and Islamophobia, and intergroup contact negatively predicting prejudice. Future research would benefit from assessing the role of political and social conservatism/liberalism in the religion-prejudice relationship. For non-religious participants, as expected, only non-religious predictors of prejudice and Islamophobia were found to be significant (intergroup contact, negatively, in each case, and SDO, positively, in the case of Islamophobia).

These results support prior research highlighting both intergroup contact (for a review, see Tausch & Hewstone, 2010) and SDO (for a review, see Son Hing & Zanna, 2010) as predictors of prejudice, negative and positive, respectively, but also indicate that measures of religiosity or strength of religious attitudes can explain additional variance in the case of religious respondents, at least when the target outgroup is a religious group. The fact that dimensions of religious attitude strength significantly predicted outgroup attitudes even when statistically controlling for SDO and intergroup contact attests to the benefit of considering religiosity when explaining prejudice in religious individuals. However, we note that the predictors explained a greater amount of variance in non-religious (vs. religious) participants' outgroup attitudes, indicating that additional predictors may be central for predicting religious individuals' attitudes. For instance, it may be beneficial to assess our new measure of religious attitude strength alongside with other well-established measures of religiosity and religious orientation (e.g., Batson et al., 1993) to more fully understand religious individuals' outgroup attitudes. In addition, future research should consider implicit as well as explicit attitudes toward religious outgroups (see Rowatt et al., 2005). The finding that religious attitude strength predicted prejudice only for religious respondents supports the construct validity of our novel measure of strength of religious attitude. This, together with the fact that non-religious individuals are also able to respond to questions regarding the strength of their attitudes toward religion (rather than being excluded from the analysis, as is the case for other measures of religion; see, for example, the exclusion criteria in Batson, Ei-

delman, Higley, & Russell, 2001), further strengthens the case for the utility of the measure we developed.

Religious Affiliation as a Buffer against Existential Threat

We found support for terror management theory, showing that mortality salience increased prejudice, at least on the measure of Islamophobia. This is consistent with prior findings of derogation of a religious outgroup following mortality salience (Greenberg et al., 1990, Study 1). However, on the measure of prejudice, this basic effect was moderated by religious affiliation. Specifically, supporting our hypothesis that religion may act as an effective buffer against existential threat arising from awareness of mortality, non-religious participants were more vulnerable than religious participants to the mortality salience effect of increased prejudice toward Muslims. This finding extends previous research showing that religiosity provides protection against mortality salience (Jonas & Fischer, 2006; see also Edmondson, Park, Chaudoir, & Wortmann, 2008). Whereas Jonas and Fischer (2006) provided evidence that this effect holds only for those who consider their religion as an end in itself (intrinsic orientation) and not for those who use their religion for non-religious ends (extrinsic orientation), in our research merely being affiliated with a religion was sufficient to mitigate the effects of mortality salience. This apparent discrepancy between our results and those of Jonas and Fischer (2006) may be due to numerous differences between the two studies, but, based on the present findings, there is evidence that simply being affiliated with a religion may act as a buffer against the existential threat arising from awareness of mortality.

Conclusion

To conclude, our research demonstrated the utility of assessing religiosity when explaining prejudice, even when other more classically social-psychological correlates are also measured. We also reported evidence of the role of religious affiliation in the management of existential terror, and the benefit of operationalizing religiosity in terms of religious attitude strength. Together, our investigation of both individual differences (religious attitude strength, SDO, and intergroup contact) and situational variables (mortality salience) reminds us of the complexity of variables, and their interactions, that help to determine religious prejudice, a social problem that is as pressing today as it has ever been.

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