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SELF-TRANSFORMATION AND SPIRITUALITY IN MARKETING

by

MRUDUL NILANGEKAR

M.Sc. in Marketing, University of Manchester, 2012

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Marketing
in the College of Business Administration
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
2024

Major Professor: David Luna

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ABSTRACT

Self-transformation and spirituality have not been extensively investigated in marketing research. However, these concepts are deeply impactful in an individual's life and are advocated by religious and spiritual traditions across the world. In Essay 1, I extend research on compassion, distance between self and other, and power by examining the effect of self-compassion on prosocial behavior. I test the effect of self-compassion on prosocial behavior mediated by the distance felt between self and other and moderated by felt power. Across five studies, I find that individuals in the self-compassionate and equal power mindset display higher prosocial behavior and lower empathy fatigue compared to the other conditions. In Essay 2, I examine the idea of agency in one's relationship with God which has not been investigated in business research although building one's relationship with God is the backbone of all major religious and spiritual traditions across the world and is seen to have widespread implications. Through five studies, I demonstrate that feelings of agency in one's relationship with God lead to a lower desire for retributive justice against an entity that has committed a transgression as compared to the no-agency condition. On the other hand, in line with earlier research, when one feels agency over material resources, one tends to have an increased desire for retributive justice against an entity that has committed a transgression compared to the no-agency condition. Across these essays, I examine the proposed conceptual models through mediation and moderation studies. Several theoretical and managerial implications are also discussed.

I dedicate my research to my Guru, Paramahansa Vishwananda, my mother Vidya,
the rest of my family, and the benefit of whoever comes across this work.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A number of people have made it possible for me to reach the end of this incredible journey. First and foremost, my dissertation chair and most valued mentor, Dr. David Luna, for his endless patience, infectious humor, and deeply compassionate guidance through many difficult and unexpected situations during the past years. Without his help, I would not be here today. Next, my dissertation committee for helping me through so many hurdles, and celebrating all my wins, big and small. To the entire marketing department for always offering support, finding solutions, and doing so with utmost kindness. Finally yet importantly, to my friends within the program and outside for being my pillars of support on days when I needed it the most.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION (ESSAY 1)

Essay Title:

Can Self-Focus Be Good for Others?

Self-Compassion Reduces Felt Distance between Self and Other

Compassion is habitually thought of as something that is given to others and charitable organizations often promote the same idea of being prosocial behavior towards others. However, compassion that is directed purely towards others more often than not leads to empathy fatigue, burnout, and subsequent disengagement with the person, charity, or cause. To resolve this contradiction, I examine the construct of self-compassion. Through five studies, I find that self-compassion creates greater and longer-lasting prosocial behavior towards others than other-compassion. This effect is found because self-compassion leads to a sense of closeness between the self and other, which in turn fosters greater prosocial behavior and lower empathy fatigue than other-compassion. I posit that these effects are found because self-compassion is a unique self-concept that allows the individual to focus on the higher spiritual self rather than the lower egocentric self. To further test the effect of felt closeness, I test the effect of self-compassion on prosocial behavior moderated by the feeling of vertical distance or power over others. I observe that individuals in the self-compassionate and equal power mindset display greater prosocial behavior as compared to the other conditions. This paper contributes to the literature on self-compassion, equal power, distance between self and other, and prosocial behavior. Finally, I discuss implications for organizations and managers as to how they should engage prospective and existing donors and volunteers.

The first thing that one has to do is perceive God within oneself. This awakening will make you luminous and in turn, you will transform everything around.

Paramahansa Sri Swami Vishwananda, Shreemad Bhagavad Gita Commentary

The ancient eastern scriptures have given a clear roadmap on how one can make a positive difference to the world. Through the ages, numerous scholars and sages have concluded that to truly help the world, one must first transform the self from the lower self to the higher self, and through this process the world is automatically benefitted. They have described the lower self as that concerned with selfish, egoistical, and limited personal desires and the higher self as being compassionate, concerned with, and connected to others (Bhawuk 2008, Maitra 2022, Vishwananda 2021a). Modern academic work has also described various aspects of the self and their varied outcomes (Baumeister 2010). For this paper, I had two aims; (1) was to illustrate a pathway of how one can operate from the higher spiritual self in daily life, in a way that is simple, sustainable, and enjoyable, and (2) demonstrate how operating from the higher spiritual self positively impacts the larger society as well.

Through its increasing recognition in popular media (Vedantam 2015) and operationalization in earlier academic work (Bluth and Neff 2018), I found that self-compassion is a unique self-concept, such that it allows the individual to operate from the higher self. It allows one to be being kind to oneself as well as others simultaneously. Although self-compassion has gained much popularity in psychology and the self-help culture, very little prior work has explored it within the marketing field. Most self-concepts clearly distinguish between

the ‘self’ and ‘other’ as distinct and mutually exclusive. However, prior work on self-compassion shows that it creates a path for the individual to simultaneously (1) accept oneself and others with kindness and understanding, as well as (2) strive to continuously better oneself without expecting others to do the same (Barnard and Curry 2011, Neff and Knox 2016). Self-compassion is giving oneself care and kindness to maintain emotional balance, having a benevolent perspective towards one's imperfections, and gently transforming one's negative qualities (Neff 2003a, 2003b).

Through my work, I find that self-compassion is the link between moving from egoistical and selfish interests to viewing the self and other as equally important. To understand the power of self-compassion, let us first look at a simple practical example. If someone goes to their neighbor to ask for sugar, can the neighbor give them sugar if they themselves do not have it? In the same way, how can one be truly charitable or kind to others when kindness within and towards the self is missing? One may be able to play the game for a limited time, but very soon it would be exhausting and impossible to keep being kind and considering others' needs more than those of the self. The current paper examines the construct of self-compassion and finds that it is one of the ways to focus on the higher spiritual self rather than the lower egocentric self, allowing one to simultaneously take care of oneself and others. Hence, this paper also contributes to the literature by directly comparing self- and other-compassion.

Eastern traditions like Hinduism and Buddhism do not believe in the distinction between self and other. They affirm that there is only one reality and hence, differences between the self and other exist only superficially. On a deeper level, the same energy and universal intelligence exist in all beings (Bhawuk 2011, Dalal and Misra 2010, Raju 1954). This teaching has been

passed down through the millennia in spiritual traditions, yet it is very often overlooked in academic research and organizational practices where differences between self and other are emphasized and even, encouraged. In spiritual traditions, it is made clear that when one focuses on the higher self within oneself it does not lead to egocentric thinking but in fact, leads to fostering good actions for the world. This higher self is non-different from a universally present divine energy and hence, it resides in all beings in equal measure (Davis 2014, Vishwananda 2015, 2021a).

I find that self-compassion leads to high and long-lasting prosocial behavior even greater than other-focused compassion, however, an important point must be clarified. Although having compassion for others is an excellent quality, very often it is misunderstood and promoted in a way that ignores most (or all) needs of the self. The common person cannot do this continuously. One cannot continuously forget about the self and focus on others unless one has completely liberated oneself beyond any needs of the self. Hence, I examine these two concepts in this paper. I theorize that first learning to focus on the correct aspects of the self (i.e., the higher spiritual self) creates an automatic progression to the second stage of self-transformation which is, true and enduring other-focus. Unfortunately, because we do not know the proper first step to transform the self, the second stage of genuine other-focus also cannot manifest properly. Additionally, this paper notes that while other-compassion elicits helping behavior, without self-transformation it also creates a sense of being more special or having more power than others, the feeling of '*I can help them*'. 'I' and 'them' are seen as mutually exclusive and the self is put in a higher position than the other. Since the self and other are separated, it becomes burdensome to focus on others continually. Prior research has found that keeping the needs of the self to the side

and focusing on others is difficult and leads to empathy fatigue and possibly, complete burnout (Figley 1995, Klimecki and Singer 2012, Nouwen et al. 2006).

Despite growing interest in psychology in learning about and training individuals to be self-compassionate (MacBeth and Gumley 2012, Thurackal et al. 2016), there has been little to no work on self-compassion in marketing. This paper contributes to consumer research in three important ways. First, I examine how self-compassion can be elicited through charitable marketing messages which can change consumption choices and experiences. Thus, I look at self-compassion as a state variable rather than a trait variable as was established in prior work. Second, I find that self-compassion helps the individual to operate from the higher spiritual self and reduces the felt distance between self and other. Thus, this paper contributes to the growing work on spirituality in marketing, which emphasizes that differences exist only superficially and that there is only one universal reality. Third, I look at another dimension of feeling closeness to or distance from others, vertical distance. To measure vertical distance, I use the construct of power as a means of operationalization of three vertical distance states: high, low, or equal power as others. The feeling of close vertical distance, operationalized as equal power, has not been significantly studied in marketing work so far. I find that equal power aligns with self-compassion as it invokes feelings of common humanity or shared universal experience. Thus, I find that self-compassion and equal power together create an amplified positive effect on prosocial behavior. In the abovementioned ways, this paper provides new paradigms to earlier work and provides a sustainable framework for engaging donors or volunteers in a sustainable and long-term manner. The next chapter discusses the various constructs examined and the contribution of this work in relation with previous research.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND (ESSAY 1)

Self-Compassion and the Traditional Definition of Self-Focus

The American Psychological Association defines self-focus as an excessive concern for the self and its needs, or selfishness. Earlier literature has also looked at self-focus as egocentric. For example, self-fulfillment and self-esteem highlight the importance of individuality and uniqueness of the self compared to others, or comparisons of the current self to a past or future aspirational self (Christopher et al. 2008, Neff 2003b). In marketing literature, a similar trend is observed. Earlier papers have looked at the benefits for the self or others in marketing appeals (White and Peloza 2009) or, the different effects of focusing on the self or the environment external to the self (Chang and Hung 2018). Hence, either subtly or overtly, literature has proposed that there is a distinct separateness of self and not-self (i.e., other, environment, and so on). However, there is a way of focusing on the self that does not seem to evoke the same outcomes. Neff and Pommier (2013) show that higher levels of self-compassion are positively correlated to other-focus, empathic concern, and altruism. They show that self-compassion is not a self-centered regulation of negative emotions but in fact, a gentle and non-judgmental mindset towards the mistakes and sufferings of the self as well as those of others (Neff 2009, Wang et al. 2017).

Additionally, being in frequent contact with the suffering of others and being responsible for the regulation of their negative affect is exhausting for the giver and could lead to complete burnout (Andreychik 2019). On the other hand, Neff (2003a) shows that self-compassion incorporates the mistakes and failures of the self as a part of the human experience and

acceptance of one's imperfections. Campos et al. (2016) state that self-compassion plays an important role in cultivating well-being and positive emotions. Self-compassion allows one to be kind to oneself instead of critical and see one's troubles as part of a common humanity rather than isolating oneself from the collective whole (Hermanto and Zuroff 2016, Martin and Kennett 2018, Neff 2003a). Self-compassion nurtures the ability to be aware of one's suffering and failures and accept them with kindness. This would help one to be appropriately empathetic without becoming enmeshed or overwhelmed by others' suffering (Neff 2003a, 2003b). Hence, self-compassion would allow the donor to understand and effectively regulate how much empathy can be given to others and how much of their burden can be shared. Following these findings by earlier research, I empirically investigate whether self-compassion reduces the level of empathy fatigue felt by the donor. Getting enmeshed and overwhelmed by the other's suffering would lead to higher empathy fatigue which is what I find happens with completely other-focused compassion (refer to Hansen et al. 2018) but not so with self-compassion. Removing the self from the collective whole and focusing only on others seems to prevent individuals from taking care of themselves and also reduces their ability to act in the other's best interests for longer periods of time. Hence, a higher concept of self as explained in eastern spirituality is important and necessary, one which views the self and other as non-different from each other. I find that self-compassion is one of the ways that individuals can bridge the gap between their egocentric selves and higher spiritual selves leading to positive outcomes for the world at large.

Self-Compassion and Helping Behavior

I find that self-compassion leads to prosocial helping which is greater and longer-lasting than entirely other-focused compassion. Furthermore, I find that by developing a self-compassionate view toward oneself, one feels a reduction in the psychological distance between self and other. Whereas purely other-focused compassion creates a psychological distancing effect between the self and other. This lends further credence to the ideas put forward in eastern spirituality that focus on the higher spiritual self leads to a feeling of common humanity with others, and focusing on the lower egocentric self creates a separation from others (the distinction between self-compassion and other self-related concepts are discussed in the next section). Self-compassion allows the individual to focus on the higher self thus, allowing one to optimally take care of oneself as well as others. I posit that other-focused compassion creates a psychological distancing effect between self and other because it prevents any kind of self-focus. This can become cognitively and emotionally burdensome which in turn would increase empathy fatigue.

Eastern spiritual traditions such as Hinduism state that one must think about and behave in a better way towards oneself before one can do the same for others. For example, one must be truly happy within oneself before one can make others truly happy. Or, as seen in this paper, one must learn to be genuinely compassionate to oneself before one can be compassionate towards others in a stable and lasting manner. A clear answer is given by several authors as to why one must first positively transform the way one thinks, feels, and behaves towards oneself before attempt to bring the same positivity to others. The work by Kapoor (1999) studied the lives of more than 200 great personalities and saints. It was seen through their lives that all of them first transformed their own lives and then the help they gave to others was unconditional and natural.

Others have examined various eastern scriptures (Dimitrova 2007, Jeste and Vahia 2008) and state that somebody who is not free from the egocentric needs of the self cannot truly help someone else. The one who has learned to continuously operate from the higher spiritual self is eventually freed from selfish personal desires and such a person can be completely other-focused without tiring of it (Vishwananda 2015). However, that is the second stage in personal transformation. In this paper, I focus on the first stage; how one can start to create genuine transformation in the self and which type of self-focus is beneficial for the self and others simultaneously. Even more so than jumping straight to becoming other-focused.

An important point to note here is that marketing messages from charitable organizations strongly promote either (1) other-focused compassion or (2) egocentric praise messages about the donor or volunteer. I have discussed the importance of self-compassion versus other-focused compassion in the above section. Egocentric praise messages about the donors or volunteers very often lead to moral licensing behavior, i.e., praise for the moral act lowers the desire to engage in moral acts in the next choice opportunity (Kouchaki 2011, Kouchaki and Jami 2018). Hence, egocentric praise of donors is also not a sustainable method of engaging donors or volunteers.

In this paper, I demonstrate why it is important that the self-concept that is evoked through marketing messages should help to reduce the felt distance between the self and other. If one helps while still maintaining psychological distance from the other, that help does little to foster repeated actions of the same kind. It becomes like a tug of war to choose between the self and other, hence becoming psychologically taxing. To test this in the paper, I examine psychological distance as both (1) emotional distance (horizontally distance between self and other- close or far) as the mediator in studies 3 and 4; as well as (2) power distance (vertical

distance by feeling high, low, or equal power as others) as the moderator in study 5. I introduce the construct of felt power as an operationalization of the moderator (vertical distance) to highlight that self-compassionate individuals are further influenced to help others when the feeling of equal power with others is made salient.

Self-Compassion, General Compassion, Sympathy, and Empathy

The construct of self-compassion has convergent validity with general compassion, sympathy, and empathy. Hence, it is important to understand the nuances that differentiate self-compassion from these concepts. Lazarus (1991) defines compassion as feeling touched by another's suffering and desiring to help them. Similarly, Gilbert (2009) defines compassion as having a deep awareness of someone else's pain combined with wanting to ease it. These definitions highlight what I have discussed above that general compassion is usually thought of as compassion for others and the self is almost entirely ignored. Thus, a distinction between self and other exists in general compassion. In this paper for clarity, I use the term other-compassion for general compassion as it is often understood as the desire to alleviate someone else's suffering. I find that other-compassion leads to higher empathy fatigue because the self is ignored and thus, other-compassion fosters shorter-term altruistic actions as compared to self-compassion. Thus, compassion when it ignores the self and is only directed outwardly has positive effects. However, these positive effects are not as effective as compared to when compassion is directed to the higher spiritual self because the higher spiritual self is seen as an equal part of the whole of humanity.

Another construct that is similar to compassion is sympathy. However, over the years, sympathy has gained a negative connotation. In recent times, it is thought of as a pity-based response towards others that keeps the individual aloof from the other's suffering (Soto-Rubio and Sinclair 2018). Hence, sympathy or pity seem to elicit the separateness of the self and other once again similar to other-compassion. Shaver et al. (1987) examined more than 130 emotion words depending on how similar the participants thought them to be. Often, sympathy and pity were grouped together along with negative emotion words like sadness, and not in the same group as compassion or love. Hence, compassion and sympathy are sometimes used interchangeably, however the implication of sympathy has become more negative whereas that of compassion has remained positive.

Similarly, compassion and empathy are also positively correlated. Ekman (2014) states that compassion incorporates empathetic concern for another in which the benefactor feels the pain of the other, and additionally takes actions to help the other come out of their suffering. Hence, compassion and empathy are comparable to each other (Gilbert 2015) and have high convergent validity. However, one point differentiates self-compassion and empathy. Empathy refers to the attempt or effort to understand someone else's pains, circumstances, or experiences (Wispé 1986). Whereas self-compassion refers to the attempt to be aware of one's own experiences, flaws, imperfections, and so on to gently transform the self as well as offer oneself kindness and consideration. In self-compassion, there is no direct link made to transforming another's circumstances or experiences, which seems to happen almost automatically by viewing the self as part of the larger humanity.

Hence, other-compassion, empathy, sympathy, and pity encourage being largely (if not entirely) other-focused whereas self-compassion encourages being positively self-focused on the higher spiritual self. This important distinction is one of the pillars of this paper. The next section looks at how self-compassion is different from other self-related concepts.

Self-Compassion and Other Self-Related Concepts

Self-compassion incorporates self-acceptance with kindness as well as self-growth through transforming what is perceived as less than ideal. Most other self-concepts focus on one of the two (1) either fostering acceptance of oneself or, (2) changing oneself. When these are done separately they lead to imperfect outcomes for the individual which we will examine in this section.

Self-compassion reduces self-critical thoughts and behaviors and increases self-kindness which in turn increases the kindness given to others (Neff and Vonk 2009). Self-compassion and self-love seem like similar constructs, yet earlier work has found that people often misconstrue what self-love means and go overboard in what they deem self-love. Excessive self-love leads to an inflated self-concept and unwillingness to put others before the self (Campbell et al. 2002). Additionally, excessive self-love is positively correlated with narcissism and aggression toward others (Bushman and Baumeister 2002). However, high levels of self-compassion are negatively correlated with narcissism and aggression (Barry et al. 2015). Hence, self-love which emphasizes acceptance of the self but not transformation of the self can create less than ideal outcomes for the self and others.

Another important self-related construct, self-esteem is investigated next. Self-esteem is derived from self-assessments compared to an ideal or aspirational self as well as upward or downward social comparisons thus, making the individual vulnerable to continuous self-judgments (Barnard and Curry 2011, Fein and Spencer 1997, Neff 2003a). High levels of self-esteem frequently lead to inflated self-ideas in which the individual does not feel the need to transform anything within the self. On the other hand, low levels of self-esteem lead to negative judgments of the self thus, making it difficult to accept the self and creating desperation to regulate the negative emotion. Both these states reduce the ability to cope with failures or imperfections observed in the self (Neff and Vonk 2009). Hence, different levels of self-esteem seem to trigger either acceptance of the self and ignoring any need for transformation or lack of acceptance of the self and a self-critical way of transformation. Both leading to less than ideal outcomes.

Compared to self-compassion, rumination, self-pity, or self-judgment make it difficult to accept oneself and/or one's circumstances and lead to a depressive or passive outlook towards the self, others, or life in general (Watkins and Roberts 2020). This makes one unable to take actions to change the self or the circumstances (Stöber 2003, Watkins and Baracia 2001). Self-avoidance or suppression of negative emotions leads to cognitive load (Richards and Gross 1999), reduction in interpersonal responsiveness, and hostile emotions and behavior towards others (Butler et al. 2007). Thus, self-compassion is quite different from rumination, self-pity, or self-judgment.

Additionally, self-compassion is different from self-absorption, narcissism, or self-centeredness because these (contrary to self-compassion) lead one to focus on what could benefit

the self regardless of the effect on others (Krizan and Herlache 2018, Waelder 1925). Self-compassion allows the individual to be aware of the inadequacies witnessed in the self and positively reflect on how to best improve them (Emmons 1987). By fostering high levels of self-compassion, one does not over-identify with one's flaws, become passive, or have an inflated sense of self. High levels of self-compassion cultivate positive emotion regulation (McRae and Gross 2020) and help one to respond better to one's circumstances.

The above review shows that self-compassion is a unique type of self-focus which allows the individual to focus on the higher spiritual self. High self-compassion avoids the pitfalls of excessive self-love, self-esteem, narcissism as well as those related to rumination, self-pity, or self-judgement because with self-compassion one does not hide one's flaws but consciously accepts them with kindness and gladly transforms them into traits more beneficial for the self and others. Self-compassion increases the feeling of a shared humanity and the feeling of agency over one's experience through positive behavioral responses to distress (Germer and Neff 2013). Self-compassion thus differs from other self-constructs which seem to largely evoke association only with the lower egocentric self. To further differentiate between self-compassion and general self-referencing, I conducted a study to examine these two constructs. The results showed that self-compassion leads to the higher prosocial behavior as compared to general self-referencing or other-compassion.

In the above four sections, I have expounded on the unique construct of self-compassion by examining what prior work has investigated, as well as the constructs that are similar and dissimilar to self-compassion. Following the various arguments put forth above, the below hypotheses have been formulated.

H1a: *Individuals in a self-compassionate mindset display greater prosocial behavior towards a cause as compared to those in an other-focused compassionate mindset.*

H1b: *Individuals in a self-compassionate mindset display longer-lasting prosocial behavior towards a cause (i.e., less empathy fatigue) as compared to those in an other-focused compassionate mindset.*

The Effect of Reduction of Psychological Distance Between the Self and Other

Horizontal Distance

In self-compassion, the feeling of common humanity is important to the individual (Neff 2003b). In other words, the self and other are not viewed as distinct from each other neither is the self placed at a higher or lower level than the other. However, earlier work has not directly measured whether self-compassion creates a greater overlap or feeling of closeness between self and other. Thus, I empirically test the effect of self-compassion on psychological distance between the self and other. I find that self-compassion leads to feelings of psychological closeness with others which subsequently foster greater prosocial behavior compared to other-compassion.

Psychological distance between the self and other is an important paradigm in decision-making. Hall (1966) finds that people feel comfortable at a specific distance from others and such proximity or remoteness can influence their decision-making (Xu et al. 2012). In the current research, I examine the reduction of psychological distance between self and other because it

provides evidence that self-compassion creates a feeling of closeness with others. This is one of the important contributions of this paper. In self-compassion, the self and other are viewed as overlapping in their identities leading to greater prosocial behavior. Hence, feeling self-compassion simultaneously creates good for the individual themselves as well as for the world. In this paper, I investigate the mediator, psychological or emotional distance as a horizontal distance between the self and other, by adapting the measure developed by Aron et al. (1992).

***H2:** The effect of donors' self-compassionate (other-compassionate) mindset on prosocial behavior is mediated by feelings of closeness (distance) between self and other.*

However, the feeling of distance from others can be felt on a vertical dimension as well. Usually, the feeling of power elicits feelings of vertical distance (of high or low elevation) between individuals (Jami 2019, Schubert 2005). Hence, I use power as a way to operationalize the construct of vertical distance and test the effect of vertical distance as a moderator of the effect of self-compassion on prosocial behavior. This is discussed in the next section.

Vertical Distance

Vertical distance is another construct that can influence the distance between self and other. I measure vertical distance in this paper by using felt power as the operational variable. Feeling powerful or having power has been defined as the extent to which an individual has

relative control over their own or another's valued outcomes or resources (Fiske and Berdahl 2007, Scholl and Sassenberg 2015). It is important to note that the feeling of psychological power is relative, its value is determined by the social context and the subject's position relative to another (Schaerer et al. 2018). In other words, one cannot talk about someone having power without specifying over whom or what (Emerson 1962) making it possible that a person can be powerful in one situation and powerless in another (Fiske and Berdahl 2007). Prior work has shown that the actions of powerful people are different from those feeling powerless (Rucker et al. 2011). Powerful individuals are less likely to be accurately empathetic (Galinsky et al. 2006, Van Kleef et al. 2004). Even in close interpersonal relationships, powerful individuals are less likely to sacrifice their self-interests in favor of their partner and his/her needs (Righetti et al. 2015). Feeling powerful tends to reduce the willingness to help and increases the psychological and emotional distance from others (Lammers et al. 2012).

However, prior work has mainly examined the unequal power states i.e., high, or low power as compared to others, and their effect on various constructs such as prosocial orientation (Côté et al. 2011), leadership positions (Winter 1987), aggression (Fast and Chen 2009), and risk-taking (McClelland and Watson 1973) among others. It is noteworthy to mention the work by Chen et al. (2001) that considered two important points (1) they compared feeling power versus a control condition, and (2) ruled out the effect of equal power as the mean between the two unequal power states due to not showing a significant effect by itself. This is important for the current paper because it highlights that, (1) a control condition is not sufficient to be considered as an equal power condition and (2) the idea of equal power has not been properly studied together with the two unequal power states. In this paper, I examine the feeling of equal

power and find that a mindset of equal power as others reduces the felt distance between self and other. Thus, the feeling of equal power displays an amplification of the positive effect of self-compassion on prosocial behavior. Thus, this feeling of reduced distance, whether horizontally or vertically, aligns with the dimension of self-compassion which invokes feelings of a common humanity. Study 5 shows that donors in the other-focused compassionate mindset are not influenced by feelings of equal power. I suspect that in charitable practices and earlier academic work, individuals may unconsciously carry feelings of superiority over less fortunate others in the donation context. Such feelings of superiority or high power could be driving the positive effect of other-focused compassion on prosocial behavior because the donor is made to feel that others lack the resources that s/he has, leading to temporarily heightened prosocial acts.

Similar to self-compassion, the feeling of equal power aligns with the spiritual concepts of eastern ancient scriptures which highlight that the innermost self within each individual is the same divine energy, hence not more or less powerful or important than anyone else (Knott 2016, Vishwananda 2016). The construct of equal power is another important contribution of this paper to academic work as well as managerial practices.

H3: Equal power as others amplifies the positive effect of self-focused compassion on prosocial behavior.

The next chapter discusses the conceptual model and the studies conducted to find evidence for the hypotheses of this paper.

CHAPTER THREE: OVERVIEW OF STUDIES (ESSAY 1)

Five studies test the effect of self- and other-compassion on prosocial behavior, the proposed underlying mechanism through reduced distance between self and other, and moderation through felt power. Figure 1 specifies the conceptual model for this paper and how each study fits into it.

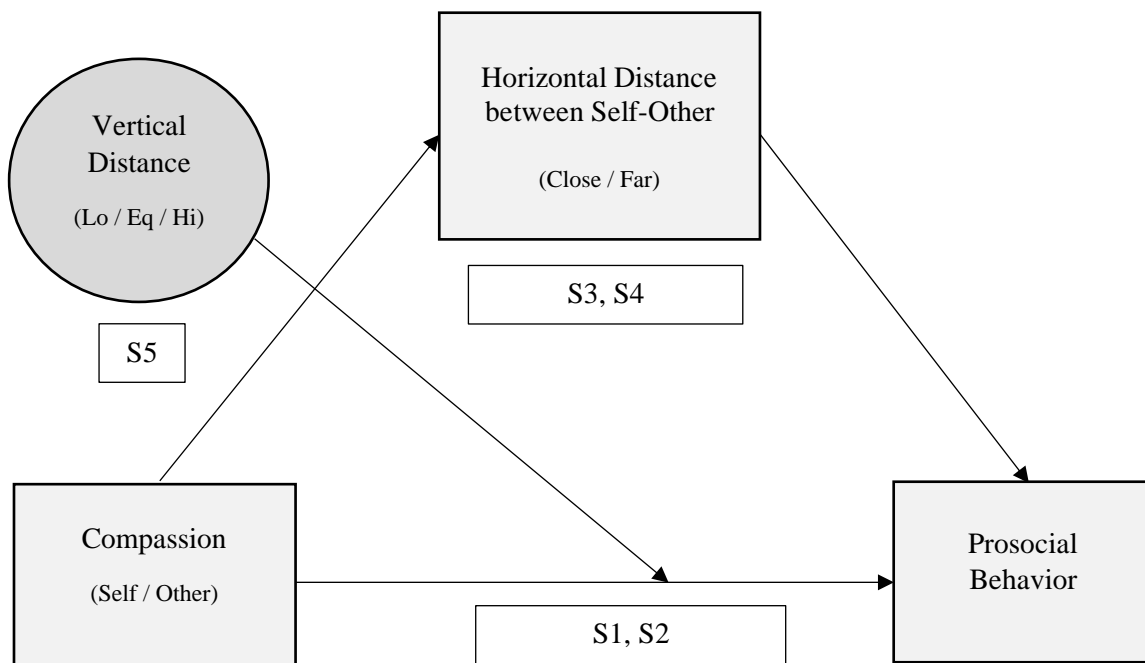


Figure 1: Essay 1 Conceptual Model

First, the effect of compassion (self vs other) on prosocial behavior is examined in two ways, (1) study 1- direct prosocial measures and (2) study 2- reduction in empathy fatigue. In study 3, the mechanism is tested; the effect of compassion (self vs other) on prosocial helping mediated by reduced distance between self and other is investigated. In study 4, the underlying mechanism is further tested through moderation of process (Spencer et al. 2005); compassion (self vs other) and horizontal distance (emotional/ psychological distance: close vs far) are manipulated to investigate their combined effect on prosocial behavior. Finally, in study 5, the moderation is tested; compassion (self vs other) and vertical psychological distance (power: high, equal, or low) are manipulated to investigate their combined effect on prosocial behavior.

Study 1: Effect of Self-Compassion, Other-Compassion, and General Self-Referencing on Prosocial Behavior

Study 1 investigates the effects of self-compassion, other-compassion, and general self-referencing on prosocial behavior. The purpose is to (1) differentiate between the effects of self-compassion and other-compassion on prosocial behavior and, (2) to rule out an alternate explanation of the results of this paper through a general self-referencing frame of mind.

Method

Participants. Three hundred and twenty-eight participants (49.6% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 21.3$) were recruited through an undergraduate subject pool.

Procedure and Stimuli. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions in a between-subjects experimental design. To hide the true purpose of the study, they were told that the study was divided into two parts and in the first part they would read a social media post and reply whether the post was easy to understand or not. The fictitious tweets they read elicited either self-compassion, other-compassion, or general self-referencing. Next, they answered two questions on whether the post was easy to understand. These questions served as comprehension checks for the study. The participants then progressed to the second part of the study in which they were asked to answer some questions such as, which charities they would support. They were asked to choose between five charities that support different causes (such as, Center for Disaster Philanthropy, Cancer Research Institute and so on) or to not support any cause. The participants that chose one of the charities were asked whether they would volunteer to organize a fundraiser and raise awareness on social media for the charity. Responses were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = extremely unlikely, 7 = extremely likely). If they chose not to support any charity, they skipped all the prosocial questions and reached the end of the study. See Appendix B for all study details.

Results and Discussion

Comprehension and Attention Checks. 48 participants were removed for failing either the comprehension check questions or a simple attention check question.

Hypothesis Testing. Preliminary analysis showed that 9 participants in the general self-referencing condition opted to not support any charity compared to 4 in the self-compassion and

2 in the other-compassion conditions. An ANOVA showed a significant difference between the groups for volunteering to help organize a fundraiser ($F(2, 280) = 7.856, p < .001$) and to raise awareness on social media ($F(2, 280) = 7.576, p < .001$). For volunteering to fundraise, pairwise analysis showed that self-compassion was significantly different from general self-referencing ($M_{SC} = 4.18, M_{SR} = 3.41, p < .001$) and self-compassion was significantly different from other-compassion ($M_{SC} = 4.18, M_{OC} = 3.67, p = .013$). However, general self-referencing and other-compassion were not significantly different from each other ($M_{SR} = 3.41, M_{OC} = 3.67, p = .632$).

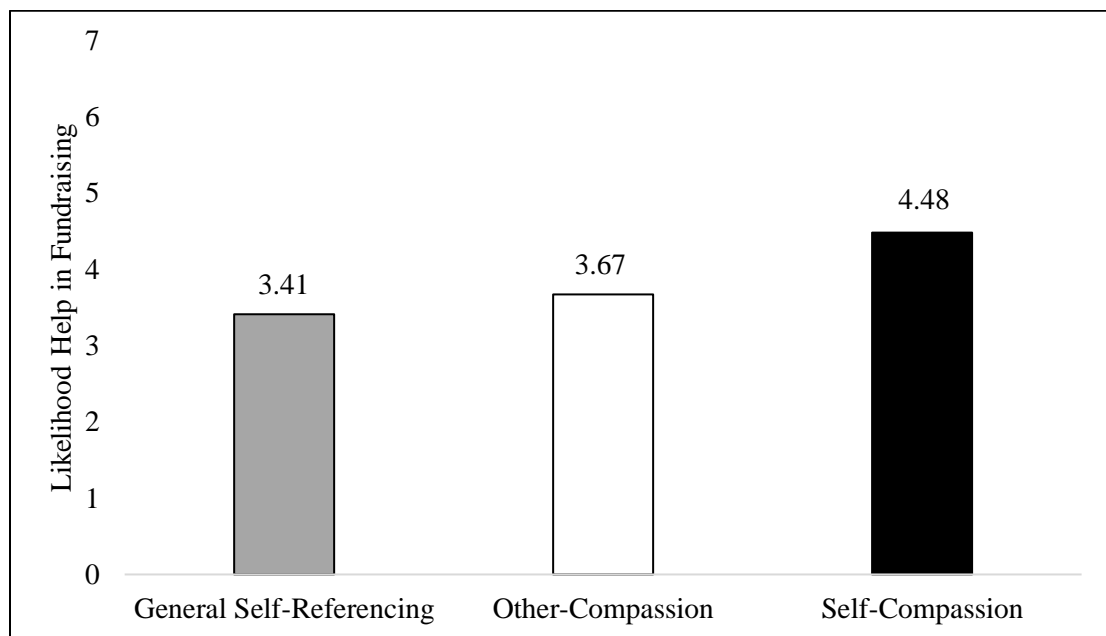


Figure 2: Essay 1 Study 1- Likelihood to Help Organize a Fundraiser for a Charity of Participants' Choice

Similarly, for volunteering to raise awareness on social media, pairwise analysis showed that self-compassion was significantly different from general self-referencing ($M_{SC} = 5.12$, $M_{SR} = 4.19$, $p < .001$) and self-compassion was significantly different from other-compassion ($M_{SC} = 5.12$, $M_{OC} = 4.18$, $p = .011$). However, general self-referencing and other-compassion were not significantly different from each other ($M_{SR} = 4.19$, $M_{OC} = 4.18$, $p = .751$).



Figure 3: Essay 1 Study 1- Likelihood to Help Raise Awareness on Social Media

The results support hypothesis 1a that those in the self-compassionate mindset display higher prosocial behavior as compared to other-compassion. Furthermore, comparison with the general self-referencing condition provided evidence that self-compassion is a unique type of

self-focus and that a general self-referencing frame of mind does not drive the results presented in this paper.

Another interesting point is that general self-referencing and other-compassion were not found to be significantly different from each other. This could indicate that evoking other-compassion is not as effective as is generally presumed to produce prosocial behavior. In fact, if a self-referencing frame of mind can produce similar positive prosocial results as other-compassion then it undermines the importance that is generally placed on evoking other-compassion. This also provides evidence for my discussion that other-compassion is the second step towards making a difference in the world. The first and necessary step is to foster that change or transformation within oneself, through a trait like self-compassion, and then other-compassion is naturally produced. The next study examines self-compassion and empathy fatigue to further illustrate the difference between the effects of self-compassion and other-compassion.

Study 2: Self-Compassion Leads to Less Empathy Fatigue Compared to Other-Compassion

Study 2 examines the effects of compassion (self vs other) on empathy fatigue. Empathy fatigue is an important variable in prosocial behavior research because compassion frequently leads to the experience of fatigue after a period (Figley 1995, Hegel et al. 2021). As discussed earlier, empathy fatigue leads to less than desirable long-term results. Donors and volunteers often feel burnout and disengage with the charity or the cause entirely when they feel fatigued by

putting others' needs before their own. Thus, finding a way to reduce empathy fatigue would be very valuable for any charitable organization. It would allow the donors or volunteers themselves to become ambassadors for the cause by being involved long-term rather than all marketing activities being organization-driven. In this study, participants were presented with three donation appeals separated by unrelated tasks to elicit empathy fatigue. I find that those in the self-compassionate condition display less empathy fatigue than participants in the other-compassionate condition. In other words, self-compassionate individuals are more likely to donate or volunteer after several donation appeals than other-compassionate individuals.

Method

Participants. Two hundred and eleven participants (52.7% female, $M_{age} = 19.9$) were recruited through an undergraduate subject pool.

Procedure and Stimuli. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions (self-compassion or other-compassion) in a between-subjects experimental design. Next, they were presented with three donation or volunteer appeals by a charity separated by unrelated filler tasks to elicit empathy fatigue. Finally, they answered three questions whether they felt fatigued (adapted from the Empathy Fatigue Scale, Stamm 2002). Example, "I feel worn out after helping others". Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all to 5 = very much so). See Appendix C for all study details.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis Testing. An ANOVA revealed a significant difference between self-compassion and other-compassion on empathy fatigue ($F(1, 211) = 10.626, p = .001$). Additionally, a marginally significant difference was found between self-compassion and other-compassion on likelihood to volunteer in the third donation appeal ($F(1, 211) = 3.218, p = .076$).

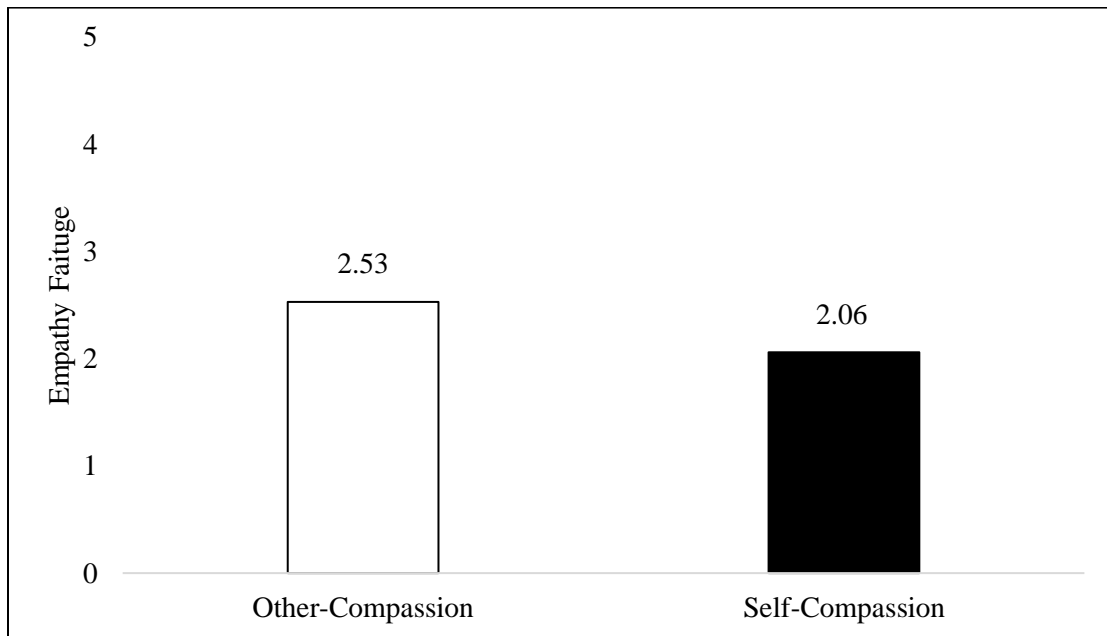


Figure 4: Essay 1 Study 2- Self-Compassion Leads to Lower Empathy Fatigue

However, when I tested for repeated measures on the three donation appeals, significant results were not found ($F(2,211) = 1.112, p = 0.156$). I believe the repeated measures analysis was not significant because the first donation appeal did not show a significant difference

between self- and other-compassion ($F(1, 211) = 1.019, p = .123$). The second donation appeal shows a partially significant difference between self- and other-compassion on prosocial behavior $F(1, 211) = 2.05, p = .091$). As well as a partially significant difference on the third donation appeal as mentioned above.

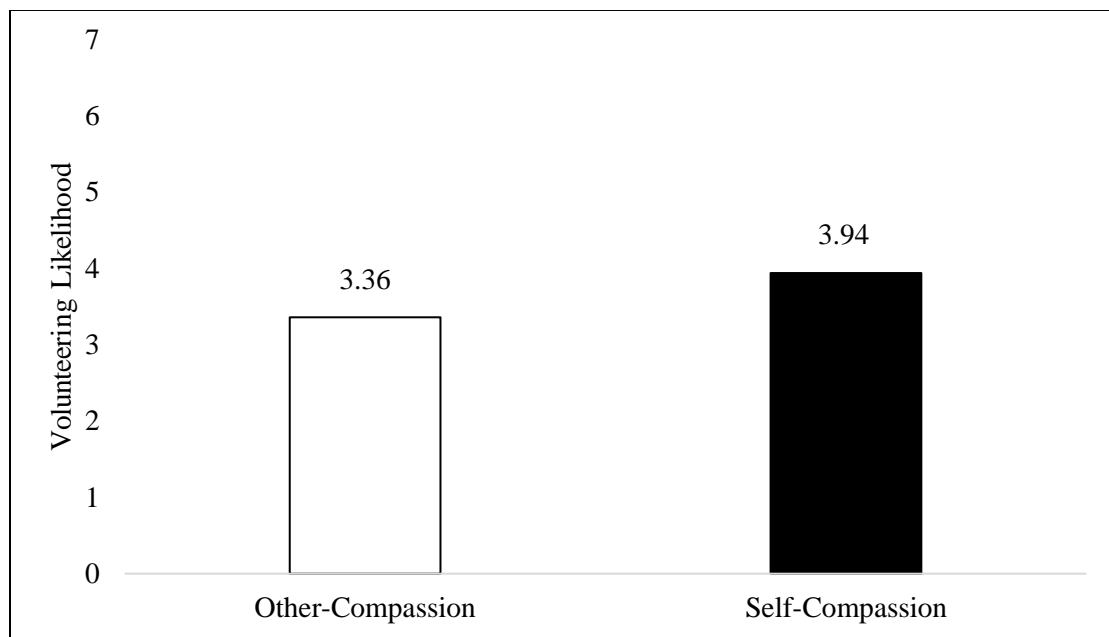
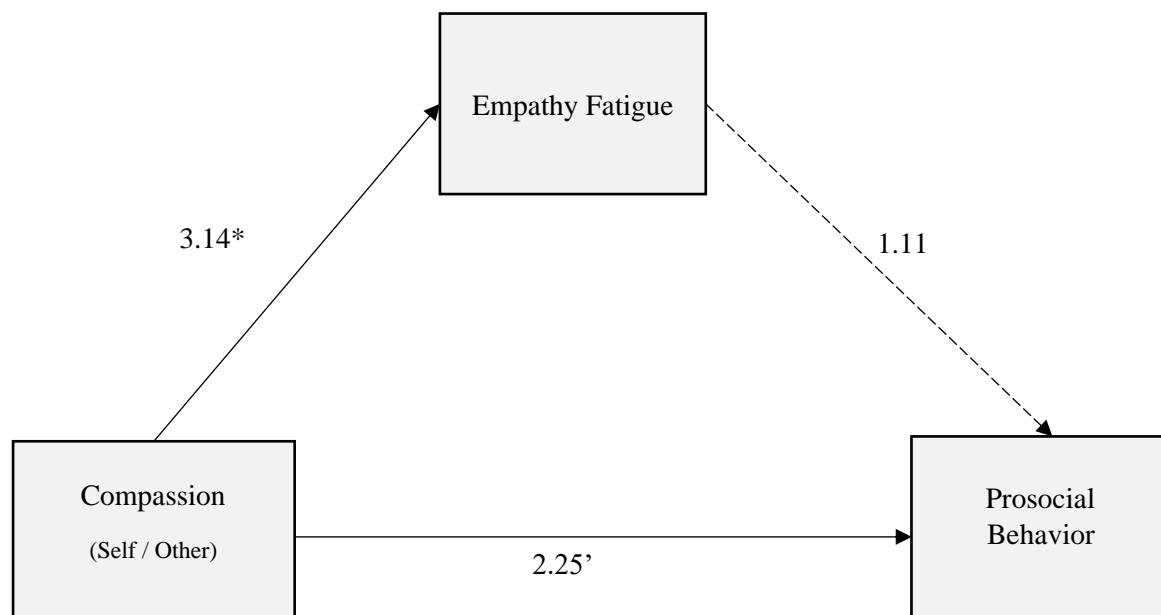


Figure 5: Essay 1 Study 2- Self-Compassion Leads to Greater Likelihood to Volunteer

These results show that self-compassion reduces the feeling of empathy fatigue as compared to other-compassion as found through the empathy fatigue scale analysis. In addition, although the full repeated measures analysis was not significant, the post hoc pairwise comparisons show that the difference between self- and other-compassion on prosocial behavior becomes partially significant for the second donation appeal and further closer to the 95%

confidence interval for the third donation appeal. Hence, it can be seen that with each successive donation appeal, the difference between self-compassion and other-compassion on prosocial behavior becomes more substantial.

Testing for Mediation by Empathy Fatigue. A supporting mediation analysis was conducted by examining the effect of self-compassion on empathy fatigue and its subsequent effect on prosocial behavior through PROCESS model 4 (Hayes 2013). This was important to further examine the above empathy fatigue analysis as well as the conceptual model for this paper.



Note: All coefficients reported are unstandardized effects. * $p < .05$, ' $p < .10$

Figure 6: Essay 1 Study 2- Supporting Mediation Analysis

In the analysis, the 90% confidence interval of the index of mediation excluded zero (index = .0920, 90% CI [.0004, .1793]). The direct effect for compassion on the mediator, empathy fatigue, was significant ($t = 3.26$, $SE = .23$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [.34, .68]). Additionally, the direct effect for compassion on the dependent variable, likelihood to volunteer, when the mediator (empathy fatigue) was introduced was partially significant ($t = 1.79$, $SE = .41$, $p = .081$, 90% CI [.109, .277]). However, the direct effect of the mediator on the dependent variable (likelihood to volunteer) was not significant ($t = 2.33$, $SE = .27$, $p = .167$, 90% CI [-.007, .112]). The indirect effect of compassion on the dependent variable (likelihood to volunteer) through the mediator (empathy fatigue) was partially significant ($t = 1.39$, $SE = .09$, $p = .077$, 90% CI [.07, .18]).

The overall mediation model excluded zero at the 90% confidence interval; however, it is possible that partial significance was found for the mediation model because there is a significant effect of compassion on empathy fatigue as well as a partially significant effect of compassion on prosocial behavior. Nevertheless, the direct path of the effect of empathy fatigue on prosocial behavior isn't statistically significant. Hence, although there are some effects of empathy fatigue as a mediating variable, it isn't an ideal mediator for the effect of compassion on prosocial behavior. However, the effect of self-compassion and other-compassion on empathy is very important to note. The above study shows that self-compassion displays lower empathy fatigue than other-compassion, which provides evidence in support of H1b.

Creating marketing campaigns that evoke self-compassion rather than other-compassion which would help the charitable organization to reduce the level of empathy fatigue felt by their donors and volunteers. Longer-term engagement with existing donors and volunteers and

reducing the burden of continuous new recruitment would be beneficial to any charity. The above analyses provide evidence for hypothesis 1b that individuals in a self-compassionate mindset display longer lasting prosocial behavior towards a cause, as compared to donors in an other-focused compassionate mindset. The next study examines the proposed underlying mechanism of this paper through the mediator, horizontal distance between self-other.

Study 3: Mediation of the Effect Through Reduced Horizontal Distance Between Self and Other

This study tests the proposed underlying mechanism for the effect of compassion on prosocial behavior. The results provide evidence for the hypothesis that self-compassion elicits a feeling of closer distance between self and other whereas, other-compassion does not. Hence, those who are self-compassionate subsequently exhibit greater prosocial behavior.

Method

Participants. Two hundred and eighty participants (55.7% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 21.4$) were recruited through an undergraduate subject pool.

Procedure and Stimuli. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions (self-compassion or other-compassion) in a between-subjects experimental design. First, they read a fictitious scenario about a cancer patient and were asked to converse with the patient as though they were standing together. They were prompted to use either first-person (I,

me, mine) pronouns or second-person pronouns (you, yours). After this they answered two comprehension check questions. Next, they read a brief paragraph about a fictitious charity, Win Against Cancer, and answered whether they would help to organize a fundraiser for the charity in their city. Responses were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = extremely unlikely to 7 = extremely likely). Next, they were told that they are progressing to the second part of the study in which the researchers are interested to know how they view their relationship with others. They responded to the self-other inclusion Venn diagrams (Aron et al. 1992) to measure how they viewed their relationship with others. This served to measure the distance between self and other that I propose mediates the effect of self-compassion on prosocial behavior. See Appendix D for all study details.

Results and Discussion

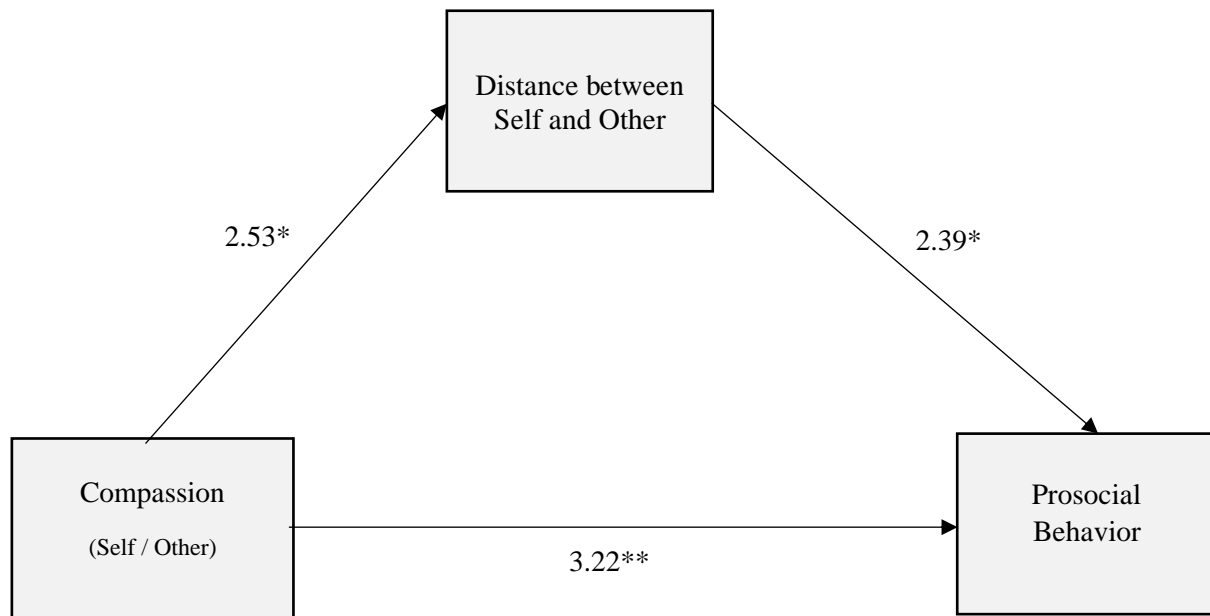
Comprehension and Attention Checks. 60 participants were removed for failing either the comprehension check questions or attention check questions that required them to respond to the Stroop Test (Stroop 1935) where the participants had to reply with the color in which the word was written and not the word itself (example, the word ‘red’ was written in black font and the correct answer was black, not red).

Mediation Analysis. To test the mediation of self-compassion on prosocial behavior through reduced felt distance between self and other PROCESS model 4 (Hayes 2013) was used. In the analysis, the 95% confidence interval of the index of mediation excluded zero (index = .0920, 95% CI [.0055, .2183]). The direct effect of compassion on the mediator, reduced distance

between self and other, was significant ($t = 2.53$, $SE = .17$, $p = .0121$, 95% CI [.10, .79]).

Additionally, the direct and indirect effects were significant when the mediator was introduced.

The effect of self-compassion on volunteering to organize a fundraiser was significant ($t = 3.22$, $SE = .23$, $p = .0015$, 95% CI [.29, .38]) and the effect of reduced distance between self and other on volunteering to organize a fundraiser is significant ($t = 2.39$, $SE = .09$, $p = .0177$, 95% CI [.04, .38]).



Note: All coefficients reported are unstandardized effects. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 7: Essay 1 Study 3- Mediation Analysis

These results provide support for the underlying mechanism proposed in the conceptual model, i.e., provide robust evidence in support of H2. Self-compassion leads to reduced felt

distance between self and other thereby, leading to higher prosocial behavior in the self-compassionate condition compared to the other-compassionate condition. The next study further tests the underlying mechanism through moderation of process.

Study 4: Moderation of Process- Compassion and Horizontal Distance

In this study, compassion (self vs other) and the horizontal distance between self and other (emotional/ psychological distance: close vs far) are manipulated to examine their combined effects on prosocial behavior. The results show that manipulating psychological distance moderates the effect of self-compassion on prosocial behavior such that the interaction of self-compassion and close emotional distance displays the higher prosocial behavior compared to other conditions. Other-compassion and far emotional distance and self-compassion and far emotional distance display similar levels of prosocial behavior. This study shows that far distance attenuates the positive effect of self-compassion on prosocial behavior.

Method

Participants. Four hundred and fourteen participants (46.4.% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 21.1$) were recruited through an undergraduate subject pool.

Procedure and Stimuli. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (compassion: self or other) by 2 (psychological distance: close or far) condition between-subjects experimental design. First, they read a fictitious post that used their ‘previous answers’ within the research

session to generate some quick personality test results. This post either elicited individuality, uniqueness, and difference from others as well as an image from the self-other inclusion Venn diagrams (Aron et al. 1992) that depicted far distance from others. Or it elicited close distance from others and used words like closeness or similarity to others, shared experience and so on in addition to an image from the self-other inclusion Venn diagrams (Aron et al. 1992) that depicted closeness to others. Next, they saw a poster about a fictitious charity called Home & Hearth which either elicited self- or other-compassion and two comprehension check questions regarding the poster. Lastly, they answered whether they would help to organize a fundraiser for the charity in their city. Responses were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = extremely unlikely to 7 = extremely likely). See Appendix E for all study details.

Results and Discussion

Comprehension and Attention Checks. 22 participants were removed for failing either the comprehension check questions or simple attention check.

Hypothesis Testing. The analysis showed a significant interaction between compassion and distance ($F(1, 410) = 8.48, p = .004$). The main effect of compassion was not significant ($F(1,410) = 0.026, p = .871$) and the main effect of distance was partially significant ($F(1,410) = 2.72, p = 0.10$). Pairwise comparisons showed that in close distance, self-compassion displayed a higher tendency to be prosocial than other-compassion ($M_{SC-C} - M_{OC-C} = .82, p = .030$) and in far distance, self-compassion and other-compassion are not significantly different from each other ($M_{SC-F} - M_{OC-F} = .08, p = .123$). In self-compassion, close distance is significantly different from

far distance ($M_{SC-C} - M_{SC-F} = .87, p = .021$). In other-compassion, there is no significant difference between close and far distance ($M_{OC-C} - M_{OC-F} = -.13, p = .287$). These results are in line with my hypothesis that other-compassion leads to prosocial behavior because the individual prefers to feel more unique and different from others (i.e., greater psychological/ emotional distance from others or lower self-other overlap). In other words, individuals in the mindset of other-compassion help others but with a feeling of personal uniqueness. It follows that this feeling of being more special than others does not foster true community orientation nor a feeling of shared humanity with others.

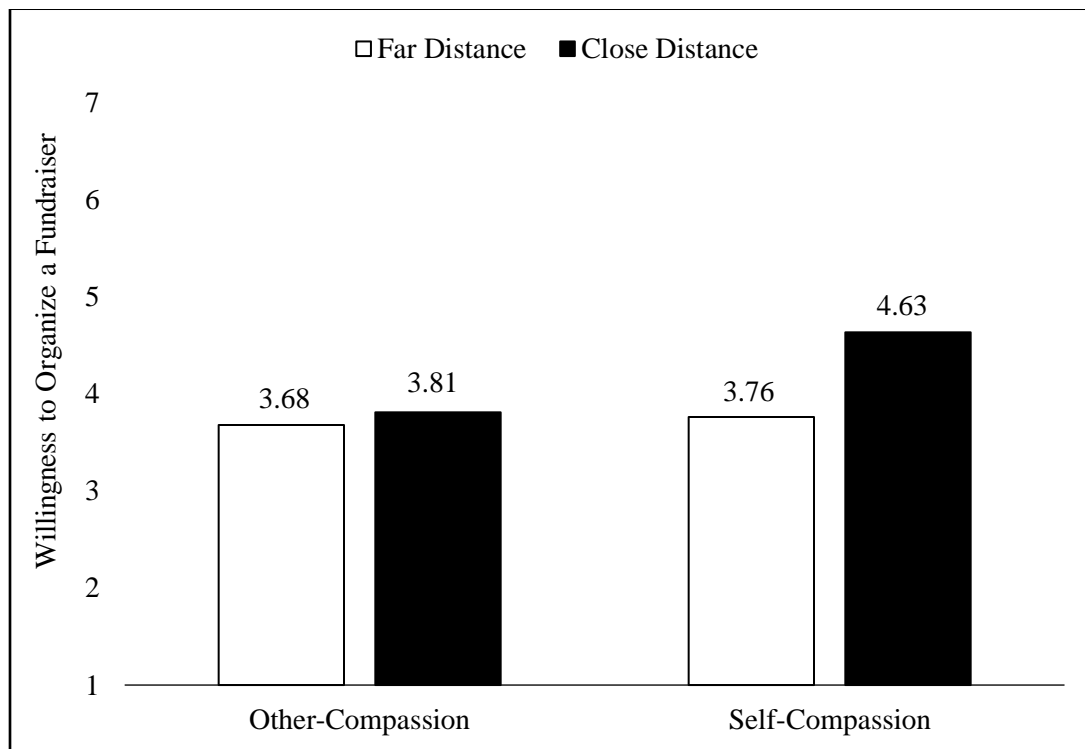


Figure 8: Essay 1 Study 4- Process by Moderation

These results also provide further support to the results of study 2, where individuals feeling other-compassion display more empathy fatigue because the separation between self and other is continuously salient creating emotional load for the individual (Figley 2002). When feeling more special or unique, individuals would be prosocial mainly because it reinforces the idea of their own individuality. The level of self-compassion and far distance is not significantly different from the level of prosocial behavior seen in other-compassion and far distance. Hence, far distance seems to attenuate the effect of self-compassion.

On the other hand, in the self-compassion condition there is a significant difference between individuals in the close or far emotional distance conditions. Closeness with others amplifies the positive effect of self-compassion on prosocial behavior. Whereas far distance from others seems to attenuate the positive effect of self-compassion on prosocial behavior. This study tested the combined effect of compassion (self or other) with horizontal distance from others (close or far) on prosocial behavior. The next study tests the combined effect compassion (self or other) and vertical distance with others (power: low, equal, or high) on prosocial behavior. Vertical distance is manipulated by the feeling power over others or equal power as others. Through studies 4 and 5, I test both dimensions of distance (horizontal- emotional/psychological distance and vertical- power relative to others) and their combined effects with compassion(self or other) on prosocial behavior. I posit that the positive effect of self-compassion on prosocial behavior is amplified by both types of closeness with others (horizontal as well as vertical- equal power).

Study 5: Moderation of the Effect of Self-Compassion on Prosocial Behavior by Felt Power

This study tests the feeling of vertical distance from others through the feeling of power. Similar to the above studies 3 and 4 which measure the feeling of horizontal- emotional or psychological distance from others, felt power also influences the extent of felt closeness with or distance from others. Hence, I introduce vertical distance as a moderator of the effect of compassion on prosocial behavior. Vertical distance is operationalized as power (low, equal, or high power). Vertical distance is important to understand because self-compassion involves (1) being kind to oneself which is in turn given to others as prosocial behavior, mediated by feelings of closeness with others, as well as (2) the feelings of a shared humanity with others which is equivalent to having a mindset of equal power as others.

The vertical distance between self and other (power: high, equal, or low) and compassion (self vs other) are manipulated to test their combined effects on prosocial behavior. Earlier research has mainly analyzed the unequal power states (high or low power as compared to others) in prosocial helping. For example, high power increases the emotional/ psychological distance between the self and others (Smith and Trope 2006, Trope and Liberman 2010, Trope et al. 2007) and Rucker et al. (2011) find that high power individuals are more self-focused and hence, donate less. Contradictorily, Han et al. (2017) find that individuals feeling either high or low power could be more prosocial than the other under specific circumstances. However, it must be noted that (1) feeling powerful or powerless is dependent on the situation (Schaerer et al. 2018) and (2) feeling powerful could result in devaluing or disapproving of the less powerful (Kipnis 1972). Considering that the feeling of power has shown such varied effects and prior

work has not adequately tested the feeling of equal power, I examine three power states: low, equal, and high in this paper. I find that the feeling of self-compassion and equal power as others leads to greater positive attitudes towards the charity compared to other conditions.

Method

Participants. Four-hundred seventy-four participants (49.6% female, $M_{age} = 21.3$) were recruited through an undergraduate subject pool.

Procedure and Stimuli. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (compassion: self vs other) x 3 (power: low, equal, or high) between-subjects experimental design. All participants read a fictitious story about someone describing how his family lost all their possessions and livelihood during the California wildfires. The participants were asked to respond either using self-compassionate (first-person pronouns) or other-compassionate language (second-person pronouns). Power was manipulated by asking the participants to read a paragraph that evoked feelings of low (subordinate), equal power (same power as a colleague), or high power (manager) (adapted from Gruenfeld et al. 2008) and two comprehension check questions. Next, the participants solved a word search grid embedded with six words related to their power condition (low, equal, or high) and four control words to further induce the differentiated feelings of power (Chen et al. 2001). The low power words were inferior, weakness, worker, follower, subordinate and trivial. The equal power words were friends, match, balance, equal, same, and similar. The high-power words were authority, boss, superior, control, executive and influence. The control words in all three grids were food, house, clock, and table. Lastly,

participants read a short description of a charity (the Red Cross), that helps meet ongoing needs for shelter, food, immediate financial relief and other necessities for individuals affected by natural disasters. Participants indicated their attitudes towards the charity. Responses were measured on a 7-point bipolar scale (bad/ good; unappealing/ appealing; not likeable/ likeable; poor/ excellent; negative/ positive) (adapted from Armitage and Conner 2001). See Appendix F for all study details.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation and Attention Checks. 31 participants were removed for failing either the attention or power manipulation checks.

Hypothesis Testing. An ANOVA with compassion (self vs. other) and power (high/ equal/ low) was conducted. The interaction between compassion and power on attitudes towards the charity was significant ($F(2, 474) = 3.26, p = .039$). A significant main effect of compassion was observed ($F(1, 474) = 3.95, p = .048$), such that participants in the self-compassion condition had higher positive attitudes towards the charity ($M = 5.99, SD = 1.27$) than those in the other-compassion condition ($M = 5.72, SD = 1.48$).

Pairwise Comparisons. Comparison analyses between the six conditions were conducted to understand the above results in detail. The most significant analyses were between (1) self-compassion and equal power versus those in self-compassion and high or low power (2) self-compassion and equal power versus other-compassion and equal power.

Within the self-compassion condition, equal power individuals were marginally different from low- and high-power conditions at the 90% CI ($M_{SC-E} - M_{SC-L} = .38, p = .091$ and $M_{SC-E} - M_{SC-H} = .40, p = .084$). Helmert contrasts showed the comparison between self-compassion and equal power condition and the combined means of self-compassion and the two unequal power conditions (high and low). I find that self-compassion and equal power is significantly different from the combined means of self-compassion and the other two power condition ($F(2, 236) = 2.89, p = .046$).

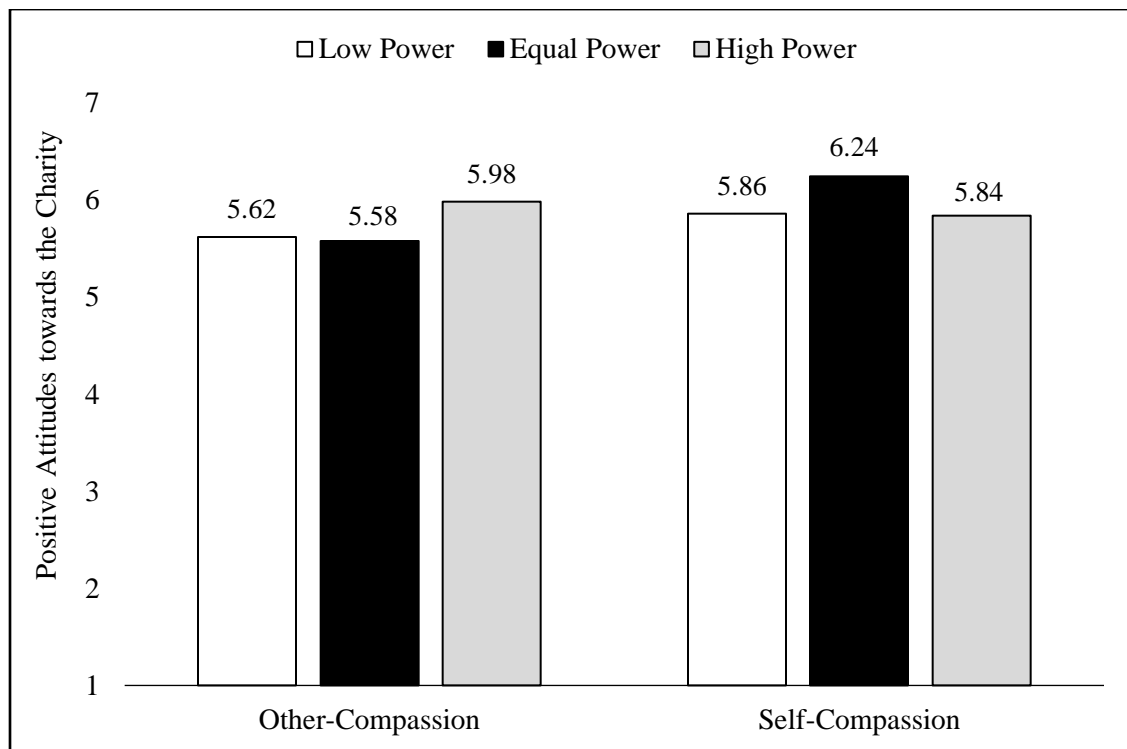


Figure 9: Essay 1 Study 5- Moderation by Vertical Distance

In the other-compassion condition, the condition of high power generated greater prosocial attitudes than equal power and low power ($M_{OC-H} - M_{OC-E} = .40, p = .057$ and $M_{OC-H} - M_{OC-L} = .36, p = .098$). This provides evidence that other-compassion tends to align with far emotional/ psychological distance from others through feeling more power than others (or high power compared to others) to be prosocial. It is also in line with earlier work by Han et al. (2017). It must be noted that overall, this still produces lower helping behavior than by those in a self-compassionate and equal power mindset. Individuals in the self-compassionate and equal power displayed significantly higher positive attitudes towards the charity compared to those in the other-compassionate and equal power condition ($M_{SC-E} - M_{OC-E} = .66, F(1, 472) = 9.55, p = .002$). These results provide strong evidence for hypothesis 3 that individuals in the self-compassionate condition have higher positive attitudes towards the charity than individuals in the other-compassionate condition. The feeling of equal power amplifies the effect of self-compassion on prosocial attitudes as compared to equal power and other-compassion which shows that equal power as others and self-compassion are complementary to each other, displaying a congruent effect. This shows that in self-compassion, power differentials between people do not lead to ideal prosocial outcomes, which is a contribution of this paper to managers and academic work.

Additionally, other-compassion and equal power do not show this harmonizing or congruent effect. In practice and in research, compassion towards others is encouraged with the assumption that it will lead to better outcomes for the world. However, (1) other-focused compassion is not complementary with an equal power mindset and thus, creates power differentials between people leading to less than ideal prosocial outcomes. (2) The positive effects of other-compassion are shorter term than those of self-compassion, oftentimes leading to

negative future behaviors such as empathy fatigue or moral licensing. It is important to understand how to create lasting prosocial attitudes so that empathy fatigue can be reduced, and higher positive engagement can be fostered. The next section discusses the theoretical and managerial contributions of this paper as well as the limitations and directions for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR: GENERAL DISCUSSION (ESSAY 1)

This research investigates the effect of self or other focus on various prosocial attitudes and behavioral intentions. Across five studies, I find that self-compassionate individuals tend to be more prosocial than individuals who directly try to foster other-compassion. Through the above studies, it is seen that self-focus doesn't always correlate with the negative traits of self-centeredness. There can be a way to operate from the higher spiritual self in daily life, and one such way is through self-compassion. Having self-compassion is a much more effective way of being compassionate to others as well because it increases kindness towards the self and therefore, towards others. In charitable contexts, this is very important to take note of because donors and volunteers are very often encouraged to be as other-focused as possible. However, this may lead to greater empathy fatigue and hence, shorter-term engagement with the charity or cause.

Theoretical Contributions

Through this research, I contribute to the academic literature on self and other focus, psychological distance, prosocial behavior, and vertical distance (power). First, self and other focus need not be mutually exclusive paradigms as is the prevalent thinking. As seen in Bhawuk (2011) and eastern spiritual books and traditions, the self and other are not separate entities. The same universal energy and spirit exists within all and emphasizing the difference between the self and other leads to operating from the lower egocentric self, hence fostering harmful

outcomes for the self and the world. Reducing the psychological distance between the self and other can help to remind the world of the ageless wisdom that what is truly beneficial for the self is beneficial for the other, and vice versa. This is possible when one focuses on the higher spiritual self within oneself rather than the lower egocentric self (Vishwananda 2021b). Developing traits such as self-compassion, which reduce the distance between self and other can help one to live with greater kindness and acceptance. Importantly, as discussed above the importance difference between self-compassion and empathy, sympathy, pity, and general compassion (or other-compassion) is that in self-compassion an effort is made to be kind to oneself which in turn increases kindness towards others. Whereas, in empathy, sympathy, pity, and general compassion (or other-compassion) the self is largely (if not entirely) ignored and an effort is to made to be kind towards others alone.

Second, this paper adds to the work on prosocial behavior by examining the construct of self-compassion in the marketing literature and as a state variable rather than a trait variable as was examined in previous work. Changing the focus from short-term variances in prosocial behavior (Bénabou and Tirole 2006) to longer-lasting helping behavior that is beneficial for donors and recipients has the potential to be very impactful for the world at large.

Third, this paper introduces a new approach to examining the concept of vertical distance or power. Earlier work has extensively studied power and how feeling powerful (high power compared to others) or powerless (low power compared to others) affects a variety of constructs such as speech style in a courtroom setting (Erickson et al. 1978), social attention and goals (Overbeck and Park 2006) and so on. However, high- or low-power separates the self from others hence, being subject to the same aforementioned imperfections of this separation. Chen et

al. (2001) examine the construct of equal power but do not find any noteworthy effects associated with it. My work investigates the aspect of equal power as a crucial element that reduces the felt distance between self and others thus, allowing actions to be simultaneously pro-self and pro-social. This is an important finding and contribution to managerial as well as academic work.

Managerial Contributions

In addition to the above, this research contributes to how managerial strategies of charitable organizations should be implemented. Charitable organizations should induce a self-compassionate mindset in their existing and prospective donors allowing them to be more understanding of others who are in need. In real-world situations, charities promote their donors' prosocial actions either by sharing information about their good deeds or asking donors to share their own stories. Most often praising donors leads to moral licensing where they feel they have done a good deed and in subsequent behaviors display more selfish or immoral behaviors (Merritt et al. 2010, Blanken et al. 2015). Additionally, asking donors to share the story of their donations may put donors in the mindset of that they should downplay their behavior so as not to appear self-promoting or self-aggrandizing. Kulow and Kramer (2016) for example, find that people who strongly believe in karma respond negatively to charitable calls that emphasize donor benefits or offer incentives because they don't want to engage in good deeds that are motivated by self-gains. Hence, it would much more beneficial for charitable organizations to engage their existing and potential donors in a dialogue of self-compassionate speech with

recipients and others in the organization or evoke their self-compassionate mindset through images and words used in their marketing campaigns.

Limitations and Future Research

In this paper, I rule out general self-referencing as a potential driver of the effects with the support of prior literature as well as in study 1, where I introduce it as a condition to compare its effects against those of self-compassion and other-compassion. However, the possibility that these measures weren't sensitive enough to measure true differences between self-referencing and self-compassion cannot be entirely ruled out. Also, I only examine the impact of self-compassion on variables directly related to engaging with charitable organizations. However, self-compassion could have wider implications for other environmentally conscious attitudes and behavior such as not engaging in excessive consumption or reducing the use of non-renewable energy sources or non-biodegradable items such as plastics. Further research is needed on the topic of self-compassion to understand and widen its scope within marketing.

CHAPTER FIVE: INTRODUCTION (ESSAY 2)

Essay Title:

The God-Self Relationship and Consumer Behavior: The Role of Agency

Academic research has examined the concept of power or agency over material resources like money or other people and the various outcomes from either feeling agency or no agency have been investigated in detail. However, the idea of agency in one's relationship with God has not been well researched although building one's relationship with God is the backbone of all major religious and spiritual traditions across the world and is seen to have widespread implications. This paper examines the effect of feeling (no agency) in one's relationship with God and across five studies finds that when one feels agency in one's relationship with God, one tends to have a lowered desire for retributive justice against an entity that has committed a transgression compared to the no agency condition. I also test the condition of feeling agency over material resources and find in line with earlier research that, one tends to have an increased desire for retributive justice against an entity that has committed a transgression compared to the no-agency condition. This contradiction between feeling agency over different types of resources (God and spiritual life versus material resources) is the gap that this paper addresses. The mediation analyses show that feeling agency with God is serially mediated by two variables – closeness with God leading to inner peace – which subsequently, display a lowered desire for retributive justice. In study 5, I further test the underlying mechanism through moderation of process. Finally, the theoretical and managerial contributions are discussed along with limitations and directions for future research.

God traces your life and makes everything possible for you ... But first make your effort and take control of your life.

Paramahansa Sri Swami Vishwananda, Shreemad Bhagavad Gita Commentary

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the effects of agency (versus no agency) in one's relationship with God on the desire for retributive justice. The feeling of agency(versus no agency) over material resources that are tangibly available such as money, possessions, or other people has been well examined in previous research which we will discuss below. However, an important aspect of feeling agency, in one's spiritual life, has not been examined. Most consumer research in the area of God-Self relationships has examined the notion of God salience, the awareness or mindfulness of the presence of God. God salience is seen to influence consumers in a myriad of ways such as a reduction of the impact of fear-based marketing appeals (Wu and Cutright 2018) or reduced consumption of self-improvement products (Grewal et al. 2022). However, most religious or spiritual traditions don't only prescribe the awareness of God but to increase our connection and build a personal relationship with the Divine. This idea of fostering a relationship with God is not well-examined in business research.

Let us first consider what it means to take control of or feel agency in one's relationship with God through the learnings from eastern spiritual traditions. Often people become very passive in their relationship with the Divine. They don't feel that they have any influence nor can they create any change because the Divine is in control of everything (Koenig et al. 2001, Spilka and Schmidt 1983). Various scriptures and writings from Hinduism examine this dichotomy of

feeling agency versus no agency in one's spiritual life and their outcomes. When one takes charge of one's relationship with God, the person becomes more God-loving, feels and wants God to be close to them in every moment, and experiences increased peace (Vishwananda 2015, 2021a). However, when one feels completely powerless in one's relationship with God, the mindset regarding God becomes emotionally distant, evoking feelings of shame, guilt, or fear (Bamberger 1929, Johnson 2016). Increased fear of God or increased scrupulosity tends to make individuals almost obsessively averse to sin (Nelson et al. 2006, Stewart et al. 2020) thus, preferring to maintain some distance from God. These ideas gave rise to the main premise of this research which is to examine the effects of agency versus no agency in one's relationship with the Universal Higher Self, God, or the Divine. God is viewed as the one who takes form in multiple ways, the self, the other, as well as everything beyond (Marsh and Low 2006).

I examine the idea of agency or no agency on the desire for retributive justice against an offending organization because it is close to the idea of sin which is prevalent across many religions. I theorize that feeling agency in one's relationship with God would lead to greater closeness with God, greater inner peace and thus, reduce the need for retributive justice against a transgressing organization. On the other hand, those who feel no agency in their relationship with God would feel distant from God, have lower inner peace and thus, increased need for retributive justice. I compare this with feeling agency over material resources and find that in line with prior work, feeling agency over material resources increases one's desire for retributive justice. This finding is contradictory to my hypothesis regarding feeling agency in one's relationship with God, forming the main gap that is addressed in and the major contribution of this paper.

Powerful individuals are often seen to support harsher punishments than individuals who feel powerless (Galinsky et al. 2003). This is one of the most important contributions of this paper, that the context of feeling powerful, having agency, or control is very important in determining what the outcome would be. Feeling powerful in one's spiritual life (in one's relationship with God) is ignored in academic research although it is very important in one's life. God salience has been a common way of measuring spiritual connection with academic research however, an important point to note is that the individual is often assumed to be completely or very nearly powerless within the individual-God dyad operationalization in prior work.

Noting the above, the question naturally arises, on the one hand the effect of one's relationship with God is important to examine in greater depth yet how can a relationship be formed when one party is a completely passive receiver? It seems illogical that a genuine relationship can be fostered under such circumstances, yet to foster this relationship is what the major spiritual traditions across the world strongly advocate. Hence, I theorize that the self cannot be powerless within the God-Self dyad. Individuals need to feel that they have agency in their relationship with God. To understand the importance of this point let us understand parasocial relationships. Individuals often build parasocial (one-sided) relationships with powerful entities (Horton and Richard Wohl 1956) that seem physically and/or socially distant. In such relationships, individuals still need to feel a very direct connection with that entity in their lives and self-identity. For example, earlier work on social media influencers and celebrity endorsers has found that consumers often discount endorsements by celebrities (Boerman et al. 2017) but are quite accepting of influencer content (Lou 2021, Vrontis et al. 2021) because they seem psychologically closer than celebrities. This interesting difference is found because of

social bonds (Escalas and Bettman 2017) and consumers' ability to directly incorporate the message from the influential entity into their lives and feel a sense of relationship with the influential entity (Scholz 2021). Also, it follows that the more one gets involved with any entity, endorser, celebrity, organization, or cause, the more one would react negatively to a transgression committed by them. Hence, I examine the construct of retributive justice as the dependent variable. The desire for retributive justice is another very important variable to examine as it has a profound effect on one's life and when organizations commit a transgression. I find that in line with prior work, feeling agency over tangible or material resources leads to greater desire for retributive justice compared to when one feels no agency over tangible or material resources. Remarkably however, feeling agency in one's relationship with God lowers the desire for retributive justice compared to when one feels no agency in one's relationship with God.

Darley and Pittman (2003) explain that when individuals feel that harm was caused carelessly or unintentionally, they desire compensatory justice for the victim. However, if harm was found to be caused intentionally, then retributive justice is demanded in addition to the compensation, where the offender must be punished for the wrongdoing as well as repay the victim's loss. Mahony and Klaas (2008) have shown that even third parties like jurors and arbitrators are driven by retributive or punitive justice motives against the offender. This finding is of particular importance because it shows that the impact of desiring retributive justice also has a large impact on business practices. Whether the harm caused was done intentionally or unintentionally would be difficult to prove for any offending organization. If the organization provides a justification, it could cause a backlash. For example, an explanation that the industry

laws don't disallow such an action or that it is something everyone does is not an acceptable explanation for most individuals (Green 1991). If the organization tries to ignore, obfuscate, or conceal the wrongdoing, it could cause people to believe that the harm was intentional in the first place (Meyer and Choo 2024). Such prior work shows that it is very important for organizations to understand justice needs and what factors amplify or attenuate them. I test and find that God salience is not enough to decrease retributive justice needs but that feeling agency in one's relationship with God shows a decrease in retributive justice needs. I believe feeling agency with God would increase a sense of closeness with God and foster greater inner peace, allowing individuals to view the transgression with less negative affect and greater amount of forgiveness. It is important for organizations to understand this aspect of their consumers' lives as mistakes, failures, or transgressions are almost inevitable in business practices (Miller et al. 2000, Tjosvold et al. 2004).

To summarize, the following points form the gaps that are addressed in this paper and its major contributions. (1) Major religions and spiritual traditions across the world promote the idea of building a relationship with the Divine yet the importance and outcomes of one's relationship with God is largely ignored in business research. (2) In prior consumer research, God salience mainly propagates the awareness of God, not the fostering of a relationship between the individual and God. (3) The Divine is thought of as all-powerful but more importantly, the individual is thought of as completely powerless in the God-Self dyad which seems to negate the idea of a genuine relationship. (4) Individuals are seen to build parasocial relationships with distant others, however, they need to feel a direct connection with that entity. (5) Justice needs are influenced by various factors, and it is important for organizations to understand them. Hence, the research question for this paper is, *what are the consumer behavior outcomes when*

one feels agency (versus no agency) in one's relationship with God, relative to when one feels agency (versus no agency) over material resources?

Essay 1 of my dissertation examined how one can start to operate from one's higher spiritual self rather than the lower egocentric self as described in the spiritual traditions of the east, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. One way to connect with one's higher spiritual self is by developing self-compassion. I find that self-compassion is more beneficial to the self as well others, displaying greater positive effects on prosocial behavior compared to other-focused compassion. The present paper examines the individual's relationship with God. God is the universal self that is equally present within the self and others as well as beyond all limitations of the world as (Marsh and Low 2006, McGinn 1981). Through this research, I contribute to the literature on God salience, the relationship, feeling of agency, and closeness with God, as well as inner peace and retributive justice. The essays in my dissertation lay the groundwork to help one to first move from the lower egocentric self to the higher spiritual self and subsequently, explore one's connection with the Universal Higher Self or God. The next chapter discusses the various constructs examined and the contribution of this work in relation with previous research.

CHAPTER SIX: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND (ESSAY 2)

God Salience and Relationship with God

Prior work has extensively looked at God salience and its impact on various aspects of an individual's life. Some examples of its positive outcomes are that reminders of God reduce the impact of fear-based marketing appeals (Wu and Cutright 2018) and increase generosity (Kelly 2022). Secure attachment to God leads to a better emotional and social life, and it could even compensate for the lack in other areas of the individual's life (Kimball et al. 2013, Liu and Froese 2020). Many papers have found that attachment to God often serves as an alternative to or compensatory for lack of secure attachment to other individuals or during times of distress (Kirkpatrick 1999, Kirkpatrick and Shaver 1990). However, God salience is also seen to foster negative or counterintuitive results. For example, reminders of God seem to increase risky behaviors (Kupor et al. 2015) and reduce the desire for self-improvement (Grewal et al. 2022). Increased remembrance of God and feeling uncertain together also create greater fear of sin (Fergus and Rowatt 2015). Interestingly, several studies on religion and spirituality have also found that religious involvement was correlated with higher levels of depression among individuals (Paine and Sandage 2017). Hence, Tung et al. (2018) state that there could be unaccounted-for variables that influence thoughts of God, religion, and spirituality that produce such diverse outcomes. However, the concept of God salience and the way prior work operationalizes it, presumes that the individual is powerless in the God-Self dyad, which is not a universally accepted fact for most religions. In fact, such a presumption goes against what most

spiritual traditions encourage, which is a direct and personal relationship with the Divine in which you can start to take ownership of your spiritual life.

I propose that feeling agency in one's relationship with the Divine would lead to better emotional states such as feelings of closeness with God (Proeschold-Bell et al. 2014). Traditionally, researchers like Freud have found that a belief in God being in control reduces the feeling of personal control. However, more recent research has found that although God is ultimately in control, humans are still responsible for their lives and are in fact, expected to take charge of their lives (Jackson and Coursey 1988). Following their line of research, I posit that taking charge of one's relationship with God allows one to feel a reduced distance between the self and God. Such a consistent closeness with God leads to higher levels of life satisfaction (Culver 2021). Following this, I predict a serial mediation such that feelings of agency lead to feeling closeness with God, which in turn increases life satisfaction or inner peace, subsequently having a combined effect on the dependent variable (such that retributive justice needs are reduced).

Individuals not only want to feel close to God, but they also wish to build a relationship with God (Efird 2021, Mullins 2022). This is similar to interpersonal and parasocial relationships as mentioned before. Thus, feeling agency with God is closely linked to feeling close to God and these feelings with God who is connected to the spiritual self within one's own self and others (Marsh and Low 2006, Vishwananda 2015), would increase feelings of peace within the self as well as with others. It follows that the feeling of greater inner peace would have larger-scale consequences that positively impact society.

The causal framework for this paper is whether feelings of agency with God foster feelings of closeness with God and greater inner peace would then induce a greater ability to forgive (i.e., have lower retributive justice needs against) an entity that has committed a transgression. This is in line with earlier research by Sharma (2020) that examines the Hindu and Buddhist idea that inner peace is seen to radiate outward toward peace for the larger society. Toussaint and Friedman (2009) explain that when one perceives peace in oneself, one can also perceive goodness in others and forgiveness can occur. Hence, one does not try to avenge the wrongs committed by others but is more ready to forgive, i.e., has a lower desire for retributive justice. On the other hand, not feeling agency in one's relationship with God, feeling powerless, in one's relationship with the Divine would create feelings of distance from God and decrease inner peace. Subsequently, feeling no agency in one's relationship with God would result in a greater desire for retributive justice.

It is important to note at this point that God is sometimes thought of as a punishing or as a loving entity. Belief in a loving God sometimes is seen to have intuitive outcomes such as greater wellbeing and love towards others (Sutton and Mittelstadt 2012) as well as counterintuitive results such decreased consumption of self-improvement products (Grewal et al. 2022) or higher likelihood to cheat and steal money (DeBono et al. 2017, Shariff and Norenzayan 2011). On the other hand, many people believe that punishing or being wrathful towards perceived bad actions is God's job (Laurin et al. 2012b) and hold a sense of fear towards God (Johnson 2016). Fearing God may create obsessive aversion to one's own or others' sins (McKay et al. 2011) but also foster better actions and lower crime than those who believe in a loving God (Shariff and Rhemtulla 2012). These contradictory outcomes show that the feeling of

God as loving or punishing may increase both good and bad actions or positive as well as negative thoughts depending on the circumstances. Through my work, I aim to understand how closeness with God is fostered through feeling of agency in one's relationship with God and to address the contradictions found in prior work. I focus on the feeling of agency in one's relationship with God rather than the idea of a loving or punishing God because I posit that feeling agency in one's relationship with God would help the individual to feel close to God as well as nurture continued good actions. This dual positive outcome would reduce the negative outcomes associated with either God prime (loving or punishing) seen in prior work. Through this paper, I find that feeling agency with God makes one feel closer to God which increases one's inner peace and subsequently, one's ability to forgive transgressions.

In the next section, I discuss agency and power over Divine versus material resources to differentiate between the current paper and earlier work on agency or felt power.

Agency over Divine versus Material Resources

Agency or personal control is the experience and/or perception that outcomes are related to personal actions (Obhi et al. 2012). This feeling of agency in one's life, circumstances, or relationships is fundamentally linked to the feeling of power (Fast et al. 2009, Inesi et al. 2011) Demanet et al. (2013) find that exerting control or power boosts a sense of agency. Hence, agency, power, and control are often used interchangeably. Feeling powerful or having a sense of agency leads to various outcomes for the individual and others. Often a powerful person is seen to be more selfish or less prosocial (Dubois et al. 2015) and also on a physiological level,

powerful people show reduced mirroring of others' behavior (Hogeveen et al. 2014), which is a natural way of trying to connect with others. The desire for power is experienced to gain mastery over one's life and control over one's destiny (Lammers et al. 2016). Often feelings of agency or control over resources lead to taking charge of rewarding good or punishing bad actions. Powerful individuals support more severe punishment than powerless ones (Galinsky et al. 2003, Kipnis 1972, van Prooijen et al. 2014). Powerful individuals are seen to base their punitive judgments on information or assumptions of negative traits and often they consider more severe punishments to be fairer than powerless individuals (van Prooijen et al. 2014). Hence, it follows from prior work that feelings of power or agency over material resources would lead to a higher desire for retributive justice and this effect is replicated in my studies as well.

Another point that is important to discuss is the feeling of agency with or over other people. People enjoy acting jointly and feeling a sense of joint agency (Seeman 2009). However, feeling agency or the feeling of power in relationship with other people oftentimes leads to individuals becoming unresponsive to others' emotions (Van Kleef et al. 2008). Hence, although people enjoy feeling joint agency, that sense of closeness seems to be limited to the in-group because agency or feeling of power is context dependent with or on whom one feels agency (Emerson 1962, Schaerer et al. 2018). Hence, feeling agency with or over others would not foster greater closeness with society at large, nor greater peace towards all. Hence, I believe that this type of feeling agency is very different from feeling agency with God who is viewed as universally present. Hence, feeling agency in one's relationship with God would foster a closeness with God and greater inner peace towards the world at large. Thus, I theorize that agency in relationship with people and agency in relationship with God would lead opposite

results. Agency in relationship with people would be limited to the individual or group one feels agency with and would not foster greater peace with the world at large and could in fact, increase retributive justice needs against a transgressing entity. However, agency in relationship with God would foster greater peace with the world at large and would decrease retributive justice needs against a transgressing entity. Additionally, one could feel a sense of higher power or greater agency than others, however, one cannot feel greater power or agency than God. Hence, the negative outcomes associated with feeling greater agency or power than others would not be salient when the other entity is God. Hence, feeling agency over or with other people would not lead to reduced desire for retributive justice. However, the feeling of agency in one's relationship with God would show different results such that, there would be a feeling of closeness with God leading to closeness with God, greater inner peace and finally, a reduced desire for retributive justice.

Cashwell and Swindle (2018) state that the perceived power differential in religious or spiritual contexts may be even higher than that in normal circumstances. Often religious leaders use a spiritual doctrine or the concept of a higher power as a control tactic over others (Johnson and VanVonderen 1991) especially those that are perceived to transgress against some doctrine (Super and Jacobson 2011). However, taking personal control over one's relationship with God is a different concept. Earlier work defines it as the difference between an organized system of religious doctrines versus personal spirituality (Super and Jacobson 2011), within which one feels personal agency with God and thus, does not give away power to other individuals to direct their relationship with God (i.e., being powerless or having no agency in one's relationship with God) (Cornish and Wade 2010, Hill et al. 2000). Expanding on these ideas, I theorize that power

or agency in one's relationship with God would lead to closeness with God and greater inner peace hence, lower desire for retributive justice. Conversely, power or agency over material resources would not lead to significant feelings of inner peace and feelings of distance from God, hence, its outcome would be in line with earlier findings, that the individual would have a higher desire for retributive justice.

***H1a:** Feelings of agency (no agency) in the relationship with God lead to a lower (higher) desire for retributive justice against a transgression.*

***H1b:** Feelings of agency (no agency) over material resources lead to a lower (higher) desire for retributive justice against a transgression.*

In the next section, the mediators, (1) closeness with God and (2) inner peace, are discussed in further detail.

Mediation: Closeness with God and Inner Peace

The individual's relationship with God is the crucial and central point of religious study and research (Sharp and Johnson 2020). However, most research does not account for this idea presented by different faiths (Jeppsen et al. 2022). This shows the importance of not focusing solely on God salience that has been looked at in academic research but on one's relationship with God. In the preceding sections, I have discussed the importance of developing agency with

God and its close connection with feeling close to God. Additionally, the connection between spirituality and inner peace is well-documented by researchers in various fields such as neuroscience (Gottfried 2004), counselling (Bauer 2019), and social sciences and humanities (Xi and Lee 2021). Feeling close to God is seen to result in high levels of life purpose and satisfaction with life (Culver 2021). Similarly, closeness to God is found to create greater wellbeing and belonging (Gilbertson et al. 2022). Kirkpatrick (1992) finds that turning to God and developing one's association with God gives the individual feelings of comfort and security. Additionally, imagery that leads to feeling that God is a distant entity far away in the clouds, leads to an avoidant attachment, and does not result in feelings of comfort or security (Heller 1986, Kirkpatrick 1992). This provides support for the hypotheses of this paper; that agency in one's relationship with God creates closeness with God and greater inner peace. However, no agency in one's relationship with God creates distance from God and lower inner peace. Knabb et al. (2023) find that anxious and/or avoidant attachments to God, fostered by distance from God, lead to depression, anxiety, and stress. Even clergy who are consistently engaged in outward religious practices are seen to go through feelings of spiritual drought when they feel far from God personally and/or in their daily life (Proeschold-Bell et al. 2014).

Spiritual connection, intelligence, and wellbeing are seen to lead to better quality of life, and the smooth functioning of the intelligence and emotional aspects of one's life (Ahuja and Ahuja 2015). In psychotherapy, individuals are encouraged to develop spiritual connection with a higher self and nurture calmness and inner peace to foster forgiveness towards others by letting go of the resentment (Ahuja and Ahuja 2015, Fisher 2013). Forgiveness is nurtured by promoting feelings of peacefulness toward the self as well as others (Menahem and Love 2013). Seeing the

relevance of closeness to God and feeling of inner peace, I examine them both as the mediators of the effect of agency with God on retributive justice. As mentioned above, I theorize that there is a serial mediation such that feelings of agency lead to feeling closeness with God, which in turn leads to greater inner peace, ultimately having a combined effect on the dependent variable (i.e., reducing the need for retributive justice).

***H2a:** Mediator 1- Agency with God leads to feelings of closeness with God which lowers desire for retributive justice.*

***H2b:** Mediator 2- Agency with God increases inner peace which lowers desire for retributive justice.*

***H2c:** Serial Mediation- Agency with God leads to feelings of closeness with God which increases inner peace, subsequently leading to lower desire for retributive justice.*

In the next section, I discuss retributive justice and its importance in the conceptual model of this paper.

Retributive Justice

Retributive justice is defined as a type of justice need when someone seeks to redress the wrongs that were done to them or others by allocating punishment of some kind to the offender

(Darley and Pittman 2003, Sterba 1977). People most often seek retributive justice when they feel hurt by someone else and when that person goes unpunished (Wenzel and Okimoto 2016). When a transgression takes place, individuals typically feel a discrepancy between the way the situation is and how they perceive the situation ought to be (Witvliet et al. 2008). Retributive justice is often sought in the case of serious offenses (Darley 2002). The perception of injustice or desire for retributive justice against an offense is not merely a cognitive experience, it is charged with negative emotions which constitute a lack of forgiveness for the offending entity (Worthington and Scherer 2004, Worthington and Wade 1999). However, individuals can reduce the desire for retributive justice if they choose to accept the events and let go of the feeling of injustice or other negative emotions associated with the transgression (Wade and Worthington 2003). In this paper, I am interested in examining how much retributive justice is sought when the individual feels agency in their relationship with God as compared to when they don't feel agency in their relationship with God. As noted in the above hypotheses, I theorize that when one feels personally agency in one's relationship with God, one experiences closeness with God, leading to greater inner peace which in turn lowers the desire for retributive justice. On the other hand, when the individual feels no agency in their relationship with God, they do not experience closeness with God or inner peace. This leads to a higher desire for retributive justice to be served to the transgressing person, group, or organization compared to feeling agency in one's relationship with God. The next chapter discusses the conceptual model and the studies conducted to find evidence for the hypotheses of this paper.

CHAPTER SEVEN: OVERVIEW OF STUDIES (ESSAY 2)

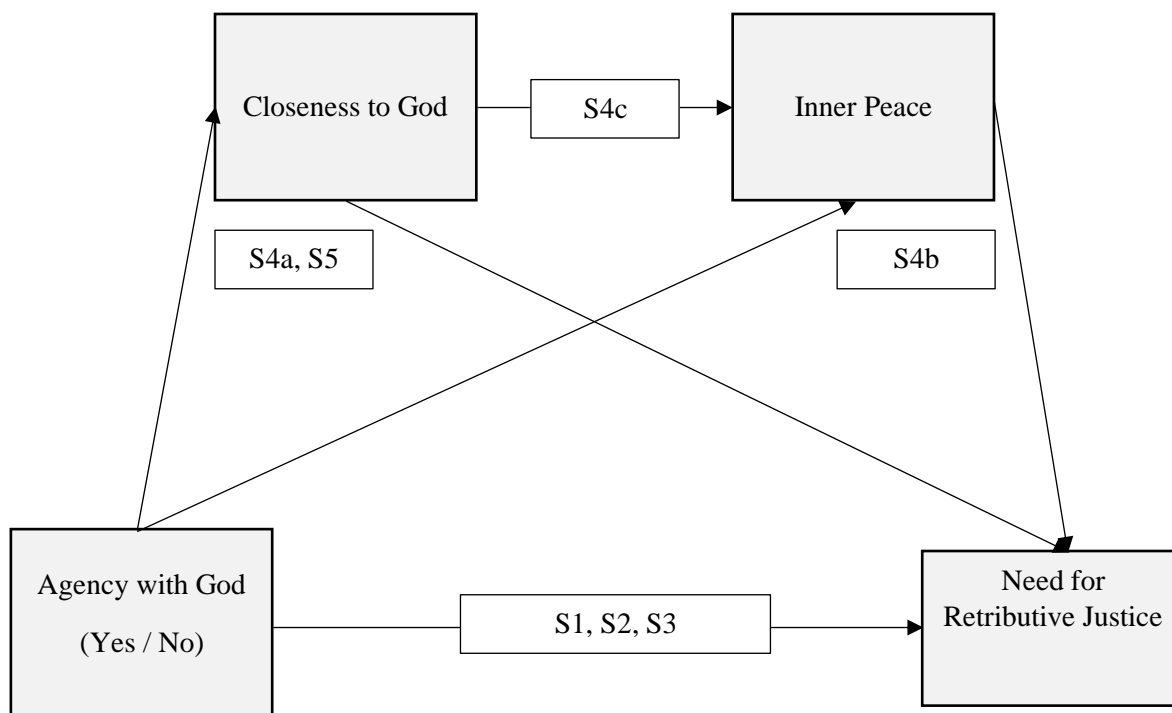


Figure 10: Essay 2 Conceptual Model

Five studies have been conducted to test the hypotheses of this paper. Figure 10 outlines the conceptual model for this paper and how each study fits into it. The aim of the first study was to find support for H1a that feelings of agency (no agency) in one's relationship with God lead to lower (higher) desire for retributive justice against a transgressing organization. The objective for study 2 was to find evidence to support H1b that feelings of agency (no agency) over material resources lead to higher (lower) desire for retributive justice against a transgression, contrary to

when agency (or agency) is felt in one's relationship with God. Next, in study 3, the effect of the interaction of resource type (God vs. material) by agency (yes vs no) on desire for retributive justice is tested to find substantive evidence for H1a and H1b in a single study. In studies 4a-c, the proposed underlying mechanism is tested; the effect of feeling agency (no agency) in one's relationship with God leads to lower (higher) desire for retributive justice against a transgression partially mediated by two variables (1) by feelings of inner peace and (2) by closer distance with God. Finally, in study 5, moderation of process is examined; the interaction of agency with God and closeness with God on retributive justice further tests the mediating process.

Study 1: Effect of Feelings of Agency (Vs No Agency) in Relationship with God and God Salience on Retributive Justice

In this study, the aim was to examine how feelings of agency or no agency in one's relationship with God as well as God salience affect the individual's desire for retributive justice. I find that feeling agency in one's relationship with God decreases the desire for retributive justice against an organization. Thus, providing evidence for H1a. Furthermore, God salience and feeling no agency in one's relationship with God are not significantly different from each other. This shows that God salience is not enough to reduce desire for retributive justice. I posit that this happens because simply being aware of God seems to evoke thoughts of God as all-powerful and the self as very nearly (if not completely) powerless. This is not what most religious or spiritual traditions teach, and it seems to miss important positive outcomes by making the individual feel so powerless in such a meaningful relationship.

Method

Participants. Two hundred and forty-one participants (44.77% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 21.56$) were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk.

Procedure and Stimuli. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions (feelings of agency in one's relationship with God, no agency in one's relationship with God, and simple God salience) in which they were asked to imagine the scenario and write a short paragraph about it. Next, after some filler tasks, they read a short paragraph about an organization that had committed a transgression by engaging in illegal business practices. Finally, all participants responded to various scales to measure the level of appropriate punishment or desire for retributive justice they felt (Leidner et al. 2013, Li et al. 2020, van Prooijen et al. 2014). Responses were measured on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = mild punishment / extremely unlikely to punish, 6 = severe punishment / extremely likely to punish) in line with earlier work. See Appendices H, I, and K for study details.

Results and Discussion

An ANOVA showed a significant difference between the groups such that those who feel agency in their relationship with God tend to feel lower retributive justice towards an organization that committed the transgression, compared to those who feel no agency in their relationship with God and simple God salience. $M_A = 2.05 < M_{NA} = 3.11 < M_S = 3.07$, $F(2,240) = 2.041$, $p = .041$. The means of Agency and No Agency as well as Agency and Salience are significantly different from each other ($F(1,160) = 2.376$, $p = .011$ and $F(1,160) = 2.12$, $p = .032$)

respectively. However, the means of No Agency and Salience are not significantly different from each other ($F(1, 160) = 1.65, p = .295$).

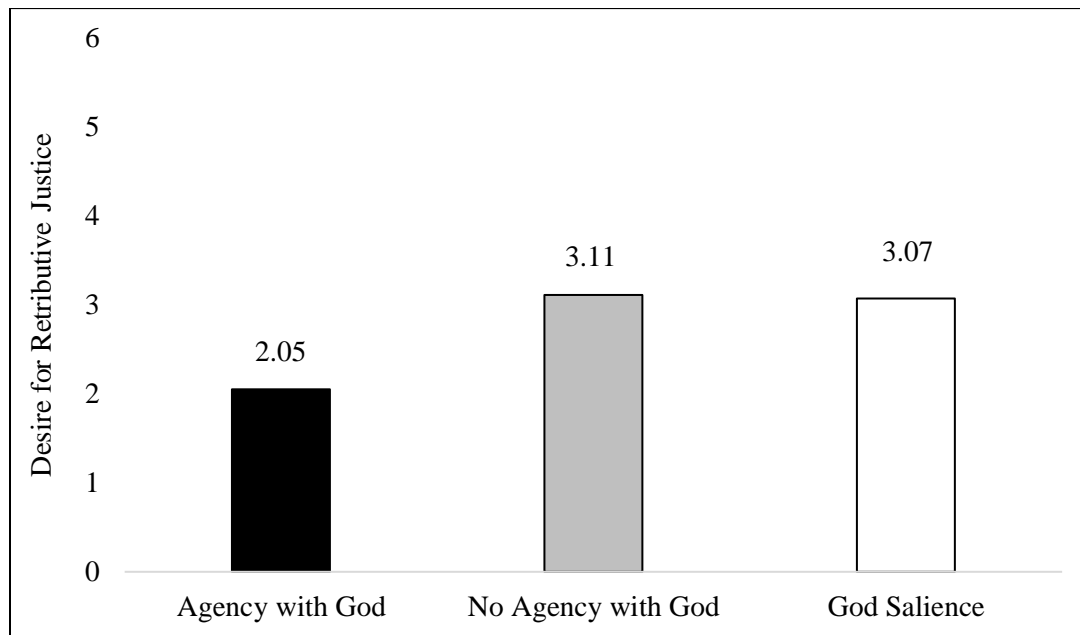


Figure 11: Essay 2 Study 1- Agency, No Agency, and God Salience on Desire for Retributive Justice

These results show that the feeling of agency in one's spiritual life (i.e., in one's relationship with God) helps the individual to feel less need to punish an offending organization. This finding provides support for H1a. It is very important for organizations to take note of this since mistakes or transgressions cannot be entirely avoided in the workplace, and it is important to know what factors could amplify or diminish the backlash after an unfortunate incident. Another interesting point noted in this study was that 93 of 241 participants said that they listen

to sermons, discourses, or spiritual/ religious advice from someone and yet 46 of those 93 (49.46%) do not feel the person whose spiritual/ religious advice they listen to is the best representative of God in their life. This shows that often people may be actively religious or spiritual yet do not feel appropriately connected to God through the individuals whose advice or guidance they listen to. This shows the further need to develop a personal and direct relationship with God rather than through intermediaries or intercessors.

The next study examines the feeling of agency or no agency over material resources as it has been investigated in prior research and provides a contrast to study 1 in support of H1b.

Study 2: Effect of Feelings of Agency (Vs No Agency) Over Material Resources on Retributive Justice

In this study, the aim was to examine whether feelings of agency or no agency over material resources like money or position in a team affect the individual's desire for retributive justice. The results of this study contrast with those found in study 1, such that feeling agency over material resources leads to greater desire for retributive justice. This is in line with earlier research as discussed above. It is important to note that the feeling of agency or subjective power is almost always examined over material resources in prior work (such as over other people, money, or other tangible resources). This paper is the first to examine the effect of feeling agency in one's spiritual life i.e., developing a relationship with God, and its effects in the individual's life especially in the business and consumer context.

Method

Participants. Three hundred and one participants (48.86% female, $M_{age} = 21.03$) were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk.

Procedure and Stimuli. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions (feelings of agency or no agency over material resources) in which they were asked to imagine the scenario and write a short paragraph about it (adapted from Belmi and Pfeffer 2016). Next, similar to study 1, they read a short paragraph about an organization that had committed a transgression by engaging in illegal business practices. Finally, they responded to the same scales as study 1 to measure the level of appropriate punishment or desire for retributive justice they felt. The name, size, type of organizations, and type of transgression were varied across the studies to randomize the effects obtained. See Appendices J and K for study details.

Results and Discussion

An ANOVA showed a significant difference between the groups. Those who felt agency over material resources like money or other people were more likely to select a more severe punishment for an organization that committed the transgression, compared to those who felt no agency over material resources. $M_A = 4.59 > M_{NA} = 4.31$, $F(1,309) = 8.275$, $p = .04$. These results provide a strong contrast with H1a and are in line with findings from earlier papers.

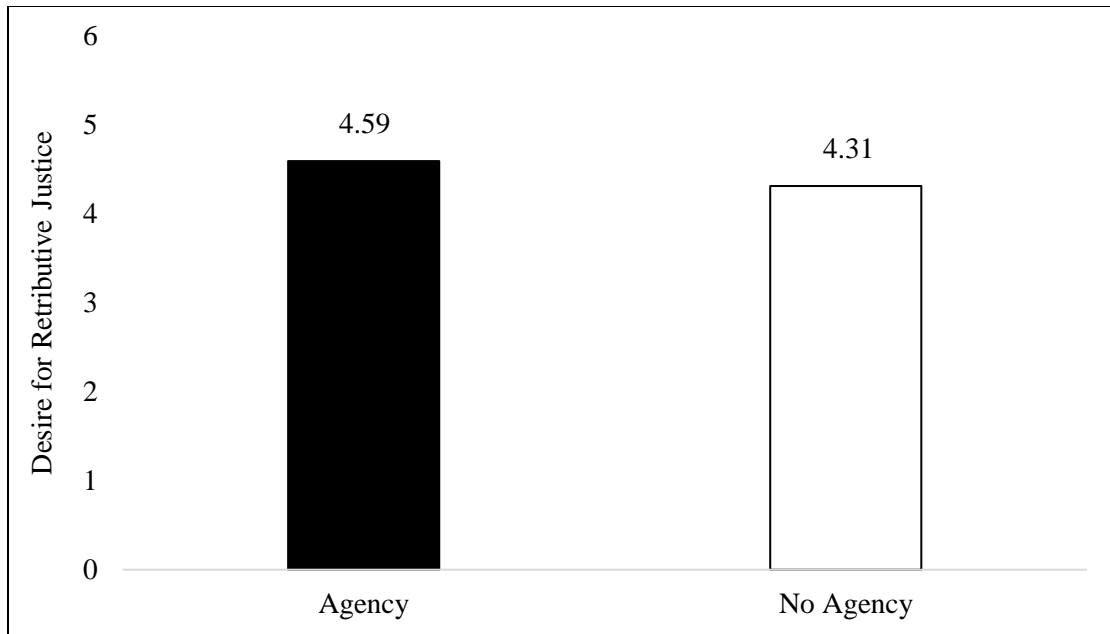


Figure 12: Essay 2 Study 2- Feeling Agency over Material Resources on Desire for Retributive Justice

The results from studies 1 and 2 show that there is a contradiction between the effects of feeling agency over material resources and feeling agency in one's spiritual life, i.e., relationship with God on retributive justice. To find decisive evidence for these findings, study 3 examines these effects as an interaction between agency (yes/no) and resources (God/material) to test the effect within one empirical study.

Study 3: Interaction between Resource Type (God/ Material) and Agency (Yes/ No) on Retributive Justice

As mentioned above, study 3 tests the effect of the interaction between agency (Yes/ No) and resource type (God/ Material) on retributive justice. The results are expected to be in line with what is seen in studies 1 and 2 such that overall, when thoughts of God are salient the desire for retributive justice is lower than when thoughts about material resources are evoked. Furthermore, feeling agency in one's relationship with God is expected to show the lowest retributive justice needs.

Method

Participants. Four hundred and fifty-one participants (48.1.% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 31.1$) were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk.

Procedure and Stimuli. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (agency: yes or no) by 2 (resource type: God or Material) condition between-subjects experimental design. The study design was similar to studies 1 and 2. See Appendices H, K, and L for study details.

Results and Discussion

Comprehension and Attention Checks. 13 participants were removed for failing either the comprehension check questions or simple attention check.

Hypothesis Testing. The analysis showed a significant interaction between agency and resource type ($F(2, 438) = 9.01, p = .011$).

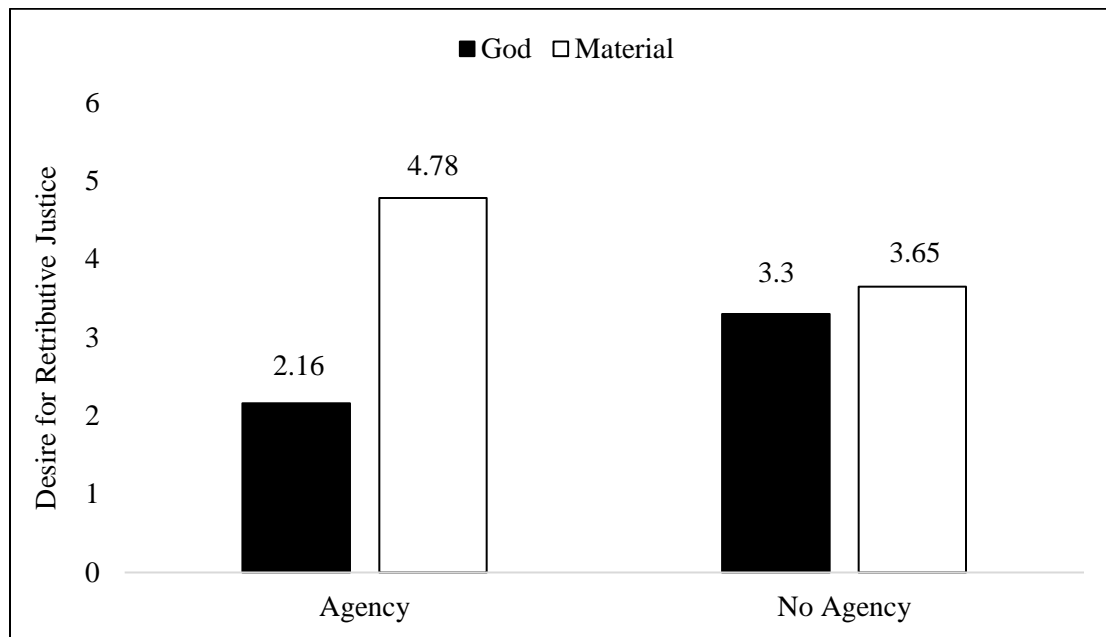


Figure 13: Essay 2 Study 3- Interaction between Agency (Yes/ No) and Resource Type (God/ Material) on Desire for Retributive Justice

The main effects of agency and resource type were not significant ($F(1,438) = .477, p = .808$), ($F(1,438) = .202, p = .569$). Pairwise comparisons showed that in feeling agency, agency with God displayed a lower desire for retributive justice than agency over material resources ($M_{AG} - M_{AM} = -2.62, F(1, 218) = 8.73, p = .002$). In the God condition, feeling agency displayed a lower desire for retributive justice than feeling no agency ($M_{AG} - M_{NG} = -1.14, F(1, 219) = 7.9, p = .033$). In the material condition, feeling agency displayed a greater desire for retributive

justice than feeling no agency ($M_{AM} - M_{NM} = 1.13$, $F(1, 219) = 11.82$, $p < .001$). In no agency, the God and material resources conditions are not significantly different from each other ($M_{NG} - M_{NM} = -.35$, $F(1, 219) = 1.77$, $p = .403$). These results are in line with hypothesis 1a and 1b that feeling agency with God displays lower desire for retributive justice than no agency with God, feeling agency over material resources, or no agency over material resources.

Since the effects seen in the material condition (agency or no agency) are in line with earlier research, for the next studies I focus on the God condition. In study 4, I examine the mediation effects stated in H2a, H2b, and H2c.

Study 4a: Mediation 1- Mediation of the Effect by Feelings of Closeness with God

Study 4a examines the mediation effect of closeness with God on the effect of feeling agency with God on the desire for retributive justice. This study tests whether feeling agency in one's relationship with God will lead to more closeness with God, which subsequently leads to reduced desire for retributive justice (H2a). On the other hand, feeling no agency in one's relationship with God will lead to distance from God, which subsequently leads to increased desire for retributive justice.

Method

Participants. Four hundred and twenty-six participants (51.2% female, $M_{age} = 38.5$) were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk.

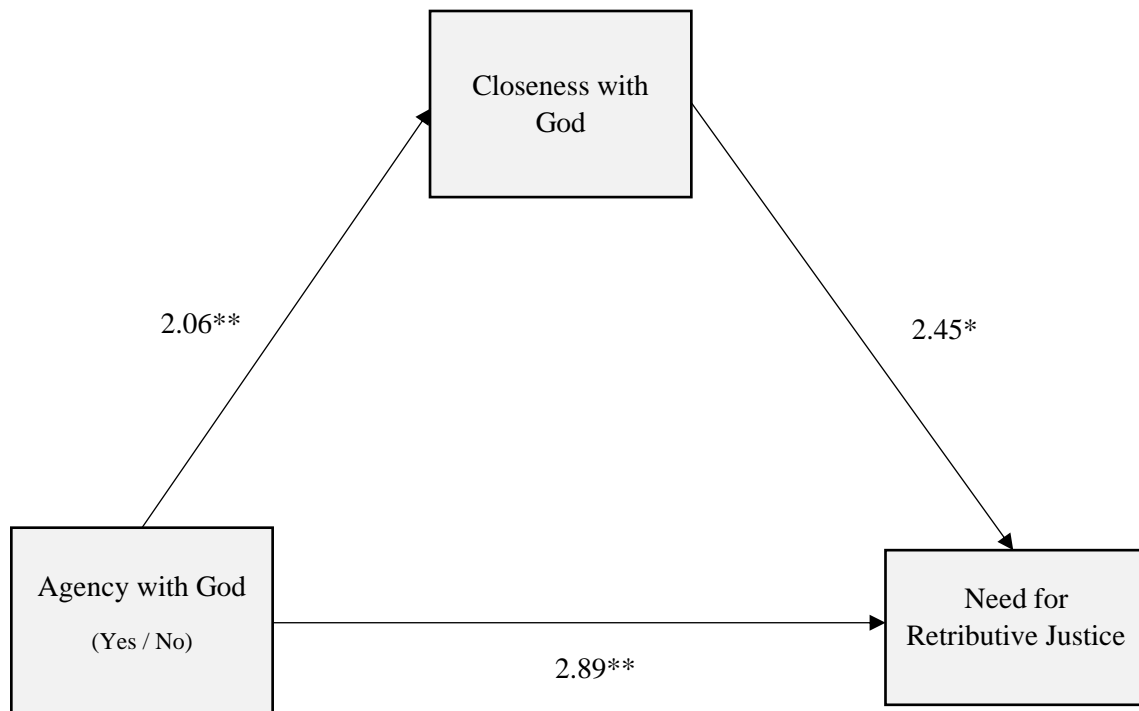
Procedure and Stimuli. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions (agency with God or no agency with God) in a between-subjects experimental design. The same procedure was followed as study 1. Finally, they responded to a variation of the self-other inclusion Venn diagrams (Aron et al. 1992) to measure how close or distant they viewed their relationship with God. See Appendices H, K, and M for study details.

Results and Discussion

Comprehension and Attention Checks. 17 participants were removed for failing either the comprehension check questions or attention check questions.

Mediation Analysis. To test the mediation of agency with God on retributive justice through increased feelings of closeness with God PROCESS model 4 (Hayes 2013) was used. In the analysis, the 95% confidence interval of the index of mediation excluded zero (index = .1454, 95% CI [.11, .44]). The direct effect for agency with God on the mediator, closeness with God, was significant ($t = 2.06$, $SE = .10$, $p = .0088$, 95% CI [.12, .39]). When the mediator is introduced, the direct effect of agency with God on retributive justice is insignificant, the direct effect of the mediator closeness with God on retributive justice is significant ($t = 2.45$, $SE = .18$, $p = .0134$, 95% CI [.18, .31]) and the indirect effect of agency with God on retributive justice through the mediator, closeness with God, is significant ($t = 2.89$, $SE = .21$, $p = .0032$, 95% CI [.31, .99]). These results provide support for the mediation proposed in the conceptual model and evidence to support hypothesis 2a. Agency with God leads to feelings of closeness with God which subsequently, reduces the feelings of retributive justice against an organization that has

committed a transgression. On the other hand, no agency with God seems to make one feel distant from God and subsequently, increases the feelings of retributive justice against an organization that has committed a transgression.



Note: All coefficients reported are unstandardized effects. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 14: Essay 2 Study 4a- Mediation Analysis 1 (Closeness to God)

The next study examines the causal relationship between agency in one's relationship with God, inner peace, and retributive justice, i.e., the causal relationship through Mediator 2.

Study 4b: Mediation 2- Mediation of the Effect by Feelings of Greater Inner Peace

Study 4b examines the mediation effect of inner peace on feeling agency with God on the desire for retributive justice. This study tests H2b whether feeling agency in one's relationship with God will lead to greater inner peace, which will subsequently lead to reduced desire for retributive justice. On the other hand, feeling no agency in one's relationship with God will lead to lower inner peace, which will subsequently lead to increased desire for retributive justice.

Method

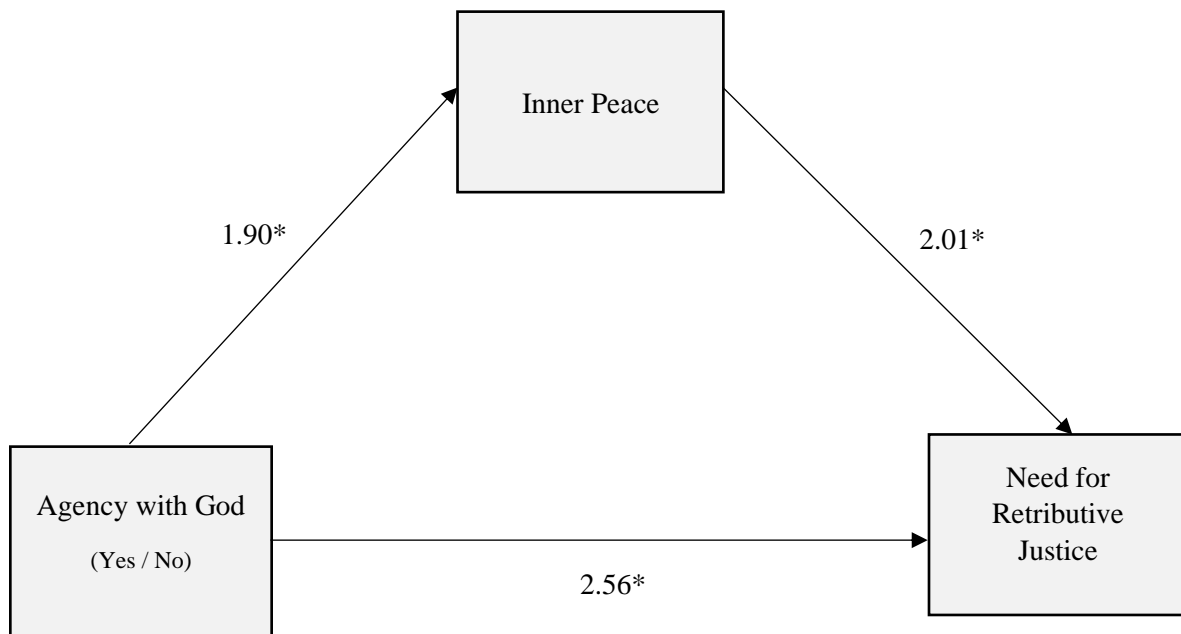
Participants. Three hundred and eighty participants (48.8% female, $M_{age} = 42.7$) were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk.

Procedure and Stimuli. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions (agency with God or no agency with God) in a between-subjects experimental design. The same procedure was followed as study 1. Next, the participants responded to the positive emotion assessment of contentment experience (peace) scale (Cordaro et al. 2021). See Appendices H, K, and M for study details.

Results and Discussion

Comprehension and Attention Checks. 20 participants were removed for failing either the comprehension check questions or attention check questions.

Mediation Analysis. To test the mediation of agency with God on retributive justice through increased inner peace PROCESS model 4 (Hayes 2013) was used. In the analysis, the 95% confidence interval of the index of mediation excluded zero (index = .0896, 95% CI [.01, .32]). The direct effect for agency with God on the mediator, increased inner peace, was significant ($t = 1.90$, $SE = .09$, $p = .0289$, 95% CI [.09, .68]).



Note: All coefficients reported are unstandardized effects. * $p < .05$

Figure 15: Essay 2 Study 4b- Mediation Analysis 2 (Inner Peace)

When the mediator is introduced, the direct effect of agency with God on retributive justice is insignificant, the direct effect of the mediator inner peace on retributive justice is significant ($t = 2.01$, $SE = .11$, $p = .0101$, 95% CI [.22, .83]) and the indirect effect of agency

with God on retributive justice through the mediator, increased inner peace, is significant ($t = 2.56$, $SE = .23$, $p = .02$, 95% CI [.19, .54]). Together, these results provide support for the proposed mediation of the conceptual model and evidence to support hypotheses 2b. Agency with God leads to feelings of increased inner peace which subsequently, reduces the feelings of retributive justice against an organization that has committed a transgression. On the other hand, no agency with God seems to reduce feelings of inner peace and subsequently, increases the feelings of retributive justice against an organization that has committed a transgression.

Studies 4a and 4b show that the two mediator variables, closeness to God and inner peace, both mediate the effect of agency with God on retributive justice, each showing significant direct effects on the dependent variable (retributive justice). Thus, studies 4a and 4b provide evidence for H2a and H2b, respectively. In the next study, I test for serial mediation, to examine whether in line with H2c and the conceptual model of this paper, mediator 1 (closeness to God) is a precedent of mediator 2 (inner peace). To examine the causal relationship of agency with God on closeness with God leading to greater inner peace and finally, reduced retributive justice.

Study 4c: Serial Mediation- Mediation of the Effect by Feelings of Closeness with God and Inner Peace

Study 4c examines the serial mediation proposed in the conceptual model. This study tests H2c whether feeling agency in one's relationship with God will lead to greater closeness with God creating more inner peace, which subsequently reduces the desire for retributive

justice. On the other hand, feeling no agency in one's relationship with God will lead to distance from God reducing inner peace, which subsequently increases desire for retributive justice.

Method

Participants. Four hundred and one participants (45.2% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 35.1$) were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk.

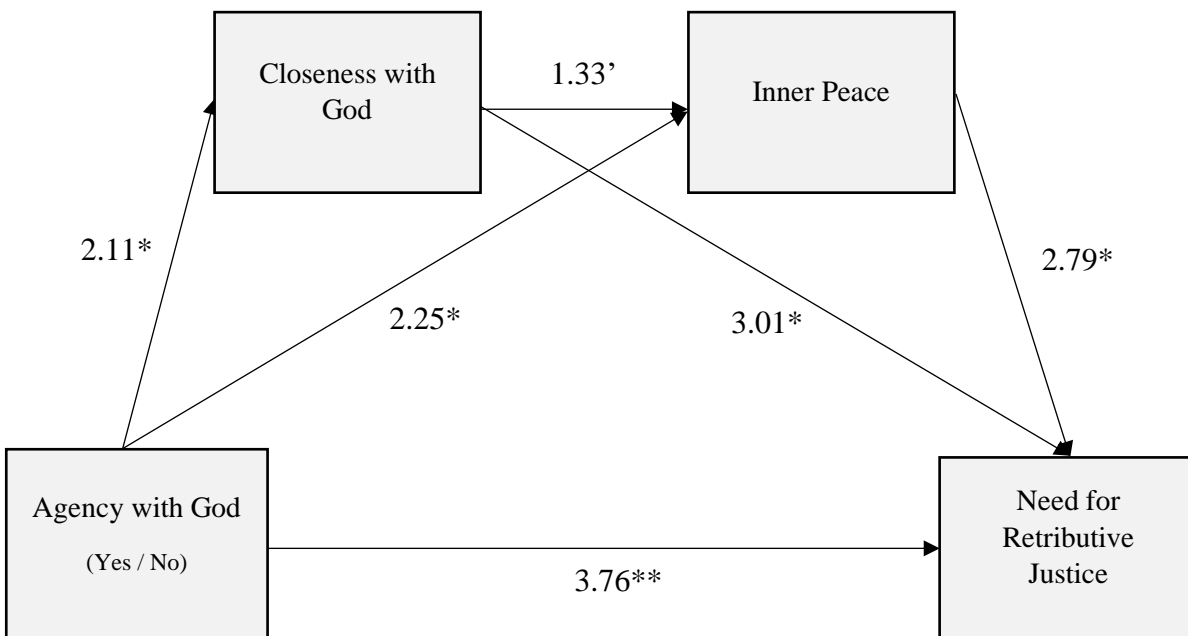
Procedure and Stimuli. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions (agency with God or no agency with God) in a between-subjects experimental design. The same procedure was followed as study 1 and the mediators were measured similar to studies 4a and 4b. See Appendices H, K, and M for study details.

Results and Discussion

Comprehension and Attention Checks. 33 participants were removed for failing either the comprehension check questions or attention check questions.

Mediation Analysis. To test the serial mediation of agency with God on retributive justice through two mediators, increased closeness with God and inner peace, PROCESS model 6 (Hayes 2013) was used. In the analysis, the 95% confidence interval of the index of mediation excluded zero (index = .4238, 95% CI [.28, .98]).

The effect of agency with God on the dependent variable, desire for retributive justice, was significant ($t = 11.003$, $SE = .0078$, $p = .009$, 95% CI [.03, .85]). The effect of agency with God on Mediator 1, closeness to God, was significant ($t = 9.613$, $SE = .0564$, $p = .0345$, 95% CI [.08, .57]). The effect of agency with God on Mediator 2, inner peace, was significant ($t = 8.711$, $SE = .0431$, $p = .0213$, 95% CI [.09, .28]).



Note: All coefficients reported are unstandardized effects. $^{\circ}p < .10$, $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$

Figure 16: Essay 2 Study 4c- Serial Mediation Analysis (Both Mediators)

Next, the parallel effect of both mediators was measured to examine their effect on the dependent variable. When both mediators are introduced, the direct effect of agency with God on

retributive justice is insignificant. The direct effect of Mediator 1, closeness to God on retributive justice is significant ($t = 2.46$, $SE = .24$, $p = .0221$, 95% CI [.12, .45]). The indirect effect of agency with God on the dependent variable retributive justice through Mediator 1, closeness to God, was significant ($t = 6.134$, $SE = .0798$, $p = .039$, 95% CI [.13, .78]). The direct effect of Mediator 2, inner peace on retributive justice is significant ($t = 3.03$, $SE = .06$, $p = .024$, 95% CI [.31, .58]). The indirect effect of agency with God on the dependent variable retributive justice through Mediator 2, inner peace, was significant ($t = 5.617$, $SE = .0501$, $p = .0125$, 95% CI [.32, .56]).

Subsequently, the serial mediation effect of both mediators as described in the conceptual model was examined through Process Model 6 (Hayes 2013). The serial mediation effect of agency with God via Mediator 1, closeness with God, on Mediator 2, inner peace, leading to retributive justice is significant and the 95% confidence interval of the index of mediation excluded zero ($t = 13.012$, $SE = .0583$, $p = .0181$, 95% CI [.54, .97]). When both mediators were introduced, the direct effect of agency with God on retributive justice was insignificant. The direct path between Mediator 1 and Mediator 2 was significant at the 90% confidence interval ($t = 3.071$, $SE = .3157$, $p = .0981$, 90% CI [.02, .13]).

These results provide support for the serial mediation proposed in the conceptual model and evidence to support hypothesis 2c. Agency with God leads to feelings of closeness with God which increases inner peace subsequently, reducing the desire for retributive justice against an organization that has committed a transgression. On the other hand, no agency with God seems to create feelings of distance from God which reduces feelings of inner peace and subsequently, increases the feelings of retributive justice against an organization that has committed a

transgression. The next study further tests the underlying mechanism proposed in the conceptual model.

Study 5: Moderation of Process- Agency with God and Closeness with God

Study 5 aims to test the underlying mechanism by moderation of process. I examine the interaction of agency with God and closeness with God on retributive justice to further test the process investigated in the above studies. Since closeness with God is the mediating variable that lead to outcomes like greater inner peace and wellbeing (Culver 2021, Gilbertson et al. 2022), I test this variable in the current study. I expect that the condition of agency with God and closeness with God would display lower retributive justice needs than other conditions.

Method

Participants. Four hundred and seventy-four participants (56.9% female, $M_{age} = 40.3$) were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk.

Procedure and Stimuli. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (agency with God: yes vs no) x 2 (closeness to God: close vs. far) between-subjects experimental design. The agency with God manipulations followed the same procedure as study 1. Next, they saw a Venn diagram depicting close or far God-Self relationship and were asked to write about a time when they felt close or far from God. See Appendices H, K, and N for study details.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation and Attention Checks. 19 participants were removed for failing either the attention or comprehension checks.

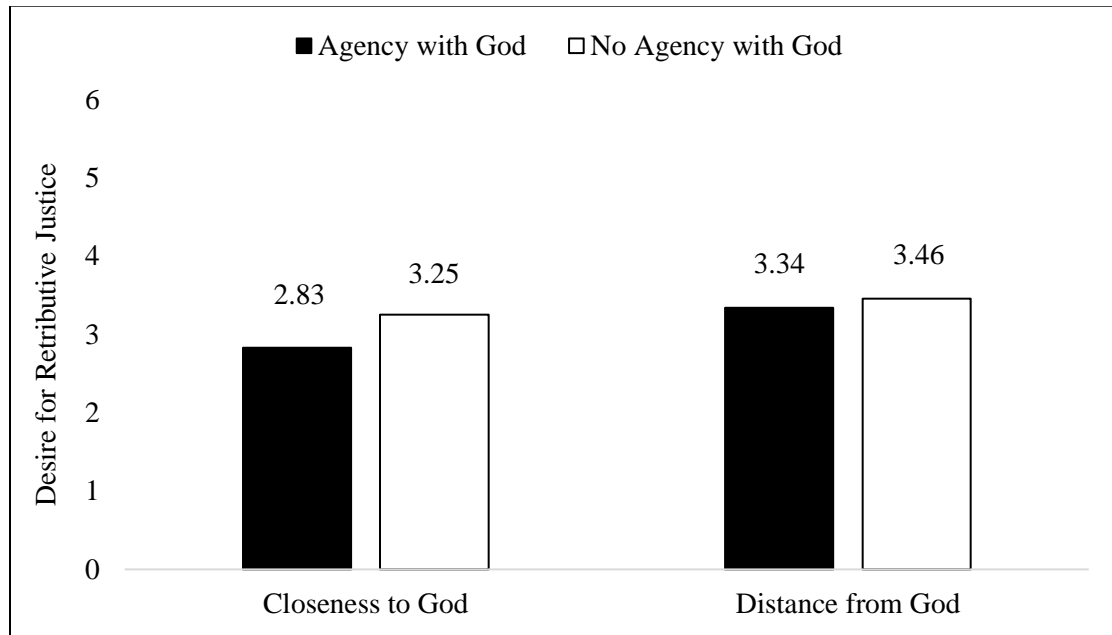


Figure 17: Essay 2 Study 5- Moderation of Process- Interaction of Agency with God and Closeness to God on Desire for Retributive Justice

Hypothesis Testing. An ANOVA with agency with God (yes vs. no) and closeness to God (close vs. far) was conducted. The interaction between agency with God and closeness to God was significant ($F(2, 455) = 3.88, p = .037$).

Feelings of agency with God and closeness to God together display significantly lower retributive justice needs than (1) those who feel agency with but distant from God ($M_{AC} - M_{AD} = -.51$, $F(1, 455) = 4.18$, $p = .041$) as well as (2) those who don't feel agency with but close to God ($M_{AC} - M_{NAC} = -.42$, $F(1, 455) = 3.66$, $p = .045$). There is no significant difference between individuals in the two distance from God conditions ($M_{AD} - M_{NAD} = -.12$, $F(1, 455) = 1.01$, $p = .457$). Similarly, there is no significant difference between individuals in the two no agency with God conditions ($M_{NAC} - M_{NAD} = -.21$, $F(1, 455) = 1.24$, $p = .314$). This shows that there is a congruence of the effect between agency with and closeness to God which drives the effect of lowering retributive justice needs. These findings help to further support the mediation hypothesis of this paper, such that when one feels agency with God it also fosters feelings of closeness with God which leads to lowering retributive justice needs.

The above studies show that feeling agency in one's relationship God is a unique construct which shows different outcomes as compared to feeling agency over material resources. Feeling agency in one's relationship God leads to greater closeness with God which increases inner peace subsequently, reducing retributive justice needs. The results from studies 1-5, show that the conceptual model of the paper is supported. The next section discusses the theoretical and managerial contributions of this paper as well as the limitations and directions for future research.

CHAPTER EIGHT: GENERAL DISCUSSION (ESSAY 2)

Theoretical and Managerial Contributions

Through this paper, I contribute to the literature on agency, God salience, one's relationship and closeness with God, inner peace, and retributive justice. The effect of agency, power, or sense of control has been extensively studied in research as well as practice. It is a fundamental part of human life and forms the basis of decisions we make in daily life such as feeling powerful increases how much money is saved (Garbinsky et al. 2014), reduction in death anxiety (Belmi and Pfeffer 2016), and reduction in willingness to sacrifice for environmental protection (Conlon and Rose 2017). Even though such widespread and divergent results are found, prior work mainly focuses on the experience of power or agency over material resources. The sense of agency in spiritual life, in one's relationship with God, is not examined in academic research although its importance is highlighted in spiritual traditions and practice. This paper aims to not just address this gap but also provide evidence regarding which choice, the feeling of agency or no agency in one's relationship with God, seems to be the better one for individuals to inculcate in one's life. This paper finds that feeling agency in one's relationship with God is very important. As the Hindu scriptures have stated, it helps the individual to take complete responsibility to nurture one's life appropriately but also develop complete trust in the Divine that one is taken care of. This leads to feelings of closeness with God without shame, guilt, or fear and hence, a positive transformation of one's life (Salagame 2017, Vishwananda 2021b).

This paper also contributes to the literature on God, religion, and spirituality in consumer research by examining the effect of developing a relationship with God and feeling agency or

personal control within that relationship, and not just being mindful of the presence of God (i.e., God salience). God is an entity that cannot be perceived directly through the senses (Meier et al. 2007), however, many people see themselves as being in a relationship with God (Exline et al. 2011). However, how that relationship with God is formed and coded in the individual's psyche is very important for the decisions one makes. For example, Laurin et al. (2012a) find that people demonstrate reduced active goal pursuit when they are exposed to concepts that God may influence their lives. Interestingly, they also find that individuals differ significantly in the amount of omniscience and omnipresence they ascribe to God. Some feel that God watches over their every action and others that God watches over only the big decisions of their life. Hence, as the results of the current paper highlight when individuals are aware of God's presence, try to build a relationship with the Divine, and feel agency in the God-Self dyad, it leads to beneficial outcomes for the individual and society. Hence, this paper examines feeling agency in one's relationship God and attempts to further academic research on it.

Another important concept for businesses to understand is the idea of retributive justice when the organization is exposed as having committed a transgression. Smith and Warneken (2016) find that starting from as early as age 4-5 years old, children start to develop thoughts about justice and deservedness. With increasing age, collective rewards and punishments are not thought of as fair instead individuals prefer for themselves and others to be treated according to individual merits or demerits. Since the development of thoughts of justice starts at such a young age, it is a very important concept to understand when organizations are attempting to redress any wrongdoing. In line with earlier work, I find that feelings of agency over resources (i.e., powerful individuals) often desire more severe punishments against transgressors as they

consider these to be fairer as compared to powerless individuals (van Prooijen et al. 2014). However, feeling agency in one's relationship with God leads to a lower desire for retributive justice due to feelings of closeness with God and greater inner peace, as compared to individuals who do not feel agency in their relationship with God. This helps to expand the literature on retributive justice, relationship with God, feelings of agency or power, and inner peace. Organizations need to consider that individuals may hold important beliefs regarding God and their spiritual life and hence, their reactions to transgressions could be quite severe or mild dependent on such beliefs.

Limitations and Future Research

This paper has not examined whether different traditions across the world advocate varied concepts about God and hence, groups of individuals who identify with particular beliefs could hold concrete ideas about agency or lack thereof in their relationship with God. Examining these cultural differences may provide further insight into understanding how individuals develop their relationship with God and what decisions they make in their lives based on that. Furthermore, individuals may feel that gaining power or agency over material resources is a proxy to their relationship with God, such that they have control over various resources because they have power in their relationship with God. This can be tested in future work whether such a causal relationship exists.

**APPENDIX A: APPROVAL LETTER FROM IRB TO CONDUCT
RESEARCH FOR ESSAY 1**



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Institutional Review Board

FWA00000351
IRB00001138
Office of Research
12201 Research Parkway
Orlando, FL 32826-3246

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

July 3, 2019

Dear Mrudul Nilangekar:

On 7/3/2019, the IRB determined the following submission to be human subjects research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Initial Study, Category 3(i)B
Title:	Use of I-pronouns and prosocial behavior
Investigator:	Mrudul Nilangekar
IRB ID:	STUDY00000470
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made, and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request so that IRB records will be accurate.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or irb@ucf.edu. Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Renea Carver
Designated Reviewer

Figure 18: Appendix A- IRB Approval Letter for Essay 1

**APPENDIX B: ESSAY 1 STUDY 1 EFFECT OF COMPASSION ON
PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR**

First, all participants saw Figure 19.



Figure 19: Appendix B-First Image seen by all Participants for Essay 1 Study 1

Next, the participants were randomly assigned to one experimental condition and shown one of the images below and asked to write a few sentences regarding the same scenario:



Figure 20: Appendix B- General Self-Referencing Manipulation for Essay 1 Study 1



Figure 21: Appendix B- Self-Compassion Manipulation for Essay 1 Study 1



Figure 22: Appendix B- Other-Compassion Manipulation for Essay 1 Study 1

To measure their prosocial intentions, the participants answered two questions, measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree):

1. Would you be willing to help Action Against Hunger to raise funds in a charity drive they are organizing?
2. Would you be willing to volunteer for Action Against Hunger to raise awareness for them on social media?

Table 1: Appendix B- Essay 1 Study 1 Results Table 1 (Dependent Variable Help in Fundraising)

Variable	SD	Mean Difference	SE	p value	Effect Size (η_p^2)
Self-Compassion	1.67	SC – OC = .51	.17	p = .013	.11
		SC – SR = .77	.20	p < .001	.23
Other-compassion	2.01	OC – SC = -.51	.17	p = .013	.11
		OC – SR = .26	.19	p = .632	.02
General self-referencing	1.98	SR – SC = -.77	.20	p < .001	.23
		SR – OC = -.26	.19	p = .632	.02

Table 2: Appendix B- Essay 1 Study 1 Results Table 2 (Dependent Variable Volunteering to Raise Awareness on Social Media)

Variable	SD	Mean Difference	SE	p value	Effect Size (η_p^2)
Self-Compassion	1.99	SC – OC = .94	.20	p = .011	.09
		SC – SR = .93	.17	p < .001	.27
Other-compassion	1.35	OC – SC = -.94	.20	p = .011	.09
		OC – SR = -.01	.18	p = .751	.01
General self-referencing	1.51	SR – SC = -.93	.17	p < .001	.27
		SR – OC = .01	.18	p = .751	.01

**APPENDIX C: ESSAY 1 STUDY 2 EFFECT OF COMPASSION ON
EMPATHY FATIGUE**

The participants were shown one of the images below and asked to write a few sentences regarding the same scenario:



Figure 23: Appendix C- Self-Compassion Manipulation Image for Essay 1 Study 2



Figure 24: Appendix C- Other-Compassion Manipulation Image for Essay 1 Study 2

Next, the participants answered the Empathy Fatigue items:

1. I feel "on edge" after helping others.
2. I feel depressed after helping others.
3. I feel worn out after helping others.
4. I feel I need a break to do something else after helping others.

Lastly, to measure their prosocial intentions, the participants answered 1 question, measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree):

1. Would you be willing to volunteer to help Loving Minds in their charitable efforts?

Table 3: Appendix C- Essay 1 Study 2 Results Table (Dependent Variable Empathy Fatigue)

Variable	SD	Mean Difference	SE	p value	Effect Size (η_p^2)
Self-Compassion	1.00	SC – OC = -.47	.10	p = .001	.30
Other-compassion	.88	OC – SC = .47	.10	p = .001	.30

**APPENDIX D: ESSAY 1 STUDY 3 EFFECT OF COMPASSION ON
PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR MEDIATED BY
SELF-OTHER CLOSENESS**

All participants read the below fictitious scenario about a cancer patient:

My name is Austin. I am 20 years old, and I am a 2x Hodgkin lymphoma survivor. After being sick for nearly a year and half my freshman year at college, I was unfavorably diagnosed, Stage IV in November 2017.

I had every symptom in the book. I saw every doctor imaginable, but still wasn't given a diagnosis. So, I became my own advocate, and took myself to walk-in clinics and ERs until I had an answer. In April, I had my stem cell transplant. I was recovering in the hospital for about 3 weeks, and now I am continuing to recover from home.

This has been, and always will be the most difficult thing I'll ever battle.

Next, the participants were randomly assigned to either the self-compassion or the other-compassion conditions:

1. Self-compassion condition manipulation- Please write to Austin with understanding and support as if he were standing in front of you right now. Specifically, imagine that something similar could happen to you. Make sure you write about yourself in the first-person.

Write in the **first-person voice**, so that Austin understands he has support. For example,

"I ..."

"... my ..."

2. Other-compassion condition manipulation- Please write to Austin with understanding and support as if he were standing in front of you right now. Specifically, imagine that something similar could happen to him again. Make sure you write to him in the second-person.

Write in the **second-person voice**, so that Austin understands how you feel. For example,

"You ..."

"... your ..."

Next, to measure their prosocial intentions, the participants answered 1 question, measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree):

1. Would you be willing to help Win Against Cancer in their charitable efforts?

Finally, to measure the closeness/ distance they felt between self-other, the participants were asked the following question.

Please select the image that best describes your relationship with others:

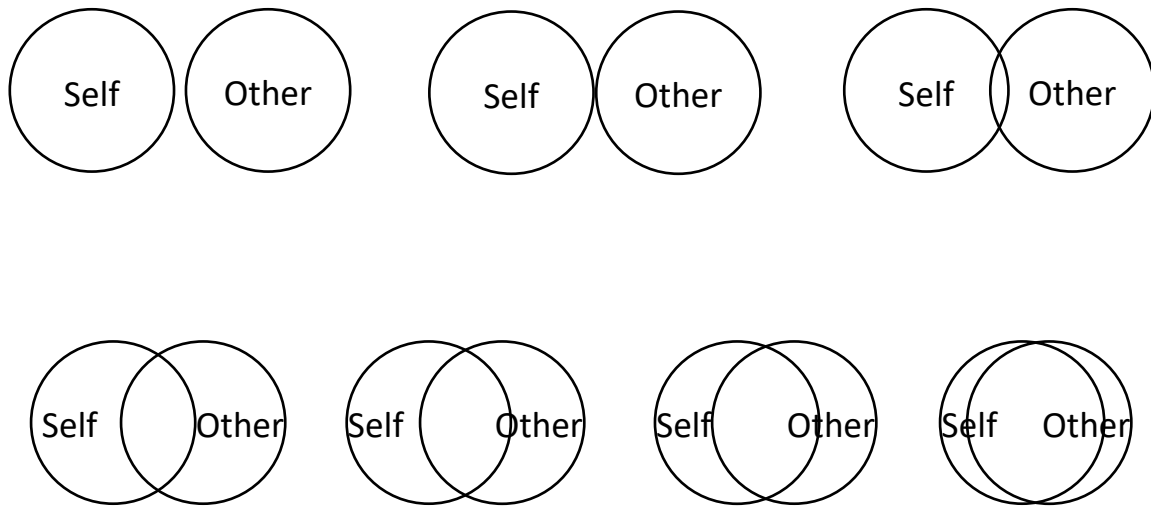


Figure 25: Appendix D- Pictorial Representation Of Self-Other Relationship Essay 1 Study 3

**APPENDIX E: ESSAY 1 STUDY 4 MODERATION OF PROCESS-
EFFECT OF COMPASSION AND SELF-OTHER CLOSENESS ON
PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR**

All participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions, close or far self-other distance. They were told that the researchers had noticed through their earlier responses that they were a part of a certain group and were asked to write a few sentences regarding the same:

- 1.) **You prefer being close to other people.**
- 2.) **Having similar interests is important to you.**
- 3.) **You intentionally do things that make your sense of self include others.**
- 4.) **You enjoy being a part of a shared experience.**

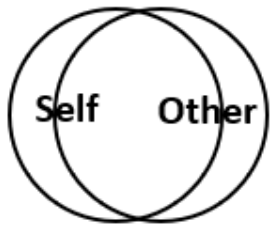


Figure 26: Appendix E- Close Self-Other Distance Manipulation Essay 1 Study 4

- 1.) **You prefer being different from other people.**
- 2.) **Being distinctive is important to you.**
- 3.) **You intentionally do things that make your sense of self unique from those around you.**
- 4.) **You enjoy your individuality.**

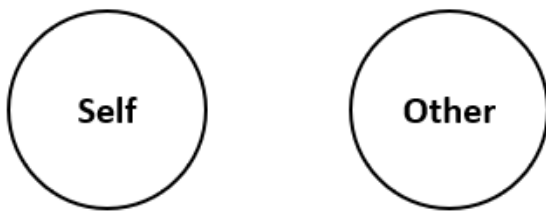


Figure 27: Appendix E- Far Self-Other Distance Manipulation Essay 1 Study 4

Next, the participants were randomly assigned to either the self-compassion condition or the other-compassion condition. They saw one of the below images as per their assigned condition and were asked to write a few sentences regarding that scenario:



Figure 28: Appendix E- Self-Compassion Manipulation Image Essay 1 Study 4



Their home is their sanctuary to learn, play and grow.
There is such a feeling of peace when they have a safe home to
rest in ...

Figure 29: Appendix E- Other-Compassion Manipulation Image Essay 1 Study 4

Lastly, to measure their prosocial intentions, the participants answered 1 question, measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree):

1. Would you be willing to help Home & Hearth to raise funds in a charity drive they are organizing?

Table 4: Appendix E- Essay 1 Study 4 Results Table (Dependent Variable Help in Fundraising)

Variable	SD	Mean Difference	SE	p value	Effect Size (η_p^2)
Self-Compassion	.56 (Close)	$M_{SC-C} - M_{OC-C} = .82$	.03	$p = .030$	.22
		$M_{SC-C} - M_{SC-F} = .87$	.03	$p = .021$	.35
	.68 (Far)	$M_{SC-F} - M_{SC-C} = -.87$	.03	$p = .021$	.35
		$M_{SC-F} - M_{OC-F} = .08$	.04	$p = .123$	.03
Other-compassion	.90 (Close)	$M_{OC-C} - M_{SC-C} = -.82$	.03	$p = .030$	.22
		$M_{OC-C} - M_{OC-F} = -.13$	.06	$p = .287$	.02
	.89 (Far)	$M_{OC-F} - M_{OC-C} = -.13$	.06	$p = .287$	.02
		$M_{OC-F} - M_{SC-F} = -.08$	.04	$p = .123$	.03
Compassion* Horizontal Distance				$p = .004$	.41

**APPENDIX F: ESSAY 1 STUDY 5 MODERATION OF THE EFFECT,
COMPASSION AND VERTICAL DISTANCE MANIPULATIONS**

All participants read the below fictitious scenario about a family affected by the California wildfires:

“It looked like the fire was way off in the canyon, like what’s happened 100 times before,” Brandon Hill said. He drove only a few miles when he realized the fire had raged through miles of trees and brush and was barreling toward Camelot, his Concow subdivision. His wife, Sara, was still there with their 8-year-old son, Nathan.

I screamed at her at the top of my lungs to just get in the car and we drove away leaving everything we owned behind. I still can’t get over how I talked to my wife.

Next, the participants were randomly assigned to either the self-compassion or the other-compassion conditions:

1. Self-compassion condition- Please write to Brandon with understanding and support as if he were standing in front of you right now. Specifically, imagine that something similar could happen to you. Make sure you write about yourself in the first-person.

Please write a minimum of 10 sentences.

Write in the **first-person voice**, so that Brandon understands how you feel. For example,

"I ..."

"... my ..."

2. Other-compassion condition- Please write to Brandon with understanding and support as if he were standing in front of you right now. Specifically, imagine that something similar could happen to him again. Make sure you write to him in the second-person.

Please write a minimum of 10 sentences.

Write in the **second-person voice**, so that Brandon understands that he did the right thing. For example,

"You ..."

"... your ..."

Next, all the participants were randomly assigned to one of three vertical distance manipulations:

1. Equal power- Imagine that you and your colleague are puzzle solvers. Both of you are in charge of completing the task assigned to you. Your colleague and you together decide how to structure the tasks and the standards by which both your work will be evaluated. You and your colleague have equal control over the work assigned to you or how much pay you will receive. Each evaluates the other at the end of the session in an open questionnaire—that is, both of you see each other's evaluations. Both of you have the opportunity to evaluate the other. Each of your compensations is the same and is affected by your own skills and those of the other.
2. High power- Imagine that you are the manager of a team of puzzle solvers. You are in charge of directing the subordinates to complete the task allocated to them. You decide how to structure the tasks and the standards by which their work will be evaluated. You

evaluate them at the end of the session in a private questionnaire—that is, the subordinates never see your evaluation. The subordinates do not have the opportunity to evaluate you. Your evaluation determines how much compensation they receive for the task. Thus, as a manager, you are in charge of creating the puzzle, evaluating your subordinates, and determining the rewards that your subordinates will receive. Your compensation is higher than your subordinates and is not affected by their skills.

3. Low power- Imagine that you are a puzzle solver. You will have to carry out a task allocated to you by your manager. Your manager will decide how to structure the tasks and the standards by which your work will be evaluated. In addition, you will be evaluated by the manager at the end of the session in a private questionnaire—that is, you will not see your manager’s evaluation of you. You will not have an opportunity to evaluate your manager. The manager’s evaluation determines how much compensation you receive for the task. Thus, only the manager will be in charge of directing the puzzle creation, evaluating you, and determining the rewards that you will receive. Your compensation is lower than your manager’s and is affected by your manager’s skills.

According to the vertical distance condition they were assigned to, they saw the following corresponding word grid to further enhance the power manipulation:

1. Equal power- Participants had to find ten words. Six words were congruent with the manipulation “friends, match, balance, equal, same, similar” and four were random words “table, house, clock, food.”

R	F	R	I	E	N	D	S	D	N	X
W	O	I	O	R	L	T	A	B	L	E
H	V	Z	O	X	H	O	U	S	E	Z
Z	B	M	A	T	C	H	H	L	J	K
R	B	A	L	A	N	C	E	F	L	E
O	H	H	N	P	B	C	P	S	R	U
Y	E	Q	U	A	L	P	Q	U	Q	Z
S	A	M	E	S	B	Q	B	V	E	L
T	S	I	M	I	L	A	R	K	S	R
I	V	C	L	O	C	K	O	C	J	N
H	X	N	U	G	F	O	O	D	D	G

Figure 30: Appendix F- Equal Power Word Grid for Essay 1 Study 5

2. High power- The relevant words they had to find in the word grid were “authority, superior, executive, control, influence, boss” and the four random words were the same as the equal power condition.

A	U	T	H	O	R	I	T	Y	Y	F
T	P	W	H	G	B	O	S	S	C	A
J	V	S	S	U	P	E	R	I	O	R
Q	O	L	G	C	J	F	O	O	D	R
C	O	N	T	R	O	L	U	D	W	Q
Z	G	C	L	O	C	K	Z	Y	W	C
H	O	U	S	E	V	U	S	J	A	X
E	E	X	E	C	U	T	I	V	E	I
F	P	N	O	I	X	L	S	R	I	D
I	N	F	L	U	E	N	C	E	U	I
L	R	B	W	T	A	B	L	E	R	X

Figure 31: Appendix F- High Power Word Grid for Essay 1 Study 5

3. Low power- The relevant words they had to find in the word grid were “subordinate, inferior, weakness, follower, worker, trivial” and the four random words were the same as the equal power condition.

N	W	Y	P	O	B	V	T	M	H	T
D	Q	R	E	Y	C	L	O	C	K	I
G	N	H	O	U	S	E	N	B	T	C
X	I	N	F	E	R	I	O	R	Y	T
L	U	F	T	A	B	L	E	V	W	T
Z	W	E	A	K	N	E	S	S	T	J
T	W	O	R	K	E	R	K	D	D	T
O	F	O	L	L	O	W	E	R	G	B
S	U	B	O	R	D	I	N	A	T	E
K	T	R	I	V	I	A	L	U	X	W
F	O	O	D	N	B	L	S	Q	L	I

Figure 32: Appendix F- Low Power Word Grid for Essay 1 Study 5

Lastly, to test their attitudes towards a charity, participants were asked to read this scenario and respond to the following attitude measures:

Since the catastrophic wildfires struck, the Red Cross has been there to help meet ongoing needs for shelter, food, immediate financial relief, and other necessities. The response to the devastating California wildfires is far from over and the Red Cross is always grateful for any help that can be given.

Bad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Good
Unappealing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Appealing
Not Likeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Likeable
Poor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent
Negative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Positive

Figure 33: Appendix F- Dependent variable measure (positive attitudes towards the charity) for Essay 1 Study 5

Table 5: Appendix F- Essay 1 Study 5 Results Table (Dependent Variable Positive Attitudes Towards the Charity)

Variable	SD	Mean Difference	SE	p value	Effect Size (η_p^2)
Self-Compassion	.56 (Equal Power)	$M_{SC-E} - M_{SC-H} = .40$	.06	$p = .084$	.10
		$M_{SC-E} - M_{SC-L} = .38$	.06	$p = .091$	.25
		$M_{SC-E} - M_{OC-E} = .66$	.04	$p = .002$	.37
	.68 (High Power)	$M_{SC-H} - M_{SC-E} = -.40$	.06	$p = .084$	.10
		$M_{SC-H} - M_{SC-L} = -.02$	.05	$p = .306$	.01
		$M_{SC-H} - M_{OC-H} = -.14$	.05	$p = .122$	.09
	.44 (Low Power)	$M_{SC-L} - M_{SC-E} = -.38$	.06	$p = .091$	.25
		$M_{SC-L} - M_{SC-H} = .02$	.05	$p = .306$	.01
		$M_{SC-L} - M_{OC-L} = .24$	.07	$p = .167$	.07
Other-compassion	.67 (Equal Power)	$M_{OC-E} - M_{OC-H} = -.40$	.05	$p = .057$	.17
		$M_{OC-E} - M_{OC-L} = -.04$	.04	$p = .334$	.02
		$M_{OC-E} - M_{SC-E} = -.66$	.04	$p = .002$	.37
	.98 (High Power)	$M_{OC-H} - M_{OC-E} = .40$	.05	$p = .057$	.17
		$M_{OC-H} - M_{OC-L} = .36$	.07	$p = .098$	.05
		$M_{SC-H} - M_{OC-H} = .14$	.05	$p = .122$	.09

Variable	SD	Mean Difference	SE	p value	Effect Size (η_p^2)
	.44 (Low Power)	$M_{OC-L} - M_{OC-E} = .04$	.04	$p = .334$	.02
		$M_{OC-L} - M_{OC-H} = -.36$	.07	$p = .098$	.05
		$M_{OC-L} - M_{SC-L} = -.24$	.07	$p = .167$	.07
Compassion* Vertical Distance				$p = .039$	.19

**APPENDIX G: APPROVAL LETTER FROM IRB TO CONDUCT
RESEARCH FOR ESSAY 2**



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Institutional Review Board

FWA00000351
IRB00001138, IRB00012110
Office of Research
12201 Research Parkway
Orlando, FL 32826-3246

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

April 10, 2023

Dear Mrudul Nilangekar:

On 4/10/2023, the IRB determined the following submission to be human subjects research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Initial Study, Initial Study
Title:	Agency with God lowers need for justice
Investigator:	Mrudul Nilangekar
IRB ID:	STUDY00005289
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explanation of Research MTurk.pdf, Category: Consent Form;• Explanation of Research Student.pdf, Category: Consent Form;• HRP-255 - FORM - Request for Exemption.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;• mTurk Recruiting (HIT posting).docx, Category: Recruitment Materials;• Questionnaire.docx, Category: Survey / Questionnaire;• Student Recruiting.docx, Category: Recruitment Materials;

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made, and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please submit a modification request to the IRB. Guidance on submitting Modifications and Administrative Check-in are detailed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request so that IRB records will be accurate.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or irb@ucf.edu. Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Harry Wingfield
Designated Reviewer

Figure 34: Appendix G- IRB Approval Letter for Essay 2

**APPENDIX H: ESSAY 2 AGENCY/NO AGENCY WITH GOD
MANIPULATIONS FOR ALL STUDIES**

Participants in the agency in one's relationship with God read the following prompt to manipulate feelings of agency:

Please take some time to write about the role or impact of God or a higher power in your life.

Specifically, please provide an example of when you felt like you have agency in your relationship with God. For example, when you felt that your actions or choices influenced your relationship with God, when you had a voice and felt heard by a higher power and had power to co-create your life together with God.

What was the situation? When did it take place? Where? How did you feel? Please be as detailed about this experience as possible, so that we may understand it.

Participants in the no agency in one's relationship with God read the following prompt to manipulate feelings of no agency:

Please take some time to write about the role or impact of God or a higher power in your life.

Specifically, please provide a specific example when you felt no control over your relationship with God. For example, when felt that your actions or choices could not influence your relationship with God, when you had no voice or did not feel heard by a higher power, or someone else was in charge of your relationship with God.

What was the situation? When did it take place? Where? How did you feel? Please be as detailed about this experience as possible, so that we may understand it.

**APPENDIX I: ESSAY 2 STUDY 1- GOD SALIENCE MANIPULATION
AND RESULTS TABLE**

Participants in the God Salience condition read the following prompt:

Please take some time to write about the role or impact of God, however you define God, in your life.

Please provide a specific example to help explain your answer. What was the situation? When did it take place and where? How did you feel? Please be as detailed about this experience as possible, so that we may understand it.

Table 6: Appendix I- Essay 2 Study 1 Results Table (Dependent Variable Retributive Justice)

Variable	SD	Mean Difference	SE	p value	Effect Size (η_p^2)
Agency with God	.80	$M_A - M_{NA} = -1.06$	.04	$p = .011$	.20
		$M_A - M_S = -1.02$	.05	$p = .032$	.18
No Agency with God	1.12	$M_{NA} - M_A = 1.06$	.04	$p = .011$	.20
		$M_{NA} - M_S = .04$	.04	$p = .295$	.01
God Salience	1.09	$M_S - M_A = 1.02$	.05	$p = .032$	.18
		$M_S - M_{NA} = -.04$	.04	$p = .295$	.01

**APPENDIX J: ESSAY 2 STUDY 2- EFFECT OF AGENCY/NO AGENCY
OVER MATERIAL RESOURCES ON RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE**

Participants in the agency over material resources read the following prompt to manipulate feelings of agency (adapted from Belmi and Pfeffer 2016).

“Please take some time to write about a time when you felt you had control over some resources or situations. For example, money, leadership over a team etc. Please be specific. What was the situation? When did it take place and where? How did you feel? Please be as detailed about this experience as possible, so that we may understand it.”

Participants in the no agency over material resources read the following prompt to manipulate feelings of agency.

“Please take some time to write about a time when you felt you had no control over some resources or situations. For example, lack of money, subordinate in a team etc. Please be specific. What was the situation? When did it take place and where? How did you feel? Please be as detailed about this experience as possible, so that we may understand it.”

Table 7: Appendix J- Essay 2 Study 2 Results Table (Dependent Variable Retributive Justice)

Variable	SD	Mean Difference	SE	p value	Effect Size (η_p^2)
Agency over Material Resources	1.34	$M_A - M_{NA} = .28$	.07	$p = .04$	.09
Agency over Material Resources	1.34	$M_A - M_{NA} = -.28$	.07	$p = .04$	.09

**APPENDIX K: ALL STUDIES DEPENDENT VARIABLE-
RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE MEASURES**

Studies 1, 4a-c, 5: **Scenario-** An organization was found to have used sub-par materials in their pipelines that caused millions of gallons of mining wastewater and other chemicals to overflow near the waterways of a city in your country. The company took immediate action to rectify the situation through clean up and repair drives. Water testing did not show elevated levels of pollutants in the local waterways.

Study 2: **Scenario-** One of the largest phone companies in the world settled its bribery case with the Department of Justice by agreeing to pay \$137 million. The case revolves around a complex series of money transfers between shell companies and consultants, resulting in payments made to foreign officials. The organization admitted to making improper payments to many foreign national companies to serve its own interests.

Study 3: **Scenario-** One of the largest energy companies in the world, dumped millions of gallons of toxic waste in Ecuador, spreading toxins throughout the Amazonian rivers and unlined pits. The company was fined \$9.5 million — a small price to pay in comparison to the enormous cost to the environment. Their rap sheet doesn't begin and end just there. The company was fined two million dollars by Angola in 2002 (the first country in Africa to fine a major multinational corporation within its borders) for oil spills.

Measure-

1. The only way to restore justice is to punish the wastewater company for its transgression.

2. Justice will be served when that the wastewater company is punished for its transgression.
3. For the sake of justice, the wastewater company has to suffer for its transgression.

Measured on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)

APPENDIX L: ESSAY 2 STUDY 3 RESULTS TABLE

Table 8: Appendix L- Essay 2 Study 3 Results Table (Dependent Variable Retributive Justice)

Variable	SD	Mean Difference	SE	p value	Effect Size (η_p^2)
God	1.51 (Agency)	$M_{AG} - M_{NG} = -1.14$	.21	$p = .033$	.27
		$M_{AG} - M_{AM} = -2.62$	.21	$p = .002$	.51
	.39 (No Agency)	$M_{NG} - M_{AG} = 1.14$	.21	$p = .033$	.27
		$M_{NG} - M_{NM} = -.35$	.20	$p = .403$	.13
Material	.46 (Agency)	$M_{AM} - M_{AG} = 2.62$	.21	$p = .002$	.51
		$M_{AM} - M_{NM} = 1.13$	.20	$p < .001$	.67
	.41 (No Agency)	$M_{NM} - M_{AM} = -1.13$	.20	$p < .001$	.67
		$M_{NM} - M_{NG} = .35$	.20	$p = .403$	.13
Agency* Resource Type				$p = .011$	.46

APPENDIX M: ESSAY 2 STUDY 4 MEDIATION MEASURES

Study 4a and 4c: Participants were asked to select which set of circles best describes their relationship with God.

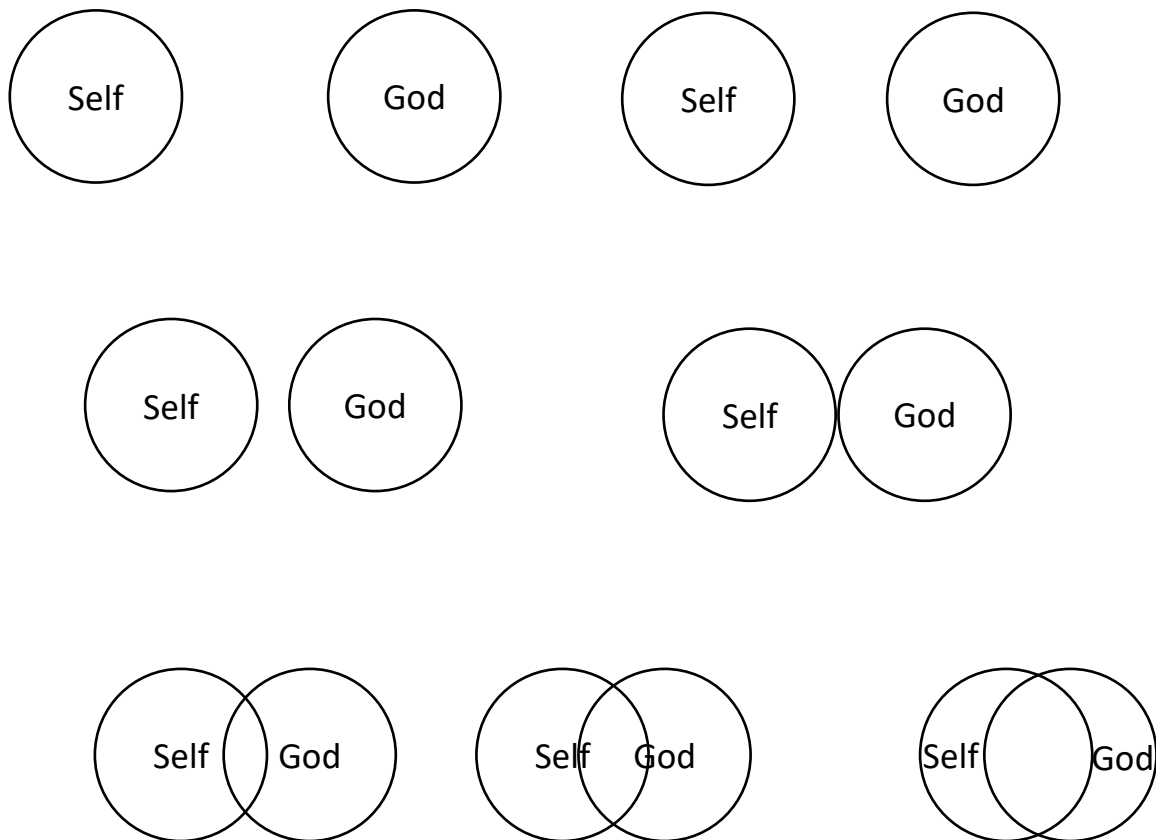


Figure 35: Appendix L- Self-God Closeness Measure for Essay 2 Studies 4a and 4c

Study 4b and 4c: Inner Peace Scale

1. I am satisfied with everything that life has to offer each and every moment.
2. I feel contentment in my daily life.
3. I feel contentment and peace no matter what is going on in my external environment.
4. I often feel an unshakable sense of peace and contentment.
5. I feel a deep sense of contentment even during difficult situations in life.
6. I feel content with my life regardless of whether others accept me or not.

Measured on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)

**APPENDIX N: ESSAY 2 STUDY 5- INTERACTION OF AGENCY/NO AND
CLOSENESS TO/DISTANCE FROM GOD
ON RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE**

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions:

Closeness to God- Sometimes God can seem close to the self. For example, the below diagram which shows the closeness one can feel with God. **Please write about a time when you felt close to God.**

For example, when you felt that his presence was near you.

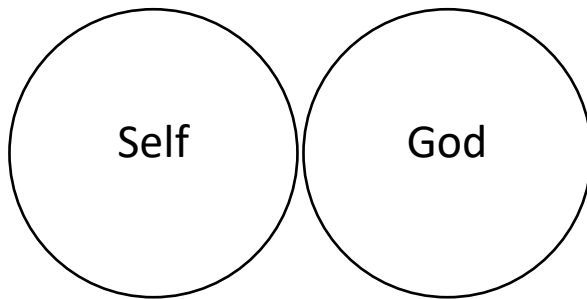


Figure 36: Appendix M- Self-God Closeness Manipulation Essay 2 Study 5

Distance from God- Sometimes God can seem far from the self. For example, the below diagram which shows the distance one can feel from God. **Please write about a time when you felt far from God.**

For example, when you felt that his presence was far from you.

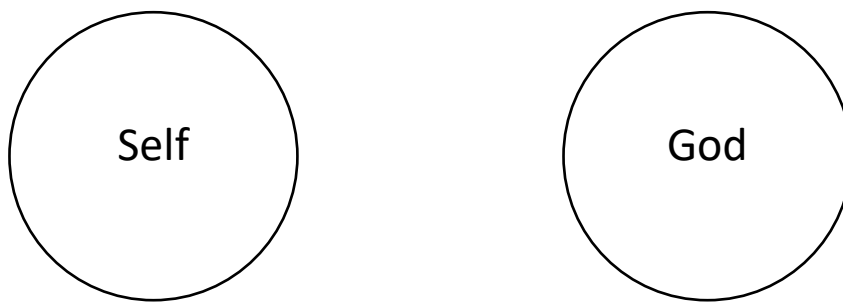


Figure 37: Appendix M- Self-God Distance Manipulation Essay 2 Study 5

Table 9: Appendix N- Essay 2 Study 5 Results Table (Dependent Variable Retributive Justice)

Variable	SD	Mean Difference	SE	p value	Effect Size (η_p^2)
Agency	1.33 (Close)	$M_{AC} - M_{NAC} = -.42$	.16	$p = .033$	.27
		$M_{AC} - M_{AD} = -.51$	.13	$p = .002$	.51
	1.22 (Distant)	$M_{AD} - M_{NAD} = -.12$	.15	$p = .457$	.03
		$M_{AD} - M_{AC} = -.51$	.13	$p = .002$	.51
No Agency	1.08 (Close)	$M_{NAC} - M_{AC} = .42$	.16	$p = .033$	.27
		$M_{NAC} - M_{NAD} = -.21$	.15	$p = .314$	.05
	1.35 (Distant)	$M_{NAD} - M_{NAC} = .21$.15	$p = .314$.05
		$M_{NAD} - M_{AD} = .12$.15	$p = .457$.03
Agency*				$p = .037$.22
Closeness to God					

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