

## DATA PAPER

# Data from Paper 'Terror Management in a Multicultural Society: Effects of Mortality Salience on Attitudes to Multiculturalism Are Moderated by National Identification and Self-Esteem Among Native Dutch People'

Mandy Tjew-A-Sin<sup>1</sup> and Sander Leon Koole<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Biological Psychology, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, NL

<sup>2</sup> Department of Clinical, Neuro and Developmental Psychology, Amsterdam, NL

Corresponding author: Mandy Tjew-A-Sin, Post-doc Researcher ([m.m.tjew-a-sin@vu.nl](mailto:m.m.tjew-a-sin@vu.nl))

The dataset includes data from the two studies reported in our '*Terror Management in a Multicultural Society*' paper. The data was collected at the psychology lab at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in 2013/2014 among Dutch-speaking student samples. The dataset consists of the measures described in the paper. The data can be used for replication purposes, meta-analyses, and exploratory analyses, as well as cross-cultural comparisons of mortality salience effects. The authors also welcome collaborative research based on re-analyses of the data.

**Keywords:** Mortality Salience; Self-Esteem; National Identification; thnocentrism; Multicultural Society

## (1) Overview

### Context

### Collection Date(s)

Spring and Fall 2013/2014.

### Background

This project [1] was based on the idea that mortality salience would increase ethnocentrism among native Dutch participants with high national identification and low self-esteem. We also investigated whether mortality salience would increase support for the celebration of Sinterklaas among native Dutch with high national identification and low self-esteem. This children's festivity has been hotly debated in Dutch society for including the controversial folklore character 'Zwarte Piet' ('Black Pete'), who appears with blackface, afro hair, red lips, and golden hoop rings.

The research was guided by Terror Management Theory, which proposes that human's unique awareness of their mortality creates the potential for overwhelming anxiety, or terror [2]. In a multicultural society, exposure to different worldviews is likely give rise to such anxiety, and trigger defensive responses. Cultural beliefs and self-esteem together form our core protection against existential concerns. From a TMT perspective people with low self-esteem lack a crucial buffer against death anxiety. Indeed prior research has shown that these individuals find it difficult

to suppress death thoughts, and respond to death reminders with increased anxiety [3, 4]. Furthermore, many studies have shown that experimentally reminding people of death leads them to defend their cultural worldviews more vigorously (for reviews, see [5, 6]. We conducted two studies on issues that may arise in modern-day multicultural societies as a result of existential concerns.

As predicted, Study 1 showed that mortality salience decreased positive multicultural attitudes among people high on national identification and low self-esteem. Furthermore, Study 2 showed that mortality salience led people high on national identification and low self-esteem to show more support for the traditional, but contested Dutch celebration of Sinterklaas.

Overall, these findings confirm the relevance of existential concerns for understanding multicultural attitudes, while suggesting that existential concerns are especially relevant for people high on national identification and low on self-esteem.

## (2) Methods

### Sample

Students of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam were invited to participate in psychological research on multicultural attitudes at the social psychology labs at the Vrije Universiteit for payment or course credit. Demographic variables are included in the datasets of each of the studies.

Study 1: One-hundred-sixty-eight paid volunteers (90 women; average age 21) were randomly allocated to either the mortality salience ( $n = 72$ ) or the dentist salience ( $n = 66$ ) control condition.

Study 2: One-hundred-seventy-four paid volunteers (139 women; average age 20) were randomly allocated to either the mortality salience condition ( $n = 83$ ) or the dentist salience ( $n = 91$ ) control condition.

### Materials

In the two studies, self-esteem was measured with the Rosenberg [7] self-esteem scale (RSES). The RSES consisted of 10 items (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself") that were answered on 9-point Likert scales.

We assessed importance of the Dutch identity to the self-concept by asking participants to rate three items [8]: "I feel connected to the Netherlands," "I identify with Dutch people," and "I feel like a Dutchman." Ratings were made on 9-point Likert scales.

In Study 1 we manipulated mortality salience (MS) by asking participants to fill out either a questionnaire about fear of death or a parallel questionnaire about fear of going to the dentist. Our main outcome measure was an aggregate of five measures that broadly assessed attitudes toward Muslims and multiculturalism.

Study 2 manipulated MS as in Study 1, and the outcome of interest was support for the traditional celebration of Sinterklaas', which includes the controversial 'Black Pete' character.

The test materials and instructions are described in more detail in the paper', and the exact computer instructions are available together with the datasets.

### Procedures

Both studies were conducted at the psychology lab of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, which was located at the basement of the psychology building. Because experiments are run there throughout the year, participants (mostly students) sign themselves up on their own initiative, either in return for monetary payment or course credits. The experiments were run in cubicles and the data were automatically registered via personal computers.

### Quality Control

We did not ask participants to participate in our study when they entered the laboratory, unless they expressed interest. Thus, we did not select based on apparent ethnicity. This allowed everyone to participate, but meant that we had to discard quite some data after collection. Six non-Western participants were excluded in Study 1 as they were not expected to identify with the Dutch people. In Study 2, 39 participants were excluded for this reason.

### Ethical issues

The study followed the ethical standards by the American Psychological Association. Data were anonymized by using participant numbers. We did not obtain personal identifiers, such as names, or e-mail addresses. Participants were free to discontinue participation at any time without

having to state a reason. We also did not reject students from participation based on outward appearance, including skin color.

## (3) Dataset description

### Object name

Data from Paper 'Terror Management in a Multicultural Society'.

### Data type

Primary data (items are already reverse scored).

### Format names and versions

The data are available as a.sav file (SPSS) or a.csv file. Syntax files (.sps) for the main analyses are also available. The .sav files and .sps files were created with SPSS 21 for Windows.

TMMS Data – Study 1.sav/.csv

TMMS Data – Study 2.sav/.csv

### Data Collectors

The data of Study 1 was collected during Fall Spring 2013. The data of Study 2 was collected in Fall 2013. Both were collected by Mandy Tjew-A-Sin during her PhD. Mandy Tjew-A-Sin was responsible for data collection and storage. Mandy Tjew-A-Sin and Sander Koole conducted the data cleaning and analyses, after which Mandy Tjew-A-Sin prepared the data files for publishing.

### Language

English.

### License

CC-BY.

### Embargo

None.

### Repository location

<https://easy.dans.knaw.nl>

<https://doi.org/10.17026/dans-24m-uj9r>

### Publication date

2014-10-07

## (4) Reuse potential

The data can be used for aggregation, further analysis, reference, validation studies, and may be particularly interesting for researchers interested in mortality salience effects among Dutch student samples.

### Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

### References

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