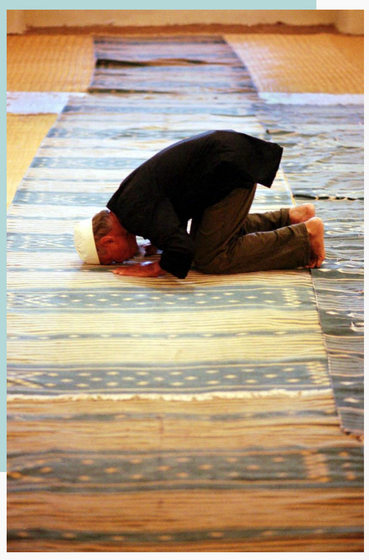
In different religious rituals we observe a variety of bodily postures, some ritual-specific. When accentuating the importance of embodiedness and extendedness of the cognitive system, those postures have to be considered as crucial elements for understanding how participants perceive and process rituals.

One of those postures is kneeling – socially and symbolically the position is associated with submission, respect, reverence and obeisance. In some religions, kneeling is explicitly used as a position for prayer – position of submission to deity or other superhuman agent.

Prolonged kneeling has been also used as a form of punishment - as an act of authority on subordinate person.



Theoretical goal of the project

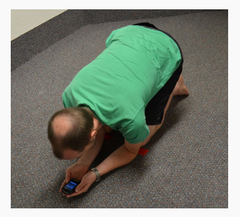
The main aim of this project is to show how bodily positions can influence our situational perceptions. The project focuses on the bodily position of kneeling and subsequent emotional experience of this bodily setting.

Hypothesis: Kneeling position induces a greater feeling of subordination compared with standing position.

While the maximum effect of the kneeling is probably connected to social setting and context, this project focuses solely on the bodily posture.

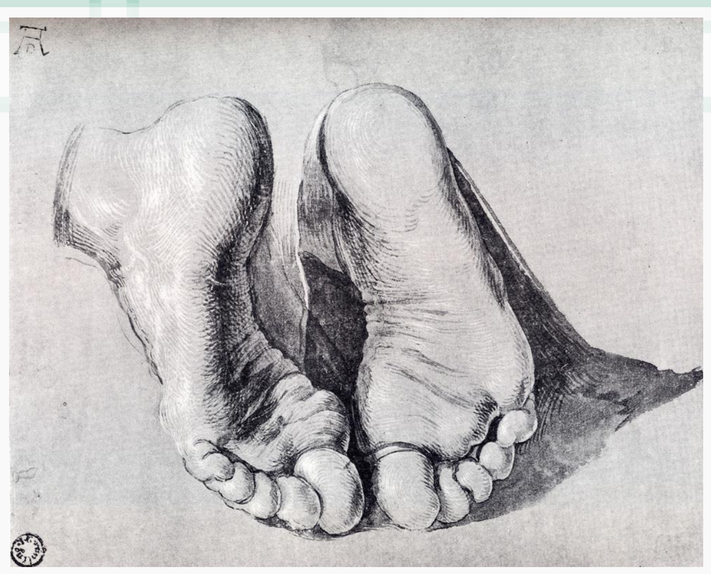
Positions

"Muslim" kneeling with elbows on floor.



"Christian" kneeling with straight back.

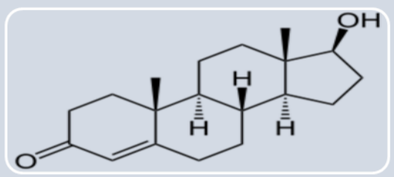
Standing



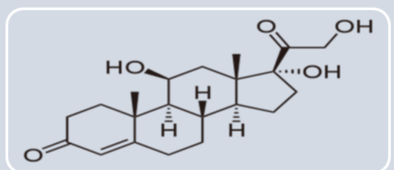
Measurements

Testosterone and cortisol levels

• Detracted from saliva samples.



Testosterone levels both reflect and reinforce dispositional and situational status and dominance (Archer, 2006; Mazur & Booth, 1998; Carney, Cuddy & Yap, 2010)



Power holders show lower basal cortisol levels than powerless people do. When power is achieved cortisol drops (Abbott et al., 2003; Coe, Mendoza & Levine, 1979; Sapolsky, Alberts, & Altmann, 1997; Carney, Cuddy & Yap, 2010).

„Height estimation task“

Based upon recent results of Michelle M. Duguid and Jack A. Goncalo (2012), showing that feeling powerful leads to overestimates in self-reported height. Positive or negative divergence in participants' estimate of their own height can therefore be used as measure of which bodily position provokes more powerful/dominant feelings.

The height of the participant of the experiment is measured in the beginning by standing them in front of a wall, marking their height on the wall and measuring it with a tape. While the participant is inside the examination room, the mark on the wall (marking their height) will be set 5 cm above the measured position. When leaving the examination room, the participant is asked to estimate their height in comparison with this marker. Participant provides their estimation on a simple scale.

Heart rate

• Measured by Polar Team System.

There is no clear or simple connection between heart rate and feeling of subordination. Still, the heart rate measure and analysis give us much broader picture of physiological processes during the assumed position.

Self-report + UWIST mood questionnaire

• Open questions concerning the process of the experiment.
• UWIST – measuring actual mood + items measuring dominance/ submission feeling.

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