

2017

Self-Compassion and Personality: A Cross-Sectional Study of Big Five Personality, Moral Reasoning, and Values

Kaylee Sisneros

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/honors>



Part of the [Counseling Psychology Commons](#), [Personality and Social Contexts Commons](#), and the [Social Psychology Commons](#)

Suggested Citation

Sisneros, Kaylee, "Self-Compassion and Personality: A Cross-Sectional Study of Big Five Personality, Moral Reasoning, and Values" (2017). *UNF Undergraduate Honors Theses*. 16.
<https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/honors/16>

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at UNF Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in UNF Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of UNF Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [Digital Projects](#).
© 2017 All Rights Reserved

SELF-COMPASSION AND PERSONALITY: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF BIG FIVE
PERSONALITY, MORAL REASONING, AND VALUES

by

Kaylee M. Sisneros

A thesis submitted to the Honors Program
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
Honors in Psychology

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

HONORS PROGRAM

December 2017

Unpublished work © Kaylee M. Sisneros

Certificate of Approval

The thesis of Kaylee M. Sisneros is approved:

(Date)

[Redacted Signature]

12/12/2017

Dr. Paul Fuglestad

Accepted for the Department of Psychology:

[Redacted Signature]

12/12/2017

Dr. Lori Lange, Chair

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my faculty mentor and research advisor, Dr. Paul Fuglestad. It has been a great privilege to be one of your advisees, and your guidance has been immensely helpful in preparing me for a future career as a researcher.

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures.....	v
Abstract.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Method.....	11
Results.....	13
Discussion.....	15
References.....	21
Vita.....	31

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and reliabilities for Big Five Aspects Scale.....	26
Table 2. Descriptive statistics for Schwartz Value Survey.....	27
Table 3. Correlations for Self-Compassion and Big Five Aspects.....	28
Table 4. Correlations for Self-Compassion and Moral Foundations.....	29
Table 5. Correlations for Self-Compassion and Core Values.....	30

Abstract

Self-compassion is a relatively new construct in the psychological literature, and it is comprised of practicing self-kindness, recognizing our common humanity, and being mindful of one's emotions. Previous research has found that individuals higher in self-compassion benefit from greater psychological well-being, less anxiety and depression, and greater clarity about their own strengths and limitations relative to those lower in self-compassion. While this construct has been investigated primarily in clinical and mental health contexts, few studies have evaluated its associations with certain aspects of personality, morals, and values. In the present research, we examined cross-sectional associations between the Self-Compassion Scale, the Big Five Aspects Scale, the Moral Foundations Questionnaire, and the Schwartz Value Survey. Participants completed an online survey comprised of these four constructs. Results indicated that overall self-compassion was negatively correlated with both aspects of Neuroticism (Volatility = $-.58, p < .001$; Withdrawal: $r = -.70, p < .001$), and positively correlated with the Industriousness aspect of Conscientiousness ($r = .38, p < .001$), the Politeness aspect of Agreeableness ($r = .19, p = .008$), and the Enthusiasm aspect of Extraversion ($r = .23, p = .002$). Self-compassion was positively correlated with only the Ingroup/Loyalty factor of moral reasoning ($r = .19, p = .013$) and only the core value of Conformity ($r = .19, p = .008$). Findings suggest that high self-compassion is related to low withdrawal and emotional reactivity, being proactive and getting things done, approaching life and relationships with enthusiasm, and being loyal and respectful to others.

Self-Compassion and Personality:

A Cross-Sectional Study of Big Five Personality, Moral Reasoning, and Values

Self-compassion has been a cornerstone of Eastern philosophies for centuries, but in more recent years, self-compassion has become one of the most studied concepts within Western psychology (see Barnard & Curry, 2011, for a detailed review). The concept of self-compassion comes primarily from Buddhist thought, where the general concept of compassion is the same for the self and others (Neff, 2003a, 2003b). Compassion by this definition consists of recognizing and desiring to ease the suffering of another or one's own suffering, as well as being fully present with that suffering rather than shying away from it (Neff, 2003a). In other words, self-compassion is a soft, mindful awareness of the complete human experience. When one is going through a difficult time or experiencing negative emotions, the self-compassionate response is to treat oneself with kindness and understanding, recognize that everyone goes through difficult experiences, and to hold painful emotions in mindful awareness rather than letting them take over. This, in turn, leads to more adaptive psychological processes associated with various aspects of well-being.

Neff (2003a) developed the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) to concretely assess levels of self-compassion, and this scale is now widely used in most studies on self-compassion (Barnard & Curry, 2011). The construct consists of six factors: having kindness towards oneself in times of suffering (self-kindness) versus being self-critical (self-judgment), understanding that one's suffering is a part of the common human experience (common humanity) versus believing one is alone in their experience (isolation), and being mindful of one's emotions (mindfulness) versus becoming consumed by emotions (over-identification). These six subscales can be grouped into the three main aspects of self-compassion: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness.

Previous research has indicated that self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness often enhance one another in different ways (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Neff, 2003b). For instance, self-kindness may promote mindfulness and common humanity. Being kind and accepting towards oneself allows one to remain in the present and hold negative emotions in a balanced perspective. Being kind to oneself may also prevent feelings of shame and inadequacy, prompting one to reach out and connect with others. Mindfulness can promote self-kindness and common humanity, such that being able to maintain a balanced view of emotions allows one to treat oneself kindly and with understanding and to realize that everyone experiences negative emotions, further promoting connection with others. Common humanity can also promote self-kindness and mindfulness, such that realizing the human experience entails imperfection and making mistakes can lead to treating oneself more kindly and keeping emotions in perspective. Thus, it seems that the three components of self-compassion are interconnected while remaining distinct from one another (Neff, 2003a).

The benefits of self-compassion on mental health and overall well-being are substantial, according to several studies. Self-compassion has been linked to general emotional well-being, more positive emotions, self-acceptance, greater social connectedness, and overall life satisfaction (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Neff, 2003a, 2003b; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007). Furthermore, engaging in self-compassion can act as an effective coping strategy by lessening the impact of negative life events and promoting a more positive outlook on these events and personal shortcomings. Leary, Tate, Adams, Allen, and Hancock (2007) conducted a series of studies that evaluated how self-compassionate individuals handled receiving negative or neutral interpersonal feedback and coped with previous negative life events. They found that individuals high in self-compassion were less likely to experience negative emotions after receiving negative

and neutral feedback, and they were less likely to catastrophize distressing life events than were individuals low in self-compassion. Self-compassionate individuals were also more likely to respond to negative feedback with equanimity, see their negative experiences in a larger human context, and be kind to themselves during times of hardship. In another study done by Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat (2005), it was found that self-compassionate individuals were able to more effectively cope with academic failure by taking a mastery versus performance-based approach to academic learning compared to individuals who were not self-compassionate. Because self-compassionate individuals do not evaluate their worth based on external circumstances like academic performance, they are likely to want to learn for the sake of learning, rather than to appear academically successful to others, and they can effectively cope with failure without it negatively impacting their self-worth. These findings, along with the findings from Leary et al. (2007) suggest that self-compassion may be an effective strategy for handling life's setbacks and negative feelings about oneself and promoting overall emotional well-being.

Self-compassion has important implications in the realm of mental health, particularly in relation to depression and anxiety. Shapira and Mongrain (2010) found that individuals vulnerable to depression who participated in a self-compassion based intervention were more likely to effectively handle negative emotions associated with depression, because engaging in self-compassionate practices cultivated a more positive mindset and mindful awareness of negative emotions. Furthermore, Diedrich, Burger, Kirchner, and Berking (2017) found that self-compassion significantly helped individuals with unipolar depression by strengthening their ability to effectively understand and tolerate negative emotions. Thus, it seems engaging in the mindfulness aspect of self-compassion can lessen the negative affect associated with depression. Self-compassion also appears to lessen symptoms of anxiety. Neff, Kirkpatrick, and Rude (2007)

found that self-compassion can protect against the anxiety one feels when evaluating one's personal shortcomings, and Harwood and Kocovski (2017) found that practicing self-compassion can significantly reduce anticipatory anxiety prior to giving a presentation or speech. In a sample of non-clinical adolescents, Muris, Meesters, Pierik, and de Kock (2016) found that self-compassion was negatively related to both depression and anxiety symptoms, especially the mindfulness component. On a more general level, self-compassion has also been found to partially mediate the relationship between positive mental health and mental illness, such that self-compassion fosters mental health while decreasing psychopathology (Trompetter, Kleine, Bohlmeijer, 2017). Based on this evidence, it appears that self-compassion can act as a substantial protective and/or healing factor against depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses.

Self-compassion is often associated with the concept of self-esteem (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2011; Neff & Vonk, 2009). While both constructs are linked to emotional well-being, positive affect, overall life satisfaction, anxiety, and depression (Lyubomirsky, Tkach, & DiMatteo, 2006; Neff, 2011), there are important differences between the two. Self-esteem involves judgments about oneself based on performance in important domains of life, and these judgments inform one's self-worth (Neff & Vonk, 2009; Neff, 2011). Self-esteem is largely seen as contingent on external factors outside of one's control, particularly evaluations from others and life circumstances (Crocker, Luhtenan, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003). When life is going well and an individual is receiving positive evaluations from others, this can raise their self-esteem. Conversely, receiving negative feedback or going through difficult life events can devastate one's self-esteem. This can make self-esteem highly susceptible to change and also prompt individuals to engage in destructive behaviors to maintain high self-esteem, which may further

lead to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Crocker & Park, 2004). Moreover, excessively high self-esteem has been linked to high levels of narcissism (Baumeister, Bushman, & Campbell, 2000; Neff, 2003a, 2011; Neff & Vonk, 2009). Researchers such as Deci and Ryan (1995) have posited that there is such a thing as “true self-esteem” that is not contingent on external factors, and self-compassion may play a significant role in maintaining this kind of self-esteem (Neff & Vonk, 2009).

Self-compassion is different from self-esteem in that it does not involve any type of evaluation of one’s worth. It involves a type of a mindful awareness of one’s complete life experience and softness towards oneself, especially in times of hardship and struggle. In this way, self-compassion is more beneficial during difficult life events, precisely when self-esteem fails. Furthermore, self-compassion allows one to view shortcomings more accurately, making growth and positive change more likely (Neff, 2003b). Because self-compassion involves treating oneself with kindness in the face of negative events or personal shortcomings, self-compassion is often thought of as self-indulgent or even narcissistic (Neff, 2003b). However, previous research has indicated that this is not the case (Leary et al., 2007; Neff, 2003b; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007). Self-compassion is generally negatively correlated with narcissism, except on the self-kindness component, where positive feelings about the self can potentially become inflated to the point of narcissism (Barry, Loflin, & Doucette, 2014). A potential reason that self-compassion is generally negatively related to narcissism is because self-compassion not only promotes compassion and positive feelings towards oneself, but it also enhances compassion for others (Neff, 2003b). This is distinct from self-esteem, where bolstering one’s self-image often involves putting others down, which can further lead to narcissistic tendencies. Overall, self-compassion promotes a healthier, more accurate self-image as opposed to self-

esteem, where the potential for distorted perceptions of the self and instability of positive feelings about the self is more likely. Even so, self-compassion and self-esteem do share several positive outcomes associated with well-being (Neff, 2003a, 2003b; Neff & Vonk, 2009). The two constructs are also highly correlated, but not to a degree that suggests they are the same construct (Neff, 2003a).

Previous research has thus far indicated that self-compassion is a distinct psychological process, and its benefits for mental health and emotional well-being are numerous. While there are countless studies on the benefits of self-compassion for mental health and well-being and its validity as a construct, there are few studies that evaluate its relationship to other constructs beyond self-esteem, self-efficacy, and other self-attitudes. In particular, studies have only recently begun to determine the potential relationships between self-compassion and other psychological constructs having to do with personality and foundational attitudes, specifically morals and values. Understanding how self-compassion relates to these other constructs may further develop the profile of individuals who do and do not possess self-compassion. Previous literature on these relationships will be discussed further here.

Self-Compassion and Personality

The Big Five personality dimensions have been very effective in appropriately describing overall personality, and there have been some studies indicating potential relationships between self-compassion and the Big Five traits. Neff, Rude, and Kirkpatrick (2007) found that self-compassion was strongly negatively related to neuroticism, meaning those higher in self-compassion experienced lower levels of depression, anxiety, and negative affect overall, which previous research has indicated is a positive outcome of engaging in self-compassion. Self-compassion was also positively associated with agreeableness and extraversion, further

indicating that social connectedness is an important aspect of self-compassion. In another study with a sample of Catholic Indian young adults, Thurackal, Corveleyn, and Dezutter (2016) found that the Big Five traits of conscientiousness, agreeableness and extraversion had a positive relationship with self-compassion. In addition, conscientiousness and agreeableness both appeared to *predict* levels of self-compassion, such that those higher in conscientiousness and agreeableness were more likely to be high in self-compassion. These findings ultimately suggest that there may be a significant relationship between Big Five personality traits and self-compassion, particularly with Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Emotional Stability (i.e., low Neuroticism). However, despite the Big Five's considerable validity across cultures, these traits are quite broad for describing several unique aspects of personality. Several researchers have attempted to break the Big Five down into smaller subtraits, and one such example is the Big Five Aspects Scale (DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007). In this model, each Big Five trait is divided into two complementary aspects: Openness/Intellect (Openness), Industriousness/Orderliness (Conscientiousness), Enthusiasm/Assertiveness (Extraversion), Compassion/Politeness (Agreeableness), and Withdrawal/Volatility (Neuroticism). To date, no studies have investigated the relationship between self-compassion and the Big Five aspects. Doing so may further define the relationships between self-compassion and the Big Five traits found in previous research.

Values

Schwartz (1992) defines values as the guiding principles in one's life that inform decision-making, attitudes, and behavior. He identified 10 basic values that can be found across cultures: self-direction, stimulation, benevolence, hedonism, achievement, conformity, power, tradition, security, and universalism. While Schwartz has since redefined this structure of values

(see Schwartz et al., 2012), there have been numerous studies using his 10-item model of core values, especially in relation to personality and a variety of behaviors and attitudes (Boer & Fischer, 2013; Fischer & Boer, 2015; Schwartz et al., 2012).

To date, there have been no studies on the relationship between self-compassion and core values. However, Lonnqvist et al. (2009) found that self-esteem was positively related to the values of power, achievement, self-direction, and stimulation, while being negatively related to conformity, tradition, and security. As previously discussed, self-esteem and self-compassion share many positive outcomes, such as positive affect, overall well-being, and motivation in life (Neff, 2011; Neff & Vonk, 2009). The similarities between self-esteem and self-compassion suggest potentially similar relationships between self-compassion and core values. Moreover, because of the distinct differences between self-esteem and self-compassion, there may also be unique relationships between self-compassion and values that are not present with self-esteem and values.

Moral Reasoning

Concerns about morality and ethical behavior permeate daily life, and many scales have been developed to measure moral reasoning. One prominent theory of moral reasoning is Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), which posits that there are five dimensions of morality upon which people guide their behavior to act in an ethical manner: harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, authority/respect, ingroup/loyalty, and purity/sanctity (Haidt & Graham, 2007). The Moral Foundations Questionnaire (Graham et al., 2011) was developed from MFT and is now used widely as a principle measure of moral reasoning.

Very few studies have been conducted measuring the relationship between self-compassion and moral reasoning. One study by Wang, Chan, Poon, Teng, and Jin (2017) found

that individuals high in self-compassion were *less* likely to be accepting of their own immoral behavior. Participants in the study were given the option to perform an easy or difficult task and were instructed to provide their partner with the task they did not choose, and those who gave their partner the difficult task were defined as engaging in “immoral” behavior by making their partner suffer through the more difficult task. Self-compassionate individuals reported being less accepting of themselves when engaging in this behavior, suggesting they were aware that their actions were harming their partner in some way and did not deny their role in this. While these findings are contingent on a very specific measure of moral judgment, they could inform a potential relationship between self-compassion and the moral foundations in MFT. For example, based on the findings of Wang et al. (2017), self-compassion may be related to a greater concern for the care of others or ensuring that they and the other person are treated fairly (i.e., the harm/care and fairness/reciprocity foundations, respectively). This potential relationship between self-compassion and moral reasoning warrants further exploration.

The Present Study

While the positive psychological outcomes of self-compassion have been thoroughly researched, the underlying relationships between self-compassion and other aspects of the self remain relatively undiscovered. The present study aims to evaluate the potential relationship between self-compassion and personality, moral reasoning, and core values to establish a more comprehensive understanding of the role of self-compassion in the actual definition of the self. Because only a few relationships have been established in the literature, the current study was largely exploratory in nature. Overall, there were three main areas of inquiry in this study.

First, as discussed, research has established that self-compassion is associated with the Big Five personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness,

but further research is needed to determine what aspects of these broad traits are related to self-compassion. To this end, the Big Five Aspects Scale (DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007), which segments each of the Big Five traits into two complementary aspects, was used to determine the relationships between personality and overall self-compassion, along with each component of self-compassion (i.e., self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness). In line with previous research, it was hypothesized that the Withdrawal and Volatility aspects of Neuroticism would be negatively correlated with overall self-compassion and all three of its components. We also predicted that the overall traits of Conscientiousness (industriousness/orderliness), Agreeableness (compassion/politeness), and Extraversion (enthusiasm/assertiveness) would be positively related to overall self-compassion, though we were unsure as to how the aspects of these traits would correlate with self-compassion and its components.

Second, because self-compassion has been found to be related to qualities such as personal initiative, social connectedness, curiosity, exploration, and mastery goals (Neff, 2003a; Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat, 2005), it was predicted that self-compassion would be positively related to the values of self-direction (personal initiative, mastery goals), benevolence (social connectedness), and stimulation (curiosity and exploration). Again, because there has been very little research conducted on self-compassion and core values, this aspect of the study was exploratory.

And finally, we evaluated the potential relationships between self-compassion and moral foundations. Based on the findings of Wang et al. (2017), it was predicted that self-compassion and its components would be positively related to the Harm/Care and Fairness/Loyalty foundations.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited via the university's online research participation system (SONA). The initial sample size was two hundred. Some cases were deleted due to several missing responses, making the final sample size 186. One hundred fifty-four of the participants identified as female (82.8%), 30 as male (16.1%), and two as non-binary (1.1%). The average age was 22 years with a range of 18-57. One hundred and forty-three participants identified as white (76.9%), 14 as black or African American (7.5%), nine as Asian or Asian American (4.8%), three as Pacific Islander (1.6%), and one as Native American (0.5%). Twenty-five participants identified as Hispanic or Latino (13.4%). Sixty-one participants identified as politically liberal (32.8%), 51 as conservative (27.4%), 37 as independent (19.9%), 20 had no affiliation with a political party (10.8%), and 17 identified their political preference as other (9.1%).

Materials

Self-Compassion Scale (SCS). The 26-item SCS was used to assess general self-compassionate behaviors in participants (Neff, 2003a). Participants were asked to rate how often they engaged in the stated behaviors, with response options of *Almost Never* (1), *Occasionally* (2), *Sometimes* (3), *Frequently* (4), and *Almost Always* (5). Items included statements such as, "I try to see my failings as part of the human condition," measuring common humanity, "When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance," measuring mindfulness, and "I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies," measuring self-kindness. Items for the SCS corresponding to the negative components of self-compassion (i.e., self-hatred, isolation, and

overidentification) were reverse coded. Mean scores were then calculated for overall self-compassion and the three subscales: overall self-compassion ($M = 3.02$, $SD = .73$, $\alpha = .93$), self-kindness ($M = 2.94$, $SD = .82$, $\alpha = .88$), common humanity ($M = 3.05$, $SD = .76$, $\alpha = .79$), and mindfulness ($M = 3.10$, $SD = .85$, $\alpha = .85$).

Big Five Aspect Scale (BFAS). The 50-item BFAS (DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007) was used to assess participants' personality characteristics based on the previously described aspects of the Big Five personality traits. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed each statement described them (e.g., "seldom feel blue"). Response options ranged from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (5). After appropriate reverse coding, mean scores were calculated for each aspect. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics and reliability of each aspect.

Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ). The 32-item MFQ was used to assess participants' moral reasoning (Graham et al., 2011). The questionnaire consists of two parts, with each part consisting of 16 items. In the first part, participants are asked to rate how relevant each item is in determining whether an action is considered morally right or wrong. Response options range from *Not at all relevant/ This consideration has nothing to do with my judgments of right and wrong* (0) to *Extremely relevant/This is one of the most important factors when I judge right and wrong* (5). Items included statements like "Whether or not someone cared for someone weak or vulnerable," and "Whether or not someone did something cruel." In the second section, participants are asked to indicate their level of agreement with items such as "Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue," and "Respect for authority is something all children need to learn." Response options for this section range from *Strongly Disagree* (0) to *Strongly Agree* (5). Each item was totaled into one of the following categories: harm/care ($\alpha =$

.61, $M = 21.99$, $SD = 4.26$), fairness/reciprocity ($\alpha = .64$, $M = 21.40$, $SD = 4.10$), ingroup/loyalty ($\alpha = .74$, $M = 16.97$, $SD = 5.46$), authority/respect ($\alpha = .67$, $M = 17.94$, $SD = 4.96$), and purity/sanctity ($\alpha = .77$, $M = 15.67$, $SD = 6.22$).

Schwartz Value Survey (SVS). The SVS was used to determine participants' core values (Schwartz et al., 2012). The original survey consists of 58 items; however, we used the 10-item version to shorten the length of the overall survey. In the SVS, each item is presented as a word or phrase representing common values. Example items include "Power (social power, authority, wealth)" and "Benevolence (helpfulness, honesty, forgiveness, loyalty, responsibility)." Participants are asked to rate each item in terms of how strongly each one is a guiding principle in their life. Response options range from -1 to 7, with -1 corresponding to *Opposed to my values*, 0 to *Not Important*, 3 to *Important*, 6 to *Very Important*, and 7 to *Of supreme importance*. Scores were adjusted to a 1-9 scale for data analysis. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for each item.

Procedure

Participants signed up to take an online survey evaluating personality and social attitudes through the university's online research participation system, SONA. After signing the electronic informed consent form, participants completed each measure. Each measure was presented in a random order. Once participants completed the survey, they were automatically granted research participation credit via SONA.

Results

Self-Compassion and Big Five Aspects

Correlations for each component of self-compassion and each Big Five aspect and associated trait can be viewed in Table 3. To summarize, several of the Big Five traits correlated

with the different parts of self-compassion (SC). Both aspects of the Neuroticism trait (Withdrawal and Volatility) were significantly correlated with each component of SC and overall SC (e.g., Withdrawal and Overall SC: $r = -.71, p < .001$; Volatility and Overall SC: $r = -.58, p < .001$). The Industriousness aspect of Conscientiousness was significantly correlated with each component of self-compassion and overall self-compassion (e.g., Industriousness and Overall SC: $r = .38, p < .001$), whereas the Orderliness aspect was unrelated to SC. The Enthusiasm aspect of Extraversion was significantly correlated with all components of SC (e.g., Enthusiasm and Overall SC: $r = .23, p = .002$), whereas the Assertiveness aspect was unrelated to SC. The Politeness aspect of Agreeableness was significantly correlated with self-kindness, mindfulness, and overall self-compassion (e.g., Politeness and Overall SC: $r = .19, p = .008$), whereas the Compassion aspect of was unrelated to SC. The Intellect aspect of Openness was significantly correlated with common humanity and mindfulness, as well as overall self-compassion (e.g., Intellect and Overall SC: $r = .20, p = .007$), whereas the Openness to Experience aspect was not related to any aspect of self-compassion. These results suggest that high self-compassion is related to low withdrawal and emotional reactivity, being proactive and getting things done, approaching life and relationships with enthusiasm, being polite to others, and possessing some degree of intellectual curiosity.

Self-Compassion and Moral Foundations

Table 4 shows the correlations between all aspects of self-compassion and each moral foundation. Results indicate that self-compassion and its components had few relationships with moral foundations. Specifically, overall SC was significantly positively correlated with the Ingroup/Loyalty foundation, $r = .19, p = .013$. The common humanity aspect of self-compassion was also positively correlated with the Ingroup/Loyalty foundation, $r = .25, p = .001$. There was

a small but significant positive correlation between common humanity and the Authority/Respect foundation, $r = .18, p = .017$, as well as between self-kindness and the Purity/Sanctity foundation, $r = .16, p = .031$. All other correlations between overall SC, its components, and the moral foundations were nonsignificant. These results suggest that being loyal to one's group is related to having self-compassion, particularly as it relates to seeing one's experiences as part of the common human experience.

Self-Compassion and Values

Table 5 shows the correlations between each component of SC and values. Results indicate that SC and its three components were not significantly correlated with core values, with the exception of the Conformity value. Overall SC was positively correlated with conformity, $r = .19, p = .008$. The common humanity and self-kindness aspects of SC were also positively correlated with conformity, $r = .22, p = .003, r = .18, p = .015$. Thus, it appears that individuals high in self-compassion also hold conformity as a core value, particularly as it relates to self-kindness and seeing experiences as part of the larger human experience.

Discussion

Overall, the current findings suggest potential relationships between self-compassion and certain personality traits. In line with previous research, self-compassion and its three components (self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness) were all strongly negatively related to Withdrawal and Volatility, both aspects of Neuroticism (Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007; Thurackal, Corveleyn, & Dezutter, 2016). This further supports the notion that people high in self-compassion are less likely to withdraw during times of hardship, remain connected to others, and are able to cope with negative life events effectively, mitigating the potential for depression and anxiety (Neff, 2003a, 2003b; Leary et al., 2007).

Perhaps the most interesting finding in the current study was that self-compassion was strongly related to the Industriousness aspect of the Conscientiousness trait. Self-compassionate individuals appear to allocate their time effectively, be proactive, and finish what they start. This could explain why self-compassionate individuals are better able to effectively cope with adverse life events and negative emotions (Leary et al., 2007; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007; Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007). In addition, there is considerable overlap in life outcomes between self-compassion and the overall trait of Conscientiousness. Individuals high in conscientiousness experience more positive emotions, fewer negative emotions, and experience greater overall life satisfaction (Smith, Ryan, & Roche, 2013). Moreover, the Industriousness aspect of Conscientiousness has been found to be associated with mastery-based goals, a sense of accomplishment, and having a sense of purpose in life, all associated with greater positive affect (Sun, Kaufman, & Smillie, 2017). All of these outcomes share a commonality with outcomes resulting from self-compassion. One potential explanation for this is that being industrious makes it more likely for individuals to be self-compassionate. Being proactive and having the ability to effectively deal with life situations could potentially make it easier to be self-compassionate, since a significant aspect of self-compassion is being able to effectively cope with negative circumstances and difficult emotions through being kind to oneself, keeping things in perspective, and maintaining a mindful awareness towards these experiences. In other words, Industriousness could be a personality factor that contributes to engaging self-compassion. Because the current study was solely correlational, this causal relationship cannot be definitively determined. However, future studies using an experimental manipulation of self-compassion, as in the study by Leary et al. (2007), could evaluate whether individuals who are high in

Industriousness experience a stronger increase in self-compassion versus those low in Industriousness.

Self-compassion was also found to have unique relationships with Intellect aspect of Openness, the Politeness aspect of Agreeableness, and the Enthusiasm aspect of Extraversion. The mindfulness aspect of self-compassion appeared to have the strongest association with Intellect, followed by common humanity, and self-kindness. Those who have a cognitive awareness of their emotions would understandably have a stronger cognitive awareness overall, and extending kindness to oneself and understanding the imperfect nature of human experience most likely requires some degree of self-awareness and thoughtfulness, which in turn requires substantial intellect.

Politeness was most strongly associated with the self-kindness and mindfulness aspects of self-compassion. This finding lends further support to the idea that those who are self-compassionate are equally respectful to themselves as they are to others (Leary et al., 2007; Neff, 2003b). Being polite entails civility and respect for the views and rights of others. Self-compassion could entail this same kind of respect for oneself, especially on the self-kindness dimension. While self-compassion was related to the Politeness aspect of Agreeableness, self-compassion was interestingly not related to the Compassion aspect. This finding was unusual, since it has been mentioned that in Buddhist psychology, the concept of self-compassion is indistinguishable from compassion for others (Neff, 2003a). By this definition, it would be expected that having the same kind of empathetic concern for the well-being of others would be related to having this same kind of concern for one's own well-being, which is inherent in self-compassion. Why this relationship is not found here is unknown and potentially warrants further investigation between self-compassion and compassion for others.

And finally, Enthusiasm was most strongly associated with the common humanity and mindfulness aspects of self-compassion, as well as overall self-compassion. This further suggests that self-compassionate individuals are more likely to be engaged with life, have a positive outlook, and have meaningful relationships. Past research has strongly supported these outcomes (Neff, 2003a; Neff, 2003b; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007; Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007). Overall, the findings here suggest that self-compassion is related to different aspects of personality. Previous findings that self-compassion is related to Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness have not only been supported, but also further distinguished into more distinct personality traits (i.e., Enthusiasm, Industriousness, Politeness, and Intellect).

Another interesting, though unexpected, finding was that self-compassion was relatively unrelated to moral reasoning or core values. There were only significant relationships between self-compassion and the Ingroup/Loyalty moral foundation, particularly with the common humanity aspect; the Authority/Respect foundation with common humanity; and the Purity/Sanctity foundation with self-kindness. A possible explanation for the Ingroup/Loyalty and common humanity association is that self-compassionate individuals see themselves as part of the larger group of humanity, and this may contribute to a strong sense of loyalty to humanity as a whole. This could also apply to the Authority/Respect relationship, where self-compassionate individuals hold being respectful of others as principally important, which is also supported by the association with the Politeness aspect of Agreeableness. The association between Purity/Sanctity and self-kindness was unexpected, and its significance is unknown. Perhaps being kind to oneself entails maintaining a sense of decency and self-respect. Regardless, there were no other significant relationships between self-compassion and moral foundations; our hypotheses in this domain were not supported.

For core values, there was only a significant relationship between the core value of Conformity and the common humanity aspect of self-compassion. Because self-compassionate individuals see themselves as no better or worse than others, they may see themselves as belonging to the relatively homogeneous group of humanity and value societal norms and the views of important others (Neff, 2003a, 2003b). This relationship may also be related to the association between the Politeness aspect of Agreeableness, since individuals who are polite to others may value fitting in with a larger group, and being polite helps maintain social harmony with others. All other core values had no relationship to self-compassion or its aspects, suggesting that one's values are relatively independent of being self-compassionate. Thus, our hypotheses in this area were also not supported.

The current study had a few key limitations that could be rectified in future studies. First, the study was entirely correlational, so causal relationships could not be drawn from the data. It is unclear whether personality traits make individuals more likely to be self-compassionate or if being self-compassionate affects personality. Personality is generally thought to be relatively stable throughout the lifespan, but some research has shown that there can be substantial change in traits, especially in response to major life events (Specht, Egloff, & Schmukle, 2011). This suggests that personality traits are subject to change, so there is a possibility that self-compassion could alter personality in some way. As previously mentioned, future studies could use an experimental manipulation of self-compassion to determine the causal direction of the relationship between self-compassion and personality. A second limitation was that we only used one scale to assess personality, moral reasoning, and core values. While both the MFQ and SVS have demonstrated significant reliability and validity, using a variety of scales for morals and values could have presented a more accurate picture of the relationships between morals, values,

and self-compassion. Future studies could use other scales that assess moral reasoning and core values to obtain a more complete picture of these associations.

Overall, the current findings suggest that there are clear associations between self-compassion and personality traits, while there may be little association between self-compassion and moral reasoning and core values. The relationship between self-compassion and personality could have important implications for self-compassion training and interventions, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Compassionate Mind Training (CMT), and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (see Barnard & Curry, 2011 for a full review of these interventions in relation to self-compassion). Understanding how personality fits into being self-compassionate could affect an individual's success in these programs, particularly with post-intervention maintenance of techniques. On a broader scale, understanding these relationships can ultimately further advance our understanding of how various aspects of the self contribute to a happier and more meaningful life.

References

- Barnard, L. K., & Curry, J. F. (2011). Self-compassion: Conceptualizations, correlates, & interventions. *Review of General Psychology, 15*(4), 289-303. doi: 10.1037/a0025754
- Barry, C. T., Lofflin, D. C., & Doucette, H. (2015). Adolescent self-compassion: Associations with narcissism, self-esteem, aggression, and internalizing symptoms in at-risk males. *Personality and Individual Differences, 77*, 118-123. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2014.12.036
- Baumeister, R. F., Bushman, B. J., & Campbell, W. K. (2000). Self-esteem, narcissism, and aggression: Does violence result from low self-esteem or from threatened egotism? *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 9*(1), 26-29. doi: 10.1111/1467-8721.00053
- Boer, D., & Fischer, R. (2013). How and when do our personal values guide our attitudes and sociality? Explaining cross-cultural variability in attitude-value linkages. *Psychological Bulletin, 139*(5), 1113-1147. doi: 10.1037/a0031347
- Crocker, J., Luhtanen, R. K., Cooper, M. L., & Bouvrette, A. (2003). Contingencies of self-worth in college students: Theory and measurement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*(5), 894-908. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.894
- DeYoung, C. G., Quilty, L. C., & Peterson, J. B. (2007). Between facets and domains: 10 aspects of the Big Five. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 93*, 880-896. doi: 10.1037/00223514.93.5.880
- Diedrich, A., Burger, J., Kirchner, M., & Berking, M. (2017). Adaptive emotion regulation mediates the relationship between self-compassion and depression in individuals with unipolar depression. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice, 90*, 247-263. doi: 10.1111/papt.12107

- Fischer, R., & Boer, D. (2015). Motivational basis of personality traits: A meta-analysis of value-personality correlations. *Journal of Personality*, *83*(5), 491-510. doi: 10.1111/jopy.12125
- Graham, J., Nosek, B. A., Haidt, J., Iyer, R., Koleva, S., & Ditto, P. H. (2011). Mapping the moral domain. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *101*(2), 366-385. doi: 10.1037/a0021847
- Haidt, J., & Graham, J. (2007). When morality opposes justice: Conservatives have moral intuitions that liberals may not recognize. *Social Justice Research*, *20*(1), 98-116. doi: 10.1007/s11211-007-0034-z
- Harwood, E. M., & Kocovski, N. L. (2017). Self-compassion induction reduces anticipatory anxiety among socially anxious students. *Mindfulness*, doi: 10.1007/s12671-017-0721-2
- Leary, M. R., Tate, E. B., Adams, C. E., Allen, A. B., & Hancock, J. (2007). Self-compassion and reactions to unpleasant self-relevant events: The implications of treating oneself kindly. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *92*(5), 887-904. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.92.5.887
- Lonnqvist, J., Verkasalo, M., Helkama, K., Andreyeva, G. M., Bezmenova, I., Rattazi, A. M. ... Stetsenko, A. (2009). Self-esteem and values. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *39*, 40-51. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.465
- Lyubomirsky, S., Tkach, C., & DiMatteo, R. M. (2006). What are the differences between happiness and self-esteem? *Social Indicators Research*, *78*(3), 363-404. doi: 10.1007/s11205-005-0213-y
- Muris, P., Meesters, C., Pierik, A., & de Kock, B. (2016). Good for the self: Self-compassion and other self-related constructs in relation to symptoms of anxiety and depression in non-

- clinical youths. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 25, 607-617. doi: 10.1007/s10826-015-0235-2
- Neff, K. (2003a). The development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2, 223-250. doi: <http://dx.doi.org.dax.lib.unf.edu/10.1080/15298860309027>
- Neff, K. (2003b). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity*, 2, 85-101. doi: 10.1080/15298860390129863
- Neff, K. (2011). Self-compassion, self-esteem, and well-being. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5(1), 1-12. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-9004.2010.00330.x
- Neff, K. D., & Vonk, R. (2009). Self-compassion versus global self-esteem: Two different ways of relating to oneself. *Journal of Personality*, 77(1), 23-50. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6494.2008.00537.x
- Neff, K. D., Hsieh, Y., & Dejitterat, K. (2005). Self-compassion, achievement goals, and coping with academic failure. *Self and Identity*, 4, 263-287. doi: 10.1080/13576500444000317
- Neff, K. D., Kirkpatrick, K. L., & Rude, S. S. (2007). Self-compassion and adaptive psychological functioning. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41, 139-154. doi: 10.1016/j.jrp.2006.03.004
- Neff, K. D., Rude, S. S., & Kirkpatrick, K. L. (2007). An examination of self-compassion in relation to positive psychological functioning and personality traits. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41, 908-916.
- Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theory and empirical tests in 20 countries. In M. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 25, pp. 1-65). New York, NY: Academic Press.

- Schwartz, S. H., Cieciuch, J., Vecchione, M., Davidov, E., Fischer, R., Beierlein, C. ... Konty, M. (2012). Refining the theory of basic individual values. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 103*(4), 663-688. doi: 10.1037/a0029393
- Shapira, L. B., & Mongrain, M. (2010). The benefits of self-compassion and optimism exercises for individuals vulnerable to depression. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 5*(5), 377-389. doi: 10.1080/17439760.2010.516763
- Smith, J., Ryan, L. H., & Rocke, C. (2013). The day-to-day effects of conscientiousness on well-being. *Research in Human Development, 10*(1), 9-25. doi: 10.1080/15427609.2013.760257
- Specht, J., Egloff, B., & Schmukle, S. C. (2011). Stability and change of personality across the life course: The impact of age and major life events on mean-level and rank-order stability of the Big Five. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 101*(4), 862-882. doi: 10.1037/a0024950
- Sun, J., Kaufman, S. B., & Smillie, L. D. (2017). Unique associations between Big Five personality aspects and multiple dimensions of well-being. *Journal of Personality, 1*-15. doi: 10.1111/jopy.12301
- Thurackal, J. T., Corveleyn, J., & Dezutter, J. (2016). Personality and self-compassion: Exploring their relationship in an Indian context. *European Journal of Mental Health, 11*, 18-35. doi: 10.5708/EJMH.11.2016.1-2.2
- Trompetter, H. R., de Kleine, E., & Bohlmeijer, E. T. (2017). Why does positive mental health buffer against psychopathology? An exploratory study on self-compassion as a resilience mechanism and adaptive emotion regulation strategy. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 41*(3), 459-468. doi: 10.1007/s10608-016-9774-0

Wang, X., Chen, Z., Poon, K., Teng, F., & Jin, S. (2017). Self-compassion decreases acceptance of own immoral behavior. *Personality and Individual Differences, 106*, 329-333. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2016.10.030

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities for Big Five Aspects Scale

Measure	α	M	SD
Volatility	.83	2.94	.88
Withdrawal	.76	2.95	.79
Openness	.69	3.70	.70
Intellect	.73	3.58	.68
Politeness	.64	3.70	.64
Compassion	.76	3.93	.74
Industriousness	.70	3.52	.67
Orderliness	.71	3.62	.71
Enthusiasm	.75	3.57	.72
Assertiveness	.77	3.44	.73

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Schwartz Values Survey

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Power	4.32	1.99
Achievement	7.04	1.75
Hedonism	5.89	2.19
Stimulation	6.05	1.91
Universalism	6.61	2.00
Benevolence	7.77	1.41
Tradition	5.45	2.12
Conformity	5.89	2.19
Security	6.70	1.83
Self-Direction	7.38	1.60

Table 3

Correlations for Self-Compassion and Big Five Aspects

Measure	Self-Kindness	Common Humanity	Mindfulness	Overall SC
Openness	.07	.06	.19**	.12
Openness	-.03	-.06	.08	-.01
Intellect	.14*	.16*	.23**	.20**
Conscientiousness	.25***	.22**	.19**	.25***
Industriousness	.35***	.35***	.34***	.38***
Orderliness	.08	.03	-.01	.04
Extraversion	.13	.18*	.17*	.18*
Enthusiasm	.18*	.22**	.22**	.23**
Assertiveness	.04	.08	.07	.07
Agreeableness	.06	.01	.07	.05
Politeness	.22**	.09	.19**	.19**
Compassion	-.11	-.07	-.07	-.09
Neuroticism	-.63***	-.57***	-.72***	-.71***
Withdrawal	-.63***	-.58***	-.67***	-.70***
Volatility	-.50***	-.44***	-.63***	-.58***

Note: Overall SC refers to Overall Self-Compassion score.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4

Correlations for Self-Compassion and Moral Foundations

Measure	Self-Kindness	Common Humanity	Mindfulness	Overall SC
Harm/Care	.08	.00	.02	.04
Fairness/Reciprocity	-.06	-.03	-.02	-.04
Authority/Respect	.10	.18*	.04	.12
Ingroup/Loyalty	.13	.25**	.14	.19*
Purity/Sanctity	.16*	.15	.07	.14

Note: Overall SC refers to Overall Self-Compassion score.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 5

Correlations for Self-Compassion and Schwartz Values

Measure	Self-Kindness	Common Humanity	Mindfulness	Overall SC
Power	-.02	-.02	-.04	-.03
Achievement	-.04	-.07	-.13	-.08
Hedonism	.01	-.05	-.05	-.03
Stimulation	-.04	-.03	.04	-.01
Universalism	-.07	-.14	.03	-.06
Benevolence	.08	.04	.10	.08
Tradition	.06	.13	.00	.07
Conformity	.18*	.22**	.13	.19**
Security	.00	.05	.01	.02
Self-Direction	.04	.02	.02	.03

Note: Overall SC refers to Overall Self-Compassion score.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$