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The Self-transcendent Emotion of Love Mediates the Relationship Between Spiritual Coping and Compassion



Marlene Figueroa M.A., & Viviane Seyranian, Ph.D.
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

INTRODUCTION

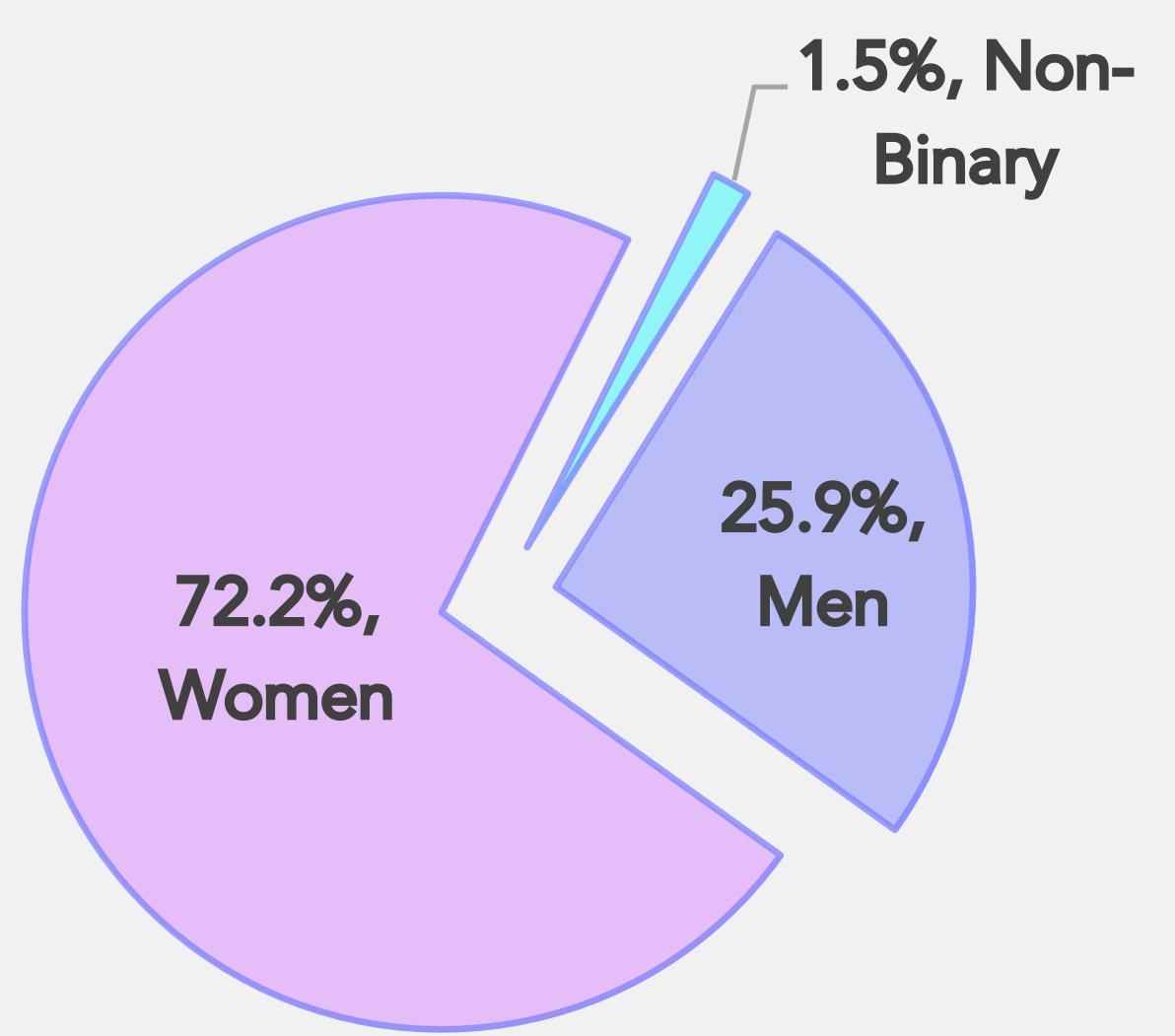
A wealth of research indicates that the self-transcendent emotion of love is a significant mediator of spirituality and well-being (Van Cappellen et al., 2014). Saslow and colleagues (2013) found that compassion is an important component explaining the relationship between spirituality and love. The current study investigated whether compassion continues to be an essential mechanism explaining the connection between spirituality and love in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, this research explored whether spirituality or religion helped students experience compassion while they navigated the challenges of the initial stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. We hypothesized that students who employed spiritual/religious coping during the pandemic would experience more compassion and in turn, more love.

METHODOLOGY

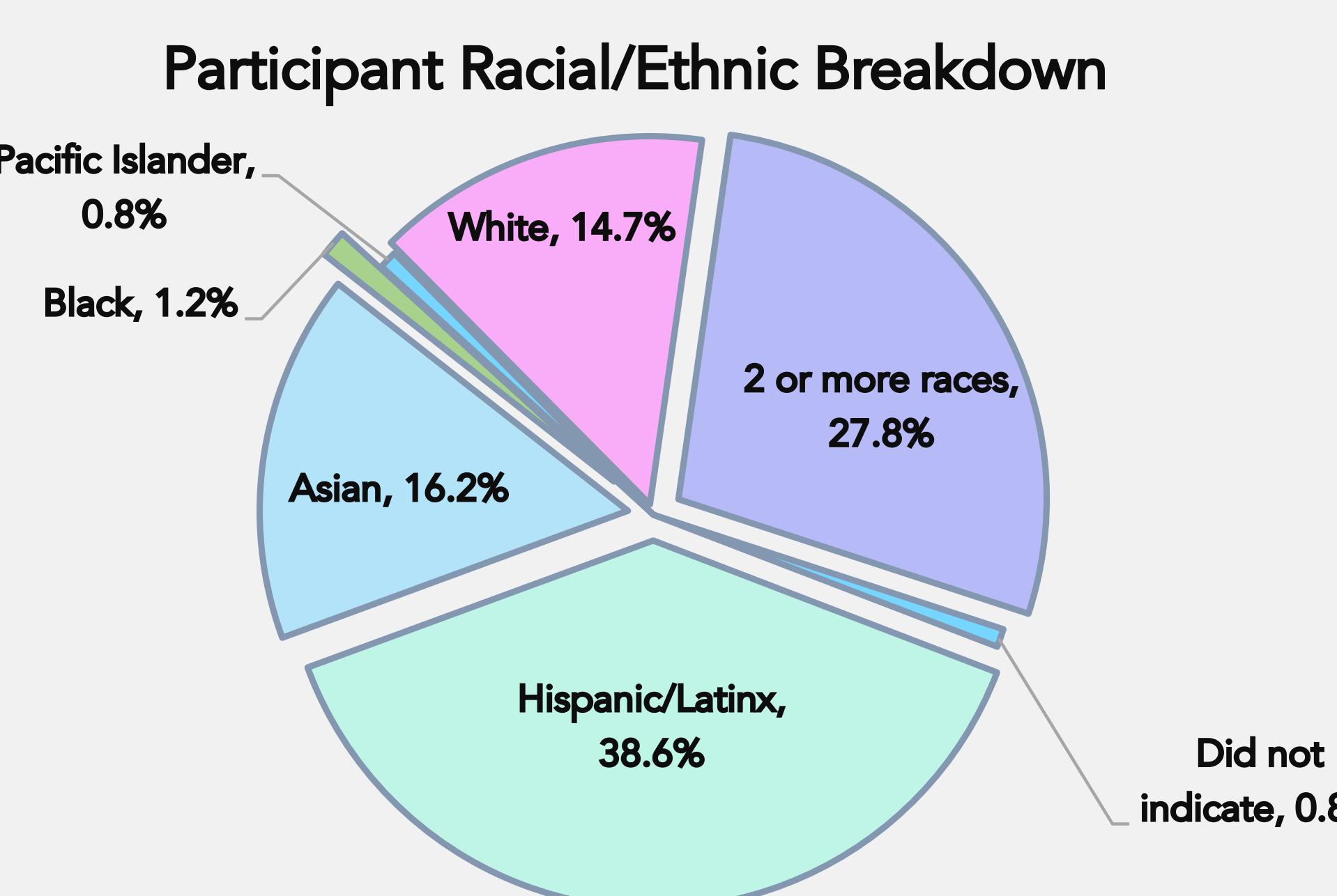
Participants

$N = 259$ Undergraduate Students; $M_{age} = 22.11$ years old; $SD_{age} = 4.86$

Participant Gender Breakdown



Participant Racial/Ethnic Breakdown

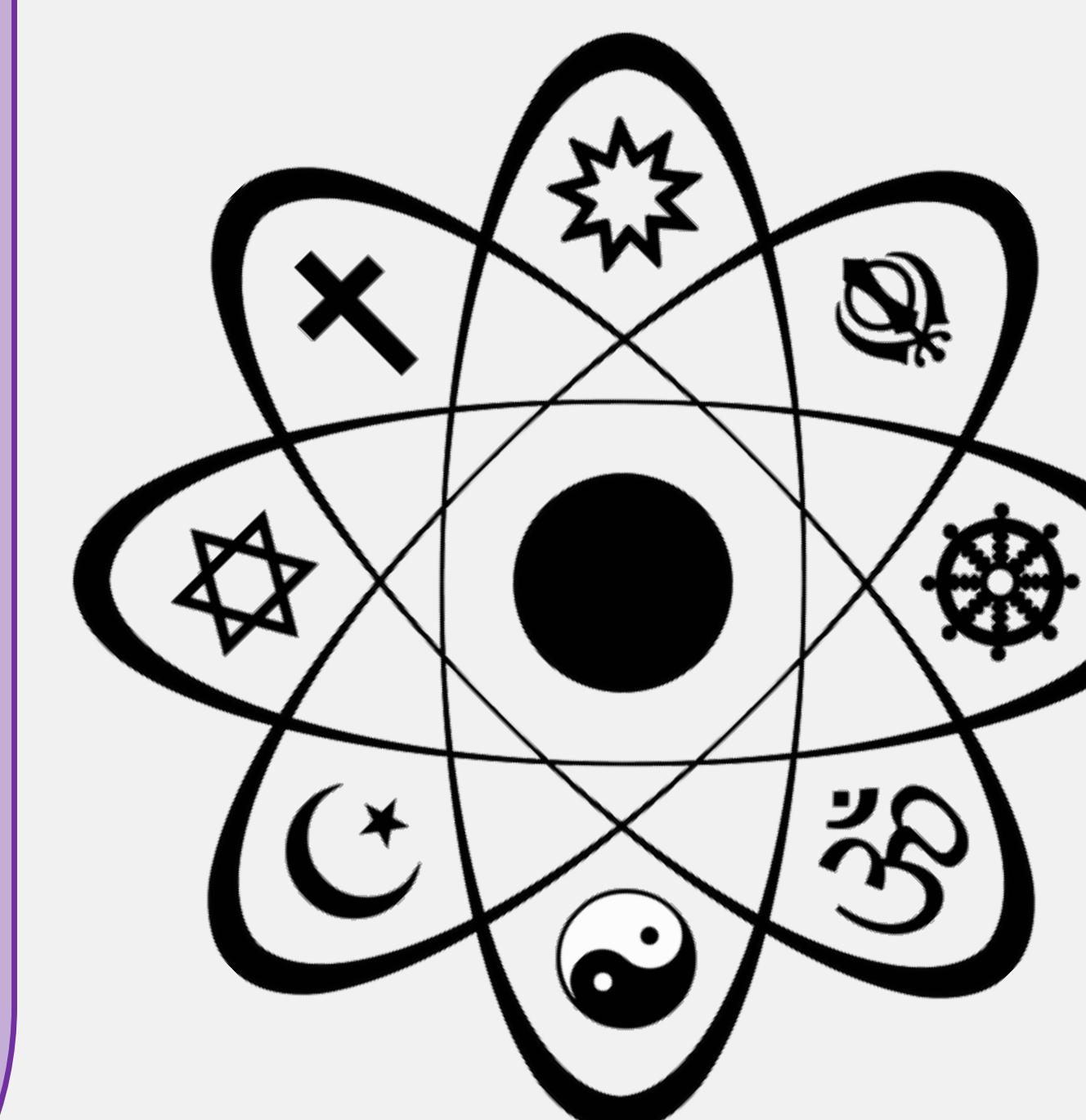


SURVEY MEASURES

- Brief Coping Inventory (Carver, 1997).
- Modified Differential Emotions Scale (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003).

RESULTS

A bootstrapping design was performed using Hayes Process Macro. Mediation analysis showed that spiritual coping and compassion were significantly mediated by love ($R = .27$, $R^2 = .07$, $F(1, 257) = 19.56$, $p < .001$).



Religious and Spiritual Coping is a way of dealing with stress in which some people turn to religion or spirituality for emotional support, positive reframing, and growth (Carver, 1989).

Mediation Analysis of Love on Spiritual Coping and Compassion

Variable	B	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
Spiritual Coping → Compassion	.08	.05	1.62	.11	-.02	.17
Spiritual Coping → Love	.24	.06	4.42	.00*	.14	.35
Spiritual Coping → Love → Compassion	.41	.05	8.03	.00*	.31	.51
Direct	.08	.05	1.62	.11	-.02	.17
Indirect	.10	.03	-	-	.05	.16
Total	.18	.05	3.49	.00*	.08	.28

Based on 5000 bootstrap samples

Note. * $p < .001$

DISCUSSION

These results supports and extend previous work by Saslow and colleagues (2013) in two ways. It provides a conceptual replication of the idea that love mediates the link between spirituality and compassion. It extends this work by showing that these relationships occur for higher education students and even during a stressful time like transitioning to online learning during a pandemic. This suggests that universities may help enhance compassion in students by offering programs that promote spiritual development and coping for students.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Viviane Seyranian, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Social Psychology
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
vseyranian@cpp.edu

