

Death and Presentation: How Mortality Salience and Framing Affects Attitudes Toward Welfare Recipients

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ABSTRACT

One hundred-five introductory psychology students were included in this study to determine whether death awareness and presentation of information would affect attitudes toward out-groups. The mortality salience hypothesis states that people will be more likely to hold negative attitudes toward out-groups when their existing beliefs are not supported and when mortality becomes salient. The results supported this hypothesis, suggesting that out-groups can alter people's attitudes according to existing beliefs. Compared to personal causes for people on welfare assistance, social causes did not show significantly different effects, nor were there any interaction effects between mortality salience and framing. The Interpersonal Judgment Scale was used to measure attitudes toward dissimilar others on two items: emotional liking and readiness to cooperate in a study with an out-group member.

People recognize that stigmatized groups exist. Examples of such out-groups are persons with physical disabilities, mental illness, and welfare recipients. Stigmatized groups are viewed negatively, but the underlying causes are not discernible. Two areas have been examined that may aid in understanding why this phenomenon occurs. The mortality salience hypothesis states that people will be more likely to hold negative attitudes toward out-groups when an awareness of inevitable death does not support their existing beliefs (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1997). Secondly, framing has been examined and was defined as the context in which information is portrayed (Iyenger, 1990; Nelson & Oxley, 1999). Does the medium used to convey information have a greater effect on people's attitudes toward out-groups or does the realization that life will one day end in death create a greater impact on our attitudes?

Becker (1973) pointed out that people realize at a relatively young age that death is inevitable. It is embedded into young minds that we will eventually die. Instead of observing this fact, people ignore it by possessing certain beliefs, such as organized religion, in order to protect themselves from the threat death educes. This point can be further argued to claim that all human behavior is designed to protect us from dying.

Our attitudes toward people depend on the groups to which they belong (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1997). The awareness of death manifests itself as anxiety, which is maintained by a belief system or the worldview, and consequently guides societal living. The problem arises when people do not conform to our worldviews.

Beliefs toward out-groups are ultimately affected by an awareness of death because they are either supported or not supported by different groups' worldviews (Greenberg *et al.* 1990; Greenberg *et al.* 1992; Rosenblatt *et al.* 1989). Specifically, researchers (Greenberg

et al., 1990) have found that when people were aware of their death, they perceived people who belonged to the same religious group positively, while viewing religious out-groups negatively.

Further, when they were aware of their death, people mandated that out-groupers receive harsher sentences for being "moral transgressors" (Rosenblatt *et al.*, 1989, p. 682, Study 1), which are differences between people's beliefs. In a second study, Rosenblatt *et al.* (1989) went on to further claim that it was because of the particular moral beliefs that people upheld that they perceived out-groups negatively. Conflicting beliefs elicit negative reactions toward dissimilar others because they do not affirm people's worldviews.

When beliefs were affirmed, out-groups were not necessarily viewed negatively, but were perceived according to people's existing beliefs (Greenberg *et al.*, 1992, Study 1; Rosenblatt *et al.*, 1989, Study 2). This supports the idea that there is a tendency for people to uphold their beliefs in the face of death. Additionally, if people's attitudes are found to be negative, it can be inferred that those attitudes were negative initially, and merely strengthened after people were induced with an awareness of death.

Greenberg *et al.* (1992, Study 2) found that when people realized they were going to die, and had been given information about tolerance, their attitudes were less negative than when tolerance was not primed. This follows that attitudes toward out-groups are dependent upon the type of information that someone receives. In other words, even though only some people were unconsciously aware of the effects of priming, tolerance stimuli did not affect everyone's attitudes. It can be concluded, then, when particular is provided, attitudes change, regardless of whether people consciously register that information.

Studies (Iyenger, 1990; Nelson & Oxley, 1999) have looked at the effects of framing on attitudes, which has

been defined as the context in which information is given (i.e. newspaper articles or a video). Nelson and Oxley (1999) found that focusing on a specific aspect of welfare reform policy changes people's attitudes, showing that less monetary assistance was granted for adults with children than when the focus was specifically on children's welfare.

Similarly, Iyengar (1990) administered information that was essentially the same but either depicted poverty as a result of an individual's actions or social structures, such as public policy. It was found that people who read about the structural stories believed that society was to blame for a person's situation. On the other hand, those who read about individualistic causes tended to agree that the individual caused his situation.

The previously mentioned research has shown that behavior was dictated by specific beliefs shaping how people think the world works. Additionally, when people's beliefs were in opposition to others' beliefs, negative attitudes between the two groups were likely to result. Further, death awareness was shown to strengthen beliefs about how the world should work. The prior studies have also suggested that the way information is specifically worded alters attitudes. What the prior research lacks, however, has been the combination of the mortality salience hypothesis with how information is framed. The present research is necessary to provide a link between an awareness of inevitable death with how information is depicted because the implications may suggest a way for people to break down mental barriers in order to see others' situations as they truly exist.

HYPOTHESIS

Three hypotheses surround the present research. First, participants in the mortality salient condition will be more likely to hold negative attitudes toward welfare recipients than participants in the mortality not salient condition. Second, participants in the positive frames condition will be more likely to hold positive attitudes toward welfare recipients than participants in the negative frames condition. Third, participants in the mortality salient condition and negative frames condition will be more likely to hold negative attitudes toward welfare recipients than participants in the mortality not salient condition and positive frames condition.

METHOD

Participants

Male ($n = 38$) and female ($n = 67$) introductory psychology students from a small midwestern university participated to fulfill a course requirement. Inclusion was based on participants who indicated they had no history of collecting public assistance [e.g. welfare, food stamps, Women, Infant, Children (WIC)].

Materials

A written mortality salience stimulus description (see Appendix A) about the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 at the World Trade Center in New York City was used to induce an awareness of death. A clipping was taken from two New York area daily newspapers and overtly stated that Americans died at the hands of those who belonged to terrorist outgroups. Statements included factual information about the losses Americans endured, such as, "Tuesday's vast numbers of faceless victims became today's 22-year-old daughter who had been planning to start a new job in San Francisco next week" (Ryan, 2001, p. B3).

Both the individualistic (Appendix B) and structural (Appendix C) frames were equal in length and content but the emphasis on responsibility differed. For example, the individualistic frame stated, "Many people believe that welfare recipients are responsible for their current situation," implying that people are on welfare because they lack motivation. The structural frame included a revised version of this statement, reading, "Many people believe that welfare recipients are not responsible for their current situation," implying that social structures, such as the public policy, cause people to collect welfare.

A neutral stimulus was administered to participants in all four conditions in order to control for the effects of death awareness (see Appendix D). This information was taken from a popular entertainment magazine and described a woman who saved money by utilizing coupons ("In the Money," 1999). By having participants read about coupons, a presumably neutral stimulus, they would demonstrate relatively unemotional responses. Therefore, any effects found in the mortality salient conditions would be due to the description pertaining to the terrorists, rather than the neutral stimulus about coupons.

The Interpersonal Judgment Scale (Byrne, 1971) was completed to assess the degree of liking toward a welfare recipient. A 7-point Likert scale measured responses to six statements on the following items: intellect, wisdom, morals, adaptive ability, emotions, and cooperativeness. Only the later two questions were designed specifically to measure attitudes. Participants were asked to rate how strongly they felt towards the welfare recipient, from, "I feel that I would probably like this person very much," to, "I feel I would probably dislike this person very much" (Byrne, 1971, p. 427). Similarly, participants rated how willing they would be to work with a fictional stimulus person, Barb, in an experiment, from, "I believe that I would very much dislike working with this person in an experiment," to, "I believe that I would very much enjoy working with this person in an experiment" (Byrne, 1971, p. 427). Demographic questions asked about sex, age, religion, and race/ethnicity.

Design

A Two-Way ANOVA was used on a 2 (mortality salience; neutral) x 2 (individualistic frame; structural frame) factorial design with Attitudes Toward Welfare Recipients as the dependent variable. The Mortality Salience variable was manipulated as either a death awareness stimulus or a neutral stimulus about coupons. Framing was manipulated on two levels: an individualistic story which depicted a welfare recipient that was responsible for her situation or a structural story of the same kind but with an emphasis of responsibility placed on social institutions.

Each participant read one of four packets of information. The first group read about death awareness and an individualistic story. Group 2 read the neutral stimulus about coupons and the individualistic story. Group 3 read the death awareness and structural stories, while the fourth group read the neutral and structural stories.

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to read one of the four experimental conditions. Prior to reading the descriptions, participants were instructed to read all directions and were notified that the researcher would address any questions. Descriptions were read in a standard university classroom, a smaller room, an observation room, or in separate cubicles. After reading assigned descriptions, all participants completed the Interpersonal Judgment Scale.

Lastly, debriefings were administered and participants were told that these statements elaborated on why the research was being conducted, what was expected to be found, and included references to two articles that originated the present research and could be used to further interest in this study. The experiment lasted approximately 10-20 minutes.

Results

Data were excluded from 30 participants who indicated that they had received public assistance. Unanswered items from the questionnaires were treated as missing values in SPSS version 10.1 and were not included in analyses.

Before descriptive and inferential analyses were performed, reverse-scoring was conducted on readiness to cooperate in a study with an out-group member from the Interpersonal Judgment Scale. Originally, the item was worded so that a score above four would equate to a more negative attitude, but reverse-scoring allowed numbers above four to translate into positive attitudes, while scores below four denoted negative attitudes.

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to see if the two items from the Interpersonal Judgment Scale that measured attitudes toward an out-group member were correlated. Because this analysis revealed that emotional liking and readiness to cooperate in a study with an out-group member were moderately correlated ($r=0.63$), the two items were combined into one mean overall attitude measure and used as the dependent variable in analyses. All analyses utilized an alpha level of 0.05.

Table 1 : Average scores for attitudes toward welfare recipients from the overall attitude measure after reading experimental stimuli

Experimental Condition	<u>M</u>	n	<u>sd</u>	Possible Range
Mortality Salience x Individualistic Frame	3.77	22	1.25	1-7
Neutral Stimulus x Individualistic Frame	3.48	25	1.15	1-7
Mortality Salience x Structural Frame	4.71	24	1.63	1-7
Neutral Stimulus x Structural Frame	4.77	31	1.08	1-7

Legend:

<u>M</u>	=	Average score on Interpersonal Judgement scale
n	=	Number of participants
<u>sd</u>	=	Standard Deviation
Possible Range	=	Scores for IJS, 1 = lowest, 7 = highest.

Preliminary descriptive analyses were conducted on the mean attitude measure for all four experimental conditions. As predicted, the neutral stimulus and structural framing condition produced slightly more positive attitudes on overall attitude (see Table 1 for average scores). Therefore, individuals who read about coupons and societal responsibility held the least negative attitudes toward dissimilar others. Contrary to my hypothesis, the mortality salience stimulus and individualistic framing group did not show the most negative attitudes. In other words, those who read about the terrorist attacks and personal responsibility were not more likely to exhibit the most negative attitudes toward out-group members. See Table 1 for average

scores.

A Two-Way ANOVA was computed on a 2 (mortality salience; neutral) \times 2 (individualistic frame; structural frame) between-subjects factorial with the dependent variable of Attitudes Toward Welfare Recipients. A main effect for Mortality Salience was found, $F(1,98)=23.98$, $p < 0.05$, supporting my first hypothesis that participants in the mortality salience condition will be more likely to hold negative attitudes toward welfare recipients than toward those in the neutral condition. In other words, participants who read about the events of September 11, 2001 conveyed the most negative attitudes. See Table 2 for F scores.

Table 2 : Analysis of variance for attitudes toward welfare recipients based on death awareness and presentation style of information

Source	SS.	df	MS.	F.	p.
Mortality Salience	031.20	1	31.20	23.98	0.00*
Framing	000.32	1	00.32	00.25	0.62
M \times F	000.81	1	00.81	00.62	0.43
error	127.48	98	01.300		

Note: * $p < 0.05$

Legend:

SS = Sum of Squares F = F statistic
df = Degrees of Freedom p = Significant Level

Discussion

Analyses indicated that people who were consciously aware of their death were more likely to exhibit in-group favoritism. Simply reading something that elicits an awareness of death alters our attitudes in a negative manner toward out-groups. This runs consistent to past findings (Greenberg *et al.*, 1990; Greenberg *et al.*, 1992; Rosenblatt *et al.*, 1989) that have also suggested death awareness negatively alters people's perceptions of dissimilar others.

The personal responsibility and societal frames did not show significant differences between the frames' effects on people's attitudes toward welfare recipients. However, the story claiming that social institutions were the causes of Barb having to collect welfare, not the recipient herself, elicited slightly more positive overall attitudes toward out-groups. Although analyses did not reveal a significant difference between the two groups, there was a slight trend for attitudes to be more positive for people who read about structural causes versus personal reasons.

A possible explanation for why the structural frame yielded the most positive attitudes is because as an individualistic society people are conditioned to be hard-working and independent. Therefore, by reading about welfare recipients, people automatically perceive out-groups negatively because the perception is a learned

reaction.

There was not a significant difference found between the individualistic and structural frames because the type of stimulus used to convey the welfare recipient's situation was not influential enough. Simply reading about someone's situation may not evoke the same emotional response as watching a video would, for instance. Individuals may respond differently to the type of stimuli depending on whether they are behavioral or cognitive stimuli.

The Interpersonal Judgment Scale may not have provided a sufficient number of items to measure the degree of liking towards others. Because the current study measured attitudes from only two statements about cooperativeness and liking, an accurate assessment of attitudes was not achieved. Therefore, future studies may utilize scales that more broadly address the degree of peoples' attitudes toward out-groups. There are a multitude of assessment techniques which may be used to determine degree of liking, however, those scales used that do not include multiple items may not be broad enough in their ability to determine attitudes.

Furthermore, the information that was included on the IJS may not have pertained to the information that was provided in each of the framing stimuli. For instance, the individualistic frame stated that responsibility for one's situation in life lies solely with the individ-

ual, whereas the structural frame attributed status to public policy. The scale included items that addressed specific opinions, such as the intelligence level of an out-group member, although the experimental stimuli did not include statements about intelligence.

A more recent explanation for the current findings on out-group attitudes could be due to the terrorist attacks. The implications suggest that unless people initially hold positive beliefs about out-groups, death awareness will not alter attitudes. Therefore, according to previous research (Rosenblatt *et al.*, 1989, Study 2), two things can be inferred: existing attitudes were strengthened not changed, and participants may have held positive attitudes initially, and only after reading about death their attitudes changed.

A slight trend in mean differences revealing that a story about coupons and the structural stimuli were the most positive on overall attitudes toward welfare recipients may suggest framing information changes people's attitudes (Greenberg *et al.*, 1992, Study 2; Iyengar, 1990; Nelson & Oxley, 1999). In general, specific attitudes may be a result of the way information is presented. However, ultimately death wins out and regardless of how information is presented, when people are exposed to out-groups, death anxiety emerges and dictates our final attitudes.

Future researchers assessing attitudes toward members of out-groups might want to consider other scales of measurement pertaining to group dynamics. The IJS attempted to portray people's attitudes based on two questions that may not be generalizable across situations. In other words, instead of assessing perceptions using specific words, as does the IJS, questions should be broadly framed in order to account for differences in experiences for all people.

Another suggestion to consider for further research is to use members of the out-group and in-group in order to allow for more comparative and generalizable results. Readers, both scholars of the field and lay people, will be able to interpret the findings according to both in- and out-groupers's perspectives.

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APPENDIX A

Directions: Please read this story CAREFULLY. Continue to read each of the subsequent descriptions and complete the questionnaire at the end.

The Times Union and The Buffalo News

September 16-17, 2001

They all died at the hands of terrorists. Death is death. I hope the government does something this time; if they don't listen now, they never will. They've shouted warnings about possible future terrorist attacks. On-lookers watched as the second aircraft ripped into the World Trade Center, and thought about those poor people who died; the brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, fathers and mothers wondering what happened to their loved ones. Another grieving mother's story has lodged itself closest to our hearts. Tuesday's vast numbers of faceless victims became today's 22-year-old daughter who had been planning to

start a new job in San Francisco next week. It became a 38-year-old Little League coach heading back to California to bring the family's yellow Labrador retriever to their new home in Arlington, VA. It became Daphne Bowers of Brooklyn, NY, who showed up at a New York hospital with a framed picture of her 28-year-old daughter, Veronique. Two friends supported Bowers as the mother told workers her daughter had been wearing a white jacket and black shirt and had called her from inside the World Trade Center to say the building was on fire. The last thing she said was, "I love you, mommy, goodbye." The couple from Maine heading to a son's wedding in Santa Barbara. The father from New Hampshire who wanted to visit his son before classes began at UCLA. "He did love me more than anything." The 31-year-old hockey scout who was returning from a visit with his twin brother, an assistant hockey coach at Boston University. Those we believe to be responsible for the tragedy a few weeks ago are those who are not our own people. However, those living in our very lands have been persecuted and blamed for the terrorist attacks. It makes you wonder whether we really know our neighbors. Do we trust those who are outside of our little circles in life? Those who are not members of our children's PTA, who belong to different churches, who live in different neighborhoods, and work at different places. The life that we all lived prior to September 11, 2001 is one than seems far gone; one that we will never see again.

Attitudes Scale

This scale is intended to measure general attitudes toward others. Some of the questions refer back to the story about the mother that you previously read. Directions: Please read each question carefully and check only ONE option per number and explain when asked. Any questions should be directed to the researcher. You do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable or ask for information you do not wish to provide.

1. Intelligence (check one)

- (a) ☐ I believe that Barb is very much above average in intelligence.
- (b) ☐ I believe that Barb is above average in intelligence.
- (c) ☐ I believe that Barb is slightly above average in intelligence.
- (d) ☐ I believe that Barb is average in intelligence.
- (e) ☐ I believe that Barb is slightly below average in intelligence.
- (f) ☐ I believe that Barb is below average in intelligence.
- (g) ☐ I believe that Barb is very much below average in intelligence.

2. Knowledge of Current Events (check one)

- (a) ☐ I believe that Barb is very much below average in her knowledge of current events.
- (b) ☐ I believe that Barb is below average in her knowledge of current events.
- (c) ☐ I believe that Barb is slightly below average in her knowledge of current events.
- (d) ☐ I believe that Barb is average in her knowledge of current events.
- (e) ☐ I believe that Barb is slightly above average in her knowledge of current events.
- (f) ☐ I believe that Barb is above average in her knowledge of current events.
- (g) ☐ I believe that Barb is very much above average in her knowledge of current events.

3. Morality (check one)

- (a) ☐ Barb impresses me as being extremely moral.
- (b) ☐ Barb impresses me as being moral.
- (c) ☐ Barb impresses me as being moral to a slight degree.
- (d) ☐ Barb impresses me as being neither particularly moral nor particularly immoral.
- (e) ☐ Barb impresses me as being immoral to a slight degree.
- (f) ☐ Barb impresses me as being immoral.
- (g) ☐ Barb impresses me as being extremely immoral.

4. Working Together in an Experiment (check one)

- (a) ☐ I believe that I would very much dislike working with Barb in an experiment.
- (b) ☐ I believe that I would dislike working with Barb in an experiment.
- (c) ☐ I believe that I would dislike working with Barb in an experiment to a slight degree.
- (d) ☐ I believe that I would neither particularly dislike nor particularly enjoy working with Barb in an experiment.
- (e) ☐ I believe that I would enjoy working with Barb in an experiment to a slight degree.
- (f) ☐ I believe that I would enjoy working with Barb in an experiment.
- (g) ☐ I believe that I would very much enjoy working with Barb in an experiment.

5. Personal Feelings (check one)

- (a) ☐ I feel that I would probably like Barb very much.
- (b) ☐ I feel that I would probably like Barb.
- (c) ☐ I feel that I would probably like Barb to a slight degree.
- (d) ☐ I feel that I would probably neither particularly like nor particularly dislike Barb.
- (e) ☐ I feel that I would probably dislike Barb to a slight degree.
- (f) ☐ I feel that I would probably dislike Barb.
- (g) ☐ I feel that I would probably dislike Barb very much.

6. Adjustment (check one)

- (a) ☐ I believe that Barb is extremely maladjusted.
- (b) ☐ I believe that Barb is maladjusted.
- (c) ☐ I believe that Barb is maladjusted to a slight degree.
- (d) ☐ I believe that Barb is neither particularly maladjusted nor particularly well adjusted.
- (e) ☐ I believe that Barb is well adjusted to a slight degree.
- (f) ☐ I believe that Barb is well adjusted.
- (g) ☐ I believe that Barb is extremely well adjusted.

7. What is your sex?

Male ☐Female ☐

8. What is your age? _____

9. What is your religion? (please explain) _____

10. What ethnic or racial group do you identify with?

Black ☐White ☐

Other (please explain) _____

11. Have you ever received any type of public assistance (welfare, food stamps, WIC, etc.)?

Yes ☐No ☐

Your time and effort are appreciated. Thank you and have a great day!

APPENDIX B

Person's Problem

Many people believe that welfare recipients are responsible for their current situation. It is the fault of the person's ability, intellect, or motivation, that have made it virtually impossible for someone on welfare to integrate back into mainstream society. It is a trend for people to place blame on individuals rather than on social institutions. Thus, some welfare recipients are at fault for their situations. Take Barb for instance. She is a single 22 year-old mother of three, Peter 6, Tommy 5, and Ian 3. Barb got pregnant out of wedlock at the young age of 17. When she got pregnant she decided to drop out of school to stay home and raise her child.

Barb and Roger got married. They moved out and lived solely on Roger's income as a construction worker. After they were married for three years, Barb divorced Roger. Barb had no choice but to file for public aid. She was not excited about going on welfare, but her options were limited. Barb had no high school diploma, let alone any post-secondary education. But with three small lives to take care of, options did not matter. Without a job and receiving only welfare benefits, Barb is not financially capable of sending her children to day-care. She does not think that she is obligated to get a job because then she would have to stop receiving welfare. She would rather sit at home and collect other people's tax money because she is not motivated to get a job.

She manages the essential foods for her children, but can barely afford to feed herself. They live in a communal apartment building with many other welfare families, without hot running water, and have not been to the doctor since she divorced her husband. Barb does not have the ability to work anywhere and therefore cannot afford adequate housing for herself and her children. Life seems meager and unavoidably hopeless for Barb and her children, but it could be different if Barb decided to get a job. Overall, Barb has it rough but it is up to her to change her situation.

APPENDIX C

Society's Problem

Many people believe that welfare recipients are not responsible for their current situation. It is the fault of the government, the economy, the unemployment rate, and other social institutions that have made it virtually impossible for someone on welfare to merge back into mainstream society. It is a trend for people to place welfare blame on social institutions rather than on individualistic reasons. Thus, some welfare recipients are not responsible for their situation. Take Barb for instance. She is a single 22 year-old mother of three,

Peter 6, Tommy 5, and Ian 3. Barb was married at the young age of 17. When she got pregnant Barb decided to become a stay-at-home mom.

Barb and Roger got married. They moved out and lived solely on Roger's income as a construction worker. After they were married for three years, Roger died. Barb was punished because she was a stay at home mom with no college education and without a high school diploma. Barb had no choice but to file for public aid. She was not excited about going on welfare, but her options were limited. Barb was unable to hold a job because that would mean giving up her public assistance. This would mean living in even worse conditions.

The four of them live in a communal apartment building with many other welfare families, without hot running water, and have not been to the doctor since her husband passed away. Life seems meager and unavoidably hopeless for Barb and her children, but the circumstances do not allow her to get a job that will afford her the things she needs. Businesses do not want to hire someone on welfare and housing authorities do not trust people on welfare for fear of not making the monthly rent. Overall, Barb has it rough but it is up to society to change her situation.

APPENDIX D

Neutral Stimuli

When Janet hit the checkout line at DeMoula's Market Basket in Hudson, NH, on March 9, 1999, she was leading a four-cart flotilla loaded with steaks, frozen turkeys, milk, vegetables, plastic bags, cleaning supplies and 20 boxes of Cheerios. But Janet also had more than 200 coupons, and when the cashier finished adding and subtracting, her bill came to exactly three cents. As her birthday approached in early March, the Nashua, NH, homemaker and mother of three figured she'd pull together as many dollars-off, two-for-ones and cashback offers to create the ultimate coupon-clipper's dream: a nearly all-expenses-paid trip to the supermarket. But as Janet had first learned as a child cutting coupons at her mother's side, free doesn't always mean easy. The eight months it took to plan her "free spree" required her to pore through her many file cabinets and record books and to consult with an online chat group whose members find and share the best deals. On Janet's big day the cheers were led by the same cashier at the supermarket, who gave her play-by-play reports on the store's public address system.

Sarah Guthrie graduated in May 2002 with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. This research was done for P420, *Advanced Lab in Social Psychology*. Sarah chose this topic because she always had an interest in the subconscious factors that play a role in human behavior. Terror management theory was put together by Ernest Becker, but Becker derived his ideas from Kierkegaard, who favored unconscious motives.