Presidents Donald Trump stirs many strong emotions in people—one of those being fear. In this study, terror management theory (TMT; Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1990) is used to explain how our unconscious fears impact our motivation and behavior. A large amount of support for TMT is from studies of death salience or “morality salience” (MS; Burke, Martens, & Faucher, 2010). This requires people to think about death by being subtly exposed to the word “death” or “dead.” According to TMT, MS increases distal worldview and self-esteem defensiveness by arousing unconscious death-thought accessibility (DTA). DTA refers to how available cognitions related to death are in one’s mind. In this study, it was found that when exposed to MS, scores of DTA went up for “Trump” and “death,” but not for our control group “pain.” These findings suggest that thoughts of one’s own death (mortality salience; MS) and thoughts of President Donald Trump will lead to higher death thought accessibility (DTA) scores than thought of pain. Meaning that the public associates President Donald Trump with feelings of death.

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Means of DTA compared with Pain, Death, and Trump

0.45 0.85 0.91

Pain Death DTA Trump

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Study Objective/Purpose

It is important to consider the role of death anxiety on the American people because it may reveal underlying fear we have and part of its source. It suggests that the presidency has a direct effect on our opinions and feelings.

Based on previous research, we hypothesized that thoughts of one’s own death (mortality salience; MS) and thoughts of President Donald Trump will lead to higher death thought accessibility (DTA) scores than thought of pain. Meaning that the public associates President Donald Trump with feelings of death.

This study revealed that the public associates President Trump with thoughts of death. These findings are consistent with our hypothesis: that thoughts of one’s own death (mortality salience; MS) and thoughts of President Donald Trump will lead to higher death thought accessibility (DTA) scores than thought of pain. Meaning that the public associates President Donald Trump with feelings of death. It is important to consider the role of death anxiety on the American people because it may reveal underlying fear we have and part of its source. It suggests that the presidency has a direct effect on our opinions and feelings.

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