When Thoughts Clash: Self-Compassion and Self-Monitoring as Moderators of Cognitive Dissonance

By

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Abstract
Cognitive dissonance occurs when someone engages in a counter-attitudinal behavior that has negative consequences. In the present study whether moderators such as self-monitoring and self-compassion impact the experience of dissonance. Specifically, high self-monitors should experience less dissonance than low self-monitors because of their propensity to alter their opinions based on the social cues around them and not be as attached to their opinions as low self-monitors. Self-compassion may also moderate the dissonance effect in that more self-compassionate individuals may handle the experience of dissonance with more self-kindness and subsequently experience less dissonance than participants with low self-compassion. Participants \( N = 331, \text{ 76\% women, } M_{\text{age}} = 22.5 \) completed an online survey where they expressed their opinion on a variety of ethical issues on a 15 point scale. Participants were then asked to write a counter-attitudinal essay on the ethical issue of capital punishment. If participants indicated previously that they supported capital punishment then they were asked to write against capital punishment, and vice versa for those who initially indicated being against capital punishment. Perception of choice was manipulated such that participants were given no choice to write according to the instructions or participants had a perceived choice in their writing topic. They were then asked to respond to several dependent variable measures and predictor variables including the full self-monitoring and self-compassion scales. Overall, participants experienced cognitive dissonance from writing the essay, and self-monitoring moderated participants’ experience of cognitive dissonance. Self-compassion did not moderate the dissonance effect; however, self-compassion interacted with dissonance to impact participants’ endorsement of moral values. These findings suggest cognitive dissonance effects can be extended to moral attitudes, and self-monitoring may impact people’s individual dissonance experiences.
When Thoughts Clash: Self-Compassion and Self-Monitoring as Moderators of Cognitive Dissonance

Why is it that some people seem to change their opinions after listening to a speaker, such as a politician, and may not even realize that they changed their opinion? They may have just been the victim of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance occurs when someone performs a counter-attitudinal behavior that is perceived by the participant to be freely chosen, has irrevocable negative consequences, and is in violation of someone's self-concept. The negative experience within the self is motivational in nature, in that the goal is to alleviate the discomfort it produces. Cognitive dissonance can be resolved by changing one’s attitude about the counter-attitudinal behavior (Debono & Edmonds, 1989; Festinger, 1962).

People differ in their experience of cognitive dissonance as a result of individual differences. One construct that moderates the negative effects of cognitive dissonance is self-monitoring (Debono & Edmonds, 1989; Snyder & Tanke, 1976). Self-monitoring is people’s ability to control how they express themselves, in both public and private arenas. High self-monitors are classified as trying to be the right people at the right place at the right time; whereas low self-monitors strive to be themselves no matter what situation they find themselves in or the people they are around (Snyder, 1974). Previous research found self-monitoring moderated people’s experience of cognitive dissonance in that high self-monitors were less prone to experience cognitive dissonance than low self-monitors presumably because they were able to hold multiple self-views at any given time. Low self-monitors were more likely to experience dissonance because of how closely they relate everything to the self (Debono & Edmonds, 1989).

One of the goals of this study is not only to add to the research on existing moderators, but to also expand and add a potential new moderator, self-compassion. Self-compassion
involves “being open to and moved by one’s own suffering, experiencing feelings of caring and kindness towards oneself, taking an understanding, nonjudgmental attitude toward one’s inadequacies and failures, and recognizing that one’s own experience is part of the common human experience” (Neff, 2003b, p.87). Self-compassion may moderate cognitive dissonance by allowing participants to alleviate psychological pain without changing their attitude. This study has the potential to be influential to the field of social psychology as it would contribute to our knowledge of what may cause cognitive dissonance and also what might moderate cognitive dissonance.

**Cognitive Dissonance**

Cognitive dissonance originated from Festinger’s definition of the term ‘cognition’, which he referred to it as “any piece of knowledge” (Festinger, 1962, p.3). Cognition could refer to knowledge about one’s behavior, attitudes, or knowledge of the world (Cooper, 2007). These cognitions can be either related or unrelated to one another; if they are related they can either be matching or conflicting. Cognitive dissonance occurs when two related cognitions are conflicting. Because dissonance is psychologically painful (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 1999), the individual is motivated to reduce the dissonance. The psychological pain creates a ‘drive-like need’ to reduce the dissonance and avoid information that may increase the dissonance (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 1999). Dissonance can be reduced by eliminating the conflicting cognitions, adding new matching cognitions, reducing the importance of the conflicting cognitions, or increasing the importance of matching cognitions, all of which may lead to conditions such as attitude change (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 1999).

Steele and Liu’s (1983) research showcased one of the first moderators of cognitive dissonance. Their study centered on the assumption that ultimately people like to think of
themselves as good and honest. So when participants were able to re-affirm something good about themselves after writing a counter-attitudinal essay the dissonance effects became minimal. Steele viewed self-affirmation as a motivation to protect the self, and if given the chance, participants will choose to re-affirm something about their selves rather than change their attitudes.

Over the years dissonance theory has been refined and adjusted as advancements have been made (Aronson, 1968; Aronson, 1992; Cooper & Fazio, 1984; Wicklund & Brehm, 1976). Aronson (1968) made a case for a reformulation of dissonance theory in order to eliminate much of the ambiguity that was associated with it at the time. Aronson was focused on the relevance of consistency between attitudes and behavior and also the potential usefulness of dissonance. Wicklund and Brehm (1976) theorized that the only thing missing from current dissonance theory was the idea of responsibility as a prerequisite for someone to experience dissonance. If someone did not take responsibility for the inconsistent thoughts and commit to the new thoughts, then one would not experience dissonance. Cooper and Fazio (1984) expanded the knowledge base for dissonance theory when they postulated that when inducing dissonance, the consequences must make a participant uncomfortable. Cooper and Fazio also reasoned that if participants are able to misattribute the dissonance arousal from voluntarily engaging in a counter-attitudinal behavior then they will not experience dissonance. Cooper and Fazio cautioned that a participant’s ability to misattribute will lead to no attitude change and may keep researchers from achieving cognitive dissonance. Contrary to previous research, Aronson (1992) contended that previous dissonance research separated constructs such as self-enhancement, or creating a good view of the self, and consistency of self, when researchers should be integrating them into the overall theory of dissonance. Aronson claimed that both self-enhancement and
consistency are equally likely to show up in research, but it is dependent on the researcher to clarify specific conditions for dissonance to occur in a study in order to determine which facet of the dissonance experience researchers will examine.

Research on cognitive dissonance has traditionally focused on attitude change. Early work by Brehm and Festinger focused on the free choice and induced compliance paradigms. In the original free choice paradigm, participants were asked to rate their opinion on different household appliances and give a list of their seven top favorite picks. Participants were then placed in two different conditions where they were offered to take an item home and either got to choose from their second and third choice, or their second and seventh. Ratings of their choice show that when the choice is harder to make (either their second or third choice) then the item picked becomes more attractive and the item not picked becomes unwanted according to a rating scale (Brehm, 1956).

The original instance of the induced-compliance paradigm involves a situation where there is a reward for choosing to verbally express an opinion that does not match the participant’s own beliefs, which Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) referred to the verbally expressed opinion as the counter-attitudinal behavior. Receiving a small reward creates dissonant cognitions about their original attitudes and behaviors which in turn create a motivation for attitude change to new attitudes being consistent with the previously counter-attitudinal behavior. However, when faced with a large reward, participants will experience little to no dissonance because the reward may validate feelings of coercion and negate any dissonant thoughts participants have about engaging in a counter-attitudinal behavior. In the counter-attitudinal role-playing paradigm participants were asked to role play being a sincere advocate for one side of an issue. Results showed active participants who were assigned to be actors were influenced more by what they were
communicating than passive participants not involved in the acting, and the greatest change occurred when participants rated their oral speaking as satisfactory. Cognitive dissonance research has continued to investigate attitude change on many topics, such as tuition increase, nuclear power, Vietnam, Fidel Castro, the self and others.

Choice or the perception of choice is essential for most paradigms in cognitive dissonance (Brehm, 1956; Cooper, 2007; Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959; Harmon-Jones & Mills, 1999). Without participants acting in a voluntary manner, no arousal will occur and participants will not feel the need to reduce the pain of conflicting thoughts (Festinger, 1962). Harmon-Jones and colleagues (1996) showed that when assigned high choice versus low choice when writing an essay, participants in the high choice condition changed their attitudes from very negative to moderately in favor of their topic whereas participants in the low choice condition showed very little to no change in their opinion of their topic. Research shows that when people freely choose to engage in a counter-attitudinal behavior, their experience of dissonance is much stronger than if they are coerced (Cooper, 2007).

**Moderators of Cognitive Dissonance**

Previous researchers have moderated dissonance using both individual differences and additional manipulations. For example, extraversion (Matz, Hofstedt, & Wood, 2008), self-affirmation (Steele & Liu, 1983) as well as attitude strength (Brannon, Tagler, & Eagly, 2007) successfully moderate dissonance. Matz et al. (2008) investigated whether extraversion would predict attitude change following a disagreement. They found introverts reported higher levels of tension and discomfort and were more likely to change their opinions to match those of the other group members than extroverts. Looking at individual difference variables such as extraversion may help to explain differences in people’s experience of cognitive dissonance.
Brannon, Tagler, and Eagly’s (2007) research on attitude strength and cognitive dissonance offers an explanation as to why some people do not experience cognitive dissonance. People who have strong attitudes tend to seek out attitudinally consistent information and resist being exposed to counter-attitudinal information, which may make them more resilient in their attitudes (Brannon et al. 2007). They may be more resistant to change because they are less willing to expose themselves to information that is counter to their attitudes. People’s preference for attitude consistency makes attitude strength a possible predictor for the experience of cognitive dissonance.

*Self-Monitoring.* Previous research finds self-monitoring can be a moderator for cognitive dissonance. Self-monitoring is a construct used to describe how one observes and controls expressive behavior and was initially discussed in Snyder’s (1974) paper. Snyder described two types of people who monitor their behavior; high self-monitors and low self-monitors. Generally, high self-monitors aspire to be the right person, at the right place, at the right time. When high self-monitors are uncertain in a situation, they draw upon their previous knowledge of situations as well as their idea of a ‘prototypic’ person or behavior to fit the situation at hand (Snyder & Cantor, 1980). Because high self-monitors receive many of their presentation cues from others, it can be difficult for high self-monitors to react appropriately when there are no social cues available to them (Snyder & Gangestad, 1982). High self-monitors may be more easily deflected by external factors such as people of influence in their lives, varying situations, and conflicting ideologies. High self-monitors’ intentions may change more readily and a measure of intention gathered previously may not accurately predict later behavior (Ajzen, Timko, & White, 1982). Low self-monitors are those who strive to be themselves throughout various situations and surroundings. Low self-monitors’ presentation style is controlled by internal consistency and is
not modeled to fit others in a situation. Low self-monitors naturally draw upon knowledge of
personal characteristics, traits, and behavioral expression when in situations. The intentions of
low self-monitors are unaffected by external circumstances or events leading them to remain
stable over time and allows for an accurate prediction of behaviors (Ajzen, Timko, & White,
1982). Low self-monitors experience conflicts of self-congruence (Leone & Corte, 1994), which
is the reason why they may be more susceptible to experiences of cognitive dissonance.

Snyder and Tanke (1976) explored self-monitoring and attitude-behavior consistency by
assessing attitude change following a counter-attitudinal behavior. Their results showed
participants who wrote a counter-attitudinal essay concerning a private belief and were low in
self-monitoring experienced more attitude inconsistency (cognitive dissonance) than those who
wrote a counter-attitudinal essay and were high in self-monitoring. Snyder and Tanke concluded
that a change in attitude stemmed from low self-monitors making dispositional attributions for
their counter-attitudinal behavior by attributing it to a corresponding attitude, whereas high self-
monitors made situational attributions for their behavior by attributing it to the experimental
situation. Similarly, DeBono and Edmond’s (1989) study researching self-monitoring and
cognitive dissonance found that when participants wrote an essay contrary to a subject that each
participant related to their self, low self-monitors experienced cognitive dissonance at a higher
and more intense rate than those high self-monitors. However, DeBono and Edmonds also found
high self-monitors were more likely than low self-monitors to change their attitudes when they
felt that their attitudes were in opposition to what their peers believed.

Self-Compassion. A potential new moderator for cognitive dissonance may be self-
compassion. Self compassion involves “being touched by and open to one’s own suffering, not
avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one’s suffering and to heal
oneself with kindness (Neff, 2003b, p.87).” It also involves offering understanding and comfort to oneself and seeing one’s personal situation as part of the overall human experience (Neff, 2003a). Being self-compassionate involves recognizing personal suffering, treating oneself kindly, and understanding that suffering is part of the human condition. Self-compassion encompasses three components: mindfulness, self-kindness, and common humanity. Mindful individuals acknowledge their thoughts and feelings as they come to them without becoming immersed in the power of the emotions (Neff, 2003a). Someone can have mindfulness in the absence of self-compassion; but one cannot have self-compassion without mindfulness. Self-kindness involves showing yourself kindness and resisting temptations to become self-critical (Neff, 2003a). Common humanity entails a realization that everyone experiences negative and positive life events and a tendency to draw on others for support rather than become isolated (Neff, 2003a).

Self-compassion positively impacts mental, emotional, and physical well-being (Leary, Tate, Adams, Batts-Allen, & Hancock, 2007; Neff, 2003a; Neff, 2003b). However, no studies address how self-compassion might lessen the experience of dissonance produced by a counter-attitudinal behavior. Yarnell and Neff (2007) researched the connection between self-compassion and authenticity. Essentially, self-compassionate people are more likely to engage in external actions that match their internal attitudes. Yarnell and Neff found self-compassionate individuals were more authentic when resolving relationship conflicts. Because self-compassionate people also tend to be more authentic, they may experience more dissonance when engaging in a counter-attitudinal behavior. However, self-compassionate people also show themselves more kindness and compassion and may experience less internal conflict when holding conflicting cognitions. The current study explores the potential moderating effects of self-compassion on
cognitive dissonance and any potential relationship self-compassion might have with self-monitoring.

The Current Study. In the present study, we investigate cognitive dissonance using a new moral topic which participants are asked to write a counter-attitudinal essay regarding an ethical belief. Although previous research focuses on personal attitudes regarding issues such as tuition increase, we were interested in an attitude that would be more relevant to a larger population. The purpose of this study was threefold. First, we hoped to replicate previous cognitive dissonance findings and show that people who choose to write a counter-attitudinal essay about an ethical belief would experience cognitive dissonance and change their attitudes. Second, we hoped to replicate previous research showing that HSMs would not experience cognitive dissonance to the same extent as LSMs. Third, we predicted that people high in self-compassion would experience less cognitive dissonance than those with low self-compassion.

We were also tangentially interested in the relationship between self-compassion and self-monitoring as these two constructs have never been investigated together. There may be a correlation between self-compassion and self-monitoring, in that being high in self-compassion maybe related to low in self-monitoring because cutting yourself a break in the face of adversity allows one to stay true to their beliefs.

Method

Demographics

The sample consisted of 331 participants (251 women, 65 men, 15 unidentified) who were between the ages of 18 and 56 ($M = 22.5, SD = 5.62$). The majority of participants were White/Caucasian (69.8%) with the remaining ethnicities including African American (11.8%), Hispanic (8.5%), Asian-American (3.6%), Asian-including the Indian Subcontinent (2.7%),
Native-American (2.4%) and Other (6.3%). A majority of participants were Christian (61%) with the remaining religious affiliations being Agnostic (9.7%), Other (8.8%), Spiritual (7.9%), Atheism (3.6%), Judaism (2.1%), Islam (1.8%) and Buddhism (0.9%). Participants were permitted to respond to more than one ethnicity and religious identity, so percentages may exceed 100 percent. Participants were all recruited using SONA, an online subject pool operated through UNF, and received course extra credit for participating.

**Procedure**

Participants were recruited from the department participant pool and had to be 18 in order to participate online. Participants read and completed an informed consent document. They indicated consent by typing in their name and student identification number and then were redirected to a different survey that collected their responses as to maintain anonymity.

Participants were asked to rate their opinion on 15 ethical issues such as gun control, euthanasia, terrorism and capital punishment. Definitions were provided for each ethical issue in case participants were unfamiliar with the issue. Participants indicated their support of each issue on a 15-point scale from completely against (-7) to completely for (+7).

Then, participants were asked to write a short essay concerning the issue of capital punishment, also known as the death penalty. Participants were assigned to write their essay based on how they scored on the initial questionnaire. If participants were in favor of capital punishment (1 to 7) ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 2.05$), they were asked to write against capital punishment. If participants were against capital punishment (-7 to 0) ($M = -3.25$, $SD = 2.81$), they were asked to write in favor of capital punishment. Participants who provided a 0 (indicating no opinion) were automatically assigned to write against capital punishment; however these participants were removed from the dataset before analyses.
Participants were randomly assigned to a choice or no choice condition. Participants in the pro capital punishment choice condition were told “As researchers, we are interested in ethical issues related to life and death. Our current aim is to gather essays in regards to one particular issue, capital punishment. We have already received many strongly worded essays from people against capital punishment. Our current goal is to gather as many pro (or con depending on what condition participants were placed in) capital punishment essays as possible. Although you may write either for or against, we would appreciate essays in support of capital punishment. Please take about 10 minutes to write a strongly worded essay in favor of capital punishment”. Participants in the no choice conditions were told “As researchers, we are interested in ethical issues related to life and death. Our current aim is to gather essays in regards to one particular issue, capital punishment. We have already received many strongly worded essays from people against capital punishment. Our current goal is to gather as many pro (or con depending on what condition participants were placed in) capital punishment essays as possible. Please take about 10 minutes to write a strongly worded essay in favor of capital punishment”. After completing the essay, participants were told “Your thoughts and feelings that you expressed in this essay will be given to a legislative group reviewing the validity of capital punishment. Your essay may assist them in making that decision.

Following the essay, participants completed the ethical issues questionnaire again as well as an emotion scale, value items, the State Self-Esteem Scale (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991), the full Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974) and the Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003a). Participants also answered a series of manipulation check questions and demographics. Finally, participants read debriefing information that explained the purpose of the study.
Measures

*Emotions.* Participants also responded to an emotion subscale that was created by the researchers where participants responded to a scale from 1(*not at all*) to 7(*extremely*). Items on the scale included emotions such as “Happy” and “Anxious” to ascertain participants’ mood at that moment. The scale included 9 items ($M = 43.75$, $SD = 10.53$) and had a Cronbach’s alpha of .84.

*Values.* Participants rated the importance of values to determine whether changing one’s attitude would influence the extent to which participants value traits such as “Being at peace with yourself” ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.74$), “Good moral values” ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 0.67$) and “Showing yourself kindness” ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.86$). Participants responded on a scale from 1(*not at all important*) to 5(*extremely important*). These items were treated as individuals for the purposes of the ancillary analyses.

**Individual Difference Measures**

*Self-Monitoring Scale.* Self-monitoring was measured using Snyder’s (1974) 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale. This scale includes items that evaluate a person’s feelings about themselves in both public and private situations. Participants rate statements included in the measure on a binary scale from 1(*true*) to 2(*false*), with a total sum value ranging from 25 to 50 points. Example items included statements such as “I have considered being an entertainer” and “I can only argue for ideas I already believe”. Higher scores indicate high self-monitoring. There is an ongoing debate among researchers regarding self-monitoring on whether self-monitoring is a type or a trait (Briggs, Cheek, & Buss, 1980; Lennox & Wolfe, 1984; Snyder & Gangestad, 1985). For the purpose of analysis the continuous version of this variable was used. Researchers have found strong internal consistency for the original 25-item Self-Monitoring Scale with a
Kuder-Richardson 20 reliability of .70 (Briggs, Cheek, & Buss, 1980; Snyder, 1974), and a test-retest reliability of .83 (over a one month interval). In a cross validation study, Snyder reported a Kuder-Richardson 20 coefficient of .63 for scales on the Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974). The Kuder-Richardson 20 coefficient for the current study was .64 which is in the normal range for this scale.

**Self-Compassion Scale.** Self-compassion was measured using Neff’s (2003a) 26-item Self-Compassion Scale. This scale consists of 26 items that evaluate a person’s ratings of self-kindness, self-judgment, mindfulness, isolation, common humanity and over-identification. The measure demonstrated high internal consistency in the present study with a Cronbach’s alpha of .93. Participants rated statements included in the measure on a 5-point scale from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*), (*M* = 3.10, *SD* = 0.62). Example items included statements such as “When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself” and “I try to see my failings as part of the human condition”. Higher scores indicate more self-compassion. Previous research shows the self-compassion scale to have high test-retest reliability (.93) (Neff, 2003b). In addition, the factor structure for the scale demonstrates good fit (*CFI*=.91) and good construct validity (Neff, 2003b).

**Manipulation Check**

In order to test the effectiveness of the choice manipulation, participants responded to the following questions using a 1 (*none at all*) to 5 (*complete choice*) scale: “How much choice did you feel you had in writing the essay”. In addition, to ensure that participants followed the instructions when writing their essay, participants answered the following question: “Think back to your essay. Did you write for or against capital punishment?” Participants either answered for or against.
Results

Data Preparation and Analysis

Based on participants’ initial capital punishment ratings, they were categorized as either being for (1 to 7) or against (-1 to -7) capital punishment. Participants ($n = 52$) who indicated they had no opinion were removed from the dataset. When reviewing the manipulation check questions looking for whether participants followed directions, participants who responded that they did not follow directions by writing an essay that was not counter to their original attitudes along with those who the researcher felt did not follow directions in their written essay were excluded from analyses ($n = 82$). The researcher also subjectively assessed the essays to determine whether participants followed directions and 11 of the participants who said they wrote a counter-attitudinal essay did not do so according to the researcher. In addition, 12 participants who said they did not write a counter-attitudinal essay were evaluated by the researcher as writing a counter-attitudinal essay. In sum, 135 participants were removed from the analyses, and the analyses were conducted with 196 participants.

Centered variables were created for self-compassion and self-monitoring. The process of centering the variables for this study involved subtracting out the mean scores to more effectively compare high and low ratings for participants. Statistical analyses included repeated measures analysis of variance. An alpha ($\alpha$) of .05 was used for all analyses and Bonferroni’s correction was used when assessing simple main effect tests. Due to missing data, the participant count is less than that of the final sample ($n=196$) on some of the measures.

Manipulation Check

A preliminary $t$-test was performed on the choice manipulation question and showed that participants in the choice condition ($M = 3.12, SD = 1.37$) also perceived that they had more
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choice. Participants in the no choice condition \((M = 2.16, SD = 1.49)\) felt they had less of a choice, \(t(193) = -4.62, p < .001\).

**Cognitive Dissonance**

A repeated measures analysis of variance was used to ascertain whether participants experienced cognitive dissonance. Pre and post capital punishment attitude ratings were entered as the repeated factor. Attitude group (pro vs. con) and choice (choice vs. no choice) were entered as predictors as well as their respective 2-way and 3-way interactions. A main effect of attitude group was found for participants’ initial attitude towards capital punishment, \(F(1, 190) = 195.53, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .51\), showing that participants who were initially in favor of capital punishment favored capital punishment more overall \((M = 3.17, SD = 1.88)\) than participants with an initial attitude against capital punishment \((M = -4.03, SD = 2.42)\). As predicted, a significant interaction was found between pre and post capital punishment scores and attitude group, \(F(1, 192) = 78.09, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .29\), showing that participants experienced a significant directional change in capital punishment attitudes for both pro \((M = 3.47, SD = .19, M = 1.22, SD = .39)\) and con \((M = -4.45, SD = .23, M = -1.85, SD = .47)\) groups (see Table 1). Contrary to prediction, there was no 3-way interaction with choice suggesting that choice was not a factor in the experience of dissonance in this study.

A significant interaction between choice and attitude group was found, \(F(1,192) = 7.79, p = .006, \eta^2_p = .039\). A pairwise comparison using Bonferroni’s adjustment (.05) was conducted to explore this interaction further. Participants for capital punishment and given no choice \((M = 2.90, SD = 3.02)\) were more in favor of capital punishment than participants against capital punishment who were given no choice \((M = -3.69, SD = 3.29)\) and participants who were in favor of capital punishment and received a choice \((M = 1.80, SD = 2.78)\). Participants in favor of
capital punishment who received a choice were more in favor of capital punishment than participants who were against capital punishment and received a choice ($M = -2.60$, $SD = 3.47$). Participants against capital punishment who received no choice ($M = -3.69$, $SD = 3.29$) were marginally more unfavorable towards capital punishment than participants who were against capital punishment and received a choice ($M = -2.60$, $SD = 3.47$). Overall, the difference between participants who were pro capital punishment and participants who were against capital punishment was greater when they did not have a choice than when they did have a choice.

Self-Monitoring as a Moderator

A repeated measures analysis of variance was used to evaluate whether self-monitoring moderated cognitive dissonance. Once again, pre and post capital punishment attitudes were entered as the repeated variable. Attitude group, choice, and self-monitoring were entered as additional predictors as well as their respective 2-way, 3-way and 4-way interactions (see Table 2). Significant findings not involving self-monitoring were reported in earlier analyses.

The only significant effect involving self-monitoring was a 4-way interaction between capital punishment scores, attitude group, choice and self-monitoring, $F (1,186) = 3.93$, $p = .049$, $\eta^2 = .020$ (refer to figures 2 through 5 ). When comparing the means of the four-way interaction (see table 3), low self-monitors experience more dissonance than high self-monitors when there is no choice, and high self-monitors experience more dissonance than low self-monitors when there is a choice. In the future, a finer grained analysis between participants who believed they had a choice and participants who believed they did not will be completed to parcel out the differences between high self-monitors and low-self-monitors in this study.

Self-compassion as a Moderator
A repeated measures analysis of variance was used to evaluate whether self-compassion was a moderator of cognitive dissonance. There were no significant effects involving self-compassion.

**Ancillary Analyses**

An exploratory bivariate correlation was conducted to test whether self-compassion and self-monitoring were related. Self-compassion was positively correlated with self-monitoring showing that more self-compassionate people are also more likely to be high self-monitors, \( r (194) = .23, p < .001 \). Overall, the magnitude of this correlation is on the low side such that self-compassion and self-monitoring ought not to be considered confounded.

Hierarchal regression analyses were used to predict one’s values using the self-compassion centered variable and a variable created to measure the participants’ experience of dissonance as a predictors (see table 4). The dissonance variable was created by taking the difference from the pre and post scores on the questionnaire and recoding the against scores so that positive numbers indicated more dissonance. Centered self-compassion and dissonance were entered into step 1 and the two-way interaction of self-compassion and dissonance were entered into step 2 (West, Aiken, & Krull, 1996).

*Good Moral Values.* A significant main effect for dissonance was found \( R^2 = 0.01, \beta = 0.13, p = 0.054 \) showing that the more dissonance a person experienced, the more they valued good morals. A significant interaction was also found \( \Delta R^2 = 0.03, \beta = -0.17, p = 0.036 \) showing that people high in self-compassion valued good moral values regardless of their dissonance experience \( r = -0.00, p = 0.87 \). However, low self-compassionate people were more likely to value good morals as their experience of dissonance increased \( r = 0.06, p = 0.00 \). There was no significant main effect for self-compassion.
Showing Yourself Kindness. A significant main effect was found for self-compassion ($R^2 = 0.04$, $\beta = 0.19$, $p = 0.009$), indicating that people who were higher in trait self-compassion valued being kinder to themselves. A marginally significant main effect was also found for dissonance ($R^2 = 0.04$, $\beta = 0.13$, $p = 0.066$), indicating that the more dissonance people experienced, the more they valued being kind to themselves. A marginally significant interaction was also found ($\Delta R^2 = 0.06$, $\beta = -0.15$, $p = 0.059$), where high self-compassionate people tended to value being kind to themselves regardless of their experience of dissonance ($r = -0.00$, $p = 0.94$). In the case of low self-compassionate people, the more dissonance they experienced, the higher they rated valuing being kind to themselves ($r = 0.06$, $p = 0.01$).

Being at Peace with Yourself. A significant main effect of self-compassion was found ($R^2 = 0.07$, $\beta = 0.25$, $p = 0.000$) indicating that self-compassionate participants valued being at peace with themselves more than less self-compassionate participants. No main effect for dissonance was found. A marginally significant interaction ($\Delta R^2 = 0.08$, $\beta = -0.15$, $p = 0.070$), indicated that highly self-compassionate people valued being at peace with themselves regardless of their dissonance experience ($r = -0.00$, $p = 0.86$). People low in self-compassion valued being at peace with themselves more when they experienced more dissonance ($r = 0.05$, $p = 0.02$).

Affect. A significant main effect was found for self-compassion ($R^2 = 0.12$, $\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the higher a person scores in trait self-compassion the more positively they will rate in their affect scores. No other significant effects were found concerning affect.

Discussion

When asked to perform a counter-attitudinal behavior regarding an ethical issue, people experience cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance’s impact on attitude change has been explored with many different topics, such as tuition reform, nuclear power, communism, self-
affirmation, retail practices, voting habits, hypocrisy within animal welfare, false memories, bogus pipeline, evaluations of others, measures of performance and others (Bølstad, Dinas, & Riera, 2013; Cooper & Fazio, 1984; Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959; McGrath, 2013; Paulhus, 1982; Bem, 1967; Powers & Jack, 2013; Rodriguez, 2014). However, this study is the first to explore cognitive dissonance within the realm of the moral issue of capital punishment. When it comes to moral issues, there is a long history wherein people tend to have strong opinions either for or against them whether its gun laws, abortion or capital punishment (Glover, 1977; Pinker, 2002).

The first hypothesis was partially supported in that participants experienced dissonance with this new paradigm; however choice did not moderate this effect. This finding contradicts previous research in that choice was not a factor in whether participants experienced cognitive dissonance (Beauvois, Bungert, & Mariette, 1995; Brehm, 1956; Cooper, 2007; Festinger & Carlsmith, 1957, Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959; Harmon-Jones & Mills, 1999). A key difference in the current study was that some participants opted out of the essay writing regardless of choice condition (n =10). There were also participants in both the choice and no choice conditions that wrote essays in favor of their original attitude. Participants who opted out of writing an essay were excluded from the analyses; however, additional analyses were performed that compared these participants to participants in the choice and no choice conditions. No significant differences were found, yet these findings suggest one’s perception of choice may be difficult to manipulate (Frey & Wicklund, 1978; Harmon-Jones et. al, 1996).

The second hypothesis was slightly supported as self-monitoring moderated cognitive dissonance in one condition. In the no choice condition, low self-monitors experienced dissonance, which is in line with previous research (DeBono & Edmonds, 1989; Snyder and
Tanke, 1976). In previous research, low self-monitors experienced dissonance when the subject matter was closely related to the self (DeBono & Edmonds, 1989) leading to the conclusion that low self-monitors may relate their moral attitudes to themselves when they are not given a choice. When reviewing the condition where choice was involved the results of this study are counter to previous research, in that high self-monitors experienced more dissonance when given a choice than low self-monitors. High self-monitors in favor of capital punishment were more in favor of capital punishment in the choice condition than in the no choice condition at pre-test. Given that choice could not have impacted pre-test measures, this difference may be a failure of random assignment. Therefore, although we found a similar finding at post-test, we cannot infer that choice had a significant impact on dissonance. High self-monitors in general held less extreme opinions towards capital punishment compared to low self-monitors (cf. Ajzen, Timko, & White, 1982).

The third hypothesis was not supported as self-compassion had no impact on people’s experience of dissonance. I anticipated that more self-compassionate participants would experience less dissonance as a result of their ability to be kind to themselves in the midst of their suffering. One potential explanation for our findings could be that writing a counter-attitudinal essay on capital punishment did not invoke any suffering; therefore, participants’ self-compassion was not relevant. However, when looking at ancillary analyses, participants’ trait self-compassion scores and their levels of dissonance interacted to predict people’s moral values and emotions. More self-compassionate participants valued good morals, showing themselves kindness, and being at peace with themselves regardless of whether they experienced dissonance. However, less self-compassionate participants valued good morals, showing themselves kindness, and being at peace with themselves more when they experienced dissonance than when
they did not experience dissonance. The reasoning for this may be that the more inconsistent a person is, the more they value things that make a ‘good’ person, namely good morals, showing themselves kindness and being at peace with themselves.

Self-compassion and self-monitoring were correlated and thus there was support for the exploratory nature of this study. Self-compassion and self-monitoring were positively correlated showing high self-monitors were also more likely to be high in self-compassion. High self-monitors may be more likely to also be high in self-compassion because they may be able to relate to common humanity, one of the aspects of self-compassion easier than others. High self-monitors may have an easier time seeing themselves as part of humanity as a larger group because they are better at perspective taking and tend to have higher emotional intelligence (Schutte et al., 2001), in a way that allows them to perceive, regulate and comprehend emotions adaptively in themselves and in others.

Overall, some of the hypotheses were supported in that the cognitive dissonance manipulation was a success even though choice was not a determinant of participants’ experience of dissonance, and self-monitoring did moderate cognitive dissonance, though not in the way that was predicted. However, self-compassion did not moderate cognitive dissonance as was hypothesized.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study was conducted online with a college population, thus the findings may not be generalizable to a larger population. In particular, the sample was young, predominately female and Christian. Although we chose a paradigm that would be applicable to a larger audience, we found upon reading the essays that some students did not have a good understanding of capital punishment or when it might be used. About 5% of students’ essays showcased participants’ lack
of understanding in terms of what exactly capital punishment is and in what cases it can be
enforced. In the future, a definition should accompany the essay topic to avoid future confusion.
A time issue also existed in that the study was conducted in one sitting where the pre and post
measures were taken close together leading to the possibility of reactance to the measure. In an
attempt to adjust for this, the capital punishment attitude question was embedded in the survey of
other ethical attitude questions. However we cannot be sure that the participants’ post responses
were not influenced by their knowledge of pre responses. With having the pre and post
questionnaires so close together, it is possible that the only reason that people may be reporting
more neutral attitudes is that they were regressing towards the mean rather than experiencing
dissonance. There may be a few ways to reduce the possibility of regression towards the mean.
One way would be to take the mean of multiple measurements as a way of selection (Yudkin &
Stratton, 1996). Another way would be to take two measurements before the intervention;
however, we were limited by time and resources in this study and unable to take multiple
measurements across time.

Future research combining self-compassion with a more traditional cognitive dissonance
paradigm should be completed to ascertain if there is indeed a connection. For example, future
studies should include more than one consequence to explore if having a low and high
consequence to an essay would elicit higher self-compassionate ratings. Neff (2003a) believes
that self-compassion is only relevant in times of suffering which might buffer more self-
compassionate people from experiencing cognitive dissonance in high versus low consequence
settings. Participants must be able to imagine the possible consequences in order for them to
experience dissonance, where degrees of strength in these consequences may provide varying
degrees of participants’ experiences of dissonance (Cooper, 1971; Goethals & Cooper, 1975;
Thibodeau & Aronson, 1992; Wen-Bin Chiou & Chin-Sheng Wan, (2007). In past research, concepts such as self-affirmation have been an effective buffer against cognitive dissonance when participants were offered a way to re-affirm a concept related to the self after writing a counter-attitudinal essay (Cohen, Aronson, & Steele, 2000; Liu & Steele, 1986; Steele & Liu, 1983). Therefore, self-compassion may work similarly to self-affirmation and help buffer against possible negative consequences of engaging in a dissonant act.

Dissonance can be manipulated within the moral realm of capital punishment; therefore, future studies should investigate dissonance effects across moral and ethical domains. Future studies should also explore different types of moral issues such as gun control, abortion, and human trafficking as well as incorporate different paradigms such as the free choice or forced compliance paradigms for potential discoveries within the research field of cognitive dissonance.

In conclusion, writing a counter-attitudinal essay about a moral issue can result in attitude change and this effect may be moderated by individual differences such as self-monitoring. Given the specificity of the moral issue, self-monitoring as a dissonance moderator should be researched with other moral issues. Morals and ethics are vital to society and are of cultural significance. The effect of cognitive dissonance on moral issues has powerful implications when it comes to persuasion and could be of importance to politicians, when writing and passing bills in the government, and in advertising.
Table 1

Repeated Measures ANOVA investigating the cognitive dissonance effect for capital punishment scores with choice and attitude group as predictors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Between Subjects</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>( \eta^2 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2772.51</td>
<td>195.53</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>0.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.996</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude group*choice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>110.46</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>.006*</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>192</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within Subjects</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>( \eta^2 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cappun</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.345</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>.672</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappun*attitude group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>585.171</td>
<td>78.09</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>0.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappun*choice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.310</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.839</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappun<em>attitude group</em>choice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.300</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>.325</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>192</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Capital punishment rating at pre-test and post-test (Cappun), Initial Attitude towards capital punishment as for or against (Attitude Group), Choice condition (Choice).
Table 2

Repeated Measures ANOVA investigating self-monitoring as a moderator for cognitive dissonance for capital punishment scores with choice and attitude group as predictors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Between Subjects</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>$\eta^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Group</td>
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<td>2673.45</td>
<td>189.26</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>0.502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
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<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>.711</td>
<td>0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMcentered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>.758</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude group*choice</td>
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<td>93.50</td>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude group*SMcentered</td>
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<td>51.04</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice*SMcentered</td>
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<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.837</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude group<em>choice</em>SMcentered</td>
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<td>22.96</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>188</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within Subjects</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>$\eta^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cappun</td>
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<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>.945</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappun*attitude group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>515.45</td>
<td>68.83</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>0.268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappun*choice</td>
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<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>.566</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappun*SMcentered</td>
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<td>3.02</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>.526</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappun<em>attitude group</em>SMcentered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>.569</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappun<em>attitude group</em>choice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>.498</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappun<em>choice</em>SMcentered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>.374</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappun<em>attitude group</em>choice*SMcentered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29.41</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>.049*</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>188</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Capital punishment rating at pre-test and post-test (Cappun), Initial Attitude towards capital punishment as for or against (Attitude Group), Choice condition (Choice), self-monitoring scores that have been centered (SMcentered)
Table 3

Means for the 4-way interaction showing significant differences in groups for and against capital punishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Self-Monitoring Against</th>
<th>No Choice</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>-5.44</td>
<td>0.394</td>
<td>-4.12</td>
<td>0.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>-2.46</td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td>-2.95</td>
<td>1.504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Self-Monitoring For</td>
<td>No Choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>0.341</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Self-Monitoring Against</td>
<td>No choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>-4.39</td>
<td>0.389</td>
<td>-4.00</td>
<td>0.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>-2.50</td>
<td>0.801</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>1.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Self-Monitoring For</td>
<td>No Choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.352</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>0.447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.726</td>
<td>-0.53</td>
<td>0.922</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.

Hierarchal regression analyses testing self-compassion and dissonance as predictors of emotions and value outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Good moral values</th>
<th>Showing yourself kindness</th>
<th>Being at peace with yourself</th>
<th>Affect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>0.935</td>
<td>0.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCcentered</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>0.935</td>
<td>0.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissonance</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCcentered*dissonance</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.173</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>-0.153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SCcentered is the centered self-compassion variable
Figures

*Figure 1.* Cognitive Dissonance interaction with capital punishment scores and attitude change.
Figure 2. 4 way interaction with Self-Monitoring with capital punishment rating.
Figure 3. 4 way interaction with Self-Monitoring with no choice and for capital punishment.
Figure 4. 4 way interaction with Self-Monitoring with choice and against capital punishment.
Figure 5. 4 way interaction with Self-Monitoring with choice and for capital punishment.
References


Appendix A

Measures

Ethical Issues Questionnaire

Please read the issues carefully and rate your opinion of these ethical issues using the following scale:

-7    -6    -5    -4    -3    -2    -1     0     +1    +2    +3    +4    +5    +6    +7
completely against complete for

_____ Euthanasia
_____ Terrorism
_____ Capital Punishment
_____ Animal Cruelty
_____ Gang Violence
_____ Abortion
_____ Prostitution
_____ Gun Control
_____ Medical Marijuana
_____ Affirmative Action
_____ Gay Marriage
_____ Lowering the Legal Drinking Age
_____ Big Government
_____ Tax Increases
- Capital punishment- The legally authorized killing of someone as a punishment for a crime. Also known as the death penalty.

- Euthanasia- The painless killing of a patient suffering from an incurable and painful disease or in an irreversible coma.

- Animal Cruelty- The infliction of suffering or harm upon animals, other than humans, for purpose other than self-defense.

- Terrorism- The use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims.

- Gun Control- Efforts to regulate or control sales of guns.

- Gang Violence- Criminal and non political acts of violence committed by a group of people who regularly engage in criminal activity against innocent people.

- Abortion- The deliberate termination of a human pregnancy.

- Prostitution- The practice or occupation of engaging in sex with someone for payment.
- Medical Marijuana- Medical Marijuana refers to the use of cannabis or marijuana, including constituents of cannabis, THC and other cannabinoids, as a physician-recommended form of medicine or herbal therapy.

- Affirmative Action- An action or policy favoring those who tend to suffer from discrimination in relation to employment or education.

- Gay Marriage- a legally or socially recognized marriage between two persons of the same biological sex.

- Lowering the Drinking Age- decreasing the age at which someone is legal to buy alcoholic beverages to age 18.

- Big Government- a term used to describe a government or public sector that they consider to be excessively large, corrupt and inefficient, or inappropriately involved in certain areas of public policy or the private sector.

- Tax increase- the amount by which taxes are increased.

- Stem cell research- research on an undifferentiated cell of a multicellular organism that is capable of giving rise to indefinitely more cells of the same type.
Capital Punishment Prompts

“Choice Pro Prompt”

As researchers, we are interested in ethical issues related to life and death. Our current aim is to gather essays in regards to one particular issue, capital punishment. We have already received many strongly worded essays from people against capital punishment. Our current goal is to gather as many pro capital punishment essays as possible. Although you may write either for or against, we would appreciate essays in support of capital punishment. Please take about 10 minutes to write a strongly worded essay in favor of capital punishment. The next button will appear after 5 minutes.

“Choice Against Prompt”

As researchers, we are interested in ethical issues related to life and death. Our current aim is to gather essays in regards to one particular issue, capital punishment. We have already received many strongly worded essays from people in favor of capital punishment. Our current goal is to gather as many essays against capital punishment as possible. Although you may write either for or against, we would appreciate essays against of capital punishment. Please take about 10 minutes to write a strongly worded essay against capital punishment. The next button will appear after 5 minutes.

“No Choice Pro Prompt”

As researchers, we are interested in ethical issues related to life and death. Our current aim is to gather essays in regards to one particular issue, capital punishment. We have already received many strongly worded essays from people against capital punishment. Our current goal is to
gather as many **pro capital punishment** essays as possible. Please take about 10 minutes to write a strongly worded essay in favor of capital punishment. The next button will appear in 5 minutes.

“**No Choice Against Prompt**”

As researchers, we are interested in ethical issues related to life and death. Our current aim is to gather essays in regards to one particular issue, capital punishment. We have already received many strongly worded essays from people in favor of capital punishment. Our current goal is to gather as many essays **against capital punishment** as possible. Please take about 10 minutes to write a strongly worded essay against capital punishment. The next button will appear in 5 minutes.

**Consequence**

Thank you for your time in writing this essay. Your thoughts and feelings that you expressed in this essay will be given to a legislative group reviewing the validity of capital punishment. Your essay may assist them in making that decision.

**Dependent and Individual Difference Variables**

**State Self-Esteem Scale**

This is a questionnaire designed to measure what you are thinking at this moment. There is of course, no right answer for any statement. The best answer is what you feel is true of yourself at the moment. Be sure to answer all of the items, even if you are not certain of the best answer.
Again, answer these questions as they are true for you RIGHT NOW. Please answer on a scale of 1-5:

1. Not at all  a little bit  somewhat  very much  extremely

1. I feel confident about my abilities.
2. I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure.
3. I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now.
4. I feel frustrated or rattled about my performance.
5. I feel that I am having trouble understanding things that I read.
6. I feel that others respect and admire me.
7. I am dissatisfied with my weight.
8. I feel self-conscious.
9. I feel as smart as others.
10. I feel displeased with myself.
11. I feel good about myself.
12. I am pleased with my appearance right now.
13. I am worried about what other people think of me.
15. I feel inferior to others at this moment.
16. I feel unattractive.
17. I feel concerned about the impression I am making.
18. I feel that I have less scholastic ability right now than others.
19. I feel like I'm not doing well.

**Emotions:**

Rate how you are feeling on each of these emotions at this present moment:

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 extremely

Happy
Sad
Angry
Anxious
Disappointed in myself
Confident
Irritated
Conflicted
Peaceful

**Self-Affirmation**

Below is a list of characteristics and values, some of which maybe important to you, some of which may be unimportant. Please answer on a scale of 1-5:

1 2 3 4 5
Not at all important  slightly important  somewhat important  very important  extremely important

Regarding your life, how important are the following things to you?...

Spontaneity/living life in the moment

Being true to yourself

Social skills

Good moral values

Showing yourself kindness

Compassion for others

Staying true to your beliefs in the face of opposition

Having a lot of money

Having a lot of friends
Being at peace with yourself

(Self-compassion Scale)

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, please click on one of the corresponding numbers using the following scale:

Almost never                  Almost always
            1                         2                         3                         4                         5

1. I’m disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
2. When I’m feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that’s wrong.
3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.
4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.
5. I try to be loving towards myself when I’m feeling emotional pain.
6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
7. When I'm down, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.
8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.
9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.

10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.

11. I’m intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don’t like.

12. When I’m going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.

13. When I’m feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.

14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.

15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.

16. When I see aspects of myself that I don’t like, I get down on myself.

17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.

18. When I’m really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.

19. I’m kind to myself when I’m experiencing suffering.

20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.

21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.

22. When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.

23. I’m tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.

24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.

25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.

26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
SELF-COMPASSION AND SELF-MONITORING AS MODERATORS

(Self-Monitoring Scale)

The statements below concern your personal reactions to a number of situations. No two statements are exactly alike, so consider each statement carefully before answering. If a statement is true or mostly true as applied to you, mark True as your answer. If a statement is false or not usually true as applied to you, mark False. It is important that you answer as frankly and as honestly as you can.

_____ 1. I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people.

_____ 2. My behavior is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.

_____ 3. At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like.

_____ 4. I can only argue for ideas which I already believe.

_____ 5. I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information.

_____ 6. I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain people.

_____ 7. When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues.

_____ 8. I would probably make a good actor.

_____ 9. I rarely need the advice of my friends to choose movies, books, or music.

_____ 10. I sometimes appear to others to be experiencing deeper emotions than I actually am.

_____ 11. I laugh more when I watch a comedy with others than when alone.

_____ 12. In a group of people I am rarely the center of attention.

_____ 13. In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons.

_____ 14. I am not particularly good at making other people like me.
15. Even if I am not enjoying myself, I often pretend to be having a good time.
16. I'm not always the person I appear to be.
17. I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone else or win their favor.
18. I have considered being an entertainer.
19. In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what people expect me to be rather than anything else.
20. I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting.
21. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations.
22. At a party I let others keep the jokes and stories going.
23. I feel a bit awkward in company and do not show up quite so well as I should.
24. I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face (if for a right end).
25. I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them.

Follow-up Essay Questions

Think back to your essay. Did you write for or against capital punishment?

For

Against

Please explain why you wrote for or against capital punishment?

If asked to do so, would you be willing to take the same position in a similar essay and email it to other special interest groups related to capital punishment?

Yes
To what extent do you feel bad about the essay you wrote?

- not at all
- slightly
- somewhat
- very much
- extremely

**Manipulation Checks**

1. How much choice did you feel you had in writing your essay?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>complete choice</td>
<td></td>
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2. How important were the consequences of your essay?

<table>
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<th>1</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>extremely important</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Demographics**

Gender: _____ Male _____ Female

Age: ___________
How would you describe yourself? (Check all that apply)

_____ Caucasian/White
_____ African-American (Black)
_____ Asian-American
_____ Hispanic/Mexican American/Latino
_____ Asian (including the Indian subcontinent)
_____ Native American, Alaska Native
_____ Other

State of Residence: ___________________

Country of Residence: ________________

Choose the option that best describes your belief system.

_____ Christianity
_____ Judaism
_____ Islam
_____ Mormonism
_____ Hinduism
_____ Buddhism
_____ Agnosticism
_____ Atheism
_____ Spiritual
_____ Other
Circum Vitae

Jessica Sastre

EDUCATION

2014         M.A., University of North Florida, General Psychology
2009          B.A., University of North Florida, Psychology
2009          B.A., University of North Florida, English

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2011-2013   Research Assistant, Professor A. Allen, University of North Florida
            • Master’s Thesis on Self-Compassion and Cognitive Flexibility
            • Working on a study looking into the Self-Compassionate mindset
            • Helping to create a intervention program for victims of domestic violence at a local shelter

2009-2011   Research Assistant, Professor J. Schmuller, University of North Florida
            • Using cognitive psychology techniques to study context effects in the recognition of pictorial stimuli
            • Reviewing literature on the recognition by components model
            • Reviewing IRB to study context effects in the recognition of pictorial stimuli

2009   Research Assistant, Professor I. Iversen, University of North Florida
            • Fall 2009 Foundations of Experimental Analysis of Behavior (course) Fall 2009
            • Performed class experiments in animal learning
            • Gained experience in data analysis.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Visual Perception
Brain Disorders
Self-Compassion
Cognitive Dissonance

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Student member
Society of Southeastern Social Psychologists, Member

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS


INVITED TALKS


TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2013-2014  Guest Lecturer, Organization of the Nervous System, Heritage Institute


2012  Guest Lecturer, Developing a Compassionate Mindset, University of North Florida

2012  Substitute Teacher, Kelly Educational Staffing, Duval County
  • Taught elementary students (including special needs)
  • Gained presentation experience
  • Gained experience in working with children

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

2005  UNF Institutional Grant
2005-2009  Fl Medallion Award

Related Skills
Microsoft Word, Excel (data management, graphing, and statistical analysis), PowerPoint, SPSS-X, Vovici, Qualtrics, Mechanical Turk (MTURK)

Departmental and Community Service

- **Volunteer and Facilitator**, bone marrow
- **Volunteer and Advocate**, Hubbard House (Domestic Violence Shelter)