

What can Terror Management Theory tell us about the problems of today's world?

- War, prejudice, terrorism, and conflict ...
- Why is it so hard for people to get along with those who are different from themselves?
- Why has human history consisted of an unending series of wars between different ethnic, religious, racial, national, and cultural groups?

Terror Management Perspective on Ethnic, Political, Religious, & International Conflict

- People with worldviews different from our own undermine consensual validation and implicitly threaten faith in our own cultural worldviews
- This threat is defused by converting them to our worldview, derogating them, or annihilating them
- This restores our confidence that our cultural worldview is the “best” – and helps manage our terror
- Thoughts of death increase the need for faith in our worldview and thus leads us to cling to it more tightly and view those who are different with disdain

The Role of Self-Esteem

- ***Social Identity:*** Our self-esteem comes from both our individual self and the groups to which we belong
- When our group is mistreated it threatens our self-esteem; so we identify with our group & hate those who harm our group
- ***Social Comparison:*** Our self-esteem is affected by comparison with others
- Those who seem to be doing better than us make us feel inferior; those who are doing worse make us feel superior
- ***Downward social comparison:*** We derogate others to make us feel better by comparison

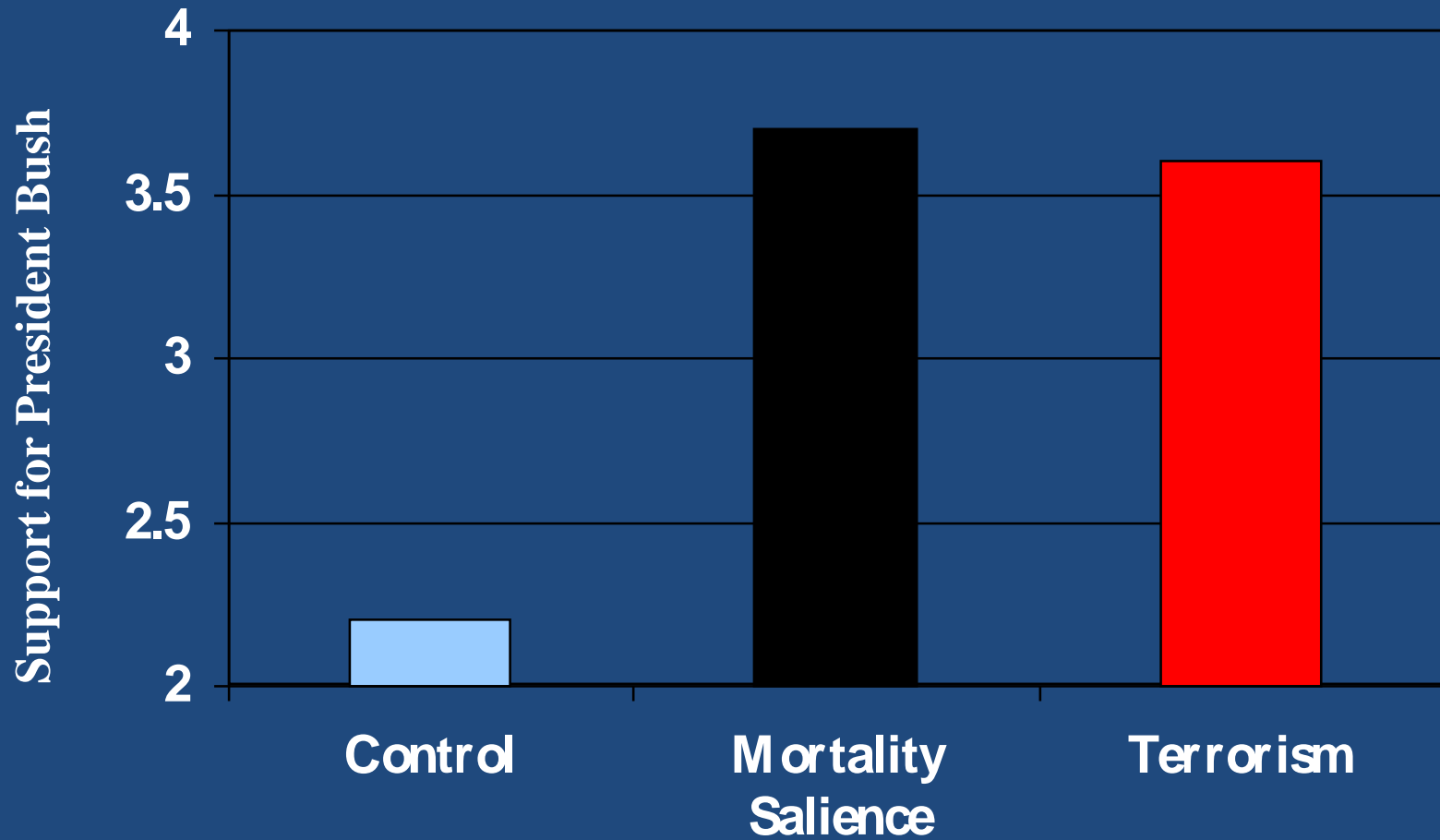
Psychological Impact of 9/11 Attacks

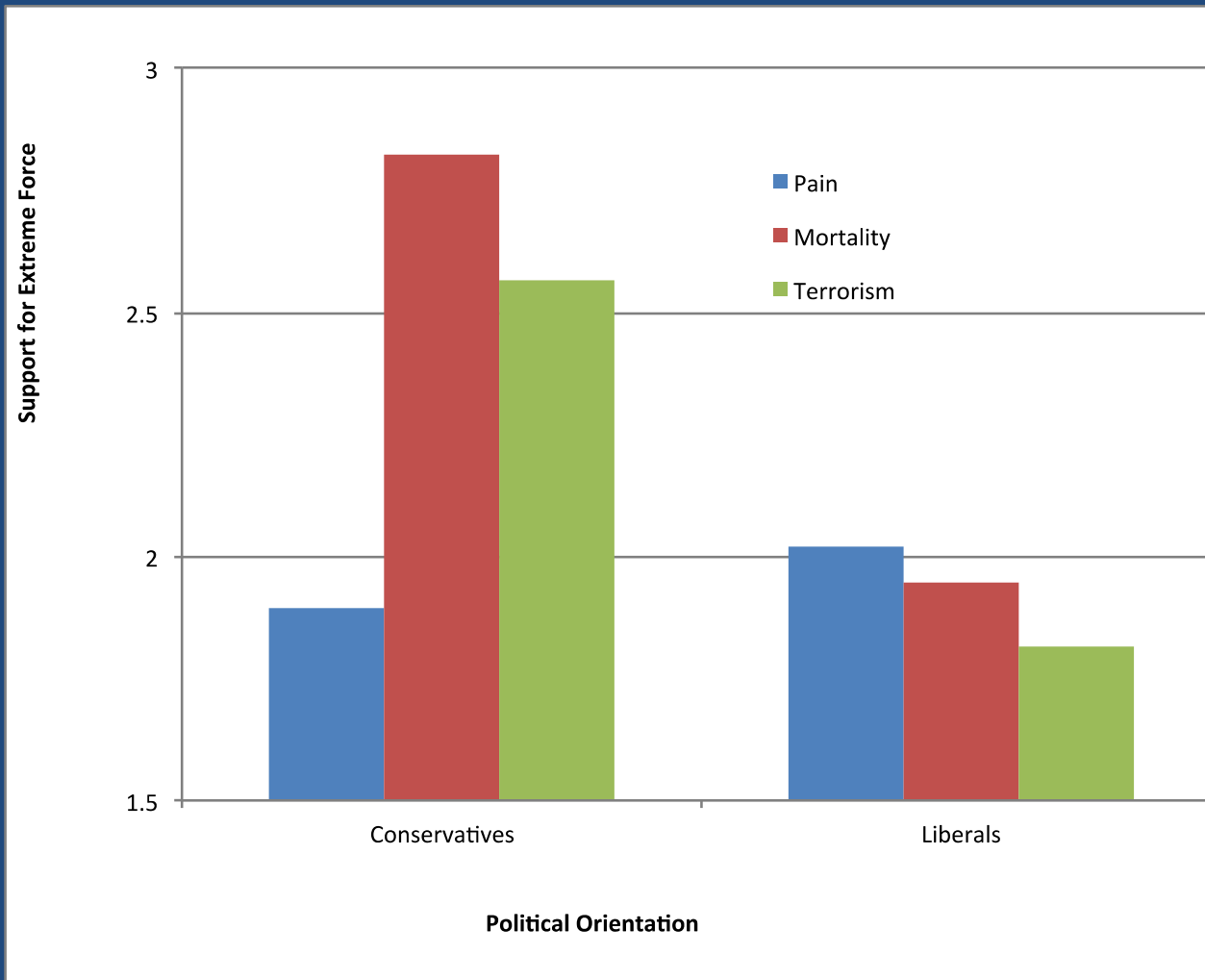
- **Dramatic reminder of death and vulnerability**
- **Potent threat to American Cultural Worldview**
 - It CAN happen here
 - Injustice of 3000 innocent victims
 - Retribution for alleged wrong-doings
 - Vengeance in the name of God

Threat to collective Self-Esteem

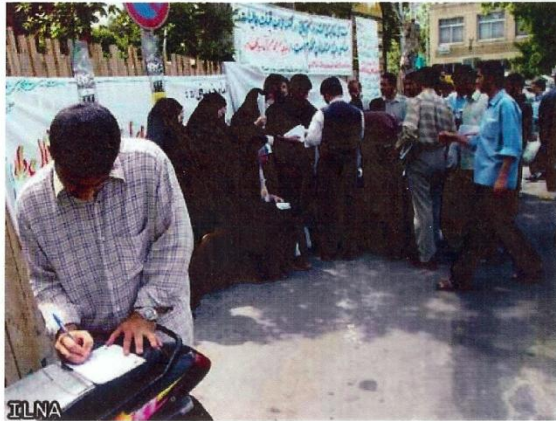
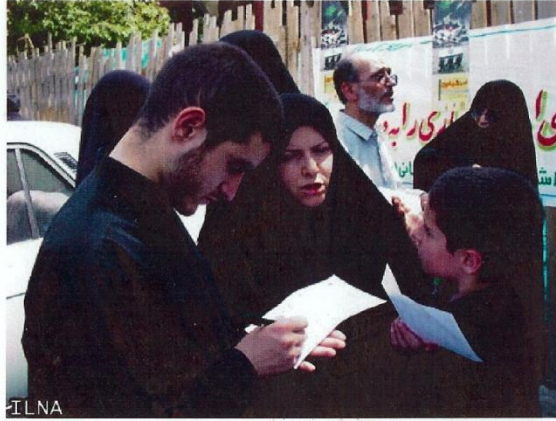
- **Seemingly unstoppable**
- **Humiliation: 19 guys with box-cutters**

Support for George W. Bush as a function of priming condition.

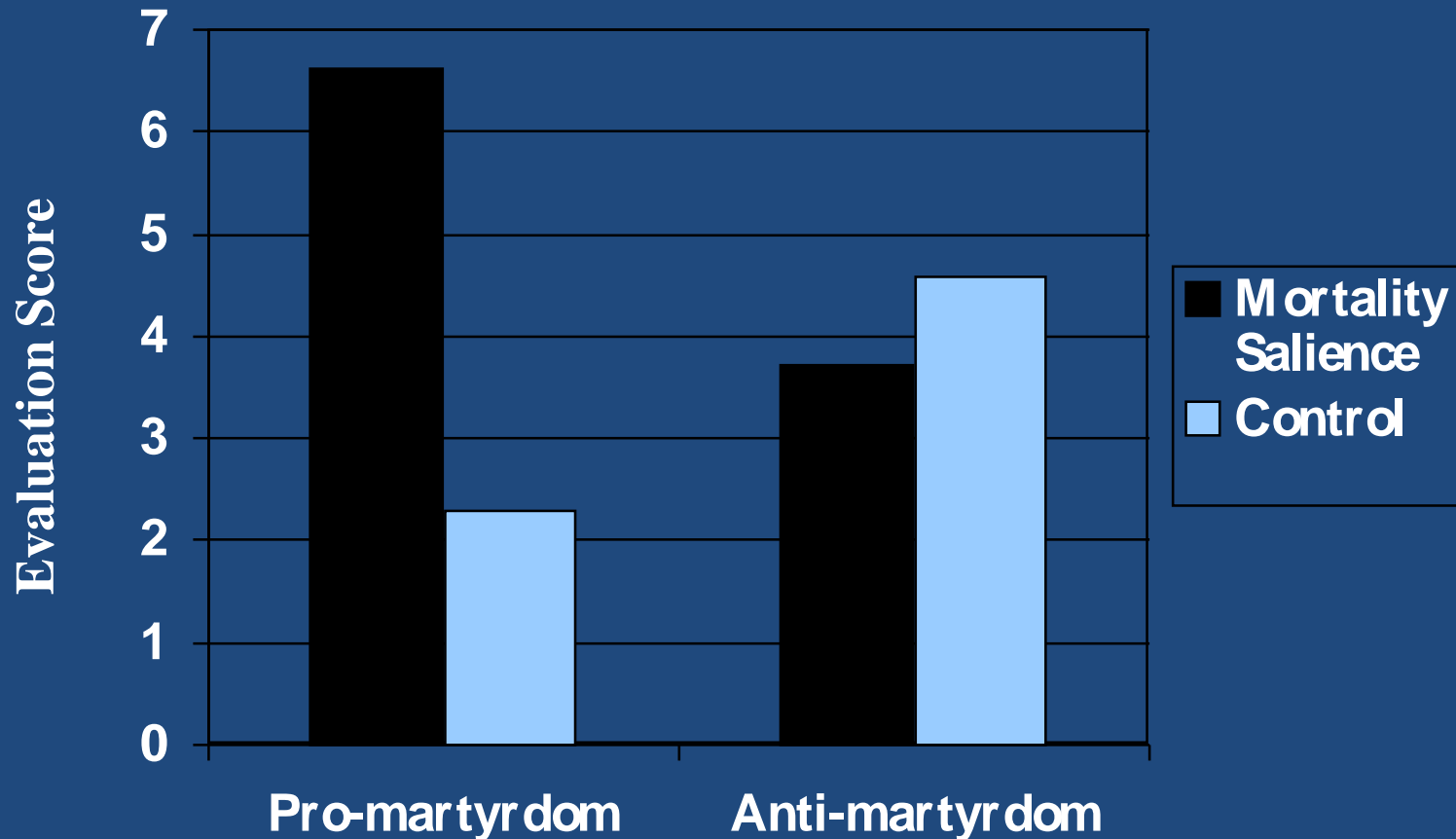




Support for Extreme Military Tactics Among Americans as a Function of Mortality Salience and Political Orientation



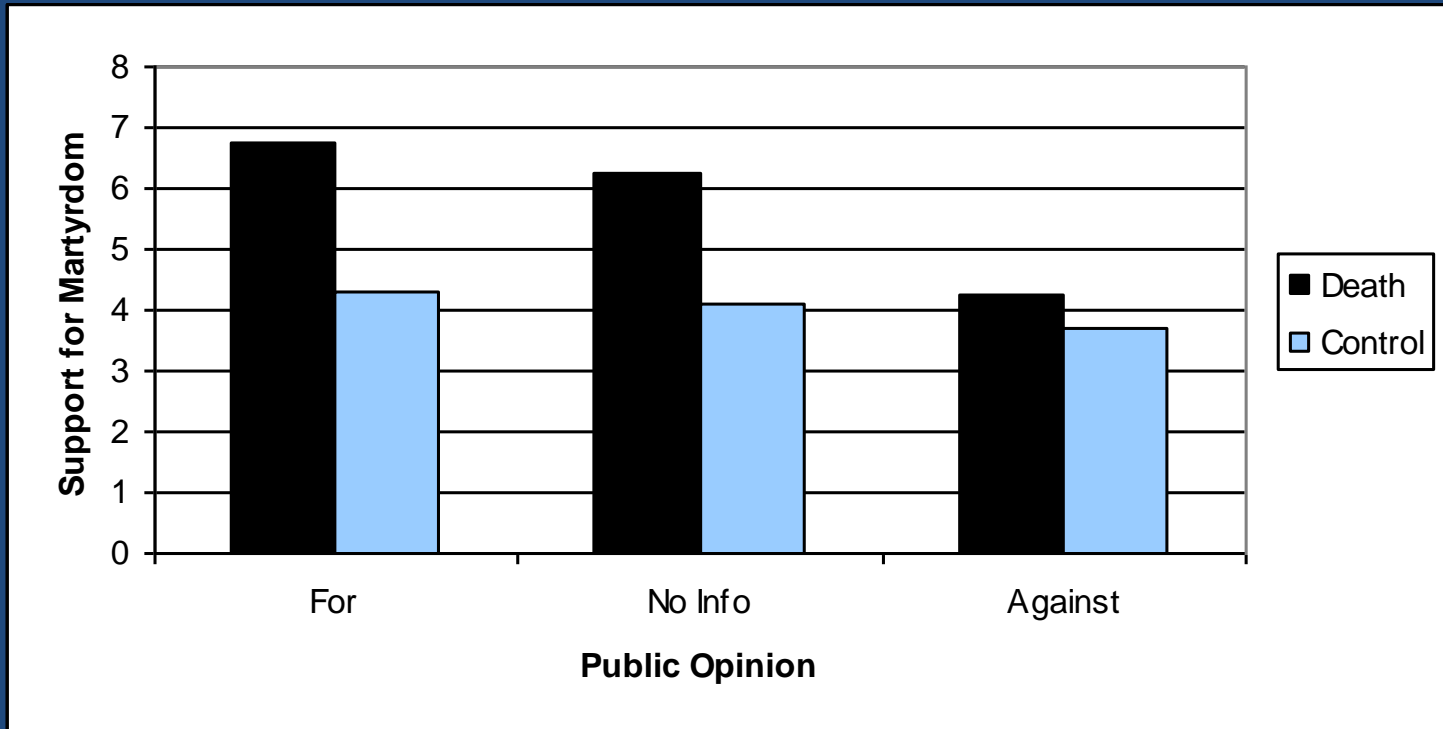
Iranians Evaluations of Persons Supporting and Opposing Martyrdom Attacks and Bombings as a Function of MS



Note. Higher scores indicate increased preference for that person.

The Effect of Death Reminders on Support for Violence is Affected by Social Support

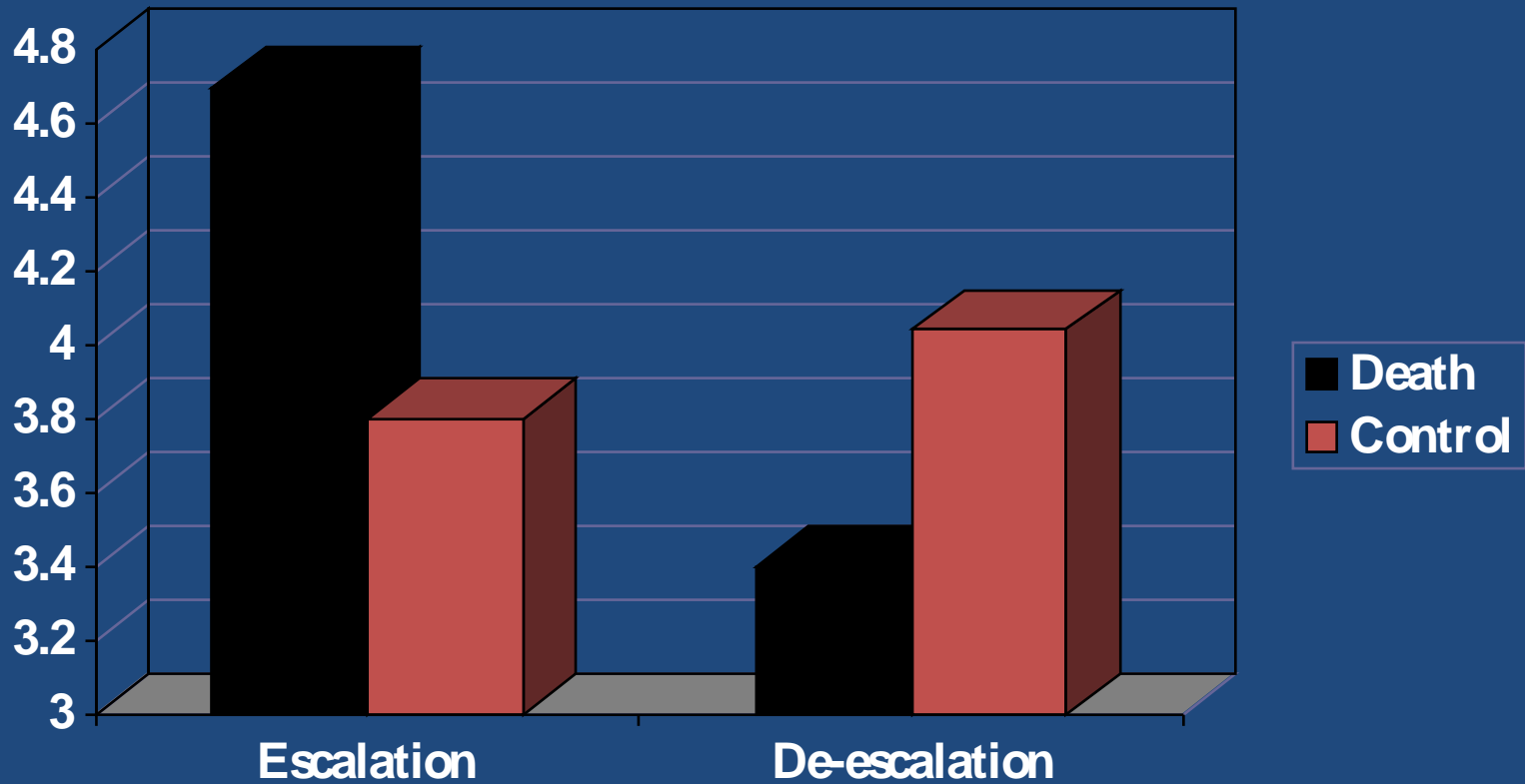
- Need other people to validate our beliefs and behavior
- We typically respond to fear by doing things we *assume* other people agree with and support
- A lack of social support for our attitude prevents us from using it for protection



Effect of Perceived Public Opinion and Mortality Salience on Support for Martyrdom Attacks among Iranians

Rhetoric from trusted leaders can provide direction for people's attempts to cope with fear.

Support for Pre-emptive Nuclear Strike on Iran among Israelis as a Function of MS and Leader Rhetoric



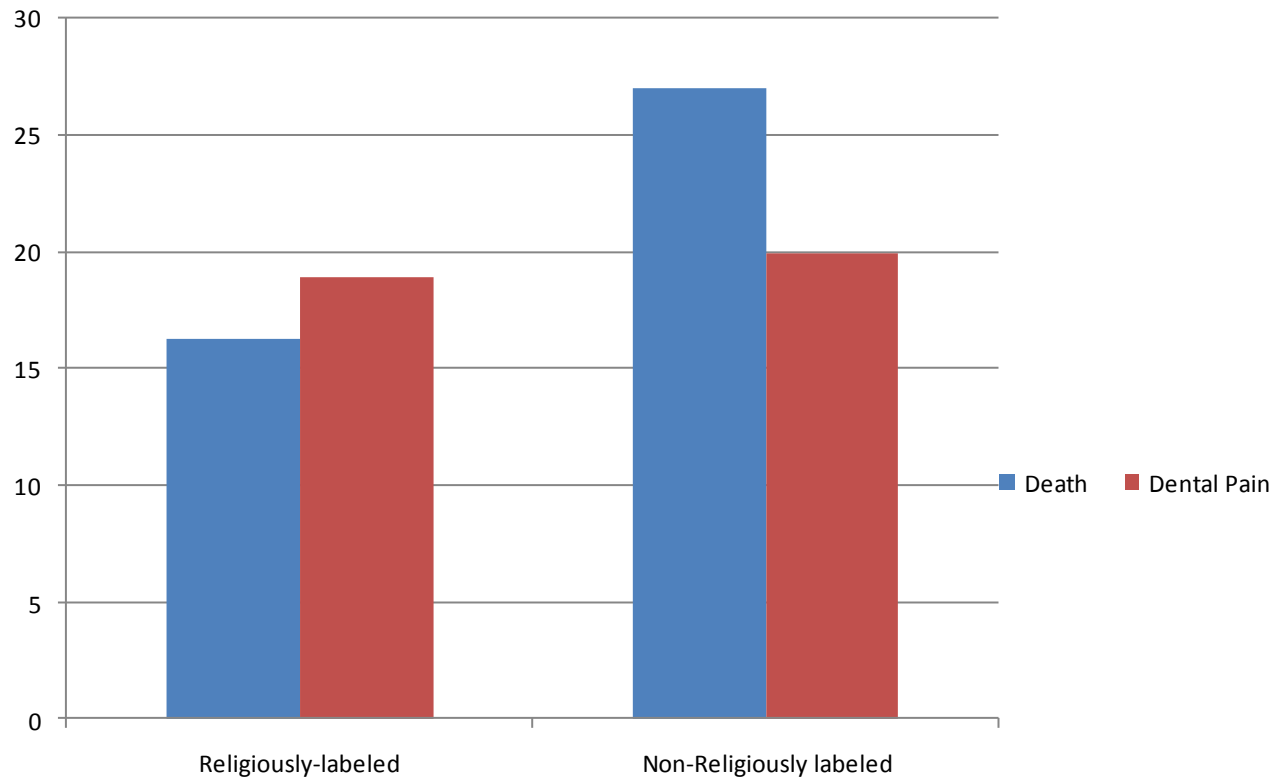
The same thing that makes them
want to kill us makes us want
to kill them ...

What can be done to reduce this
hostility?

Ways of Redirecting Responses to Existential Fear

- Compassionate Religious Values

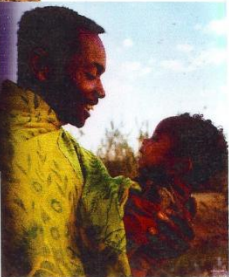
The Effect of MS and Compassionate Muslim Values on Anti-Western Attitudes among Iranians



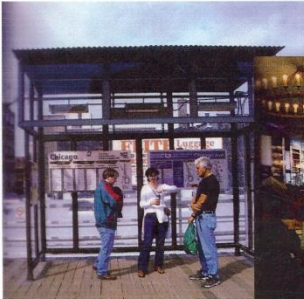
Ways of Redirecting Responses to Existential Fear

- Compassionate Religious Values
- Shared Humanity: The Human Family

Common Humanity

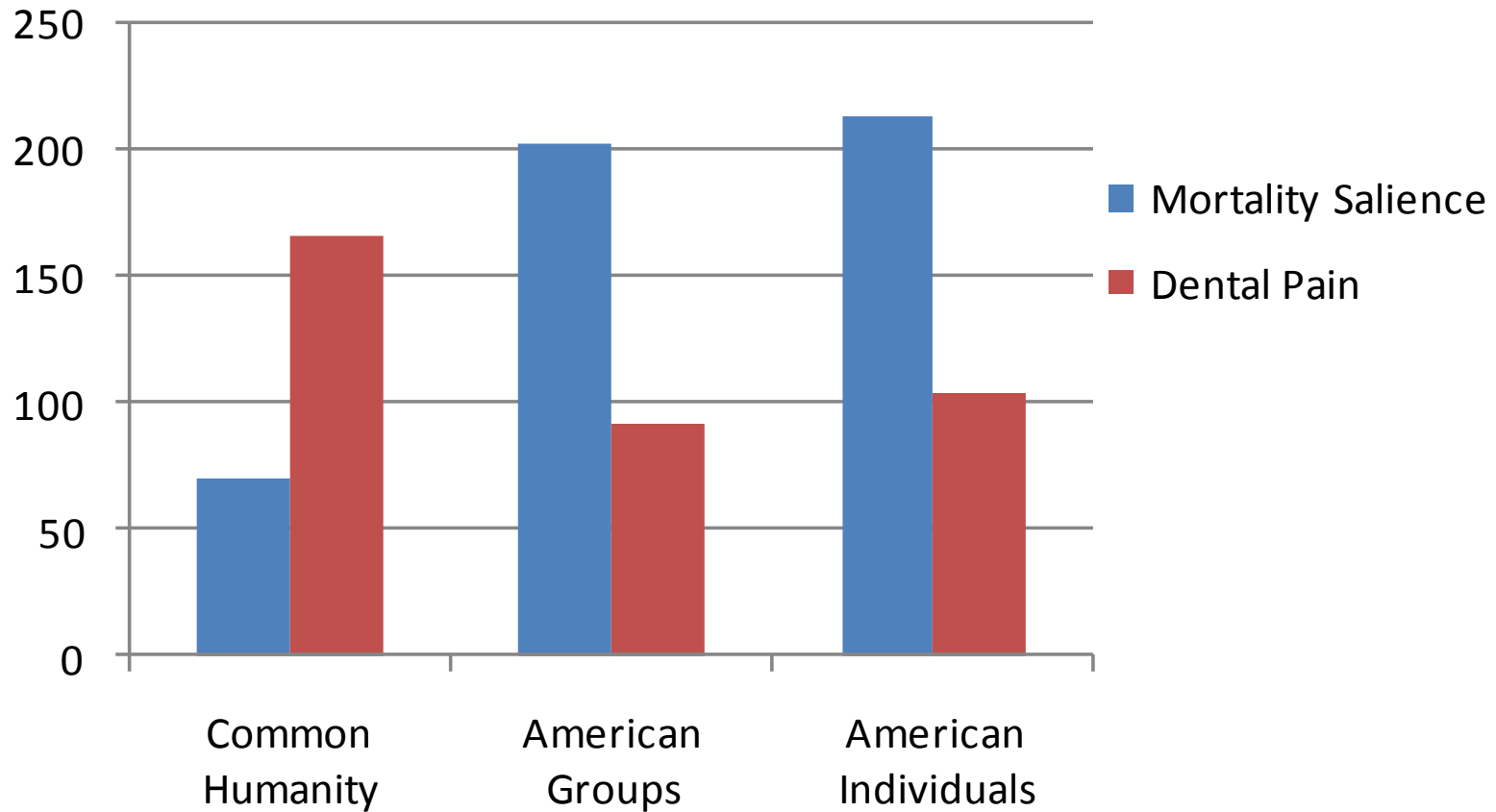


American Family

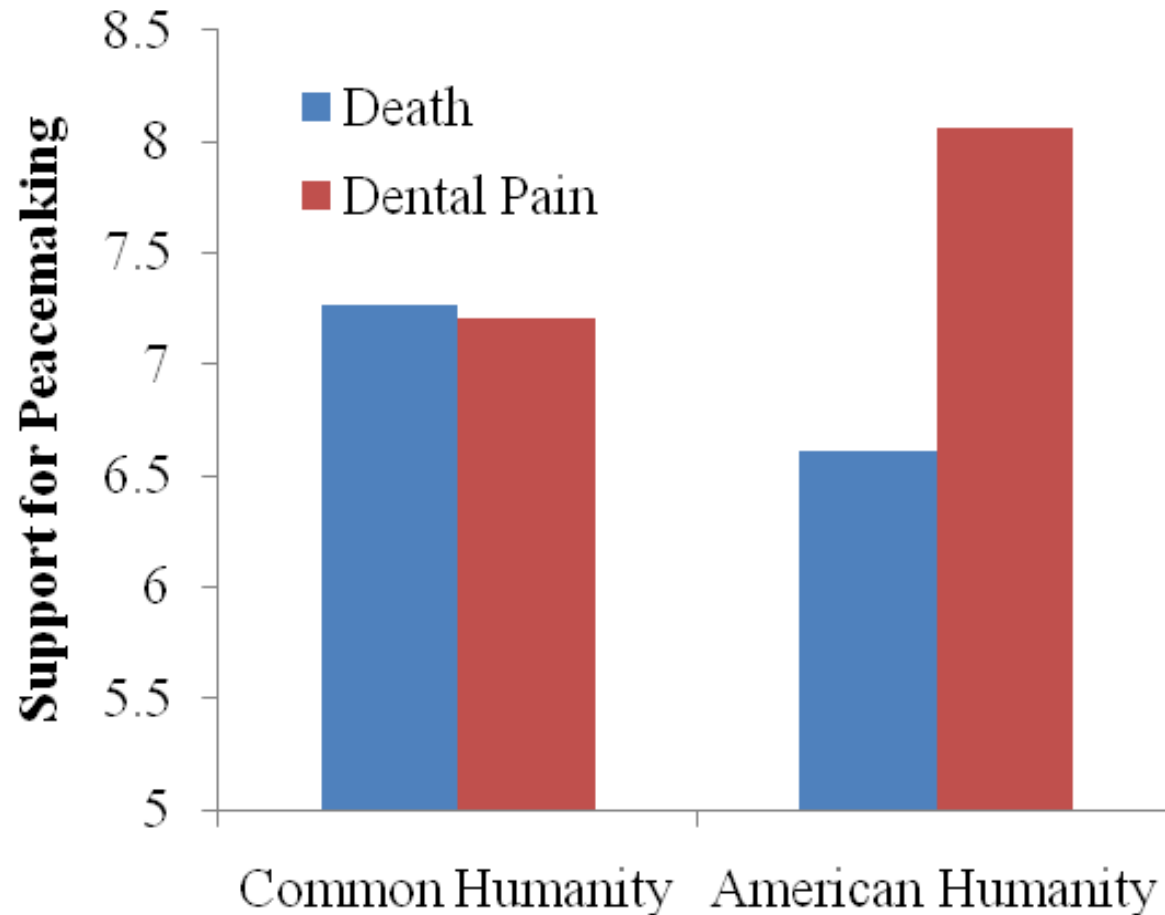


Neutral

IAT Anti-Arab Prejudice scores as a function of MS & common humanity primes



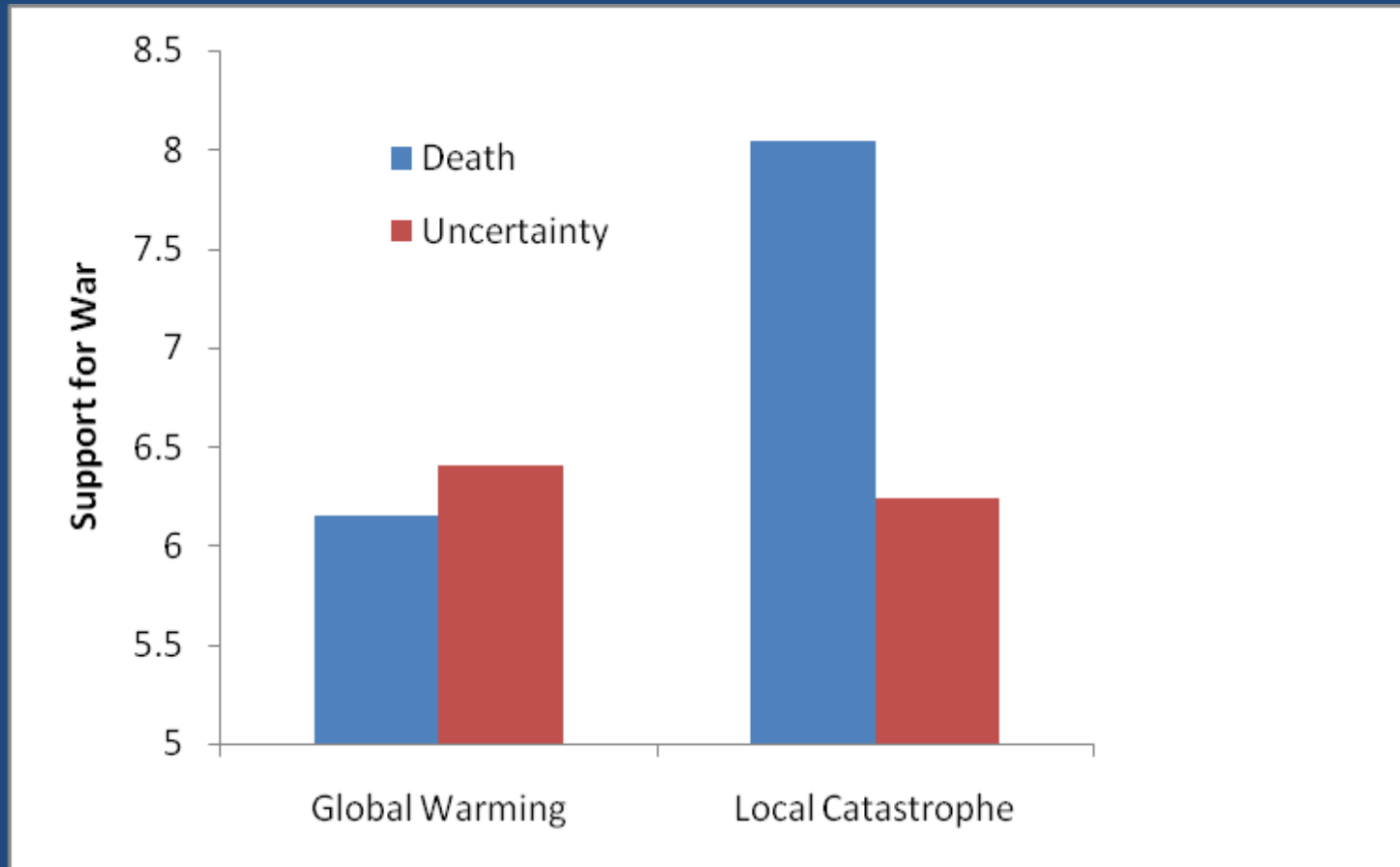
Support for Peacemaking as a Function of Mortality Salience and Common Humanity



Ways of Redirecting Responses to Existential Fear

- Religious Values Supporting Compassion
- Attachment Security
- A Sense of Common Humanity: The Human Family
- Shared Fate: Global Climate Change
 - The Sunny Side of Global Warming?

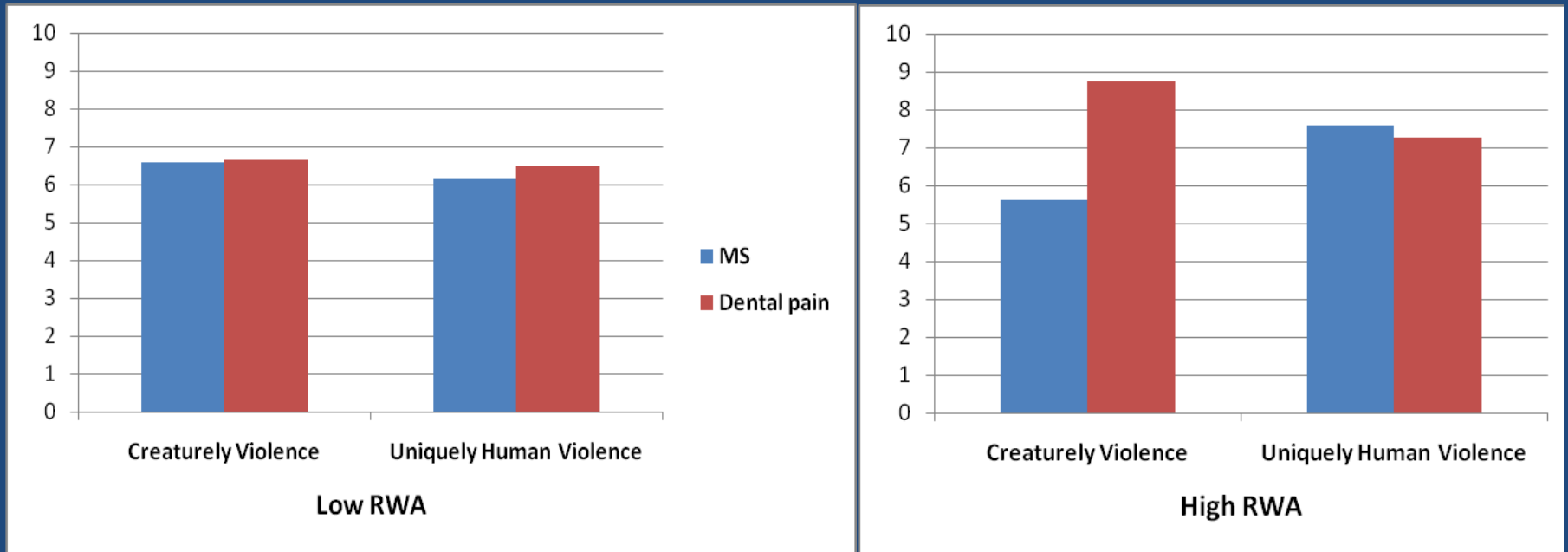
Americans' Support for War with Iran as a Function of Mortality Salience and Global Warming



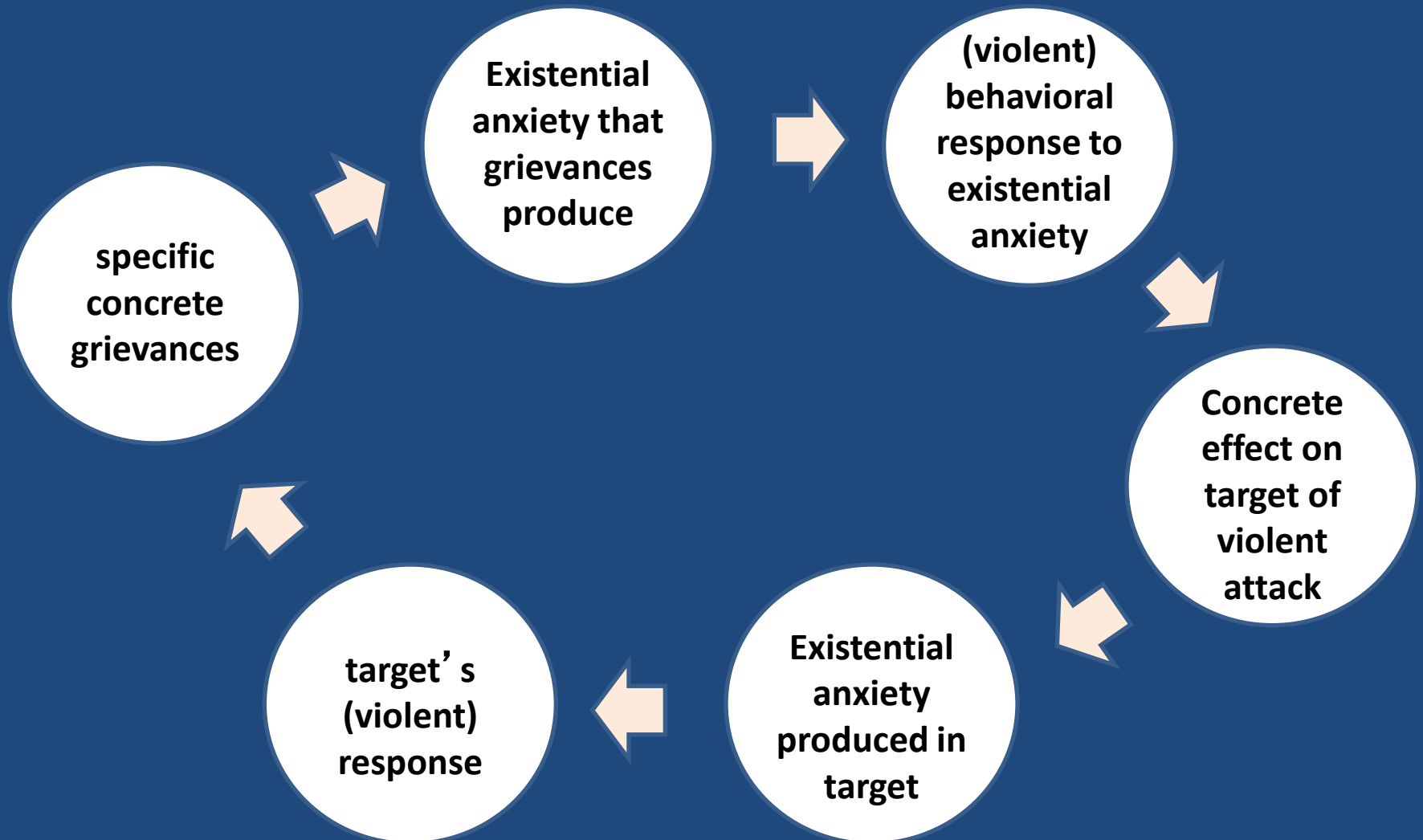
Ways of Redirecting Responses to Existential Fear

- Religious Values Supporting Compassion
- Attachment Security
- A Sense of Common Humanity: The Human Family
- Shared Fate: Global Climate Change
 - The Sunny Side of Global Warming?
- Infra-humanization of Violence: Removing the Honor or War

Support for military action as a function of MS, violence prime, and RWA



Cycle of Intergroup Violence



Break the Cycle of Violence and Redirect Responses to Existential Fear by:

- Promoting Compassionate Values
- Promoting a Sense of Common Humanity
- Encourage Awareness of the Common Interest Fate Shared by all Human Beings – Ubuntu
- Remove the honor and nobility from war and violence
- Reduce exposure to violence and killing