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CAN I GET A WITNESS? EMPLOYEE REACTIONS TO WITNESSING VISIBLE SELF-COMPASSION AT WORK

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration
Concentration: Organizational Behavior

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by
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May 2024

Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

Self-compassion is defined as a tripartite process whereby an individual notices their own suffering, feels empathetic concern for oneself, and responds to alleviate or address the suffering. Research on self-compassion has proliferated in the last decade, and a major theme in the literature posits that it is beneficial for the practicing individual. However, less attention is given to the impact of self-compassion expression on other individuals in the workplace – partly because one major assumption is that self-compassion is an internalized process. In this dissertation, I conceptualize self-compassion as a social process and draw from affective events theory to make predictions on observer reactions to witnessing self-compassion in the workplace. Specifically, I argue that observed self-compassion is an affective event that triggers affective reactions, which then influences subsequent judgments and behaviors. I make competing hypotheses regarding the type of affective reaction experienced by the observer, and introduce workplace norms as an environmental feature that will impact this relationship. Across three studies, results show that observers react positively (and not negatively) to witnessing self-compassion. These positive affective reactions are amplified in compassion-based work environments (Study 2), however, neither positive nor negative affective reactions are influenced in high-performance work environments (Studies 2 and 3). Implications for theory and practice, as well as future research directions, are discussed.

DEDICATION

To Anthony. This journey is better with you, my love.

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"Thank you" is simply not enough to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to my fellow mentors, colleagues, family, and friends. This journey could not have been completed without all of you.

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CHAPTER ONE

COMPASSION IN THE LITERATURE

Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive

- Dalai Lama

Introduction

Compassion is the process of noticing, feeling, and addressing suffering through kind acts towards others (other-compassion; Kanov et al., 2004) or oneself (self-compassion; Dodson & Heng, 2022; Neff, 2003a). Scholars have only recently begun to give self- and other-compassion in organizations serious consideration, which is surprising because suffering is pervasive in organizational life. As Worline and colleagues (2017, p. 13) note:

> It's not always obvious to businesspeople, immersed in competitive markets or dealing with financial bottom-line questions, that compassion is relevant in their world…But when seeking to build high-performing organizations that meet the challenges of a twenty-first century work environment, compassion matters more than most people recognize.

However, the expression of other-compassion may be more accepted in the workplace (versus self-compassion expression) because it benefits several parties. For instance, if a colleague fails to meet their goals, a fellow employee might show compassion towards them by treating them to coffee and listening to them vent. As a result, the fellow employee may feel good for helping someone in need, and the colleague may be more likely to reciprocate or pass along other-compassion in the future (Blau,

1964). Expressing other-compassion at work can be a win-win for both parties. Now, consider a situation where *the fellow employee* fails to meet a goal, and thus shows self-compassion by treating themself to coffee and spending some time away from work. As a result, the fellow employee may feel better because they took the time to be kind to themself, but the outcome of their self-compassion (taking time away from work) may impact their colleagues negatively.

While it may seem plausible that others may view self-compassion in a positive light – given that some organizations encourage the practice of positive behaviors such as mindfulness (Urrila, 2022) and care about employees' overall well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2020) – indeed, some scholars have suggested that self-compassion may be inappropriate in the workplace (Goleman, 1998; Robinson et al., 2016). Scholars note that "self-compassion, which requires the employee to focus on their personal needs rather than on their work for some time, may conflict with the workplace expectation that employees invest their whole selves into achieving organizational success" (Dodson & Heng, 2022, p. 189). Employees hesitate to practice self-compassion if organizational leaders, who tend to abide by social norms for suppressing emotions after suffering events, do not express self-compassion (Hudson et al., 2023). Such behavior ultimately sets the precedent that expressing self-compassion may not be as readily accepted. Therefore, it is not surprising that some may view self-compassion in a negative light (Robinson et al., 2016), especially as others question if it can be perceived as selfish or self-indulgent given its self-focus (Marshall et al., 2020; Miron et al., 2014). At this point, it is unclear how practicing self-compassion at work may be perceived by others.

Answering this question is important for scholars and practitioners who advise employees to behave in a self-compassionate manner at work.

Although researchers have investigated how other-compassion impacts both the individual (e.g., via compassion satisfaction and employee voice; Stamm, 2002; Wee & Fehr, 2021) and outside members (e.g., via prosocial behavior; Goetz et al., 2010), much less is known how self-compassion impacts observers. Rather, the existing work on self-compassion solely examines how it impacts the individual's personal experiences and neglects any surrounding members. One potential reason for this could be because self-compassion is thought to be a highly internalized experience, as originally defined in Neff (2003a)'s work. For example, self-compassion has been defined as an "internal empathizer" and taking a "caring emotional stance toward oneself" (Neff, 2003a, p. 91). Self-compassion may seem largely internal as it involves dialogue with oneself (expressing kindness to the self) that revolves around perception (realizing that everyone suffers) and cognition (having a balanced awareness of emotions).

However, preliminary work suggests that self-compassion is more observable than initially thought (Chau et al., 2022; Neff & Beretvas, 2013; Neff et al., 2007a). In their recent review, Dodson and Heng (2022) state, "given that self-compassionate practices can range from low (e.g., meditating at one's desk for 5 min) to high visibility (e.g., taking a day off work), variations in others' reactions and self-compassion efficacy likely exist" (p. 189). I argue that understanding how self-compassion is perceived by others is an important gap to fill because some view self-compassion as a weakness (Gilbert et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2016), while others see it as a strength (Neff,

2003a). Therefore, it is important to empirically investigate the reactions that self-compassion elicits in observers because there could be a risk to the individual who expresses self-compassion, and downstream consequences on workplace relationships if self-compassion is viewed poorly by observers. Specifically, understanding observers' emotional reactions are particularly pertinent – not only because affect and emotions make up an important component to self-compassion (Dodson & Heng, 2022) – but also because they offer insight on predicting the implications of such reactions. For example, scholars have argued that emotions are key to providing insight into how individuals make sense of an event and influence their social judgments and behaviors as they are deeply woven into organizational life (Fisher, 2019; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Kroon & Reif, 2023). As such, I contend that understanding the emotions self-compassion elicits in observers will inform the type of reactions, judgments, and behaviors that result. In this dissertation proposal, I draw from affective events theory (AET; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) to argue that a self-compassionate act is an affective event that can elicit affective reactions in observers. Specifically, I create competing hypotheses that test the potential for self-compassion to elicit positive or negative affective reactions, and how these reactions, in turn, impact affiliation and the degree to which the observer judges the focal actor[1] as a potential leader.

In Chapter 1, I will broadly review the literature on self- and other-compassion and explain why I examine self-compassion. Then, I will discuss self-compassion's

[1] Henceforth, I use the term 'focal actor' to refer to the individual engaging in self-compassion and the term 'observer' to refer to the individual witnessing the focal actor's self-compassion.

conceptualizations, conceptual distinctiveness, antecedents and consequences, and conclude with future research directions. Next, in Chapter 2, I create a conceptual framework that delineates the process of witnessing self-compassion and synthesizes the social situations that may influence observer reactions. In Chapter 3, I introduce my model and conduct three studies to empirically test my hypotheses. Finally, in Chapter 4, I discuss the overall findings and implications.

Self- and Other-Compassion

Compassion is divided into two constructs: self-compassion and other-compassion. The two constructs share a similar foundation, but the main difference is the receiver of compassion. Other-compassion is a relational process (Kanov et al., 2004) and consists of six dimensions: kindness versus indifference (expressing caring and concern versus indifference towards the sufferer); common humanity versus separation (seeing oneself as connected to the sufferer versus feeling separated from them); and mindfulness versus disengagement (maintaining a balanced awareness of the situation versus disengaging from the person's suffering) (Pommier et al., 2020). The literature on other-compassion suggests that the construct is beneficial for both the giver and receiver. For example, Goetz et al. (2010) argue that other-compassion consists of a prosocial function that motivates helping behavior and Wee & Fehr (2021) demonstrate that team-compassion behavior replenishes employee resources during challenging times. In addition, being compassionate towards others is related to a "do good-feel good" process (Glomb et al., 2011) and this gratifying experience, commonly referred to as compassion satisfaction, reduces compassion fatigue (Stamm, 2002).

Self-compassion refers to the process of noticing one's suffering, feeling empathetic concern towards oneself, and expressing kindness towards oneself to alleviate the suffering (Dodson & Heng, 2022). Self-compassion consists of six similar dimensions: self-kindness versus self-judgment (expressing kindness and care to the self versus being overly harsh or critical), common humanity versus isolation (viewing one's suffering as a part of the human experience versus feeling isolated and alone in the suffering), and mindfulness versus overidentification (maintaining a balanced awareness with the situation rather than overidentifying with negative thoughts and feelings) (Neff, 2003a). The first dimension (self-kindness/kindness) is thought to be the most behaviorally-based (Dodson & Heng, 2022), and the other dimensions (common humanity and mindfulness) may be considered more cognition-based. The literature at large reflects that self-compassion is largely beneficial for the self. For example, self-compassion helps buffer against anxiety (Neff et al., 2007a), emotional exhaustion (Anjum et al., 2020; Reizer, 2019), stress-type changes in the body (Breines et al., 2015) and negative reactions to guilty eating (tendency to feel guilty after overeating; Adams & Leary, 2007). The mechanisms for these associations have not been explored. Because the work on self-compassion predominately focuses on how it impacts the individual, it has led many to assume that it is a highly individualized and internalized experience that cannot be observed (Neff, 2003a).

However, preliminary work demonstrates that self-compassion is more observable than initially thought. For instance, Neff and Beretvas (2013) find that intimate partners can easily observe the self-compassionate behaviors of their partners. For example,

partners may witness verbalizing common humanity ("Oh well, I'm only human", p. 81), taking needed breaks, or handling stressful situations with composure as self-compassionate behaviors. Neff et al. (2007a) show a significant relationship between observer ratings of self-compassion and self-ratings of self-compassion. Chau and colleagues (2022) argue that individuals may verbalize their self-compassion and found that "untrained observers can reliably discern variation in self-compassion" (p. 1012). Finally, Dodson and Heng (2022) suggest in their review that self-compassion is a visible behavior that can take many forms, such as "physical (e.g., yoga, exercise), social (e.g., talking with coworkers), and mental (e.g., writing, meditation) activities" (p. 14). Taken together, the existing research implies that self-compassion can be observable, thus it is important to recognize self-compassion's full impact, which includes those who witness displayed self-compassion. As such, this is a core focus of my dissertation. Below, I further elaborate on the need for additional research in this area.

Understanding how self-compassion is observed by others is important for two reasons. First, because of the plethora of benefits for the individual, most research encourages employees to practice self-compassion at work (Neff, 2003a; Reizer, 2019). Yet, we know very little about how other employees may perceive this behavior. Thus, there may be unacknowledged outcomes, and some may be undesirable if self-compassion elicits negative reactions in observers. By shifting the lens from the individual to the observer, we can get a more complete picture of the implications of displaying self-compassion at work. Second, extant literature treats self-compassion as a hidden, internalized, intra-individual experience. I challenge this widely held assumption

and argue that self-compassion may be more multifaceted than originally thought. Aside from the hidden and cognitive portion of self-compassion, I argue that there might also be a visible and observable component that can be noticed by others, making it a social phenomenon.

Before delving into my conceptual model where I elaborate on a novel framework for understanding employee reactions to witnessing their colleagues engage in self-compassion, I first review extant conceptualizations of self-compassion, conceptual distinctiveness from similar constructs, provide an overview of relevant antecedents and consequences, and conclude with future research directions.

Conceptualizations of Self-Compassion

As work on self-compassion has proliferated, researchers have conceptualized this construct in three primary ways: as a trait, a state, and a process. Most scholars adopt the view of self-compassion as a trait (Neff, 2003b). However, studies have shown that self-compassion can be induced (Leary et al., 2007), and some scholars have argued that it can be an unfolding process that comprises different stages (Dodson & Heng, 2022). While the various conceptualizations can offer rich insight into the different angles of self-compassion, these assorted views have muddied the literature to understanding the broader message of how self-compassion is conceptualizaed and operationalized. Some studies claim they are testing state self-compassion, yet use the trait self-compassion scale (Breines & Chen, 2012; see Neff et al., 2021). Relevant to my specific research question, my goal is to review the different conceptualizations of self-compassion,

explain why my study fits within the process-based view, and then utilize the definition and foundation of compassion to provide an overview of antecedents and consequences.

Trait Self-Compassion

In her seminal piece, Neff (2003a) defined self-compassion as an individual's tendency to be "touched by and open to one's own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one's own suffering and to heal oneself with kindness" (p. 87). One of the most widely used measures is the 26-item self-compassion scale (SCS; Neff, 2003b), which contains three positive components (self-kindness, common humanity, mindfulness) and three negative components (self-judgement, isolation, over-identification). Scholars view the positive components as compassionate responding and the negative components as uncompassionate responding (Neff et al., 2018). Depending on the researcher's primary interest, they can either use the total score of the SCS (negative components reverse-scored) or focus on individual subcomponents. A short form of the SCS is also a common measure for those that use the total score (Raes et al., 2011).

The work on trait self-compassion has consistently shown that it is beneficial for the individual and buffers against negative experiences. For example, trait self-compassion is positively correlated with happiness, optimism, and positive affect (Neff et al., 2007b) and highly correlated with but distinct from self-esteem (Neff & Vonk, 2009). Individuals that score high in the trait SCS are motivated to correct their mistakes (Baker & McNulty, 2011). Further, studies have found that trait self-compassion serves as a robust resource and protective agent. For instance, trait self-compassion is associated

with decreased anxiety (Neff et al., 2007a), decreased emotional exhaustion (Anjum et al., 2020; Reizer, 2019) and reduced impact of stress-type changes in the body (Breines et al., 2015). Once coined a “cognitive immunization strategy” (Raes, 2010, p. 761), trait self-compassion has proven to not only protect against ‘the bad,’ but also enhance ‘the good.’ Meta-analytic work shows a negative relationship between self-compassion and psychopathology (r = -.54; MacBeth & Gumley, 2012) and a positive relationship between self-compassion and well-being (r = .47; Zessin et al., 2015). However, one limitation of these metas is that they focus on students, theraprists, and clinical samples, and it is still less certain how these relationships play out amongst employees in organizations.

Further, although the trait SCS has been used for two decades, there has been lively discussion regarding its consistency and validity that warrant mention. First, there have been debates on whether the studies in the area of uncompassionate responding commit the “jangle fallacy” – which is when existing constructs have different labels (Neff et al., 2018; Pfattheicher et al., 2017) – and if the positive and negative aspects should be separate constructs (Dodson & Heng, 2022). Second, some critics argue that the scale does not display psychometric validity nor is it theoretically coherent (Costa et al., 2016; Muris, 2016). Yet, in response to this criticism, scholars have demonstrated the validity of the scale (Neff, 2016) and that the six elements are distinct, yet mutually engender or enhance one another (Dreisoerner et al., 2021; Neff, 2003a). Some scholars have failed to replicate consistent results on the proposed factor structure, prompting researchers to operationalize self-compassion in other ways beyond the trait-view

(Dodson & Heng, 2022). Specifically, Dodson and Heng (2022) argue that self-compassion should align with the work on other-compassion, given its close resemblance, and be viewed as a process (to be discussed below).

State Self-Compassion

Aside from the considerable portion of work that examines trait self-compassion, other research suggests that self-compassion may be more malleable than initially thought. This could mean that self-compassion is a skill that individuals learn. For example, Neff and Germer (2013) show that self-compassion is a teachable skill through their 8-week Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) intervention. Across two studies, they illustrate that self-compassion significantly increases within-individual and that this increase is significantly larger compared to the control group. Further, these gains lasted in six-month and one-year follow-ups. Biological research shows that these interventions are effective because it can open new neurological pathways for different ways to treat the self (Gilbert & Irons, 2005). Another popular intervention, the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR; Barnard & Curry, 2011) involves two-hour weekly sessions of sitting meditation, body scan, Hatha yoga, and breathing exercises for eight weeks total (Shapiro et al., 2005). This intervention has been shown to increase mindfulness and self-compassion in individuals (Barnard & Curry, 2011). In sum, interventions are not only important for increasing an individual's self-compassion, but also because they have demonstrated significant effects on depression, anxiety, stress, negative affect, life satisfaction, positive affect, eating behaviors, mindfulness, rumination effects, and self-

criticism (see meta-analysis, Ferrari et al., 2019). This body of work demonstrates that self-compassion is a skill that can be learned, and thus can be regarded as a state.

Scholars have explored the state-like properties of self-compassion through the induction of a 'self-compassionate mindset'. One of the first experimental studies to examine state self-compassion was conducted by Leary et al. (2007). Broadly, they investigated cognitive and emotional reactions for self-compassionate people dealing with unpleasant life events. The authors manipulated suffering, which is the context in which self-compassion is most relevant, in various ways across five studies (participants reported the worst thing that happened to them during that week that was their fault; participants read hypothetical scenarios that involved failure, loss, or humiliation; participants recorded themselves doing an embarrassing task on video and then had to watch the recording; participants were induced to think about a negative event that made them feel badly about themselves). While each study primed the participant with a negative event, self-compassion was experimentally induced only in Study 5 (it was not manipulated in Studies 1-4). Specifically, participants were asked to think about the negative event in a self-compassionate manner and respond to ways in which they could implement self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness to the situation. Results showed that participants in the self-compassion condition acknowledged their role and responsibility in the negative event and experienced lower negative emotions in comparison to non-self-compassion conditions. The authors also collected participants trait self-compassion score at an earlier time and illustrated that the self-compassion induction was effective for individuals that scored low in trait self-compassion. In sum,

Leary et al.'s (2007) Study 5 is one of the first studies to "determine whether a self-compassionate perspective could be experimentally induced" (p. 899).

Other studies followed Leary et al. (2007) by inducing state self-compassion. For example, Adams and Leary (2007) induced self-compassion among restrictive and unhealthy eaters by providing a prompt that encourages participants to be kind to the self, realize that everyone can eat in an unhealthy manner sometimes, and be mindful of how they are treating themselves. They found that self-compassion helps buffer against negative reactions to guilty eating. Breines and Chen (2012) induced self-compassion by adapting Leary et al.'s (2007, Study 5) manipulation and found that people experiencing state self-compassion will acknowledge their mistakes and even work to correct them for personal improvement. Finally, Zhang and Chen (2016) also adapted Leary et al.'s (2007) self-compassion prompt in Study 3 when asking individuals to think about their biggest regret. Next, they reported their state self-compassion, which was adapted from Neff's (2003b) SCS. Results showed that individuals reported greater personal improvement after reflecting on their greatest regret through heightened acceptance of the situation.

Researchers have also induced a self-compassionate mindset in the organizational context. For instance, Lanaj et al. (2022) draw from leader identity theory and developed an intervention to induce self-compassion in leaders. Leaders were asked to "recall a time in which you were understanding and patient toward yourself when experiencing challenges at work because of your role as a leader" (p. 1547-1548). Their results showed that activating a self-compassionate mindset in leaders was positively related to helping others at work, and that these leaders were perceived as more competent and civil by

stakeholders. Additionally, Jennings et al. (2023) use integrated self-control theory and induced a work self-compassionate mindset by asking participants to recall a time they expressed self-compassion during a difficult situation they encountered at work. Their findings illustrate that employees with a work self-compassionate mindset were more resilient and engaged because they had more energy and higher self-esteem, which consequently led to higher performance and well-being.

Most scholars that assess self-compassion as a state or mindset adapt prompts or scales that are based off Neff's (2003b) trait SCS. This has been criticized because "researchers have not presented psychometric evidence for the validity of these measures beyond calculating reliability" (Neff, 2021, p. 123). As such, two state self-compassion measures were recently validated: a long form state self-compassion scale that includes the six subcomponents, and a short form state self-compassion scale that measures global state self-compassion (Neff, 2021). These scales will most likely serve as the basis for future research studies on state self-compassion.

Self-Compassion as a Process

Finally, recent studies have conceptualized self-compassion as a dynamic process, which is in line with the conceptualization of other-compassion (Dodson & Heng, 2022; Kanov et al., 2004). Kanov et al. (2004) conceptualized other-compassion as a three-stage process model consisting of noticing suffering, feeling empathetic concern, and acting to alleviate suffering. Dodson and Heng (2022) conceptualize self-compassion in line with this compassion model, which they argue is important since they share foundational similarities. In their recent review, Dodson and Heng (2022, p. 184) propose

a dynamic and processual view of self-compassion that “begins with mindful awareness of personal suffering (noticing), followed by appreciating and empathizing with one's own pain (feeling) which culminates in a response to alleviate it (acting).” This unfolding process integrates cognitive (noticing), affective (feeling), and behavioral (acting) portions.

Given the recency of this conceptualization, there are few studies that study self-compassion as a process. Additionally, some extant work claims to study a process-based view of self-compassion, yet its operationalization is not as clearly distinguishable from trait and other self-compassion work. For example, Dodson and Heng (2022) note that Schabram and Heng (2022) adopt a process-based view. However, in Study 1, Schabram and Heng (2022) implement a longitudinal study where they ask participants “to what extent do you engage in the following behaviors” for the self-kindness subscale from Neff’s (2003b) trait SCS. In doing so, it appears they examine an individual’s trait self-compassion, rather than a process. In Study 2, they implement an experiential sampling methodology and direct participants to engage in a self-kindness behavior. This latter study focuses on the students’ suffering experiences and prompts them to practice the acting/self-kindness stage, which is more in line with the process-based view because it examines discrete stages in the compassion model (i.e., noticing suffering, acting to alleviate suffering). Overall, work within the realm of the process view of self-compassion is still in its early stages, and more research is needed to demonstrate how it differentiates from existing conceptualizations and what nuanced research questions can be explored with this new approach.

The state and process views are not vastly different from the original construct itself, as they both are based on the foundations and components from the original trait SCS. For instance, the items on the state SCS are similar to the trait SCS, with the exception of the question stem (e.g., "how I feel *right* now" for the state SCS; Neff et al., 2021). Similarly, the process approach is based on the three components of Neff's (2003) conceptualization of self-compassion (e.g., noticing – mindfulness, feeling – common humanity, acting – self-kindness). The conceptualizations thus largely overlap, and ultimately self-compassion's manifestation will largely be determined by the focus and theory of the study at hand. The state and process views offer support that there are additional ways to conceptualize self-compassion, and that it is not solely a trait phenomenon. My dissertation answers recent calls to extend our knowledge on the process view (Dodson & Heng, 2022) by exploring how the behavioral component of self-compassion (visible self-compassion – which manifests as the noticing portion to observers) impacts observer reactions (the feeling and acting subprocesses).

In sum, scholars have conceptualized and operationalized self-compassion as a trait, state, and process. The process approach is more comprehensive in that it encompasses multiple dimensions within an individual (e.g., cognition, affect, behavior) and serves as a suitable conceptualization for my research model. As such, I draw from the compassion model (noticing, feeling, acting; Dodson & Heng, 2022; Kanov et al., 2004), which conceptualizes self-compassion as a process, to make predictions about observer reactions to witnessing self-compassion. In doing so, I build on the current framework by incorporating the observer's perspective. Specifically, my research

question examines the stages of the compassion model from the observer's standpoint: the observer *noticing* the self-compassion practice, the observer's *feelings* about the self-compassion practice, and the observer's *action* in response to witnessing self-compassion. Given that I am examining visible self-compassion, I treat self-compassion as a behavior by focusing on its behavioral component (self-kindness) and explore this through the lens of the compassion model to understand how this process unravels for the observer. I focus on self-kindness as opposed to self-compassion's other components (e.g., common humanity and mindfulness) because the former is thought to be more behavioral based – that is, more visible to others – and the latter are more cognitive-based and invisible.

Conceptual Distinctiveness from Similar Constructs

Self-compassion is most relevant during instances of failure or suffering (Neff, 2003a). But, being kind to one's self in response to suffering may be viewed as soft, weak, or selfish (Robinson et al., 2016) and can be thought of as individuals letting themselves avoid accountability. These assumptions have prompted discussion on what self-compassion is and is not. In this section, I will discuss the existing literature on self-compassion's conceptual distinctiveness with three concepts that have been a common focus point in the literature (Dodson & Heng, 2022; Neff, 2003a; 2003b; Neff & Vonk, 2009): self-esteem, self-pity, and self-forgiven,ess.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to evaluations individuals make about their self-worth (Rosenberg, 1979). People high in self-esteem have positive self-evaluations and

experience greater happiness (Baumeister et al., 2003). Generally, individuals with high self-esteem excel on many levels, including facing failures with an optimistic and opportunistic mindset (Dodgson & Wood, 1998). However, research suggests that high levels of self-esteem are related to narcissism or self-absorption (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Twenge & Foster, 2010). Additionally, scholars argue that "the pursuit of high self-esteem is often associated with inflated and inaccurate self-concepts, making self-improvement difficult" (Neff & Knox, 2016, p. 3). Self-compassion was introduced in the literature as an alternative to a "healthy self-attitude," specifically one that does not entail the potential dark sides of high self-esteem (Neff, 2003a, p. 86; Neff, 2011). Neff argues that self-compassion is different from self-esteem because it reflects a non-judgmental way of dealing with suffering and does not entail a self-evaluation process.

Both self-esteem and self-compassion deal with positive emotions toward the self, which has impelled scholarly conversation regarding their distinctiveness. Empirical work suggests that the trait constructs are indeed distinct. For example, Neff (2003b) found that self-esteem and self-compassion are positively correlated ($r = .59$), but self-compassion was not significantly related to narcissism while self-esteem was significantly related to narcissism ($r = .29$). Further, Neff (2003b) found that self-compassion explained unique variance in depression and anxiety beyond self-esteem. Leary et al. (2007) showed throughout a series of studies that self-compassion, in comparison to self-esteem, was related to fewer negative emotions during difficult situations. Participants in the self-compassion condition also took more responsibility and acknowledged their role in their negative situation compared to the self-esteem condition.

It appears that one difference between self-esteem and self-compassion can be found in how individuals respond to negativity or failure.

Finally, Neff and Vonk (2009) teased out the differences between the constructs in a large correlational study (N = 2,187). They found a significant correlation between the self-compassion and global self-esteem scales ($r = .68$). However, they also found that self-esteem, but not self-compassion, was related to narcissism and that self-compassion had a stronger negative association with a host of negative cognitive and emotional outcomes (e.g., social comparison, self-consciousness, self-rumination, anger, need for cognitive closure). The authors conclude that "self-compassion is linked to many of the benefits typically attributed to high self-esteem…while also providing stronger protection against the ego-defensive drawbacks sometimes associated with the pursuit and maintenance of high self-esteem" (p. 44).

Self-pity

Self-compassion has been described as the "antithesis" of self-pity (Neff & Knox, 2016). Self-pity occurs when feelings of sorrow arise during instances of pain (Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001). Typically, individuals that feel self-pity immerse themselves in sorrow and forget that others also experience pain and failure. As noted by Barnard and Curry (2011), self-pity theoretically contrasts with some of self-compassion's subcomponents. For instance, individuals who self-pity tend to overidentify with negative thoughts and feelings and experience a lower degree of common humanity. In contrast, individuals high in self-compassion hold their suffering with a balanced and mindful approach and realize they are not the only ones who fail or suffer. Self-compassion is

thought to break the self-absorption process that self-pitying individuals may experience (Neff, 2003). To my knowledge, there is not empirical work that examines the relationship between these concepts, but strong theoretical grounds suggest they are in fact distinct, and that self-pity may be more closely linked with the negative components of self-compassion, such as overidentification (Dodson & Heng, 2022). Essentially, self-compassion appears to be a broader concept than self-pity.

Self-forgiveness

Self-forgiveness is defined as "a set of motivational changes whereby one becomes decreasingly motivated to avoid stimuli associated with the offense, decreasingly motivated to retaliate against the self…and increasingly motivated to act benevolently toward the self" (Hall & Fincham, 2005, p. 622). Self-compassion and self-forgiveness overlap in some ways. For instance, Neff (2003a) states that "feeling compassion for oneself is similar to forgiveness for oneself" (p. 87). Both self-compassion and self-forgiveness relate to similar health outcomes and personality factors, such as positive mental health, extraversion, and neuroticism (Neff et al., 2007b; Ross et al., 2004; Toussaint & Webb, 2004). Additionally, self-compassion and self-forgiveness are significantly and positively correlated (r = .64; Conway-Williams, 2015).

However, research has shown that while these constructs overlap in some ways, they are conceptually different. In their review, Dodson and Heng (2022) clarify the difference between self-compassion and self-forgiveness. They note one main difference is that self-forgiveness is pinned to a specific transgression, while self-compassion can broadly apply to an individual's suffering experience, which does not necessarily have to

be an individual’s wrongdoing. While the two constructs are highly correlated (r = .64, p < .001), Williams (2015) argues that self-compassion preceded self-forgiveness and that self-compassion was related to greater self-forgiveness due to decreased shame. Further, Williams (2015) notes that “self-forgiveness occurs in the face of an offense, while self-compassion is relevant during any period of struggle” (p. 86).

In conclusion, scholars have studied how self-compassion is similar to, yet distinct from each, of these constructs. Self-compassion is similar to self-esteem in that they both focus on self-focused positive emotions, yet self-compassion does not possess the grandiose or negative qualities associated with self-esteem. Further, self-pity more closely relates to the negative subcomponents of self-compassion rather than the positive subcomponents. Finally, self-forgiveness is one specific way that an individual can express self-compassion, however it may not always be applicable for the individual’s broader suffering experience.

Antecedents and Consequences of Self-Compassion

In their recent review, Dodson and Heng (2022) conducted a thorough investigation of the key antecedents and consequences of self-compassion. The authors created two categories for antecedents (individual and contextual) and two categories for consequences (intrapersonal and interpersonal) of self-compassion (see Table 1 for a summary of their review). In the section below, I will summarize their categories in Table 1 and offer a few comments and critiques that provide impetus for several facets of my propsed research model. Then, I will discuss recent work not included in their review that updates existing knowledge on the antecedents and consequences of self-compassion.

Table 1 illustrates the general direction (i.e., positive or negative) of self-compassion's relationships with the reported antecedent and consequence variables, excluding relationships that may not have a clear general direction (which I discuss in more detail below).

Antecedents of Self-Compassion

Dodson and Heng (2022) categorize the antecedents of self-compassion into individual factors (dispositional characteristics – *personality traits, emotional intelligence, attachment styles* – and demographics – *age, work experience, gender, cultural upbringing*) and contextual factors (organizational support – supportive coworkers, supervisors, and organizational culture – and workload). I will make comments on a few of the antecedent variables, as opposed to repeating the findings of Dodson and Heng (2022), which can be found in Table 1. First, regarding gender as an antecedent variable, Dodson and Heng (2022) cite Yarnell et al.'s (2015) meta-analysis to suggest that males tend to have higher levels of self-compassion than females. However, it is important to note that this effect size was small (d = .18; Cohen, 1992), and Yarnell et al. (2015) state that "interpretations indicate that though males report higher self-compassion than females, there is a great deal of similarity in their responses" (p. 507). Additionally, several studies have found no significant differences in gender (Lanaj et al., 2022; Neff & McGehee, 2010; Neff & Pommier, 2013; Neff et al., 2007b; Sun et al., 2016). Thus, it is still unclear if there are significant differences in gender on self-compassion and I caution against making confident claims on this relationship. Further, there is not much work on the relationship between culture and self-compassion, but

Dodson and Heng (2022) note that the scant work that does exist suggests that cultural upbringing is positively related to the likelihood of practicing self-compassion and the perceived usefulness of it at work. More research is needed in this area.

Consequences of Self-Compassion

There are several categories under the consequences of self-compassion: intrapersonal factors (mental and physical health – *depressive symptoms, negative thoughts, psychological well-being, burnout, physical health, sleep quality, health behavior change, stress, chronic mental and physical fatigue* – resilience – *emotional resilience, resilience, improved resilience* – job satisfaction – and job performance – *job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, turnover intentions, job engagement, in-group functioning*) and interpersonal factors (compassion fatigue – *compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction* – and relationships – *compromise and helping behavior, coworker and supervisor relationships, compassion for others, leader effectiveness ratings*). To avoid repeating the results in the review, I will highlight the relationships that are unclear and warrant further discussion. Dodson and Heng (2022) note that there are inconsistent results for the relationship between self-compassion and job satisfaction. Their primary studies found both positive and non-significant relationships between self-compassion and job satisfaction. However, I want to note that the studies that found no relationship between self-compassion and job satisfaction were among healthcare workers, whereas the studies that found a positive relationship were among workers in various industries. Ultimately, this could suggest that the consequences of practicing self-compassion may vary according to industry or workplace norms. More research is needed

to determine the extent and under what circumstances self-compassion is related to job satisfaction.

Second, there are few studies that examine the relationship between self-compassion and compassion fatigue (a form of burnout that results from continuously caring for others; Figley, 1995) and compassion satisfaction (the satisfaction derived from expressing care and kindness towards others; Stamm, 2002). Most of these existing studies in Dodson and Heng's (2022) review assess participants in care-related roles. Thus, it is unclear how self-compassion may relate to compassion fatigue and satisfaction outside a position that revolves around caring for others. Given that self-compassion serves as a protective agent against negative experiences (Schabram & Heng, 2022), it is possible that self-compassion would be negatively related to compassion fatigue. More work is needed before scholars can confidently argue the directionality of these consequences of self-compassion. Finally, future work needs to investigate how compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue are different from other forms of replenishment or depletion, particularly in the social support literature.

Updates to Dodson and Heng (2022) Review

There are a few noteworthy studies that have been published since this review that warrant discussion. First, Lanaj et al. (2022) explore self-compassion from a leadership perspective. These authors are one of the first to explore leader self-compassion. Drawing from leader identity theory (DeRue & Ashford, 2010), the authors illustrate in study one that leader self-compassion relates to subsequent leader behaviors (helping with personal issues and helping with task-related issues) and stakeholder perceptions (leader

competence and leader civility). Lanaj et al. (2022) are the first to explore observer's reactions to leader self-compassion. However, the perceptions in their study were a downstream outcome of leader self-compassion, as mediated by the leader's engagement in helping behaviors. Therefore, I build on their work and add to the self-compassion literature by investigating reactions directly in response to a colleague's self-compassion and, in doing so, gain a better understanding of the immediate outcomes associated with this observation.

Jennings et al. (2023) also explore additional consequences of self-compassion. Drawing from integrated self-control theory (Kotabe & Hofmann, 2015) and self-compassion theory, they propose that a work self-compassionate mindset predicts greater performance (goal progress) and well-being (meaning in life) via resource capacity (work self-esteem and depletion) and motivation (work engagement and resilience). In their experimental experience sampling study, they found that participants in the induced work self-compassionate mindset condition experienced lower depletion and higher work self-esteem, which led to greater work engagement and resilience, thus leading to enhanced goal progress and meaning in life. The findings of this study speak to the benefits of self-compassion at work for the *practicing* employee, which is in line with the majority of literature that investigates the benefits of self-compassion for the practicing individual.

Next, Heng and Fehr (2022) drew from attribution theory and explored the affective and cognitive pathways that explain the relationship between self-compassion and future helping after an individual fails to help someone. In four studies exploring these dual pathways, they find that while self-compassion reduces future helping via

decreased feelings of guilt, it also increases future helping via increased helping self-efficacy. In other words, self-compassion assuages feelings of guilt when an individual fails to help someone (resulting in less pressure to engage in future helping) while simultaneously enhancing the individual's beliefs about their capability to help (resulting in increased future helping behavior). This study provides a more nuanced view of the relationship between self-compassion and helping behaviors and offers valuable insight on the consequences of self-compassion.

Finally, Andel et al. (2021) conducted a multilevel study among employees to explore the moderating role of self-compassion in the relationship between COVID-19 work stressors and well-being and helping behavior via work loneliness. Although this study did not focus on the antecedents or consequences of self-compassion, the study's findings shed more light on the relationship between self-compassion and helping behavior, which Dodson and Heng (2022) find is a consequence of self-compassion. Andel et al. (2021) draw from the need for belonging and investigated the relationship between COVID-19 related work stressors and well-being (depression) and helping behavior via work loneliness. Self-compassion moderated the relationship between work loneliness and the outcomes, such that higher levels of self-compassion weakened the relationship between work loneliness and depression. Interestingly, the authors also found that higher levels of self-compassion strengthened the negative relationship between work loneliness and helping behavior. This latter finding contradicts with Dodson and Heng (2022)'s review that states self-compassion is positively related to helping behavior. Andel et al. (2021) rationalize their finding by stating that "individuals higher

on self-kindness may therefore be more likely to give themselves 'grace' to refrain from helping behaviors when their resources are low" (p. 283). They also speculate that these individuals may have experienced citizenship fatigue. As a result, more work needs to address the nuances of the relationship between self-compassion and helping behavior and discuss how it differs from constructs such as citizenship fatigue.

Overall, Dodson and Heng's (2022) review outlined the antecedents and consequences of self-compassion. Combined with the most recent research on self-compassion, it appears there are fewer studies that investigate the antecedents, compared to the consequences, of self-compassion. To a large degree, this could be explained by the initial focus on trait self-compassion in the literature – as there are few predictors of traits beyond genetics and early experiences/development. Thus, more research is needed on this topic.

Future Directions in Self-Compassion Research

There has been much scholarly work in the compassion space, albeit in various disciplines outside of organizational scholarship. We know about the foundational aspects of self-compassion, but finer-grained analyses of why, when, and for whom is self-compassion beneficial – especially in a challenge-ridden environment such as the workplace – is needed. In this section, I identify and elaborate on the current gaps in the self-compassion literature and provide future research directions.

The literature thus far demonstrates that self-compassion is a beneficial practice for the individual. Yet, questions remain about the potential for negative outcomes as well. For instance, in related literature on mindfulness, Glomb et al. (2011) note that

being mindful – where individuals may slow down or pause – may not always be desirable or in line with an organization's goals. Given that mindfulness is a component of self-compassion (Neff, 2003a), this could suggest that there may be downsides to practicing self-compassion at work. For instance, some have found that practicing self-compassion means taking an emotional break (Allen & Leary, 2010) or "giv[ing] themselves grace…when their resources are low" (Andel et al., 2021, p. 8). Thus, this may mean that an employee decides to attend to emotional needs and leave work early or take a break, which may not contribute to the achievement of the organization's goals. In line with the concerns of Glomb et al. (2011), while beneficial for the individual, the downstream consequences of self-compassion (i.e., withdrawal-like behaviors) may hinder progress on work productivity.

Further, another potential drawback to practicing self-compassion in the workplace is that it may be perceived poorly by others. For instance, if practicing self-compassion by leaving work early or taking an emotional break means increasing the workload or stress for a fellow coworker, then the fellow coworker may have negative reactions to the sufferer's self-compassion. Further, employees who work in an organization – in which long work hours and high levels of burnout are normal – may view practicing self-compassion as equivalent to having a weak work ethic or lacking commitment (George et al., 2023). This perception could increase the likelihood of observers engaging in negative interpersonal behaviors (i.e., avoidance, incivility, gossiping) towards self-compassion expressers for violating workplace norms. Moreover, researchers suggest that feelings of envy or resentment may arise for individuals that do

not practice self-compassion (Simpson et al., 2014). As such, these perceptions can negatively impact relationships between employees. Based on this anecdotal evidence, it is would seem that self-compassion is not a widely accepted social norm in the workplace, thus creating potential complications on how it is perceived by others or relates to organizational outcomes. Given that researchers encourage the practice and benefits of self-compassion in the workplace for the individual employee, future research should explore ways organizations can overcome such barriers to practicing self-compassion in the workplace (so that it does not hinder performance or negatively impact employee relationships).

From a methodological standpoint, a large portion of self-compassion work is cross-sectional and correlational (Anjum et al., 2020; Daltry et al., 2018; Dev et al., 2018; Lopez et al., 2017; Neff & Pommier, 2013; Neff et al., 2007b; Raes, 2010) and consists of undergraduate (Adams & Leary, 2007; Daltry et al., 2018; Leary et al., 2007; Lindsay & Creswell, 2014; Melwani et al., 2012; Neff et al.,2005; Neff et al., 2007a; Neff et al., 2007b; Raes, 2010) or adolescent samples (Neff & McGehee, 2010; Yang et al., 2021). Cross-sectional studies capture a single point in time and are problematic because they raise concerns for causality. Further, correlational studies represent the association between two variables, rather than predicting the independent variable on the dependent variable. Therefore, a weaker argument exists for causality, and it is unknown whether the effects in these studies linger. Moreover, adolescent, undergraduate, and adult samples arguably experience vastly different social settings (Ford, 2016; George et al., 2023). Therefore, it is difficult to generalize the findings from an adolescent sample to

adult or undergraduate samples, and vice versa. Further, if researchers make claims about the benefits of self-compassion in the workplace, then it is important to sample working participants (rather than non-working participants). Future work needs to conduct more advanced studies, such as longitudinal, daily diary, or social network studies, and sample a wider range of personnel, such as employees to have a complete and accurate picture of self-compassion in organizations.

Additionally, most of the existing work examines self-compassion from the individual's perspective. This is not unusual as initial work conceptualized self-compassion as highly internal and individualized (Neff, 2003a). However, recent studies have suggested that self-compassion can be witnessed. Further, we do not know how self-compassion is regarded by others. Some work on other-compassion suggests that observing compassionate acts can impact others. For instance, scholars suggest that witnessing compassionate acts is contagious and inspirational and creates "positive spirals", which provide individuals with more resources to help others (Dutton et al., 2007). Therefore, it is important to ask if witnessing self-compassion, a similar yet distinct construct from other-compassion, impacts observers and, if so, how, which is a major goal of my dissertation research.

Finally, the current theoretical explanations are insufficient to explain how self-compassion is regarded by others. While the self-compassion literature lacks strong theoretical grounding *in general*, the focus of existing theory explains self-compassion at the intrapersonal level. For example, Schabram and Heng (2022) use COR theory to explain self-compassion's power on replenishing an individual's own burnout experience.

Lanaj et al. (2022) use leader identity theory to explain how a self-compassionate mindset allows the individual to identify with their leader role, which in turn, leads to improved outcomes. Jennings et al., (2023) draw from integrated self-control theory and "theory on self-compassion" to illustrate how a work-related self-compassionate mindset improves performance and well-being via an individual's resource capacity and motivation. In sum, many of these theoretical lenses are used to investigate self-compassion as an intra-individual experience, and none to my knowledge explain the interpersonal experience, such as the emotions, judgments, and behaviors *of others* who associate with someone who practices self-compassion.

As such, I draw from affective events theory (AET; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) to overcome this theoretical gap and address the interpersonal effects of observing self-compassion. AET acknowledges that observable events can have affective consequences in the workplace and offers theoretical guidance concerning the nature of these varying emotional responses and observers' subsequent reactions. Accordingly, I argue that self-compassion expression in the workplace is an affective event that triggers positive and negative reactions in observers. In exploring potentially divergent responses to expressed workplace self-compassion, I provide theoretical expansion to a literature that is largely atheoretical (see Dodson & Heng, 2022 for a review). Further, this work will enhance our understanding of self-compassion at the interpersonal level, which is noteworthy because – as noted by Rodell and Lynch (2016) on the importance of observing positive behaviors (volunteerism) – "understanding the consequences of [positive behaviors] in the

workplace involves more than just the resulting attitudes and behaviors of the [focal actor] – it should also consider the opinions and reactions of others" (p. 628).

The literature on self-compassion has substantially progressed since its conceptualization in 2003, yet there are still several areas that need to be explored to better understand the nuances of its power and possible limitations. In this dissertation, I focus on the effects of witnessing self-compassion in the workplace. In doing so, I make several contributions. First, I extend the literature by shifting the focus of attention from the focal actor to the observer. The majority of work has solely investigated self-compassion's influence on the actor, and no work to my knowledge explores how this practice may influence others' attitudes and behaviors. Further, I present a model that showcases the implications of self-compassion at work. Specifically, I contend that observers can have positive or negative emotional reactions, which, in turn, effect their perception of and behavior toward the person who displayed self-compassion. Third, I provide theoretical expansion to the literature that adopts the view of self-compassion as a social phenomenon and theorizes about the consequences of observing this behavior at work. Before discussing my theoretical model, I create an overarching framework that draws from AET and incorporates the stages of the compassion model (Dutton et al., 2014) to delineate the process of observer reactions in response to self-compassion expression.

CHAPTER TWO

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR OBSERVING VISIBLE SELF-COMPASSION

In this chapter, I create a conceptual framework that integrates AET with the stages of the compassion model (noticing, feeling, acting; Dodson & Heng, 2022) and prior compassion research (Dutton et al., 2014) to investigate how this process unfolds in light of contextual factors. In doing so, I provide high-level insight into how noticing this self-serving behavior elicits reactions among employees in the workplace. This framework provides the broader foundation for my theoretical model which tests specific reactions (emotions, judgment, and behavior) to witnessing displayed self-compassion at work as well as examines the moderating influence of workplace norms (i..e, a contextual factor). Figure 2 depicts my conceptual framework.

Visible Self-Compassion as a Process

I utilize the compassion process model, in conjunction with AET to explicate how emotion-based reactions to observed self-compassion at work are likely to unfold. Specifically, I make predictions about how noticing visible self-compassion influences affective reactions (feeling and acting subprocesses) for the observer. Like Dutton et al. (2014), I recognize that these subprocesses can occur simultaneously, but I treat them as distinct stages for "analytic purposes" (p. 281).

Self-compassion is linked to an individual's affective state (Dodson & Heng, 2022) and has been shown to remedy negative emotional states, such as emotional exhaustion (Schabram & Heng, 2021). Thus, affect and emotions are a critical component to an individual's self-compassion expression and has the potential to produce affective

reactions in those who witness the behavior as well. Emotions, which are affected by workplace events, are a fundamental part of the workplace that drive employees' judgements and decision-making (Ashkanasy et al., 2016), and thus serve an important role in understanding the consequences of practicing this positive behavior at work. The central tenant of AET is the connection between workplace events and emotional reactions. Specifically, workplace events are "proximal causes of affective reactions" (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, p. 11), and scholars have studied these affective reactions as either discrete emotions (e.g., anger, excitement, Rodell & Judge, 2009; Rupp & Spencer, 2006) or the valence of emotions (positive versus negative; Bledow et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2022). Additionally, these emotional reactions have implications for affect-driven outcomes – which have "relatively immediate consequences of being in particular affective states" Weiss & Beal, 2005, p. 5).

Noticing

First, the model begins with the observer noticing the focal actor engage in an act of self-compassion. In line with AET (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), I define witnessing self-compassion as an affective event that influences affective reactions. Affective events, which can include events such as leader expression of positive emotions, daily work hassles and uplifts, and interaction with coworkers (Basch & Fisher, 1998; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Diefendorff et al., 2008), are the proximal events that spur affective reactions in observers (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Basch and Fisher (1998, p. 3-4) define an affective event as "an incident that stimulates appraisal of and emotional reaction to a transitory or ongoing job related agent, object, or occurrence." Similarly, the self-

compassion event stimulates appraisals that produce either positive or negative reactions. For instance, it may be perceived as selfish by others (e.g., taking time away from work to focus on yourself), or it may be viewed as a strength (e.g., standing up for oneself, knowing one's limits; Neff, 2021). Therefore, in this situation, observers are appraising the focal actor's behavior and experiencing emotional reactions in response to this affective event. In summary, I contend that self-compassion expression is an observable and affective event and, consistent with how self-compassion has been defined and operationalized in the literature (for a review, see Dodson & Heng, 2022), define the noticing stage of my model as *the observer noticing visible self-compassion in response to a suffering event*.

Feeling

Second, feeling is the next stage in the compassion model. Typically, scholars posit that individuals feel empathetic concern towards the focal actor experiencing suffering (Dutton et al., 2014). Similarly, in their review, Dodson and Heng (2022) suggest that the feeling stage of self-compassion relates to feelings of common humanity – meaning that "common humanity [or recognizing one's humanness] can facilitate feelings of self-directed empathetic concern" (p. 185). However, it is important to note that empathetic concern is not the only feeling that can arise when one experiences suffering. For instance, Kanov et al. (2004) note that feelings of compassion may vary among individuals, as some may experience concern, indignation, or guilt. Along these lines, I argue that observers' emotional reactions may vary in response to others after witnessing visible self-compassion. Observers may feel a variety of positive or negative

emotions in response to an affective event (Bash & Fisher, 1998), and, consistent with other AET studies (Martinescu et al., 2019; Mohr et al., 2019), I make predictions about the constellation of positive and negative emotional responses. Additionally, I argue that these emotions will be other-directed, which is common amongst studies on observers' emotional reactions (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Martinescu et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2015). As was suggested in the above paragraph, the self-compassion expression represents an affective event that spurs emotional reactions in observers about the focal actor. Self-compassion arguably impacts the focal actor (e.g., aims to improve their current state) more so than the observer. So, given that this behavior is focused on one individual, I argue it is likely that the observer will experience emotions about that individual, the focal actor (e.g., what does this make the observer feel about or for the focal actor?).

I suggest that observers can experience positive or negative affective reactions in response to self-compassion expression. On one hand, AET scholars indicate that, positive events – such as leader expressions of positive emotions – elicit positive emotions – such as happiness and joy – in followers (Cropanzano et al., 2017). In relation to self-compassion, I suspect that observers may feel positively towards the focal actor for being kind to themselves. Specifically, observers may feel good that the focal actor cares for themself, which can subsequently a produce stronger, more resilient and productive employee. On the other hand, anecdotal evidence hints at the possibility that self-compassion may be viewed as selfish or a weakness (Robinson et al., 2016) – especially since self-serving behaviors may be perceived as violating workplace norms if individuals are expected to suppress self-focused behavior. Thus, it would be naïve not to

assume that observing visible self-compassion might trigger negative emotions in observers. Prior work on AET suggests that events that are perceived as negative affective events will elicit negative emotions in others (Cropanzano et al., 2017) because they will threaten to hinder the observer's goals. Because anecdotal evidence suggests the possible downsides of self-compassion, I suspect that observers may feel negative reactions in response to self-compassion expression at work. As such, I create a model that incorporates both possibilities with competing hypotheses (Chapter 3). In conclusion, I define the feeling stage as *the observer's emotional reaction(s) in response to witnessing visible self-compassion.*

Acting

Finally, the compassion model concludes with the acting stage (Dodson & Heng, 2022; Neff, 2003a). The compassion literature acknowledges various outcomes – concrete or abstract (Dutton et al., 2014; Frost et al., 2006) – that fall under the acting stage. Similarly, I argue that outcomes can vary as well for observers. While the compassion model labels this stage as actions, I account for both behavioral and thought-related actions in my model, which is in line with how AET defines affect-driven behaviors ("behaviors, decisions, and judgments that have (relatively) immediate consequences of being in particular affective states"; Weiss & Beal, 2005, p. 5). In doing so, I conduct a richer exploration of observer responses to the focal actor's self-compassion display. Specifically, my model incorporates the acting stage as the observer's judgment and behavior in response to the focal actor's self-compassion expression. I argue that the observer will make *decisions* based on these emotional

reactions regarding their *behavior* (affiliation) with the focal employee and *judgments* about the degree to which they see this focal actor as influential. The nature of the observer's emotional reaction (positive or negative) will influence the nature of their judgment and behavioral reaction (positive or negative) toward the focal actor. Because my model acknowledges the possibility of positive and negative emotional reactions, I also argue that judgment and behavioral reactions can take a positive or negative form. As such, I define the acting stage as *the observer's judgement and behavioral reaction in response to the emotional reaction from witnessing visible self-compassion.*

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided a high-level conceptual framework that draws from AET and incorporates the stages of the compassion model. Specifically, I defined the noticing, feeling, and acting portion of my model for observers and made predictions that were in line with AET regarding the observer's affective reactions. In the next chapter, I discuss my theoretical model, which empirically tests a portion of this conceptual framework.

CHAPTER THREE

CAN I GET A WITNESS? EMPLOYEE REACTIONS TO WITNESSING VISIBLE SELF-COMPASSION AT WORK

In the aftermath of the pandemic, employee stress and suffering are common in the workplace due to various hardships, such as tension from changes in work modality and high levels of burnout (Moss, 2021). One tool that has been recommended by many to mitigate workplace suffering is self-compassion (for review, see Dodson & Heng, 2022). Self-compassion is defined as a tripartite process in which an individual notices their own suffering, feels empathetic concern for oneself, and responds to alleviate or address the suffering (Dodson & Heng, 2022). Research on self-compassion has proliferated in the last decade, which prominently illustrates that it is beneficial for the practicing individual (Adams & Leary, 2007; Anjum et al, 2020; Breines et al., 2015; Neff et al., 2007a; Reizer, 2019). However, scholars have given less attention to the impact of self-compassion expression on other individuals (observers) – largely due to the assumption that self-compassion is a highly internalized and intrapersonal experience, and therefore it may go unnoticed by surrounding individuals. Yet, preliminary work suggests that self-compassion is more observable than previously assumed (Chau et al., 2022; Dodson & Heng, 2022; Neff & Beretvas, 2013; Neff et al., 2007a).

Although scholars have paid scant attention to observers' reactions to self-compassion, some work indicates that people have mixed reactions to witnessing this expression as individuals view the practice in both positive (Dodson & Heng, 2022) and negative ways (Miron et al., 2014; Robinson et al., 2016). Therefore, it is unclear how

others will generally view and respond to employees who practice this behavior. This ambiguity warrants exploration because it may reveal potential risks to practicing this behavior at work or, conversely, showcase its potential benefits for interpersonal dynamics. To investigate these questions, I rely on theory that speaks to the importance of the influential role of emotions in the workplace, and how workplace events shape the emotional states of employees (Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Accordingly, AET posits that affective events elicit appraisals (primary and secondary) that manifest as the observer's emotional reactions (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Specifically, the primary appraisal represents the noticing stage of the compassion model (such that the observer notices this affective event as self-relevant) and the secondary appraisal reflects the feeling stage (such that the sensemaking appraisal of the event drives the emotional reactions). I argue that self-compassion expression can be appraised as self-relevant to the observer because interdependent employees may be attuned to the behaviors their coworker enacts that may impact their own goals. On one hand, given that self-compassion is a self-focused behavior that is not about work, and in fact, may cause the actor to avoid work tasks (Dodson & Heng, 2022), it is likely to be a behavior interdependent observers will find self-relevant and appraise negatively. On the other hand, observers may see this behavior as a sign of excellence that they wish to emulate, or perhaps as a sign that the employee is working on self-improvement, thereby improving their performance – all of which may be appraised as self-relevant and of positive impact to the observer. Given that it is currently unclear the type of emotional reaction the observer may experience, I create a model that investigates both options

(negative and positive emotions about the focal actor, or other-directed emotions) as a potential emotional response to observed self-compassion.

AET posits that these emotional reactions to self-compassion expression will, in turn, trigger subsequent consequences (i.e., judgments, decisions, and behaviors; Weiss & Beal, 2005). Prior work suggests that employees' emotions about others influence the degree to which they desire to associate with them (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Martinescu et al., 2019) as well as the degree to which they view them favorably (e.g., competent, trustworthy; Gooty et al., 2010; Haidt, 2003). Given that self-compassion may attract the attention of interdependent employees based on self-relevant appraisals (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), I investigate how two affect driven outcomes – affiliations and perceptions of leadership potential – are shaped by their emotional reactions. For instance, if self-compassion expression elicits negative emotional reactions in the observer (because they may appraise it to hinder goals for them), then the observer may affiliate less with the focal actor and associate only when needed due to their negative reactions toward them (John & Gross, 2007). Additionally, these negative emotional reactions about the focal actor may make it less likely that the observer views or judges this individual as influential (or a role model that others should look up to). Conversely, if the observer experiences positive emotional reactions (which may be appraised as self-relevant because the focal actor is focused on self-improviement, and ultimately improving work goals), then the observer may have a desire to affiliate more with the focal actor due to their positive emotions toward them. Also, these positive emotions may lead the observer to judge the focal actor as an influential role model to others.

AET further postulates that the work environment can play an influential role in shaping affective reactions (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). I argue that the affective implications of observed self-compassion on observer reactions may be contingent on the degree to which this behavior is readily accepted in the workplace. As such, I investigate workplace norms – a boundary condition within AET (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) – as a moderator that influences the relationship between observed self-compassion and affective reactions. In sum, I make competing hypotheses about the affective reactions that self-compassion expression produces in observers and predict that negative emotions will explain the negative relationship between self-compassion and affiliation (leadership potential), and that positive emotions will explain the positive relationship between self-compassion and affiliation (leadership potential). Additionally, I propose that the negative (positive) relationship between observed self-compassion and outcomes will be stronger when it violates (is consistent with) workplace norms. My theoretical model is presented in Figure 2.

This study will make several contributions to the literature. First, by conceptualizing self-compassion expression as a social phenomenon, I challenge the assumption that this behavior is a wholly internalized experience and posit that it can manifest in observable behaviors. In doing so, I advance the literature beyond understanding the intrapersonal consequences of self-compassion expression, and instead offer insight into the interpersonal consequences, which has been largely overlooked. Second, by drawing upon the tenants of AET (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and viewing observed self-compassion as an affective event that is appraised as relevant by

interdependent employees (and testing for both positive and negative observer reactions), I introduce a new theory to the literature that addresses ambiguity regarding the implications of engaging in self-compassion at work. This research will adopt a wholistic view of this practice by considering both the potential benefits as well as risks to displaying self-compassion at work. Moreover, as it currently stands, the literature lacks strong theoretical grounding – especially beyond intrapersonal experiences – proving it difficult to theorize about its occurrence and influence in the workplace. As such, I create a nuanced model that examines observed self-compassion through an affect-based lens, delineates how this expression is relevant for others, and unpacks how that ultimately impacts workplace relationships. Finally, by incorporating workplace norms as a moderator within my model, I propose that the work environment shape observers' affections reactions in distinct ways, thereby providing a narrower view of the complex interpersonal nature of expressing self-compassion at work. In the paragraphs that follow I further elaborate on each of the predictions of my theoretical model.

Theoretical Development

AET postulates that the appraisal process manifests as an emotional reaction. As mentioned above, I expect interdependent employees to appraise self-compassion expression in either negative or positive ways, thereby displaying as other-directed emotions. While not directly tested, a discussion and recognition of the appraisal portion of AET (primary or self-relevant appraisal and secondary or sensemaking appraisal) helps to understand how observers reach their respective emotional reaction. In the

section below, I draw from AET and the compassion model to create competing hypotheses about the potential emotional reactions.

Observed Self-Compassion and Emotional Responses

AET posits that observers have emotional reactions in response to an affective event (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The appraials of the affective event determine the intensity of the emotional reaction about the focal actor (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). I expect the self-compassion event to elicit emotions about the focal actor, or other-directed emotions. Related work on observing others' behaviors in the workplace tend to produce a range of other-directed emotions in observers (Martinescu et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2015), therefore it is useful to build from studies that provide guidance on predicting the type of observers' reactions and why. For instance, Mitchell et al. (2015) draw from a justice perspective and show that observers feel anger or content with the abusive supervisor based on their perception of whether the abusee deserved the mistreatment. Martinescu et al. (2019) draw from AET and find that observers feel positive other-directed emotions (e.g., liking) towards those who express positive gossip and other-directed emotions (e.g., anger) towards those who express negative gossip.

One potential pathway, in line with AET, theorizes that observing self-compassion may elicit other-directed negative emotions. First, self-compassion may be perceived as a selfish act, which may provide support for the primary appraisal that this event holds self-relevance to the observer's goals. For instance, taking the time to practice self-compassion may mean taking time away from work-related tasks: "self-compassion, which requires the employee to focus on their personal needs rather than on

their work for some time, may conflict with the workplace expectation that employees invest their whole selves into achieving organizational success" (Dodson & Heng, 2022, p. 189). Therefore, observers may make sense of this (secondary appraisal) and feel negatively toward the focal actor for prioritizing themselves over work as it could potentially create more work for other employees, increase tension among employees who feel they are working harder than the focal actor, and/or hinder team productivity. Additionally, observers may also feel self-compassion is selfish (secondary appraisal) because it is too self-focused and less warm, which is how individuals who expressed self-pride were viewed (Ritzenhofer et al., 2019). Along these lines, research suggests that people highly prioritize warm traits (towards others) in their coworkers (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007), thus observers may feel the focal actor is selfish for expressing warmth towards the self rather than expressing warmth toward others and this may produce their negative emotions.

Additionally, observers may also view self-compassion as a weakness or laziness. Expressing self-compassion is a sign of vulnerability, and research has demonstrated that self-disclosing a vulnerability as a weakness (Gibson et al., 2018). For example, if the focal actor expresses self-compassion by meditating during their lunch break, the observer may feel the focal actor is soft – which is a common misperception of self-compassion (Robinson et al., 2016). Further, observers may appraise the self-compassion expression as a sign of laziness or an excuse for poor work ethic, which evidently may impact goals of interdependent employees and result in negative emotional reactions in observers. Observers may view self-compassion as a trade-off, such that the focal actor

attends to the self instead of focusing on work. Similarly, ancillary work in the sports-industry indicates that some view self-compassion as "letting yourself off the hook" (Ferguson et al., 2014 p. 212). Taken together, the above evidence suggests the possibility that observers may view self-compassion at work in a negative light and, therefore, are likely to feel negative other-directed emotions towards the focal actor. In sum, I suspect that observing a positive, yet self-focused, behavior has the potential to elicit other-directed negative emotions and I I hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1a: Observed self-compassion is positively related to observers' other-directed negative emotions.

In contrast to the negative emotional reaction viewpoint, the other AET pathway theorizes that observers may experience positive other-directed emotions in response to observed self-compassion. Observers may have a primary appraisal of the self-compassion event as being self-relevant because the focal actor's behavior signals that they are taking initiative on improving themselves, thereby improving the organization (thus it might help the observer with their goals). Indeed, studies show that self-compassion provides many benefits to the individual, ultimately making them a more valuable organizational member. For example, previous studies suggest that self-compassion is beneficial for the workplace, as it is negatively related to burnout (Reizer, 2019; Schabram & Heng, 2022) and positively related to job performance and employee relationships (see Dodson and Heng, 2022). Therefore, observers may see the benefits of this practice and view it in a positive light.

Observers may also appraise the self-compassion behavior as a strength (and deem it relevant and helpful to them) because, despite the pervasiveness of suffering in

organizational life, individuals tend to be less compassionate to themselves and more compassionate to others (Lopez et al., 2018). In other words, it is not uncommon for individuals to continuously put others – including the organization – before themselves and avoid prioritizing self-compassion. Thus, expressing self-compassion may send the message that the focal actor is focused on taking care of and bettering themselves, and observers may see it as courageous to turn that care inward and feel positively about the focal actor. Given that self-compassion is not a common behavior in the workplace, observers may admire the focal actor for expressing such vulnerability and standing up for oneself (i.e., setting boundaries). Relatedly, research suggests that individuals experience moral emotions in response to witnessing excellence (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). Specifically, the authors reason that observers are moved by the exemplary acts of others, such as witnessing a person's moral development, generosity, or displays of extraordinary achievement. Thus, it is possible that observers may view the focal actor's self-compassionate behavior as a sign of excellence to improve the self, and this may spark positive other-directed emotions. Because observers may appraise the behaviors of a self-compassion event as courageous and admirable, they may feel positive other-directed emotions towards the focal actor. Taken together, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1b: Observed self-compassion is positively related to observers' other-directed positive emotions.

Observed Self-Compassion on Judgements and Behavioral Responses

I investigate two consequences of these emotional reactions: affiliative behavior and observer's judgment of the focal actor's leadership potential. Consistent with AET (Cropanzano et al., 2017), negative (positive) emotional reactions will influence negative

(positive) judgments and behaviors. I examine these two outcomes to better understand not only how observers decide to *behave* toward the focal actor in response to self-compassion expression, but also how observers make *judgments* regarding the influential role of the focal actor's self-compassion.

First, I investigate the observer's desire to affiliate with the focal actor, which has been studied by AET scholars as a behavioral reaction to an affective event (Martinescu et al., 2019). Affiliation is defined as the extent to which the observer desires to interact or associate with the focal actor (Leary, 2010). Essentially, I expect observers negative (positive) emotional reactions will decrease (increase) their affiliation, which is in line with related research that suggests positive emotions evoke approach motives (increase in affiliation) and negative motives evoke avoid motives (decrease in affiliation) (Chen & Bargh, 1999).

Stemming from AET, I expect observers to lessen the extent to which they affiliate with the focal actor due to negative other-directed emotions. As mentioned previously, observers may feel negatively toward the focal actor's expression of self-compassion. In turn, prior evidence suggests a relationship between other-directed negative emotions and affiliation (Ruiz et al., 2001). The observer's negative other-directed emotions may signal that this behavior is not acceptable (Hareli et al., 2013) – because they may appraise it as hindering their well-being or goals (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) – and they may affiliate less to express that message (Hess, 2006). This desire to affiliate less may occur for a few reasons. For example, if the observer feels negative emotions about the self-compassion behavior, then they might be hesitant

to affiliate with the focal actor for fear of being negatively evaluated by their peers (who also may view the behavior in a negative light) and engage in ways that protect their self-image (Maner et al., 2007; Scott & Duffy, 2015). Therefore, observers (who may fear that others will also negatively evaluate the focal actor's self-compassion) may affiliate less with the focal actor to demonstrate to other surrounding members that they are not associated with this focal actor's behavior. Moreover, self-compassion may not be viewed as an attractive behavior (Miron et al. 2014; Robinson et al., 2016), and negative emotions about the focal actor may prompt observers to decrease affiliation to send cues that this behavior is not appropriate. Affiliation can be a sign of support (Leary, 2010), and decreasing the extent to which the observer affiliates with the focal actor may send the message that the observer does not support this behavior. Related research on exclusion supports this idea, as observers create more distance from employees' or ostracize those who they feel threaten group stability or behave in unacceptable ways (Coleman, 1988; Scott & Duffy, 2015). Taken together, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2a: Other-directed negative emotions will mediate the negative relationship between self-compassion and affiliation.

In contrast, I expect positive other-directed emotions to increase the observer's desire to become closer with the focal actor, therefore acting as a mechanism between observed self-compassion and affiliation. As stated in earlier arguments, self-compassion expression may invoke positive other-directed emotions in observers. In turn, prior work suggests a link between positive other-directed emotions and affiliation (Martinescu et al., 2019). Scholars have found that positive other-focused emotions lead to feelings of connectedness and enhance relationships (Hart, 1998; Van de Ven, 2011), and employees

tend to engage in affiliative behaviors with those they feel positive emotions for (Tang et al., 2022; Smith & Lazarus, 1990). In addition, Dutton et al. (2007) suggest that witnessing other-compassion elicits positive emotions and brings individuals closer together. Unsurprisingly, affiliative behaviors have been shown to strengthen interpersonal relationships (Algoe et al., 2020).

The motivation to affiliate closer with someone is driven in part by gaining positive stimulation from the association with the focal actor (Hill, 1987). For instance, the observer may appraise the self-compassion behavior as self-relevant (and have positive other-directed emotions) because they may view this behavior as a sign of excellence with which they wish to surround themselves. Along these lines, Kong et al. (2017) show that individuals tend to affiliate with others with whom they share values, especially if these values are good for the collective organization. In line with this notion, I expect that positive emotions about the focal actor's behavior (derived from self-relevant and positive appraisals) will bring individuals closer together. Because affiliative behavior is a "socially oriented construct" (Kong et al., 2017, p. 793) and a sign of emotional support (Leary, 2010), I expect that individuals' positive other-directed emotions will drive their desire to affiliate and emotionally support the focal actor. Taken together, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2b: Other-directed positive emotions will mediate the positive relationship between self-compassion and affiliation.

Aside from affiliation, observers may form judgments about the focal actor's leadership potential based on their particular affect. Leadership potential is in the eyes of the beholder (Gazdag et al., 2022), meaning that followers judge the behavior of others

and use their perceptions to determine whether someone has the potential to be a leader. Stemming from the secondary appraisal of AET (or meaning-making stage; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), the judgment of the focal actor's behavior will trigger an emotional experience that guides observers' perceptions of the focal actor's leadership potential. Early work demonstrates that individual judgments about others are congruent with their affect (Bower, 1981). I expect that negative (positive) emotions will impact perceptions in a symmetric way, which is in line with prior work that suggests negative (positive) emotions yield negative (positive) outcomes (Lindebaum & Jordan, 2012).

I predict that observed self-compassion may be negatively related to leadership potential via negative other-directed emotions. In line with my prior arguments, observers may experience negative other-directed emotions in response to the focal actor's displayed self-compassion. In turn, prior work suggests that other-directed negative emotions are negatively related to leadership potential. For example, Stark et al. (2021) found that followers rate their leader less favorably when they feel negative emotions (e.g., annoyance, irritation, frustration) toward their leader. Further, Judge et al. (2009) argue that followers use criteria, such as 'will I get along with this leader' or 'will I get ahead with this leader' when assessing an individual's leadership potential. Thus, if observers feel negative other-directed emotions toward the focal actor, then they are likely to answer 'no' to the above criteria and less likely to view them as having leadership potential.

Observers' negative emotions are driven by sense-making appraisals (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) that ultimately drive the rationale for why this behavior would

negatively relate to leadership potential. Leaders are expected to adopt a self-sacrificial behavior, such that they are putting the followers' interests ahead of their own (van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). In fact, Silard and Dasborough (2021, p. 1193) state that "in general, the danger associated with leaders expressing positive emotions toward themselves is that followers tend to believe that leaders should be focused on them." Therefore, observers may appraise a self-focused behavior as selfish and contradicting to expected leadership roles, and this may manifest as negative emotions and likely decrease the degree to which they view this focal actor as having leadership potential. Therefore, perhaps the observer feels negatively because they believe the focal actor would make a weak leader and hinder organizational productivity – driven by their appraisal that self-compassion is soft and weak and hinders their own goals – and therefore judges them to be less influential. Taken together, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3a: Other-directed negative emotions will mediate the relationship between self-compassion and negative ratings of leadership potential.

In contrast, I predict that observed self-compassion may positively relate to leadership potential via positive other-directed emotions. As mentioned previously, positive events produce positive emotions (Cropanzano et al., 2017), and I argue earlier that self-compassion may produce positive other-directed emotions in observers. In turn, prior work suggests that individuals will view someone as a potential leader when they feel positive emotions toward that individual. For example, scholars found that follower positive affect relates to positive perceptions of leadership (Eberly & Fong, 2013) and predict positive evlautions of their leader (Visser et al., 2013). Additionally, followers who positively evaluate an individual who they perceive they will 'get along' or 'get

ahead' with in their career will positively relate to judgements of leadership potential of that individual (Judge et al., 2009).

In line with AET, the observer's appraisal may provide reason as to why this event sparks positive emotions and increases judgments of leadership potential. Leadership is an influential process that typically results in the follower modeling after leadership behaviors (Oc & Bashur, 2013). Therefore, if self-compassion evokes positive reactions, then observers may see leadership potential in the focal actor because they appraise this behavior to exemplify strong leader characteristics (e.g., understanding of their limits and having a sense of self-awareness). Accordingly, the observer may appraise this behavior as self-relevant and beneficial to their goals, which drives their positive emotions and judgement of the expresser (or focal actor) as an influential figure. In sum, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3b: Other-directed positive emotions will mediate the relationship between self-compassion and positive ratings of leadership potential.

The Moderating Role of Workplace Norms

"Too many companies bet on having a cut-throat, high-pressure, take-no-prisoners culture to drive their financial success. But a large and growing body of research on positive organizational psychology demonstrates that not only is a cut-throat environment harmful to productivity over time, but that a positive environment will lead to dramatic benefits for employers, employees, and the bottom line." (Seppala & Cameron, 2015)

While the competing hypotheses above target the type of affective reactions in response to observed self-compassion *in general*, AET posits that environmental features influence the affective experience (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). As such, I address *under what circumstances* do observers react positively or negatively to self-compassion

expression and how this impacts behaviors towards and judgments of others – a question that has yet to be resolved within the compassion literature itself. I suspect that these relationships may depend on how readily self-compassion is accepted in a workplace environment. In other words, observers may consider if expressing self-compassion violates or is consistent with normative workplace behavior. As such, I investigate workplace norms – an important component of an organization's culture (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014) – as a crucial environmental factor that will influence the relationship between observed self-compassion and the observer's other-directed emotions. In particular, I manipulate the observer's perception of high-performance work norms versus compassion-based norms in Study 2 to explore how observers' reactions vary in response to the focal actors' displayed self-compassion in each of these environments. In Study 3, I measure the observer's perception of high-performance work versus compassion-based norms in their own work environment.

AET posits that work environmental features play a central role in shaping reactions to employee behaviors (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Workplace environments are reflections of their cultural norms and have shown to have important implications for employee behavioral norms (Sheridan, 1992). Although there is not much AET work that links workplace norms to affective reactions, scholars identify the organization's cultural environment – which is "the norms of behaviour and accepted ways of doing things" – as an influential contextual factor (Briner, 2000, p. 300). Indeed, Silard and Dasborough (2021) discuss that organizations have emotional display rules that influence employees' interpretations and that responses "will differ depending on what the emotion display

rules are (p. 1196). Similarly, Johns (2006, p. 2005) defines context as "situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behavior as well as functional relationships between variables" and notes that norms are an important manifestation of context. Taken together, I investigate the influential role of the observer's perception of workplace norms in my theoretical model, which has been identified by other scholars as a work environmental feature (Russell & Eisenberg, 2012).

An important question to consider is why self-compassion adheres to or violates an individual's perception of workplace norms? Workplace norms are part of and influenced by an organization's culture (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014; O'Neill & Rothbard, 2017), thus investigating an individual's perception of how tolerable the overall culture is of expressing self-compassion will provide insight as to whether this behavior will be consistent with or violate norms. Essentially, work norms are "unwritten rules" that inform employees how to behave (Hammer et al., 2004, p. 84), and will elicit negative reactions from observers toward those who violate them (Brauer & Chekroun, 2005). Relatedly, emotion scholars state that organizational "display norms will influence how people interpret the emotional expression of others…[and observers responses] will differ depending on what the emotion display rules are" (Silard & Dasborough, 2021, p. 1196). As such, in line with the previously mentioned logic that negative appraisals drive other-directed negative emotions (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), I argue in Study 2 that this relationship may be exacerbated in high performance work environments. For example, observers' negative emotions may intensify because they may believe the self-compassion behavior makes the focal actor soft or weak (Robinson et al., 2016), and

weak employees harm performance (Slone et al. 2007). Moreover, individuals perceive that work environments with high performance norms instill high demands and performance pressure (Hammer et al., 2004), thus attention directed toward the self that is perceived to violate normative behavior could exacerbate negative other-directed emotions as it could potentially create more work for team members and harm performance.

Additionally, scholars have alluded that many professions are “often characterized by toughness, self-reliance, and a preference for rationality over emotionality” and expression of emotions can inhibit certain performance domains (O’Neill & Rothbard, 2017, p. 78). Therefore, expressing emotion and vulnerability coupled with a motivation to be caring and tender to the self intuitively would be perceived as norm-violating based on these cultural characteristics. Since self-compassion is considered a self-focused expression, it may not fit within the realm of normative behaviors in workplaces that may be more concerned about productivity (and less concerned about employee suffering). In such work environments, employees may be workaholics and experience burnout frequently as they continuously put work before themselves (Fry & Cohen, 2009). Thus, engaging in self-compassionate behaviors would be considered counter-normative. Taken together, I predict:

Hypothesis 4a: The positive relationship between observed self-compassion and other-directed negative emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger when self-compassion is expressed in high-performance work environments.

Conversely, the relationship between observed self-compassion and other-directed positive emotions may be strengthened when it is in line with norms, which I propose is

represented by compassion-oriented work environments in Study 2. Self-compassion may be more readily accepted in workplaces that are concerned about employee suffering (Dodson & Heng, 2022) as people-oriented environments are typically characterized by strong relationships and a care for others (Setton & Mossholder, 2002). Moreover, cultures that emphasize a compassioante- based orientation may embody normative behaviors that focus on affection, caring, and companionate love (Barsade & O'Neil, 2014; Nolan et al., 2022). Along these lines, Nolan et al. (2022, p. 2) introduce the concept of psychological compassion climate, which is "the individual perception of shared norms around compassion within one's workgroup/unit." As such, when compassion is embedded in the workplace culture, observers may view self-compassion behavior in a positive light – such as a powerful tool that will enhance the organization, rather than a weakness that hinders productivity – and are likely to strengthen their positive emotions associated with this normative behavior. Suffering – though pervasive – is associated with uncertainty regarding the well-being or performance of the focal actor (Kanov et al., 2017). Self-compassion is one response to alleviate suffering (Neff, 2003a), and – because it may be considered a normative behavior in people-oriented environments – has the potential to strengthen positive other-directed emotions because behaving in a way that is consistent to norms reduces uncertainty (Goodrick & Salancik, 1996). Taken together, I predict:

Hypothesis 4b: The positive relationship between observed self-compassion and other-directed positive emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger when self-compassion is expressed in compassion-based environments.

Integrating the rationale made above for Hypotheses 1-4b, I hypothesize the following conditional indirect effects:

Hypothesis 5a: The negative relationship between observed self-compassion and affiliation mediated by other-directed negative emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger when self-compassion is expressed in high-performance work environments.

Hypothesis 5b: The positive relationship between observed self-compassion and affiliation mediated by other-directed positive emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger when self-compassion is expressed in compassion-based environments.

Hypothesis 6a: The negative relationship between observed self-compassion and leadership potential mediated by other-directed negative emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger when self-compassion is expressed in high-performance work environments.

Hypothesis 6b: The positive relationship between observed self-compassion and leadership potential mediated by other-directed positive emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger when self-compassion is expressed in compassion-based environments.

Methods

Before I proposed my dissertation, I collected pilot qualitative data to better understand if and how observers witness self-compassion. I will briefly describe that exploratory study and provide a sample description of responses first before delving into the three empirical and quantative studies that tested my theoretical model. Specifically, Study 1 involves a randomized video experiment where I tested my competing hypotheses of the observer's emotional reactions after witnessing self-compassion expression (Hypotheses 1a-1b). In Study 2, I conducted an experiment and manipulated workplace norms to test the observer's emotional reactions in workplace environments that are high-performance versus compassion-based (Hypotheses 1a-1b; Hypotheses 4a-

4b). Finally, I conducted a social network study in Study 3 to test the full theoretical model. The experiments in Studies 1 and 2 were preregistered (https://aspredicted.org/VSV_79K; https://aspredicted.org/87G_X8L). All studies were approved by Clemson University's Institutional Review Board (pilot study: IRB2022-0571; Studies 1-3: IRB2023-0624). I analyzed Studies 1 and 2 in SPSS and R and Study 3 in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2019).

Pilot Study

Participants and Procedure

I collected qualitative data from full-time employees via Prolific Academic, which is an online platform commonly used in the behavioral sciences (https://www.prolific.co/). To be eligible for the study, participants must have lived in the United States, worked full-time, and worked either fully or at least partly in-person.

I administered two surveys in this pilot study. First, I administered a prescreening survey to 100 participants, which prompted them to read a definition[2] of self-compassion and then answer, "Have you witnessed a fellow employee practicing self-compassion at work?". Participants were also instructed that they may be invited for a follow-up study. Out of the 100 participants surveyed, 92 answered "yes." They were compensated $0.40 for completing the prescreening survey. Second, I administered a follow-up survey to the 92 participants who answered "yes" in the prescreening survey. Participants were

[2] "Self-compassion is defined as being kind and understanding toward oneself in instances of suffering. Suffering at work can take many forms that are work-related (not meeting deadlines, getting yelled at by your boss, stressing over workload) and/or non work-related (family or personal issues, health issues, financial issues)."

reminded of the prescreening survey, provided a definition of self-compassion, and asked to please describe the incident in detail. I received 80 responses (86.95% response rate). However, 3 of those responses were deleted because participants did not answer how they witnessed someone else engage in self-compassion at work (2 participants answered how they were compassionate towards someone else, and 1 participant said they could not think of any "specific" instance), thus yielding 77 responses. Of those, 61.04% identified as male. With respect to race, 84.44% were White/Caucasian, 7.79% were Asian, 2.60% were Black or African American, and 5.19% selected 'other'. The average age was 36.62 years (*SD* = 10.01). Participants worked in a variety of industries, including professional service, medical/healthcare, education, technology, amongst others. Participants were paid $2.00 for participation in the follow-up survey.

Results

Table 2 summarizes sample descriptions of the participants' responses. These responses indicate that employees can in fact notice a coworker's self-compassion, and that self-compassion can manifest in a variety of observable forms. As such, this preliminary study offers some credence to the notion that self-compassion can extend beyond an internalized and individualized experience, and be conceptualized as an affective event that surrounding coworkers can notice and have reactions to. Although I did not intend to use this pilot study to answer my research question – nor do I make predictions regarding the behavioral manifestations of self-compassion – this qualitative data study served as a fruitful avenue to gaining insight on the observations employees

make regarding their coworker's self-compassion, and thus helped me further refine my research model.

Next, I will discuss the three quantitative studies I conducted to test my theoretical model.

Study 1 Method

Participants and Procedure

I collected data from full-time employees via Prolific Academic (https://www.prolific.co/). Prolific was determined to be a suitable platform to test my hypotheses because it allowed me to survey employees across a range of organizations. To be eligible for the study, participants must have lived in the United States, worked full-time, and regularly interacted with other employees.

An a priori power analysis using G*Power indicated I would need 128 participants to detect a medium effect size (Faul et al., 2007). Thus, to ensure I would have at least 128 participants, I oversampled and targeted 200 participants. All participants passed the attention check (e.g., 'this is an attention check, please select 'not at all''), thus yielding 200 usable and complete responses. Of those participants, 63% identified as male (35% female; 2% selected 'other'). Regarding race, 74% were White, 10.5% were Black, 7.5% were Asian, 3.5% identified as Hispanic, and the remaining selected 'other.' The mean age was 40.65 years (*SD* = 11.34). About 63% of the participants attained a bachelor's degree or higher. Participants worked on average 41.69 hours per week (*SD* = 5.09) in a variety of industries (technology, medical/healthcare, retail, professional services, education, manufacturing, amongst others). Their average

job tenure was 8.12 years (*SD* = 7.73). Respondents were compensated $1.00 for their participation.

Participants were randomly assigned to 1 of 2 conditions (low self-compassion vs. high self-compassion). I did not include a control condition as a prior meta-analysis illustrates that on average, control conditions with neutral expressions unintentionally produce emotional change (Joseph et al., 2020). Further, only incorporating low and high conditions is in line with prior experimental work on self-compassion (Heng & Fehr, 2022). I included a manipulation check at the end of each survey to check for differences across conditions.

In each condition, participants were prompted to watch a video of a hypothetical interaction between two coworkers and to imagine they were a coworker witnessing this interaction. Consistent with prior recommendations (Podsakoff et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2021), I recruited an employee (male, 30 years old, White/Caucasian) who typically works in an office setting and has acting experience to play the role of the focal actor expressing high/low self-compassion. One of the author's friends played the role of the other coworker (face not shown in video) to maintain conversation with the focal actor. In the video, the focal actor was having a conversation with the observer in the office. The focal actor described experiencing a hardship and then discussed how they are going to be self-compassionate to themselves (either high or low) in front of the observer. The self-compassion expression (high and low) was based on the definition of the construct

(Neff, 2003). The URLs to both videos are available in the footnote[3]. The script of the experimental conditions are provided in Appendix A.

Measures

After watching the video, all Prolific participants were prompted to answer the following survey questions.

Other-directed positive emotions. I used a three-item measure – "admiration", "awe", and "inspiration" – to capture other-directed positive emotions (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Tang et al., 2021). Participants were asked to please rate the extent to which they personally felt the following emotions about the coworker's response (1 = *not at all*; 5 = *to a large extent*).

Regarding other-directed positive emotions, I used the three-item scale of admiration, awe, and inspiration (Algoe & Haidt, 2009), which is in line with prior work that measured other-directed positive emotions in response to witnessing a behavior (Tang et al., 2021). Admiration is an other-focused emotion that arises when an individual "has a feeling about delighted approval" about another's accomplishments or actions (Van de Ven et al., 2011, p. 784). Awe can result from witnessing or interacting with another person and has been described as "an emotion that prompts people to focus on others" (Perez & Lench, 2018, p. 49). Inspiration shares many overlapping qualities with admiration and is considered the "motivational output" portion of the emotion that influences relationships (Algoe & Haidt, 2009, p. 107). Collectively, I argue that

[3] Low self-compassion condition: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzTnjh-3oFU
High self-compassion condition: https://youtu.be/jFpOwf-woAU

observers who view the focal actor's self-compassion as courageous or admirable may experience these other-directed positive emotions.

Other-directed negative emotions. I used a three-item measure to capture other-directed negative emotions: "annoyed", "frustrated", and "irritated" (Batson et al., 2007). These emotions are thought to be similar and have been clumped together in previous work (Caplan et al., 1975; Stark et al., 2021; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Participants were asked to please rate the extent to which they personally felt the following emotions about the coworker's response (1 = *not at all*; 5 = *to a large extent*).

I selected these three other-directed negative emotions because studies have shown that many other-directed negative emotions fall under the larger umbrella of anger. For instance, previous scholars incorporate various adjectives to describe other-directed negative emotions: outraged, perturbed, mad, angry, offended, upset, irritated, annoyed, frustrated (Batson et al., 2007; O'Mara et al., 2011). However, negative emotional reactions (specifically those that fall under anger) can vary depending on the degree of harm the behavior that produced the emotions caused. Indeed, a large portion of work on observer negative emotions tends to be in response to negative events that can directly harm other individuals (e.g., abusive supervision, Oh & Farh, 2017; perceived injustice, Weiss et al. 1999; workplace bullying, Ayoko et al., 2003; moral violations, Batson et al. 2007; O'Mara et al., 2011), and thus they tend to elicit other-directed negative emotions such as feeling angry, perturbed, and outraged. Given that self-compassion is a self-focused, yet positive, behavior that does not harm others to the same

overt degree, I propose to measure three-items – annoyed, frustrated, and irriated – from the anger scale (Batson et al., 2007).

Manipulation check. For the self-compassion manipulation check, participants were asked to please answer the following question about the employee whose face was visible in the video: "The employee shown in the video was compassionate towards themself". Manipulation checks were anchored on a five-point response scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*).

Demographics. I collected several demographics, including gender, age, race, education, job title, industry, tenure, and average work hours per week.

Results

In the Prolific sample, respondents were randomly separated into one of two conditions: low (N = 99) or high (N =101) self-compassion. To ensure there were no significant demographic differences across conditions, I ran an independent samples t test. Results show no significant differences between (low/high) conditions and gender (M_{low} = 1.38, SD = .51; M_{high} =1.37, SD = .55 ; p = .71), age (M_{low} = 41.16, SD = 11.32; M_{high} = 40.14, SD = 11.40 ; p = .53), or race (M_{low} = 1.87, SD = 2.44; M_{high} =1.98, SD = 3.15 ; p = .78). An independent samples t test on the manipulation check revealed that participants in the high self-compassion condition (M_{high} = 4.35, SD = .74) scored significantly higher than participants in the low self-compassion condition (M_{low} = 2.92, SD = 1.02), $t(198) = -11.36$, $p < .001$.

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics. Levene's Test for Equality of Variance (i.e., homogeneity assumption test that assesses whether variances across groups

significantly differ) was violated for other-directed positive and negative emotions, which is problematic as this can increase Type 1 errors and decrease statistical power (DeShon & Alexander, 1996). Thus, in line with best practice (Rosopa et al., 2013; 2018), I used HC4 (heteroscedascticity-consistent covariance matrix 4) to correct for this violation. Specifically, "this approach corrects the covariance matrix among the parameter estimates…regression coefficients are not adjusted or corrected because they remain unbiased" (Rosopa et al, 2013, p. 344). HC4 has been recommended as the best correction method in comparison to the other HCCM options when heterogeneity is present (Rosopa et al., 2018). There was not a significant main effect of self-compassion (M_{high} = 1.88, *SD* = 1.13; M_{low} = 1.63, *SD* = .81) on other-directed negative emotions, $F(1, 198) = 3.44$, $p = .07$. Hypothesis 1a was therefore not supported. As predicted by Hypothesis 1b, there was a significant main effect of self-compassion on other-directed positive emotions, $F(1, 198) = 9.64$, $p = .002$. Specifically, participants in the high self-compassion condition reported higher other-directed positive emotions (M_{high} = 2.43; *SD* = 1.12) than in the low self-compassion condition (M_{low} = 1.97; *SD* = .98).

In Study 1, I tested the competing hypotheses (H1a/b) of witnessing self-compassion on participants' emotional reactions. The results support the positive emotions pathway, such that observers feel positively about their coworker expressing self-compassion, and not negatively. In Study 2, I replicate Study 1 and assess the impact of workplace norms on participants' emotional reactions after witnessing self-compassion.

Study 2 Method

Participants and Procedure

I collected data from full-time employees via Prolific Academic (https://www.prolific.co/). To be eligible for the study, participants must live in the United States, work full-time, and regularly interact with other employees. In addition, I excluded participants who participated in Study 1 using their Prolific IDs.

An a priori power analysis using G*Power indicated I would need 128 participants to detect a medium effect size (Faul et al., 2007). However, scholars have recently expressed concerns that G*Power underestimates the required power to detect interaction effects (Giner-Sorolla, 2018). Therefore, I oversampled and targeted 250 participants. I removed participants who incorrectly answered the attention check (n = 11), participants who answered they do not work (n = 1), and participants who worked less than 30 hours per week (n = 6), thus yielding to 232 participants. Of those respondents, 56.9% identified as male (42.2% female; .9% selected 'other'). Regarding race, 69.8% were White, 11.2% were Asian, 6.0% were Hispanic, 5.2% were Black or African American, and the remaining selected 'other'. About 71.6% attained a bachelor's degree or higher. Participants worked on average 42.25 hours per week (*SD* = 6.23) in a variety of industries (technology, medical/healthcare, retail, professional services, education, manufacturing, amongst others). Their average job tenure was 6.24 years (*SD* = 5.35). The mean age was 38.66 years (*SD* = 10.34). Respondents were compensated $1.35 for their participation.

Participants were randomly separated into one of four conditions: 2 (high-performance work environment x compassion-based environment) x 2 (low compassion x high self-compassion). Similar to Study 1, I included a manipulation check to assess differences across conditions. I manipulated workplace norms with a mock LinkedIn page about a hypothetical company ("Company X"). In line with previous experimental work (Pu et al., 2022), I used a LinkedIn page based on a real company's LinkedIn page (and then made changes to incorporate the manipulation and mask the organization) in order to increase external validity. I used validated constructs from the literature to reflect either high-performance (Hammer et al., 2004) or compassion-based (Nolan et al., 2022) workplace environments. Once participants familiarized themselves with the hypothetical company, they were randomly assigned into a compassion condition. Specifically, they read about an interaction they had with a coworker at "Company X", where the coworker was discussing a hardship they were experiencing and how they were trying to be self-compassionate (either high or low) to themselves. These experimental conditions and visuals tested Hypotheses 1a-1b and Hypotheses 4a-4b and can be found in Appendix B.

Measures

After reading the scenario, participants were asked to answer the following questions.

Other-directed positive emotions. I used the same measure as Study 1.

Other-directed negative emotions. I used the same measure as Study 1.

Manipulation checks. In the workplace norm manipulation check, participants were asked, "please rate the degree to which the following items accurately reflect your

perception of Company X's culture (as depicted in the LinkedIn page)." The items were "Company X has a results-oriented culture" and "Company X has a compassionate-oriented culture." I used the same self-compassion manipulation check as in Study 1. Both manipulation checks were anchored on a five-point response scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

<u>Demographics.</u> I collected several demographics, including gender, age, race, education, job title, industry, tenure, and average work hours per week.

Results

Respondents were randomly separated into one of four conditions: low self-compassion and high-performance work environment ($N = 60$), low self-compassion and compassion-based environment ($N = 56$), high self-compassion and high-performance work environment ($N = 59$), and high self-compassion and compassion-based environment ($N = 57$). To ensure there were no significant demographic differences across conditions, I conducted a one-way ANOVA. Results show no significant differences between conditions and gender ($p = .90$), age ($p = .29$), or race ($p = .07$).

An independent samples *t* test was conducted to test the manipulation checks.. For the high-performance manipulation check, participants in the high-performance condition ($M_{high\ performance} = 4.68$, $SD = .70$) scored significantly higher than participants in the compassion-based environment ($M_{compassion} = 2.94$, $SD = 1.17$), $t(105) = 9.27$, $p < .001$. For the compassion-based manipulation check, participants in the compassion-based condition ($M_{compassion} = 4.61$, $SD = .76$) scored significantly higher than participants in the high-performance condition ($M_{high\ performance} = 2.79$, $SD = 1.13$), $t(105) = -9.76$, $p < .01$.

Regarding the self-compassion conditions, results show a significant difference in the self-compassion conditions $t(105) = -6.56$, $p < .001$, between the low self-compassion ($M_{low} = 1.85$, $SD = 1.01$) and the high self-compassion ($M_{high} = 4.18$, $SD = .99$).

In addition to testing the main effects, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare means of other-directed positive and negative emotions across workplace norms conditions in the high self-compassion condition. Levene's Test showed that homogeneity of variance was not violated for other-directed positive emotions ($p = .86$) or other-directed negative emotions ($p = .63$).

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics. There was a significant main effect of self-compassion (1 = Low self-compassion; 2 = High self-compassion) on other-directed negative emotions, yet it was in the opposite direction of Hypothesis 1a, $F(1, 229) = 7.11$, $p = .008$. Specifically, participants in the low self-compassion condition reported higher other-directed negative emotions ($M_{low} = 1.55$, $SD = .71$) than in the high self-compassion condition ($M_{high} = 1.30$, $SD = .71$). Hypothesis 1a was therefore not supported. In support of Hypothesis 1b, there is a significant main effect of self-compassion (1 = Low self-compassion; 2 = High self-compassion) on other-directed positive emotions, $F(1, 229) = 43.49$, $p = .000$. Specifically, participants in the high self-compassion condition reported higher other-directed positive emotions ($M_{high} = 2.67$; $SD = 1.05$) than did participants in the low self-compassion condition ($M_{low} = 1.86$; $SD = .82$). For Hypothesis 4a, I did not find a significant difference in other-directed negative emotions across workplace norm conditions, $F(1, 114) = .04$, $p = .84$. In other words, observers did not have significantly stronger other-directed negative emotions in the high-performance work environment,

compared to the compassion-based environment. Finally, I found partial support for Hypothesis 4b, $F(1, 114) = 3.74$, $p = .056$. Specifically, observers experienced marginally significant differences in their other-directed positive emotions across workplace norm conditions, such that they had higher other-directed positive emotions in the compassion-based environment ($M_{compasion} = 2.86$; $SD = 1.05$) compared to the high-performance work environment ($M_{high\ performance} = 2.49$; $SD = 1.03$). Table 5 provides the means of other-directed negative and positive emotions across workplace norm conditions.

In conclusion, Studies 1 and 2 indicate a consistent positive effect of observing self-compassion on observer's other-directed positive emotions. Moreover, participants in the compassion-based condition experienced higher other-directed positive emotions than participants in the high-performance condition (marginal support, $p = .056$). However, the relationship between observed self-compassion and other-directed negative emotions is not impacted by high-performance or compassion-based workplace norms. In Study 3, I conducted a social network analysis to test the full theoretical model.

Study 3 Method

Participants and Procedure

In Studies 1 and 2, I conducted experiments to assess the emotional reactions to witnessing self-compassion (Studies 1 and 2) and investigated the moderating role of workplace norms on observer reactions (Study 2). Results support the positive pathway and reveal that workplace norms do not affect this relationship. In Study 3, I surveyed a cohort of graduate students enrolled in a full-time face-to-face program via a roster-based approach to capture the dyadic relationships (e.g., what each student thinks about every

other student's self-compassion, along with their emotional and behavioral reactions toward that student). Collecting data in a roster-based way is akin to a social network study, which "connect[s] feeling, thinking human beings" and are key conduits through which employees understand coworkers' thoughts and emotions in the workplace (Casciaro et al., 2015, p. 1162). This type of data collection was advantageous as it provides an empirical account of the social context and information about dyadic relationships. In other words, it allowed me to capture the observer's rating of the focal actor's self-compassion and their affective reactions toward each person.

I collected data from full-time in-person students enrolled in a graduate program in the Southeastern United States. This sample is preferable because – as opposed to manipulating workplace norms (Study 2) – I capture workplace norms as they exist given that all students in the sample are subject to the same norms. The data was collected during the middle of the semester (October, 2023) to allow in-person students a chance to interact and form relationships while also learning the norms in their program.

To recruit the appropriate participants, I was provided a roster of instructors who taught full-time in-person MBA students that semester. Out of nine instructors, three were willing to administer the survey. However, only two instructors were able to administer extra credit for participation. As such, a total of 141 students received the option to participate in the survey (across three classes), but only 79 were offered extra credit for participation. I received 52 usable responses (36.88% response rate for all students who were offered the survey; 65.82% response rate for students who were offered extra credit). While this sample size is lower than expected, students answered

questions about everyone they knew and interacted with in the graduate program, which yielded 791 observations (participants rated 15 students on average). Given that this was a lengthy survey, I made several efforts to increase participation. In addition to asking instructors to offer extra credit, I also attended classes in-person to announce the survey and express my gratitude for their participation. Additionally, I added a monetary incentive for participating students. Specifically, ten students were randomly chosen and provided a $20 Amazon gift card for participation. Of the respondents, 40.40% identified as male (59.60% female). Regarding race, 84.30% were White, 5.9% were Asian, 3.9% were Hispanic, 2.0% were Black or African American, and the remaining selected 'other'. The mean age was 25.35 years (SD = 5.71).

Measures

The measures are separated into two categories: roster-based questions (or questions the observer answered about the focal actor) and non-roster-based questions (or questions the observer answered about themselves). In the roster-based questions, to reduce respondent fatigue, I collected data with single-item measures (Borgatti et al., 2018), which is a common and necessary approach in roster-based data collections. A number of studies demonstrate that single-item measures are a good alternative when a research protocol makes the use of multi-item measures impractical (e.g., Wanous et al.,1997). More recent research (Matthews et al., 2022) has provided even stronger support, suggesting that single-item measures do not have limitations often attributed to them, including low reliability and low content validity. Sackett and Larson (1990)

recommend that researchers using single-item measures provide unambiguous, focused information in the question.

Interation tie. Respondents were first instructued to select "everyone you know and interact with in the graduate program" from a roster that included all in-person MBA students (e.g., Umphress et al., 2003). This list of participants (interaction ties) was then presented in subsequent network-related questions so that respondents did not have to experience the fatigue that would have resulted from reading the roster on multiple occasions (Zagenczyk et al., 2020).

Self-compassion. Participants were provided a definition[4] of self-compassion (Heng & Fehr, 2022; Neff, 2003a) and asked to reflect on the extent to which each person behaves in a self-compassionate manner in their program (1 = never; 5 = always). To elaborate on the reasoning for single-item measures above, prior roster-based studies have used single-item measures with a clear construct definition (Bowler & Brass, 2006; Ferrin et al., 2006; Zagenczyk & Powell, 2023). Taking this step saved respondents from the fatigue that they would have experienced from rating all of their interaction ties using a multi-item measure of self-compassion.

Other-directed positive emotions. I used the same emotions as in Studies 1 and 2.

Other-directed negative emotions. I used the same emotions as in Studies 1 and 2.

[4] "Self-compassion involves treating oneself with warmth, kindness, and understanding when dealing with setbacks. This may mean: trying to be understanding and patient toward those aspect of one's personality that they don't like, being kind to oneself when experiencing suffering, giving oneself the caring and tenderness needed when going through a hard time, being tolerant of one's own flaws and inadequacies, and trying to be loving toward oneself when feeling emotional pain."

Affiliation. Participants were instructed to "indicate the likelihood to which you would: enjoy spending more time with this person, enjoy meeting with this person more, being friends with this person." (Algoe et al., 2020; 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

Leadership Potential. Participants were instructed to "indicate the extent to which you view this person as having the potential to: become an effective leader, learn leadership skills, advance to a leadership position, become a role model." (Mueller et al., 2011; 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

Workplace Norms. Similar to Study 2, I use the high performance work norm and compassionate environment scales (Hammer et al., 2004; Nolan et al., 2022). I adapted the items to reflect the MBA program. Participants were instructed to "please rate the degree to which the following items accurately reflect your perception of *your* program's culture (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = stronglty agree). A sample item for the high-performance norm is "Achievement-oriented." A sample item for the compassion-based norm is "Members of my program show compassion to one another."

Analyses

The data have a few notible features that required a multilevel approach. The data are nested within the observer, with Level 1 (within-level) variables as the obsever's rating of the focal actor's self-compassion, the observer's emotional reactions, and the observer's affective reactions, and Level 2 (between-level) variable as workplace norms. Therefore, I needed to utilize a multilevel approach and test a cross-level interaction. Because of the nested nature, I calculated the intraclass correlation (ICC) to determine if a multilevel approach is appropriate. Using Bliese's (2006) "multilevel" package, I

specified a null model and ran a one-way anova on the endogenous variables. I calculated the ICC(1) for each variable (see Table 6). The ICC(1) can be thought of as a measure of "nonindependence" (Bliese, 2000) and the amount of variance that is attritibutable to the observer. For instance, 15% of the variability in any one respondent's rating of positive emotions is a function of the person who rated them (or the observer). All variables indicate there is a degree of dependence in the data, suggesting that multilevel modeling (MLM) is appropriate.

Table 7 presents descriptive statistics for Study 3. I tested my hypotheses in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2019). Hypothesis 1a predicted that observed self-compassion is positively related to other-directed negative emotions. I found a significant effect, but in the opposite direction, (b = -0.37, SE = 0.09, $p < .01$). Hypothesis 1a is not supported (and thus providing additional support for Hypothesis 1b). Hypothesis 1b predicted that observed self-compassion is positively related to other-directed positive emotions. I found a significant positive effect of observing self-compassion on other-directed positive emotions, (b = 0.79, SE = 0.08, $p < .01$). Hypothesis 1a is supported.

To test the indirect effects in Hypotheses 2a-3b, I ran bootstrap analyses with 10,000 replications. Hypothesis 2a predicted that other-directed negative emotions would mediate the negative relationship between observing self-compassion and affiliation. I found a significant positive indirect effect of observing self-compassion on affiliation via other-directed negative emotions, (*Indirect effect* = 0.11, SE = 0.03, 95% Confidence Interval [CI] [0.04, 0.17]). Hypothesis 2a was not supported. Hypothesis 2b predicted that other-directed positive emotions would mediate the positive relationship between

observing self-compassion and affiliation. I found a significant positive indirect effect, (*Indirect effect* = 0.50, *SE* = 0.06, 95% CI[0.39, 0.62]), thereby supporting Hypothesis 2b. Hypothesis 3a predicted that other-directed negative emotions mediated the negative relationship between observing self-compassion and leadership potential. I did not find a significant indirect effect, (*Indirect effect* = 0.07, *SE* = 0.06, 95% CI[-0.05, 0.19]), therefore Hypothesis 3a is not supported. Finally, Hypothesis 3b predicted that other-directed positive emotions mediated the positive relationship between observing self-compassion and leadership potential. I found a significant positive indirect effect, (*Indirect effect* = 0.36, *SE* = 0.06, 95% CI[0.23, 0.48]). Hypothesis 3b is supported.

Next, I tested the conditional direct and indirect effects. Hypothesis 4a predicted the positive relationship between observed self-compassion and other-directed negative emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger when self-compassion is expressed in high-performance work environments. I did not find a significant conditional direct effect, (b = 0.00, *SE* = 0.05, p = 0.98). Hypothesis 4a is not supported. Hypothesis 4b predicted the positive relationship between observed self-compassion and other-directed positive emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger when self-compassion is expressed in compassion-based environments. Similarly, I did not find a significant direct effect, (b = 0.03, *SE* = 0.03, p = 0.31). Therefore, Hypothesis 4b is not supported.

Finally, Hypotheses 5a-6b predicted the conditional indirect effects. I did not find any significant effects: (H5a), (*Indirect effect* = 0.11, *SE* = 0.23, 95% CI[-0.35, 0.57]); (H5b), (*Indirect effect* = 0.00, *SE* = 0.13, 95% CI[-0.26, 0.26]). (H6a), (*Indirect effect* =

0.11, *SE* = 0.06, 95% CI[-0.00, 0.22]). (H6b), (*Indirect effect* = 0.19, *SE* = 0.65, 95% CI[-1.08, 1.46]). Hypotheses 5a-6b are thus not supported.

Although not predicted, I also tested these relationships in non-congruent worknorm environments (meaning, I tested the moderating role of the high-performance work norm on the positive pathway and the moderating role of the compassion-based norm on the negative pathway). However, I did not find significant results: negative pathway on affiliation moderated by compassion-based environment = (*Indirect effect* = 0.06, *SE* = 0.06, 95% CI[-0.06, 0.17]); positive pathway on affiliation moderated high-performance work environment = (*Indirect effect* = 0.18, *SE* = 0.11, 95% CI[-0.04, 0.39]); negative pathway on leadership potential moderated by compassion-based environment = (*Indirect effect* = 0.11, *SE* = 0.06, 95%CI[-0.00, 0.22]); positive pathway on leadership potential moderated by high-performance work environment = (*Indirect effect* = 0.18, *SE* = 0.12, 95% CI[-0.05, 0.40]). Figure 3 presents the results.

In Study 3, my results support the positive pathway, which is consistent with Studies 1 and 2. Specifically, I found a main effect of observing self-compasion on other-directed positive emotions, and I also found a significant indirect effect on both of affiliation and leadership potential. However, I did not find support for the negative pathway. Further, I did not find support for the moderating role of workplace norms on the negative or positive pathways. Table 8 summarizes the results for each study. In the next chapter, I conclude with a discussion, theoretical and practical implications, as well as limitations and directions for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Self-compassion is extending kindness towards oneself in response to a suffering event and, unsurprisingly, has a host of benefits for the focal actor. Yet, it is also important to understand how an employee's self-compassion practice impacts others, as scholars have suggested that it may be viewed in either positive or negative ways. This dissertation sought to explore the impact of employee's self-compassion expression on colleagues' emotional and relational reactions to observing their behavior. To test whether observers have positive or negative reactions to witnessing self-compassion, I made competing hypotheses to explore both potential pathways. I drew from Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) to create a theoretical model that investigates observers' affective reactions in response to witnessing self-compassion and the influence of workplace norms on their affective reactions.

Across two experimental studies, I found that observers have positive emotional reactions to witnessing an employee's self-compassion expression. The negative emotional pathway was not supported in either study. Additionaly, I found marginal support (p = .056) for the moderating role of compassion-based environments on observers' other-directed positive reactions. This indicates that observers' feel higher positive emotions in response to a coworker's self-compassion in a compassion-based work environment. I did not find support for the moderating role of high-performance work environments on other-directed negative emotions.

In Study 3, I found support for the positive (but not the negative) pathway. Specifically, I found that self-compassion was positively related to other-directed positive emotions, and that other-directed positive emotions mediated the positive relationship between observing self-compassion and (a) affiliation, and (b) leadership potential. There was a main effect of self-compassion on negative emotions, but in the opposite direction. Speficially, observers feel less negative emotions when they notice someone extending kindness towards themselves (perhaps because they feel more empathetic to their suffering event), or alternatively they feel more negatively toward someone when they are less self-compassionate or overly critical towards themselves. I did not test *why* observers feel less negative, but these findings provide further support for the positive pathway. Regarding the moderating variable (i.e., workplace norms), I did not find significant direct or indirect effects on the positive or negative pathway. I suspect the non-significant interactions may be due to some limitations in how I manpiluated and measured the workplace norm variables. I discuss these potential reasons in the Limitations and Future Research Directions section.

In sum, upon initial exploration of this dissertation, it was generally unclear how others will view and respond to employees who practice self-compassion. My studies consistently support the positive (and not negative) pathway, meaning observers have favorable responses to witnessing self-compassion, and in fact, do not have negative reactions (exception: Study 3 shows a *negative* relationship between observed self-compassion and other-directed negative emotions). These positive reactions (conditional direct effect amplified in compassion-based work environment, Study 2) suggest that

observers may appraise this behavior as self-relevant because it signifies that the focal actor is working on self-improvement, and this may be beneficial when working with them. The lack of support for the negative pathway indicates that observers generally do not view this behavior negatively (e.g., selfish, weak, lazy) in a self-relevant way. In fact, observers felt negatively when the focal actor was overly harsh or critical towards themselves.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This dissertation makes several contributions to the literature. First, I conceptualize self-compassion expression as a social phenomenon and shift the focus of attention from the focal actor (intrapersonal lens) to the observer (interpersonal lens). Scholars have mainly focused on the benefits of self-compassion to the focal actor, yet no work to my knowledge explores how this practice may influence others' attitudes and behaviors. In doing so, I challenge the assumption that this practice is a wholly internalized experience and posit that it can manifest in observable behaviors.

Second, by drawing upon the tenants of AET (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and conceptualizing observed self-compassion as an affective event that is appraised as relevant by interdependent employees (and testing for both positive and negative observer reactions), I introduce new theory to the literature that addresses ambiguity regarding the implications of engaging in self-compassion at work. The literature currently lacks strong theoretical grounding – especially beyond intrapersonal experiences – proving it difficult to theorize about its occurrence and influence in the workplace. As such, I created a nuanced model that examined observed self-compassion

through an affect-based lens, delineated how this expression is relevant for others, and unpacked how that ultimately impacts workplace relationships.

Finally, one reason AET is influential is because it acknowledges that affective reactions do not occur within a vaccum, and rather, context plays a pivotal role in influencing reactions. Thus, by incorporating workplace norms as a moderator within my model, I argued that the work environment shapes observers' affections reactions in distinct ways, thereby providing a narrower view of the complex interpersonal nature of expressing self-compassion at work. Future research should explore the influence of additional types of workplace environmental features, such as industry. For example, investment banking (characterized by a higher priority on productivity, lower priority on employee well-being; Karaian & Sorkin, 2021) is an industry that evoke more negative reactions to observing self-compassion, compared to mental health or therapeutic services, which may elicit more supportive reactions.

From a practical standpoint, because I found support for the positive pathway, it seems logical that organizations would want to nurture and develop conditions that promote self-compassion. First, organizational members should understand that self-compassion is a useful tool for combatting the many challenges and suffering experiences both in and out of the workplace. Organizations should implement workshops that educate employees on the importance of adopting a self-compassionate mindset and set up policies that promote and reward this type of behavior. Second, organizational leaders should be a source of encouragement for this practice and championing or rewarding employees who prioritize self-compassion. This is particularly important because

oftentimes organizations are rewarding employees who adopt workaholic tendencies (e.g., working on the weekend, staying late at work, etc.; Clark, 2024), and thus practicing self-compassion may seem paradoxical. My results suggested that compassionate-based environments amplify observers' positive reactions, and thus making changes to the rituals, norms, rewards, and policies in a way that promotes a compassionate culture (and thereby self-compassion) can contribute to the "social fabric" of the organization (Dutton et al., 2007) and perhaps normalize this practice for employees. Finally, though my results indicate that individuals in general feel positively toward others' self-compassion, leaders should understand that employees may fear that others view it poorly (Joeng et al., 2017). Thus, leaders can practice visible self-compassion in the workplace to model this type of behavior for others. They can also coach and mentor followers to further encourage this practice.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

As with every study, this dissertation has limitations that warrant discussion. First, the experimental designs in Studies 1 and 2 are advantageous as experiments are an underutilized method in the social sciences that minimize concerns with internal validity (Podakoff & Podsakoff, 2019). However, emotions were measured rather than manipulated in my studies, thereby not fully addressing causal-chain designs. Future research should implement experimental-causal-chain designs (Spencer et al., 2005) – whereby the independent variable is manipulated in one study and the mediating variable is manipulated in a second study – as supplementary studies to further bolster causality arguments and strengthen internal validity. Additionally, there are some limitations

regarding my manipulations in the experimental studies. Notably, there are limitations to validity on the video experiment design in Study 1. Although I included a manipulation check to assess differences in the high vs. low self-compassion conditions, I did not assess whether the participant was *actually* witnessing self-compassion (as opposed to other similar constructs, such as coping). I drew from the literature (Neff, 2003a) to create the self-compassionate (high and low) responses, but if I redo this study, I may create other conditions that reflect similar, yet distinct constructs and run that in a separate sample to strengthen validity of the video design.

Second, there are limitations regarding the moderating variable (workplace norms) that may have resulted in insignificant interactions. In Study 2, it is possible that the worknorm manipulations were not worded strongly enough to have a significant effect (especially the high-performance work environment). Future work may juxtapose these workplace norms in one condition to more strongly manipulate the workplace norm (e.g., high performance work environment, low compassion-based environment in one condition or vice versa). Alternatively, it is possible that participants imagined their work environment to be *both* “high-performance” and “compassion-based.” The significant correlation between high-performance and compassion-based environments in Study 3 (r = .36) suggests that this may be possible. Contrary to my initial thinking, it is not necessarily the case that low compassion-based environments are equivalent to high-performance environments (and vice versa). In fact, the fundamental basis of what it means to practice self-compassion in each environment may be different. For example, expressing self-compassion in a compassion-based work environment relates to the

notion of whether it is safe to express self-compassion in this environment. On the other hand, expressing self-compassion in a high-performance work environment may relate to the idea of whether the focal actor is focusing on the *self* versus the *organization*. Essentially, I tested (in)congruity in my dissertation – how affective reactions are influenced when self-compassion is consistent with or in violation of workplace norms, (or when they are in congruent or incongruent environments) – but it may have been more appropriate to test high and low conditions. If I redo this study, I might test the workplace norms differently such that I manipulate high/low norms in the experimental study and include scales that reflect compassionate and non-compassionate environments in the field study.

Third, Study 3 data was collected at a single point in time, thus I cannot claim causality. Although this type of data collection is common within roster-based studies (Methot et al., 2016; Zagenczyk et al., 2020; see also Taylor et al., 2021) and can be challenging to collect, future research should implement longitudinal studies to strengthen casuality and investigate how prolonged exposure to a self-compassionate employee impacts future affective reactions in observers as a potential research question. Additionally, Study 3 surveyed in-person MBA students, and therefore may limit generalizability to other populations. Future research should conduct this type of analysis amongst employees in various organizations to bolster external validity (Cruz, 2021).

Finally, although there were a high number of observations in Study 3, the response rate regarding the number of students that elected to participate is lower than expected. This could have been a result of the lengthy survey or insufficient awareness to

the study's timeline. Specifically, there was not a limit on how many students could be selected for the interaction tie. This means that the more students selected, the longer the survey. In a close and tight-knit program, it is possible that students discussed this aspect, which may have deterred other students from participating. Future research may sample in an organization and limit the number of ratees that a participant can select. For instance, Taylor et al. (2021) had employees select five coworkers whose last name was closest to the letter "L". Adopting a similar approach may be a suitable method for decreasing participant fatigue, sample bias, and increasing the likelihood of participation. Second, I was not able to attend all classes that this survey was distributed in to make an announcement. Therefore, some students may have only been exposed to the study via a Canvas announcement, which may have not had as strong of an effect for motivation to participate (compared to making an announcement and expressing gratitude in-person). Future work may benefit from attending in-person to the organization to explain the study and express gratitude for participation.

Conclusion

In a world full of suffering, the need for studying and practicing self-compassion is imperative. This dissertation sought to explore the interpersonal consequences of practicing self-compassion at work. My results showed that observers react favorably to employees practicing this positive, yet self-focused behavior. While there is a wealth of work on self-compassion, there are still many questions to be explored. I aspire to join the handful of scholars studying self-compassion in the workplace and "grab a seat at the table" by continuing to make contributions in this space.

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Table 1
Summary of Dodson and Heng (2022)

ANTECEDENTS	CONSEQUENCES
Dispositional Characteristics Agreeableness (+) Extraversion (+) Conscientiousness (+) Neuroticism (-) Emotional intelligence (+) Avoidance of attachment to others (-) **Demographics** Age (+) Work experience (+) Gender Cultural upbringing **Organizational Support** Supportive coworkers & supervisors (+) Supportive organizational culture (+) **Employee workload** Employee workload (-)	**Mental & Physical Health** Depressive symptoms (-) Negative thoughts (-) Psychological well-being (-) Burnout (-) Physical health (+) Sleep quality (+) Health behavior change (+) Stress (-) Chronic mental & physical fatigue (-) **Resilience** Emotional resilience (+) Resilience (+) Improved resilience (+) **Job Satisfaction** Job satisfaction (inconsistent results) **Performance** Job performance (+) OCB (+) Turnover intentions (+) Job engagement (+) In-group functioning (+) **Compassion** Compassion fatigue (-) Compassion satisfaction (+) **Relationships** Compromise & helping behavior (+) Harm interpersonal relationships (-) Compassion for others (+) Leader effectiveness ratings (+)

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Observing Visible Self-Compassion

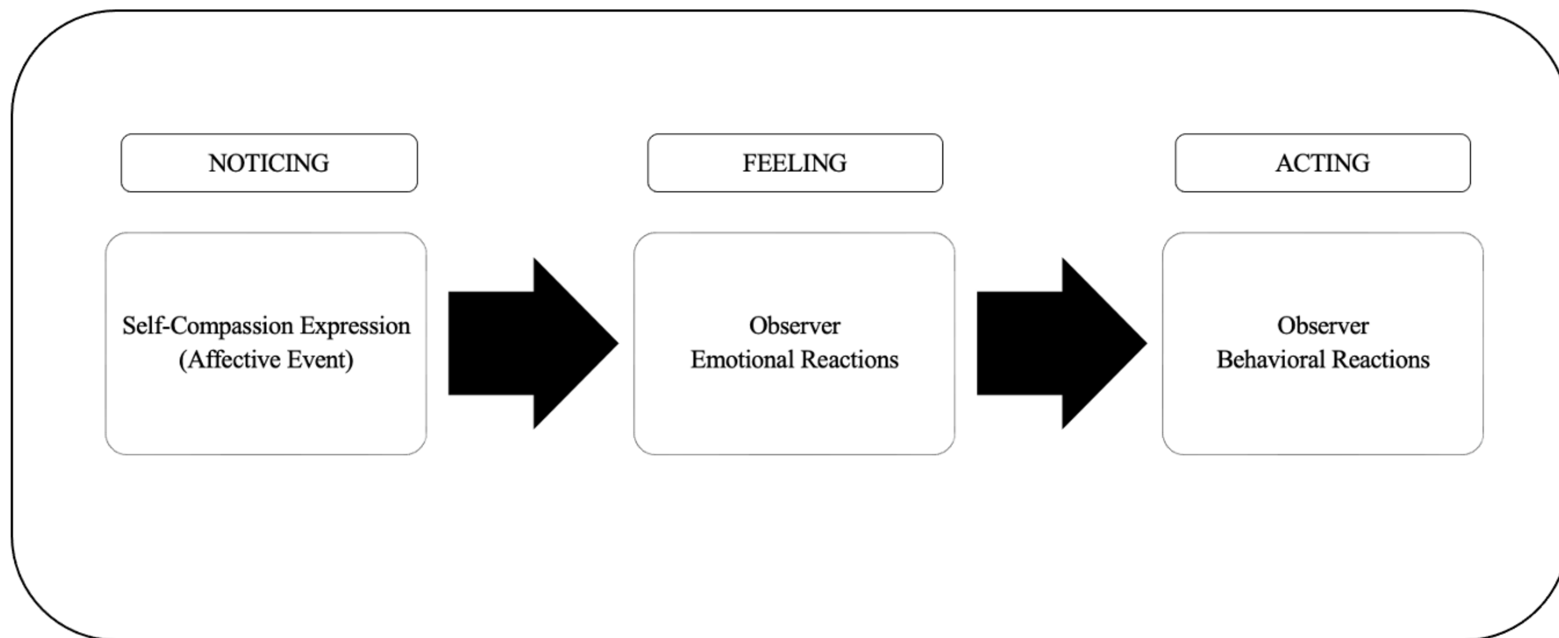


Figure 2 Theoretical Model

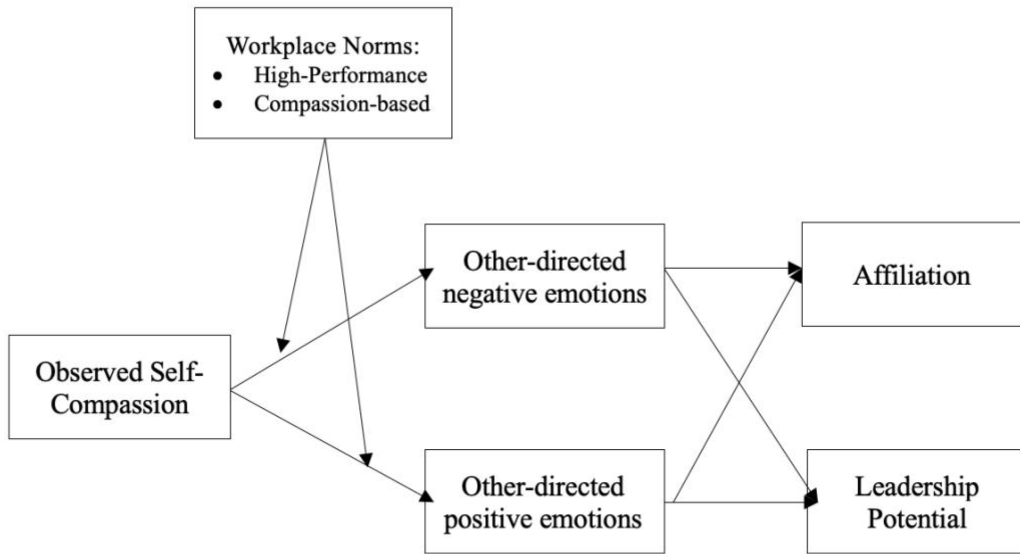


Table 2
Sample Descriptions of Observing Self-Compassion (Pilot Study)

- “We were told to do some early work that started at 6am by higher up and one of my coworkers proceeded to tell them that he wouldn’t be there because he would be taking the morning to work out and do dome meditation instead and that he could finish and catch up later.”
- “My colleague had several very intense calls one week. They didn’t take up her whole shift, but were unusually emotionally draining. She told our boss she would be working from home the next day to give herself space to process and access to her favorite walking trail to take breaks between the next day’s calls.”
- “My coworker came back from a meeting regarding the Oracle upgrade (software) we had migrated to and you could tell [he] was visibly unhappy given the outcome. I briefly caught him in passing where he told me "not right now" and then packed up his stuff to take the rest of the day off. From there, he ended up working from home at a much more lax pace for the next couple days.”
- “I had a coworker that was having a very very bad week. He was having home troubles, extended family troubles due to medical issues, and general issues at work with missing deadlines and falling behind on daily tasks. One day when he seemed really stressed I saw him order a pizza, and bring his laptop to a breakroom that is unused. He spent his entire hour lunch break watching a movie and eating pizza. When I noticed what he was doing he told me he needed to relax a bit and this was his ‘happy place’ thing to do when things are bad.”
- “My coworker was going through a tough time at home and our work load was increasing due to the start of the school year. It was a very overwhelming time. She decided to take time off during the most critical time of the year for the staff but she needed to do that to take care of her mental health. She also started taking advantage of the yoga classes being offered on-site after work hours.”
- “One employee was working overtime to get out a shipment on time and was stressed because we were shorthanded. It was obvious that they were stressed but they persevered and kept alert and dutiful. After the job was complete they they did some minor yoga to relax and stretch. There was even a pause for some brief meditation of silence to clear their mind.”
- “I saw an employee who was super busy at one point during busy season start to meditate in his office. He would close his door for a thirty minute period and sit on the ground while listening to nature sounds.”
- “The employee treated themself and bought a dessert from the next door market during work because we were having a hard day. They also took the time to use their 10 minute paid break because we are usually too busy to leave and relax.”
- “Recently, I saw a colleague being stressed due to personal conflicts and the work load. The employee took time off and decided to be firm as to not take on any more tasks. He also took some breaks to talk things off with his close colleagues.”
- “The employee took a long lunch break at a nice restaurant after a stressful project was completed.”

Table 3
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of the Focal Variables (Study 1)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Self-Compassion	1.51	0.50	(-)		
2. Positive Emotions	2.20	1.08	0.22**	(0.85)	
3. Negative Emotions	1.76	0.99	0.13	-0.25**	(0.90)

Note. $N = 200$. Self-Compassion (1 = Low Self-Compassion; 2 = High Self-Compassion). Cronbach's alpha are in paratheses on the diagonals.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of the Focal Variables (Study 2)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Self-Compassion	1.50	0.50	(-)			
2. Workplace Norms	1.49	0.50	0.01	(-)		
3. Positive Emotions	2.26	1.03	0.40**	0.12*	(0.85)	
4. Negative Emotions	1.42	0.72	-0.17**	-0.10	-0.29**	(0.91)

Note. $N = 232$. Self-Compassion (1 = Low Self-Compassion; 2 = High Self-Compassion).
Workplace Norms (1 = High-Performance; 2 = Compassion-Based).
Cronbach's alpha are in paratheses on the diagonals.
$^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics of Other-Directed Negative and Positive Emotions (Study 2)

		Other-directed negative emotions		
Condition	N	Mean	SD	SE
LSC_Results	60	1.69	0.75	0.1
HSC_Results	59	1.28	0.63	0.08
LSC_Relat	56	1.39	0.64	0.09
HSC_Relat	57	1.31	0.8	0.11
		Other-directed positive emotions		
LSC_Results	60	1.8	0.75	0.1
HSC_Results	59	2.49	1.03	0.13
LSC_Relat	56	1.92	0.89	0.12
HSC_Relat	57	2.86	1.05	0.14

Note. LSC = Low Self-Compassion, HSC = High Self-Compassion, Results = High-Performance, Relat = Compassion-Based

Table 6
ICC(1) Values (Study 3)

Variable	*F* ratio	ICC(1)
Positive Emotions	3.74**	0.15
Negative Emotions	9.12**	0.46
Affiliation	2.83**	0.11
Leadership Potential	6.74**	0.27

**$p < .01$

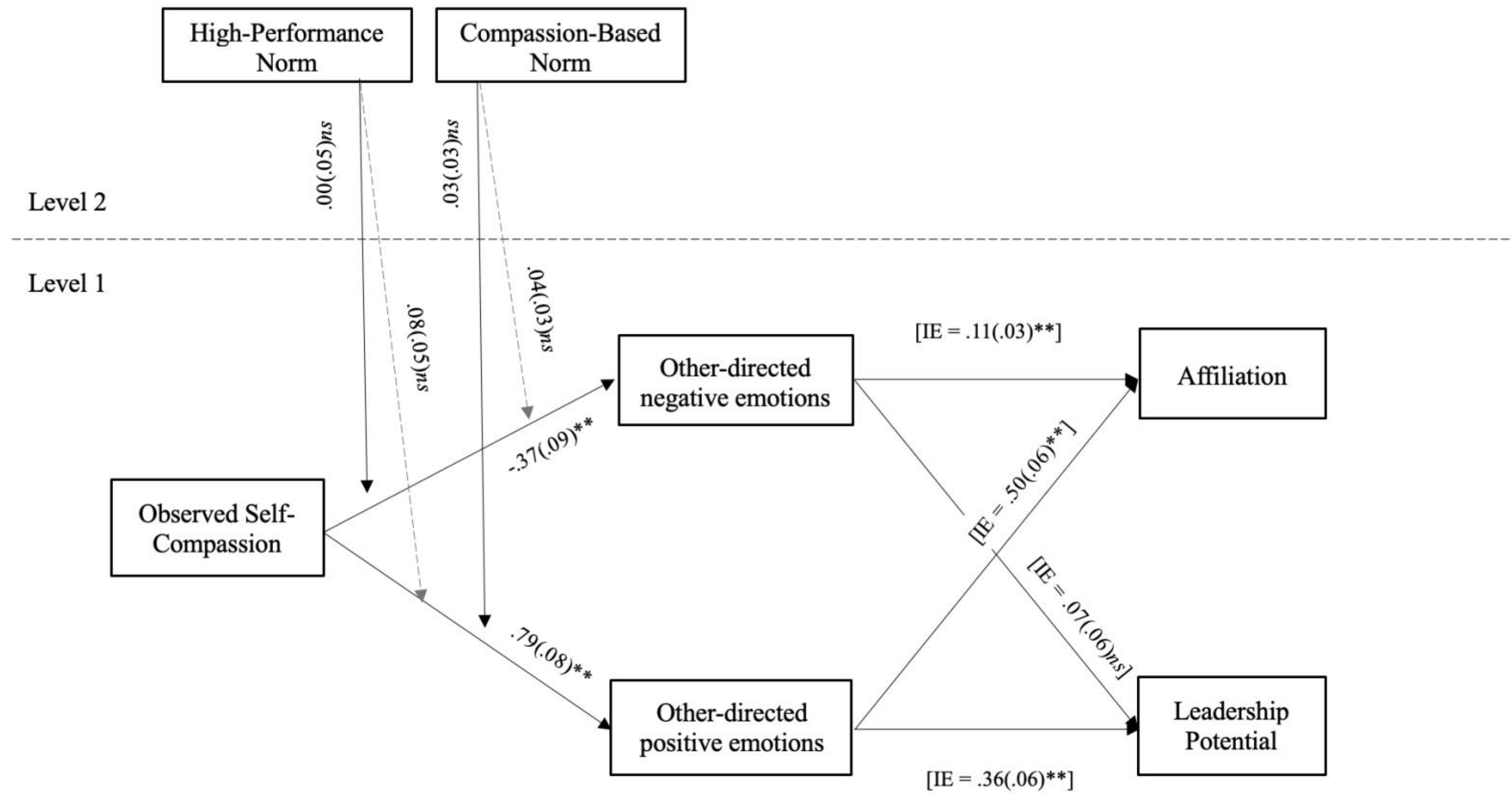
Table 7
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations (Study 3)

	Within		Between							
Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Self-Compassion	4.10	0.84	4.00	0.57	--	0.44**	-0.40**	0.38**	0.36**	--
2. Positive Emotions	3.36	0.98	3.24	0.61	0.25	--	-0.39**	0.68**	0.52**	--
3. Negative Emotions	1.42	0.76	1.56	0.67	-0.46**	-0.05	--	-0.46**	-0.40**	--
4. Affiliation	3.76	0.99	3.8	0.43	0.07	0.22	-0.35*	--	0.55**	--
5. Leadership Potential	3.83	1.01	3.78	0.65	0.25	.41**	-.40**	.53**	--	--
6. Compassion-Based	--	--	3.58	0.82	0.11	0.26	0.11	-0.09	0.00	--
7. High-Performance	--	--	3.92	0.51	0.01	0.15	0.07	0.03	0.25	.36**

Note. Correlations below the diagonal are at the between-level (N = 52). Correlations above the diagonal are at the within-level (N = 791).

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

Figure 3
Study 3 Model



Note. Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported with standard errors in parenthesis. Dotted arrows in model indicate relationship was not hypothesized. IE = Indirect Effect. *p < .05; ** p < .01.

Table 8
Summary of Results

Hypothesis		Study	Result
H1a	Observed SC is positively related to other-directed negative emotions	1, 2, 3	Not supported
H1b	Observed SC is positively related to other-directed positive emotions	1, 2, 3	Supported
H2a	Other-directed negative emotions mediates the negative relationship between observed SC and affiliation	3	Not supported
H2b	Other-directed positive emotions mediates the positive relationship between observed SC and affiliation	3	Supported
H3a	Other-directed negative emotions mediates the negative relationship between observed SC and leadership potential	3	Not supported
H3b	Other-directed positive emotions mediates the positive relationship between observed SC and leadership potential	3	Supported
H4a	The positive relationship between observed self-compassion and other-directed negative emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger when self-compassion is expressed in high-performance work environments	2, 3	Not supported
H4b	The positive relationship between observed self-compassion and other-directed positive emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger when self-compassion is expressed in compassion-based environments	2, 3	Partially supported
H5a	The negative relationship between observed self-compassion and affiliation mediated by other-directed negative emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger when self-compassion is expressed in high-performance work environments	3	Not supported
H5b	The positive relationship between observed self-compassion and affiliation mediated by other-directed positive emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger in when self-compassion is expressed in compassion-based environments	3	Not supported
H6a	The negative relationship between observed self-compassion and leadership potential mediated by other-directed negative emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger when self-compassion is expressed in high-performance work environments	3	Not supported
H6b	The positive relationship between observed self-compassion and leadership potential mediated by other-directed positive emotions is moderated by workplace norms, such that the relationship is stronger when self-compassion is expressed in compassion-based environments	3	Not supported

Appendix A
Study 1 Experimental Vignettes

In the high self-compassion condition, the actors read the following script (the script is not visible):

> ***Focal actor (sitting with colleague in office, both appear to be working):*** *"All right so let's touch base for this week's agenda. It looks like we have two meetings tomorrow – one with Jim and one with Jane. Then, we also need to get that report done by Friday. Does that all sound about right to you?"*
> ***Colleague:*** *"Yup that's what I have on my end too."*
> ***Focal actor:*** *"Great, why don't we get started on that report today."*
> ***Colleague:*** *"Actually, don't forget we have that client meeting with the team at 3 o'clock. We should probably leave for that soon."*
> ***Focal actor:*** *"Yup good call, I'll be ready to leave in a few minutes. I need to get my stuff together because I've got to head out right after the meeting."*
> ***Colleague:*** *"Do you have another meeting after our 3 o'clock?"*
> ***Focal actor:*** *"No, I'm going to finish our work from yesterday. This project has been incredibly challenging, and this week has been so disappointing. But I realized I just need to take some time and be kind and compassionate to myself in times of stress*[5] *(checks watch). Hey we better get going."*

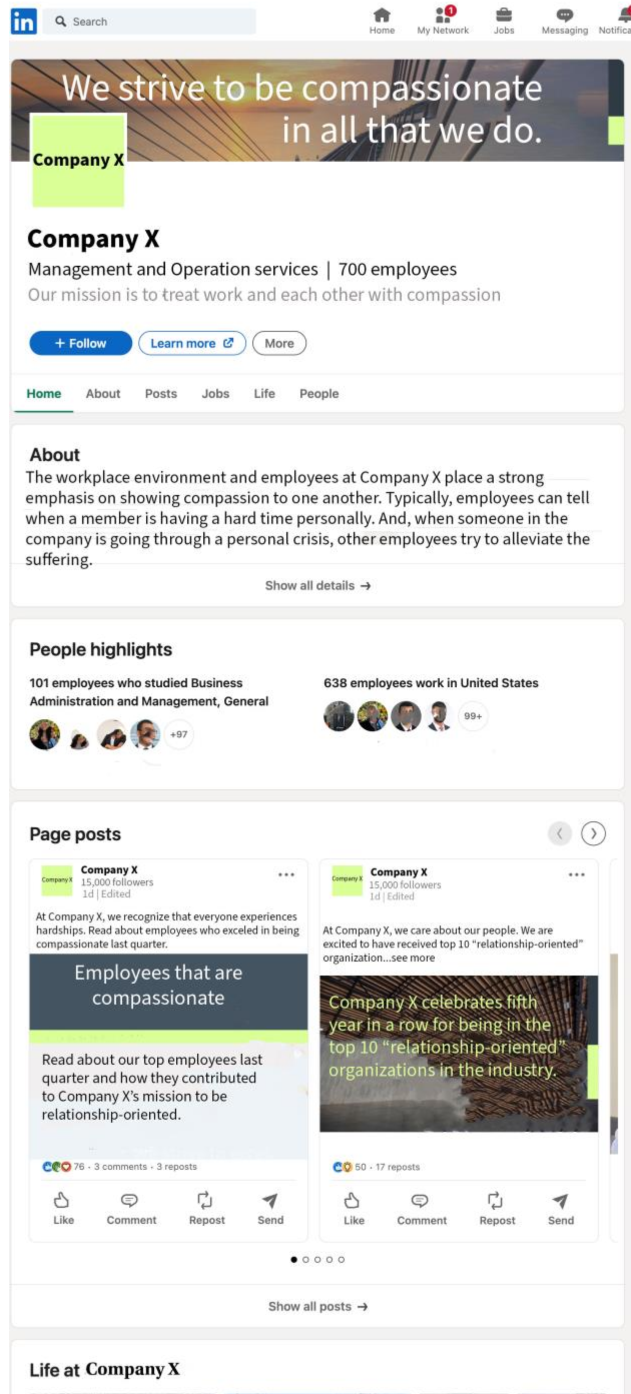
In the low self-compassion condition, the actors read from the following script:

> ***Focal actor (sitting with colleague in office, both appear to be working):*** *"All right so let's touch base for this week's agenda. It looks like we have two meetings tomorrow – one with Jim and one with Jane. Then, we also need to get that report done by Friday. Does that all sound about right to you?"*
> ***Colleague:*** *"Yup that's what I have on my end too."*
> ***Focal actor:*** *"Great, why don't we get started on that report today."*
> ***Colleague:*** *"Actually, don't forget we have that client meeting with the team at 3 o'clock. We should probably leave for that soon."*
> ***Focal actor:*** *"Yup good call, I'll be ready to leave in a few minutes. I need to get my stuff together because I've got to head out right after the meeting."*
> ***Colleague:*** *"Do you have another meeting after our 3 o'clock?"*
> ***Focal actor****: "No, I'm going to finish our work from yesterday. This project has been incredibly challenging, and this week has been so disappointing. But I'm more disappointed and mad at myself for not getting more work done, despite how stressful things are right now (checks watch). Hey we better get going."*

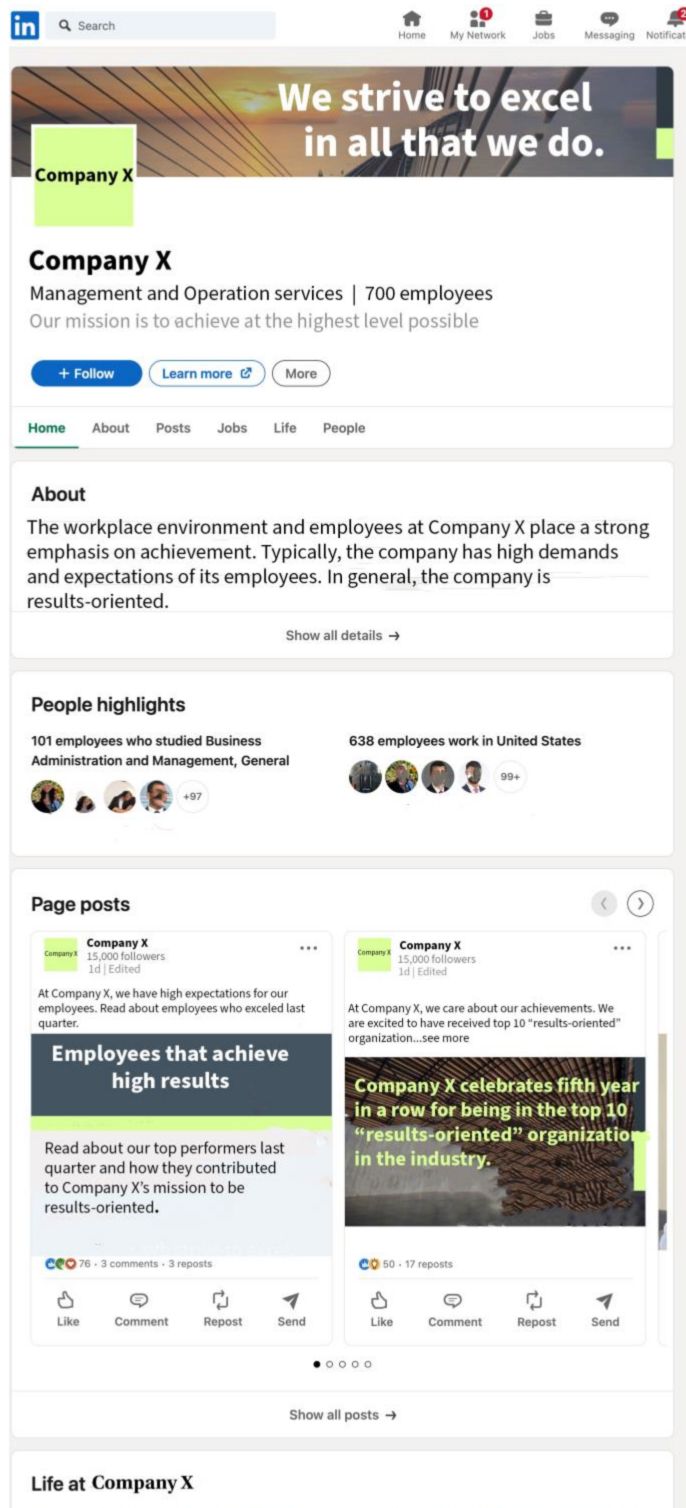
[5] For all experiments, highlighted sentences reflect the manipulation.

Appendix B
Study 2 Mock LinkedIn pages and Experimental Vignettes

Compassion-Based Environment Mock LinkedIn page for Company X:



High-Performance Work Environment Mock LinkedIn for Company X:



In the high self-compassion condition, participants will read the following scenario:

> *Imagine you are working closely with a coworker on a big project at Company X. This coworker has experienced a work-related hardship that was disappointing. As you approach your coworker's desk to chit-chat before the project status meeting, you ask how they are doing. The coworker responds that they are trying to be understanding and compassionate towards themself. They realize everyone experiences hardships at work and that they are trying to take a balanced view of the situation and be kinder to themselves during this time.*

In the low self-compassion condition, participants will read the following scenario:

> *Imagine you are working closely with a coworker on a big project at Company X. This coworker has experienced a work-related hardship that was disappointing. As you approach your coworker's desk to chit-chat before the project status meeting, you ask how they are doing. The coworker responds that they are disappointed in themself and wished they were a better performer. They feel that they are the only one who experiences hardships at work and are consumed with feelings of inadequacy.*