people cope with existential terror is by denigrating outgroups. This gives people a
sense that their view of the world is correct and imbues them with a sense of supe-
riority. J. Greenberg and colleagues (1990) designed an experiment to test this hypoth-
esis. During the first part of the experiment, Christian participants completed a series
of questionnaires. For participants assigned to the mortality-salient condition, one of
the questionnaires asked participants to contemplate their death and to describe how
they thought they would feel as they were dying. Participants in a control condition
did not complete this task. During the next part of the experiment, participants read
about another participant they were going to meet. In one condition, the other person
indicated that he was Christian; in another condition, the other participant indicated
that he was Jewish. Finally, the participants indicated how much they thought they
would like the person they were going to meet.

Terror management theory asserts that thoughts of one’s own death create exis-
tential terror and that people manage this anxiety by convincing themselves that their
view of the world is the correct one to hold. As applied to the experimental situation
created by Greenberg and colleagues, the theory predicts that participants who have
recently contemplated their death will be especially approving of someone who shares
their worldview and especially disparaging of someone whose worldview differs
from theirs. The data in Figure 10.7 reveal just such a pattern. After thinking and
writing about their death, these Christian participants indicated greater liking for a
Christian and less liking for a Jew. Terror management theory assumes that this pat-
tern represents an attempt to reduce the anxiety occasioned by the thoughts of one’s
death (see also Castano, Yzerbyt, Paladino, &Sacchi, 2002; Solomon, Greenberg, &
Pyszczynski, 2000).

4. Reverse Favoritism: The Black-Sheep Effect

Ingroup favoritism is the rule, but sometimes people enhance their feelings of self-
worth by derogating an ingroup member. This occurs when an ingroup member does
something particularly reprehensible or blameworthy. For example, suppose someone
from your university defected to a foreign country that is an enemy of the United States.
Chances are you would soundly condemn the individual as a traitor. By derogating the