A Qualitative Exploration of the Connections Among Quality of Relationships with Parent(s), Self-Compassion, and Academic Motivation in Young Adults

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Faculty of Social Sciences, Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario

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Abstract

Multiple studies have demonstrated a link between the quality of parent-child relationships and children’s capacity for self-compassion. In turn, children’s self-compassion has been linked to motivation for achieving academic success. However, research has not explored the connections among the quality of parent-child relationships, young people’s capacity for self-compassion, and young people’s academic motivation. This qualitative research study fills an important gap in the literature by holistically exploring the self-perceived connections among these three constructs among university students. This study included nine undergraduate students attending Brock University (across several disciplines and years). Participants completed a demographic section along with a self-compassion survey and a semi-structured interview. Findings suggest some participants perceived a connection between positive relationships with parents and high self-compassion and academic motivation when their parents extended compassion to them in difficult situations. Interestingly, some who did not perceive their parents as compassionate and supportive still reported having high self-compassion and being very motivated to achieve academic success. Findings can inform clinical practices that support young adults and university students as they strive to navigate the transition to university life and excel academically.
Acknowledgments

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the help and support of many great people who dedicated their energy and time to help me succeed.

To my supervisor, Dr. Christine Tardif-Williams, thank you for guiding me throughout this transforming journey, you have shown amazing commitment and dedication in support of my interests and goals. I am thankful for having worked with an understanding and empathetic supervisor, especially during the roughest times during my pregnancy. Christine, you gave me the best graduate experience, it is simply unforgettable.

To my external examiner, Dr. Andrea Breen, and committee members, Dr. Thomas O’Neill and Dr. Heather Chalmers, thank you all for your thorough and constructive feedback. I appreciate the time and effort you put into assisting me throughout this process. Your suggestions allowed me to improve my writing and enhanced the quality of my research.

To the students who participated in this study, this project wouldn’t have been a success without your sincere interest which produced detailed reflections and made the sharing of your personal experience possible, I am very grateful to have interviewed such unique individuals. Thank you for sharing your accomplishments and struggles with me.

Finally, to my loving husband and amazing parents, this would have been a much more difficult experience without your support and encouragement.

To my wonderful family and friends, thank you for being patient with me through this journey, I would not have done it this well without your cheering. Special thanks to my loving husband, David, and my mother, Soha, who supported me throughout this journey in every possible way, thank you both for believing in me and caring for my son when I wasn’t available. To my dear son, David III, I am sorry for the times that I had to be away from you. Although you are still too young to understand, I hope you think it was worth it in the end when you grow up and become a graduate student yourself.
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List of Terms

**Attachment**: An intimate emotional bond that exists within infant and mother relationship and impacts the social and emotional relationships in later years of life (Bowlby, 1969).

**Authoritarian Parenting Style**: A parenting style where the parent exercises control but does not execute it with warmth or support; these parents expect obedience without questioning, use harsh discipline methods with their children, and can be insensitive to their children's emotional needs (Baumrind, 1971).

**Authoritative Parenting Style**: A parenting style where the parent exercises high parental control yet conveys it with warmth and responsiveness; these parents maintain a balance of expectations to provide a healthy challenging environment for their child (Baumrind, 1971).

**Autonomous Motivation**: Engaging in a behavior that is consistent with intrinsic goals or outcomes which makes the behavior self-determined (Hagger et al., 2014).

**Common Humanity**: It is the recognition of our shared humanity which is one of the elements of self-compassion. Compassion means “to suffer with,” which implies a basic mutuality in the experience of suffering (Neff, 2019).

**Internal Working Models**: The mechanism through which children translate caregiving experiences into an attachment pattern based on the mental representations of their caregivers’ responses and behaviour (Bowlby, 1969/1973).

**Learning/Mastery Approach Goals**: This applies to individuals who are mainly concerned with gaining knowledge to increase their competence and to master something new (Dweck, 1986).
**Mastery Motivation/Orientation Towards Learning:** This applies to individuals who are motivated by curiosity and the desire to develop skills, master tasks and understand new material (Elliot & Church, 1997).

**Maui Thai practice:** A form of combat sport originating in Thailand that involves the use of fists, elbows, knees, and shins (Krick, & Raschka, 2018).

**Mindfulness:** It is a non-judgmental mind state in which one observes thoughts and feelings as they are without suppressing or denying them. It also means to increase the ability to adapt to the current environment in a meaningful manner (Neff, 2019).

**Narcissism:** A trait associated with feelings of arrogance, entitlement, and grandiosity (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010).

**Overidentification with Emotions:** The inability to hold one’s painful thoughts and feelings in balanced awareness and instead have the urge to overidentify with them (Neff, 2019).

**Parenting Styles:** It is based on Baumrind’s typology of parenting styles (1971, 1989) which includes authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles.

**Performance Approach Goals:** This applies to individuals who focus on demonstrating their competence to others in order to gain favorable judgments or avoid negative judgments (Dweck, 1986).

**Permissive Parenting Style:** A parenting style where the parent is non-controlling yet set very few rules and boundaries and is reluctant to enforce them. (Baumrind, 1971).

**Self-Acceptance:** When individuals accept themselves as valuable human beings whether they are self-efficacious and others approve of or love them (Thompson & Waltz, 2008).

**Self-Compassion:** A type of coping mechanism that allows one to see their own experience as part of the common human experience, acknowledging that failure, suffering, and inadequacies are part of the human condition. It also entails being warm and understanding
toward one’s self rather than ignoring the pain. The three factors of self-compassion include self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (Neff, 2019).

**Self-Criticism:** When individuals experience feelings of unworthiness, inferiority, and guilt, which allows them to engage in harsh self-scrutiny and develop fear of not being accepted by other (Warren, Smeets, & Neff, 2016).

**Self-Kindness:** This involves generating feelings of care and comfort toward oneself and to associate with the development of being tolerant of one’s flaws and inadequacies instead of being self-critical (Neff, 2019).
Introduction

Many studies highlight the importance of psychological well-being from childhood into adulthood as it lays the foundation for a healthy and productive life (Burns, Loh, Byles, & Kendig, 2018; Chen, Yang, & Chiang, 2018). These findings underscore the need for practices and techniques that promote psychological well-being from childhood throughout adulthood to support people as they take on their roles as active and thriving members of society. According to Herrman (2012), psychological well-being refers to a state of well-being in which a person can use his or her abilities to cope with stressful events or adversity in his or her life.

Furthermore, examining factors that promote psychological well-being has led some researchers to focus on the potential of self-compassion as it is associated with greater positive self-attitude, feelings of self-kindness and common humanity, all of which are necessary to overcome hardships and succeed after experiencing failure (Neff & Germer, 2017; Scoglio et al., 2018). According to Raes (2011), although self-compassion is viewed as a relatively new concept in the field of psychology, it is becoming an area of significant interest across disciplines. Researchers have found that self-compassion aids in cultivating a healthy attitude and caring relationship towards the self (Birnie, Speca & Carlson, 2010).

One concept that is thought to associate with the development of self-compassion in young people is the quality of the parent-child relationships, which is also known to be a determinant of mental health in childhood, adolescence, and early-mid adulthood (Neff & Faso, 2015). Moreover, studies have shown that one’s level of self-compassion after making a mistake is associated with an increased motivation to achieve success (Breines & Chen, 2012). According to Breines and Chen (2012), an increase in motivation means an increase in the aspiration to take self-improvement action, which would become the driving force of achieving success and improving performance. These findings suggest that the quality of
parent-child relationships plays an important role in the development of self-compassion and that, in turn, self-compassion is associated with academic motivation among young people (Breines & Chen, 2012; Neff & Faso, 2015). However, research studies have yet to examine holistically the connections among self-compassion, quality of parent-child relationships, and academic motivation.

Notably, most, if not all, the studies on self-compassion in connection with the quality of parent-child relationships and academic motivation among young adults have adopted quantitative methods, despite the limited provisions of quantitative methods when it comes to personal accounting of lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, there seems to be a lack of research studies that adapt qualitative methods when exploring self-compassion and its connection to either parent-child relationship quality or academic motivation among young adults. Furthermore, in recognition of the surprising number of university students experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression (Andrews & Wilding, 2004; Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, & Hefner, 2007), there is a need for research that explores the factors contributing to the well-being of young people in university.

Accordingly, this study uses qualitative methodology to holistically explore the connections among quality of relationship with parent(s), self-compassion, and academic motivation among university students. This qualitative study will contribute uniquely to the existing body of knowledge on self-compassion and will highlight new findings of the complexity of the relations among these important constructs. Qualitative methods offer an in-depth analysis of topics and grants participants a chance to tell their unique stories. In this way, by conducting flexible and open-ended interviews, I hope to enrich our understanding of the connections among the quality of parent-child relationships, self-compassion and academic achievement among university students (Creswell, 2013).
Literature Review

Self-Compassion & Well-Being

Background on Self-compassion. According to Neff (2003b), having self-compassion involves respecting oneself and forgiving failings since it is considered a part of the human condition. It also involves being open to one’s own suffering rather than avoiding or disconnecting from it; self-compassion supports the generation of desire to alleviate suffering and reinforces the idea of healing oneself with kindness (Neff, 2003b). To be self-compassionate is to provide a non-judgmental understanding to pain, failures, and inadequacies so that one’s experience is seen as part of the larger human experience (Neff, 2003b). This implies understanding that the shared human condition is fragile and imperfect, and developing a willingness to extend that understanding to others when they fail or make mistakes (Neff & Germer, 2017). Moreover, based on the teachings of Buddhist philosophy, Neff (2003b) identifies self-compassion’s three main factors: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness which combine and interact to create a self-compassionate mindset (Neff & Germer, 2017).

According to Neff (2003a), individuals with low self-compassion are more likely to beat themselves up when making a mistake or failing in some way, which robs them of one of the most powerful coping mechanisms when dealing with the difficulties of life. Neff explains that when the self is harshly judged, excessive self-conscious emotions and feeling could be strengthened, which increases risk of overidentification with emotions especially during negative experiences and feelings of isolation (Neff, 2003a). One the other hand, self-kindness reduces levels of high self-conscious emotions, allowing for more feelings of interconnection and acceptance of reality (Neff & Germer, 2017). Also, common humanity allows one to recognize that personal failures and life’s challenges are simply part of being human, thus one can have more acceptance and understanding of why he or she might not be
the perfect person they want to be (Neff & Germer, 2017). Moreover, mindful acceptance involves being open to the reality of the present moment, allowing emotions, thoughts, and sensations to enter one’s awareness without judgment, avoidance, or repression (Neff & Germer, 2017). According to Neff (2003b), practicing self-compassion requires refraining from overidentification with emotions or engaging in negative self-criticism so that there is mental space that allows one to have self-kindness and recognize the broader human context of experiences. These studies offer extensive background information about the concept of self-compassion and its role as a coping mechanism, which support’s this research study’s understanding of self-compassion as it becomes one of the main constructs explored in connection to the other two constructs.

**Self-compassion and psychological well-being.** A growing body of research suggests that self-compassion is associated with psychological health (Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007; Neff & Vonk, 2009). Research findings indicate a positive association between self-compassion and emotional intelligence, greater life satisfaction, social connectedness, and mastery goals (Neff, Hsieh & Dejitterat, 2005; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007). Meanwhile, other studies found that a negative association between self-compassion and self-criticism, depression, anxiety, rumination, perfectionism, disordered eating behaviors (Neff & Vonk, 2009), emotional suppression and avoidance (Marshall & Brockman, 2016). According to Neff and Germer (2017), self-compassionate individuals show greater psychological health than those with lower levels of self-compassion because the inevitable pain and sense of failure that is experienced by all individuals are not amplified through harsh self-judgement, isolation, or overidentification with emotions. Moreover, Leary and colleagues (2007) found that self-compassion protected people against negative feelings towards self as they imagined being in distressing social events. They also found that it moderated negative emotions after receiving feedback (Leary et al., 2007). These findings
suggest that having greater self-compassion allows people to acknowledge their role in negative events without being overwhelmed with negative emotions (Leary et al., 2007).

Although these results inform this study of the positive association between self-compassion and mental health in young adults (Neff, Neff, Hsieh & Dejitterat, 2005; Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007; Neff & Vonk, 2009; Marshall & Brockman, 2016), none of them include the role of parent-child relationships in association with self-compassion (Joeng et al., 2017; Birnie, Speca & Carlson, 2010; Burns, Loh, Byles & Kendiga, 2018; Neff & McGehee, 2010). Thus, more research needs to include the role of parent-child relationships in connection to self-compassion and adaptive coping strategies, which could hold promise for designing interventions that can measure and support coping skills in young adults. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by including parent-child relationships when exploring the connections between self-compassion and motivation in young adults.

**Self-compassion, self-esteem, and narcissism.** Among the many studies that compared self-compassion with self-esteem, Neff and Germer’s (2017) study argued that while self-compassion yielded similar mental health benefits as self-esteem, self-compassion does not have the same pitfalls in terms of social comparison or contingency on successful performance. Instead, self-compassion protects against self-judgment since it is not based on the performance evaluations of self and others, or set ideal standards like self-esteem (Neff, 2003). Neff (2003) also found that self-compassionate individuals are more likely to have compassion for others because they avoid engaging in downward social comparisons to think of the self as acceptable, whereas maintaining high self-esteem often entails an unrealistic view of oneself. Neff and Volk (2009) also stated that unrealistic or false praise does not acknowledge that individuals may have unhealthy, unproductive, or harmful patterns of behaviour that need to be changed or improved (Neff & Volk, 2009).
In contrast, a series of experiments found that a positive association between self-compassion and higher emotional balance when individuals encountered humiliating situations, unflattering interpersonal feedback, or negative life events (Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrick, 2007). These results reinforce the argument that self-compassion is a more effective coping mechanism over self-esteem and false praise (Neff, 2003; Neff & Volk, 2009) and stress the effectiveness of self-compassion at combating self-judgment and isolation (Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrick, 2007). However, they do not mention the role of parents and how they impact the development of one’s self-compassion, which is why this study incorporates the quality of parent-child relationships when exploring the connections with self-compassion and academic motivation.

Self-compassion was also found to counter the tendencies toward narcissism and self-centeredness (that may stem from attempts to maintain high self-esteem) which enhances feelings of connection to others, rather than setting oneself up in opposition to others (Neff, 2003). Overall, differentiating self-compassion from other constructs such as narcissism and self-esteem informs this study as it underscores the unique role that self-compassion plays in helping children, youth, and young adults cope with failure and stressful situations. However, these studies do not consider how the quality of relationships with parents or guardians contributes to the young adult’s capacity for self-compassion. They also fail to gather and reflect on qualitative data (Note, narcissism will be further discussed in the next section under self-compassion and its connection to academic motivation). Therefore, this study explores the connections among parent-child relationship quality, self-compassion and academic motivation using qualitative methods which allow for rich data retention of the unique experiences of young adults.

Parent-child relationships & Self-Compassion
**Parenting and children’s self-compassion.** When reviewing the existing literature on the connection between parenting and self-compassion, many studies including Neff (2003b) noted that parents who encourage children to have compassion for their own failings and suffering can foster self-understanding and non-judgmental feelings in their children and help them forgive and have loving acceptance toward themselves. A compassionate parent is not punitive or judgmental, rather, they are kind, loving, and focused on their children’s well-being (Neff, 2003b). On the other hand, Burns, Loh, Byles, and Kendiga (2018) examined the risk (long term) of perceived poor quality of parental bonding on mental health across the lifespan and found that a substantial mental health risk was attributed to the quality of childhood parental bonds on lifelong mental health outcomes. They also found that higher mental well-being was associated with lower perceptions of over-protective mothers and fathers and higher perceptions of caring mothers and fathers (Burns, Loh, Byles, and Kendiga 2018). Both studies provide information that informs this study about the positive parental responses and the impact on children’s mental well-being and the ability to foster non-judgmental appraisals of the self (Burns, Loh, Byles, & Kendiga 2018; Neff, 2003b). However, they do not provide information on how this link between self-compassion and the quality of parent-child relationships could impact young adults’ academic motivation.

Meanwhile, this study incorporates motivation for academic achievement along with the connections with parent-child relationships and self-compassion; such an understanding would have clear implications for acknowledging the experiences of university students who are struggling to perform well academically and who may be thinking of dropping out of their formal studies.

**Mindful parenting.** Mindful parenting has been viewed as one way to promote secure attachment relationships as it encompasses five dimensions relevant to the parent-child relationships which include: listening with full attention, non-judgmental acceptance of self
and child, emotional awareness of self and child, self-regulation in the parenting relationship, and compassion for self and child (Siegel & Hartzell, 2003). In one study by Medeiros, Gouveia, Canavarro, and Moreira (2016), mindful parenting practices was found to be an important component of parental training programs for both parents as it aimed to promote a more secure parent-child relationship and enhance the child's well-being (Medeiros, Gouveia, Canavarro, Moreira, 2016).

Moreover, another study by Moreira, Gouveia, and Canavarro (2018) stated that mindful parenting was indirectly associated with adolescents’ mindfulness and self-compassion through perceptions of a more secure relationship with the parents and was indirectly associated with the well-being of adolescence through perceived attachment security, self-compassion, and mindfulness (Moreira, Gouveia, & Canavarro, 2018). These findings inform this study about the importance of having secure attachments with mindful parents to adopt roles that respond accordingly to the child’s needs which allows for positive parent-child relationships to form and enhances the child’s self-compassion that is carried into adolescence (Medeiros, Gouveia, Canavarro, Moreira, 2016; Siegel & Hartzell, 2003). This information could be one way to explain how positive parent-child relationships are formed and the connection to feelings of self-compassion among children. However, little is said about this connection in different age groups besides childhood. Therefore, this study aims to explore how this link between the quality of parent-child relationships and self-compassion is perceived by young adults.

Furthermore, Duncan and colleagues (2009) introduced a model of mindful parenting as a framework where parents purposely had momentary awareness to the relationship with their children. This was done by developing the qualities of cultivating emotional awareness, attentive listening, self-regulation, compassion, and acceptance to their parenting interactions (Duncan, Coatsworth, & Greenberg, 2009). In the end, some studies suggested that mindful
parenting is positively associated with secure attachment (Medeiros, Gouveia, Canavarro, and Moreira, 2016; Siegel & Hartzell, 2003), while others suggested that mindful parenting is associated with self-compassion and can reduce parenting stress (Moreira, Gouveia, and Canavarro, 2018). However, these studies do not explain if mindful parenting practices can enhance children’s motivation to succeed especially in the academic field, which could widen the intervention focus and include ways to support children that are struggling to achieve academic success. Therefore, this study focuses on exploring the holistic connections among these latter three constructs and uses qualitative methods to allow alternative explanations to be revealed (e.g., perhaps young adults might highlight the importance of certain aspects of parent-child relationship quality such as mindful parenting).

**Parent involvement and child’s academic motivation.** Regarding the link between parenting styles and adolescents’ academic success, a study by Steinberg, Elmen, and Mounts (1989) examined the relationship between authoritative parenting acceptance, psychological autonomy, and school achievement among a sample of 10-16-year-olds to test whether authoritative parenting facilitated school success. Findings revealed that authoritative parenting influenced adolescents’ academic success and made an independent contribution to achievement, implying that adolescents who described their parents as democratic, warm, and firm were more likely than their peers to develop positive attitudes toward their academic achievement, and were more likely to do better in school (Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989). On the other hand, Simons-Morton & Chen (2009) stated that students who are not motivated and do not try to do well are less likely to reach their academic potential. Their results demonstrated that authoritative parenting practices could foster school engagement directly and indirectly by discouraging affiliation with peers who do not value school engagement as highly and facilitating school adjustment (Simons-Morton & Chen, 2009). These findings help this research study understand the degree of parental influence
and parenting style can have on the children’s level of performance (Simons-Morton & Chen, 2009; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989). However, they do not explain how parenting could contribute to the child’s academic motivation, which is why this study uses academic motivation as one of the main constructs in connection with parent-child relationships and self-compassion. This study also examines the connections from the perspective of young adults and uses qualitative methods to highlight the depth and complexity of relationships which are usually overlooked in studies using only quantitative methods.

Furthermore, a recent study by Moè, Katz, and Alesi (2018) assessed perceived parental autonomy-supportive scaffolding on children’s autonomous motivation for homework. This study’s results found that higher levels of parental autonomous motivation were associated with children’s perceptions of their parents as being more autonomy-supportive, which could enhance children’s development of autonomous motivation, self-efficacy, and engagement in homework (Moè, Katz, & Alesi, 2018). Findings also addressed the strengths that parents displayed when helping their children develop more positive attitudes towards homework including giving autonomy support as a scaffold for motivation (Moè, Katz, & Alesi, 2018). Another study by Gunderson et al. (2018) examined children’s academic achievement in fourth graders and found that process praise from parents to toddlers predicted children’s academic achievement seven years later in elementary school through their motivational frameworks. Meanwhile, a study by Bariroh (2018) aimed at discovering the influence of parents' involvement in the learning motivation and achievement of children with different abilities. Results revealed that parents' involvement significantly influenced children's motivation. Implications of these findings are that parents should be encouraged to be more intensive in assisting, accompanying and guiding their children so that their motivation and academic achievement can be enhanced (Bariroh, 2018).
Overall, these findings suggest that parenting quality is associated with academic motivation and achievement in children, youth, and adolescence (Bariroh, 2018; Gunderson et al., 2018; Moè, Katz, & Alesi, 2018); however, they do not speak to the subtle complexities of parent-child relationships, self-compassion, and academic motivation among older youth attending university. They also do not explain how these children/adolescences internalize their parents’ responses, which might be associated with a greater motivation for academic achievement later in adolescence (i.e., when attending university). Accordingly, the present study aimed to build on this body of research by adopting a qualitative methodology to explore the self-perceived connections among the quality of parent-child relationships, self-compassion, and academic motivation among older youth attending university in order to attain more details about the complexity of these connections.

**Self-Compassion & Academic Motivation**

**Motivation and compassion.** A study conducted by Breines and Chen (2012) examined whether self-compassion increases self-improvement motivation after making a mistake. Through a series of four experiments, they found that participants with higher self-compassion reported greater motivation to rectifying and avoiding repetition of a recent error, spent more time studying for a test after experiencing failure and reported greater motivation to improve their flaws (Breines and Chen, 2012). These findings suggest that taking an accepting approach to personal failure may make people more motivated to improve themselves. In all four studies, it was also found that self-compassion was more helpful at boosting motivation than self-esteem (Breines and Chen, 2012). However, Gilbert and colleagues (2011) argued that some people fear to have self-compassion because they think it will undermine their efforts to reach their goals. Yet, Neff and Germer (2017) raise the question, “would a compassionate father ruthlessly criticize his son when he messes up, telling him he is a hopeless failure?” to which they answer: “Of course not” (p.12) stating that
a compassionate parent would reassure his child that it is only human to make mistakes and offer support to assist his child to produce his best work. This could motivate their child to try to attain their goals in life with the parent’s encouragement and acceptance, rather than being belittled during failure (Neff & Germer, 2017, p. 12).

On the other hand, when discussing narcissism in relation to self-compassion and academic motivation, Barnett & Flores (2016) found that narcissism may stem from emotional regulating systems such as overactive threat system, which involves feelings of insecurity and defensiveness, or a maladaptive self-soothing system, which involves feelings of safety and secure attachment. Their findings confirmed that narcissism is associated with school burnout through low self-compassion, specifically with the over-identification with emotions and isolation components of self-compassion (Barnett & Flores, 2016).

The previous studies reflect on the large body of research that confirms the necessity of parental support to enhance motivation to achieve success among children and youth (Breines and Chen, 2012; Neff & Germer, 2017). However, Neff and Germer’s (2017) study was the only one known to explore the links among parent involvement, self-compassion and academic motivation, and further research that confirms the validity of these results is needed. Therefore, this research study replicates and extends this focus through a qualitative lens with the goal of learning more about these connections as perceived by young adults.

**Optimism and self-handicapping.** There is ample empirical evidence to support the idea that self-compassion enhances motivation. According to Neff (2003b), self-compassionate people aim just as high, but they also acknowledge and accept that they cannot always reach their goals. Meanwhile, in a study by Williams, Stark, and Foster (2008) that measured undergraduate students’ levels of self-compassion using Neff’s Self-Compassion Scale, it was indicated that students with higher levels of self-compassion had less motivational anxiety and engaged in fewer self-handicapping behaviours such as
procrastination than those with lower levels (Williams, Stark, & Foster, 2008). Moreover, undergraduate students with higher levels of self-compassion were found to experience less psychological distress when confronted with academic pressures and social difficulties, and they also had fewer feelings of homesickness during their first semester at college as self-compassion appears to aid adjustment to university life (Neff & Germer, 2017).

Moreover, Akin & Akin (2015) stated that self-compassion can play an important role in self-handicapping. Since their study examined the relationship between self-compassion and self-handicapping among university students, their results suggested that self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness were negatively associated with self-handicapping while self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification were positively related to self-handicapping (Akin & Akin, 2015). Another study by Neff, Rude, and Kirkpatrick (2007) examined the relationship between self-compassion and positive psychological health using a sample of undergraduate students and found that self-compassion had a significant positive association with self-reported measures of happiness, optimism, wisdom, personal initiative, curiosity, and exploration. Results also revealed that happiness, which may stem from the feelings of warmth, inter-relatedness, and equilibrium that one experiences when they are self-compassionate, and optimism was strongly associated with self-compassion (Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007). Although these results address the association between self-compassion and adaptive coping skills that allow one to set achievable goals (Neff, 2003b) and the negative association between self-compassion and motivational anxiety (Williams, Stark, & Foster, 2008) and self-handicapping (Akin & Akin, 2015), they do not clearly compare optimism or goal achievement to academic motivation. Accordingly, this study views motivation as an independent construct from optimism and goal achievement, which is why this study specifically targets academic motivation in connection to the other two constructs.
Motivation for achieving goals. Many studies that explored self-compassion and motivation for learning found that self-compassion was positively associated with learning approach/mastery goals (Akin, 2008; Elliot & Church, 1997; Hope, Koestner, & Milyavskaya, 2014; Neff 2003b; Neff, Ya-Ping, & Dejitterat, 2005). According to Neff (2003b), while having self-compassion involves reducing harsh criticism towards the self for failing to meet ideal standards, it does not mean one’s failings go unnoticed, rather, it means that the actions needed for optimal operating are done with gentleness and patience (Neff, 2003b). She also stated that students who have a mastery orientation toward learning or learning approach goals are intrinsically motivated by the desire to develop new skills and understand new material with curiosity. Meanwhile, she argued that students with performance-approach goals are motivated to succeed by the desire to enhance their sense of self-worth by avoiding failure (Neff, 2003b). In agreement with Neff (2003b), Hope, Koestner, & Milyavskaya, (2014) found that individuals high in self-compassion appeared to be less vulnerable to the affective consequences of low goal progress. Also, autonomous motivation was related to low negative effect for students that were high in self-compassion. These results suggest that the “key to feeling good is to pursue the right goals rather than to achieve success at these goals” (Hope, Koestner, & Milyavskaya, 2014, p. 590). However, all of these studies do not simultaneously gather data on the influence of parent-child relationships on both self-compassion and academic motivation. Thus, the holistic approach of this study which examines the connection among the three constructs could serve to provide newer findings and unravel the complex nature among the connections.

Moreover, Akin (2008) also stated that self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness were positively associated with learning-approach goals and negatively associated with performance-approach goals. Although he did not indicate a direct connection between learning approach goals and autonomous motivation as Hope Koestner, &
Milyavskaya (2014) did, his findings still inform about the importance of the desire to learn or focus on the process or have learning approach goals which are positively associated to self-compassion.

Furthermore, learning approach/mastery goals were linked to undergraduate students’ academic engagement and low focus on harsh evaluation as they set their own standards for achievement to view the making of mistakes as a part of the learning process (Church, Elliot, & Gable, 2001; Elliot and Church, 1997). Whereas, students with performance-approach goals were linked to the presence of evaluation focus and harsh evaluation (Church, Elliot, & Gable, 2001; Neff, Ya-Ping, & Dejitterat, 2005). These results were also replicated by Oksana and colleagues (2018), who found that medical students who have more self-compassion and who endorsed learning approach/mastery goals reported being more engaged with their medical studies and feeling protected from burnout-related exhaustion. Meanwhile, students who were less self-compassionate, who exercised less, and who endorsed mastery/performance-approach goals reported greater exhaustion from their studies (Oksana et al., 2018).

In summary, findings from the studies reviewed above suggest that self-compassion was positively associated with mastery orientation toward learning, optimism and happiness, and autonomous motivation (Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007). Meanwhile, it was negatively associated with self-handicapping (Akin & Akin, 2015), high motivational anxiety (Neff, 2003b) and low feelings of vulnerability when experiencing failure (Joeng et al., 2017). These studies use undergraduate students as their sample, but they do not use any qualitative methodologies to present in-depth details on the experiences of students (Akin & Akin, 2015; Joeng et al., 2017; Neff, 2003b; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007). Thus, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by targeting the experiences of undergraduate students using qualitative methods. Findings from this study could inform efforts to retain
and provide supports for young adults/university students as they cope with academic and social stressors.

**Qualitative over quantitative methods.** Research employing qualitative methods has made significant contributions to psychology since its early development, however, psychologists began to define this field by its focus on experimental and correlational research methods (Levitt, Bamberg, Creswell, Frost, Josselson, & Suárez-Orozco, 2018). To date, the majority of studies in this field have valued statistics and verifiable facts through quantitative methods since qualitative research was thought to threaten the credibility of psychology and was marginalized (Levitt et al., 2018). Some of the advantages that came with quantification include: finding which variables best explain a particular result, providing numerical information from valid and reliable measures, generalizing, determining cause and effect, prediction, and description of the distribution of attributes in a population (Creswell, 2013; Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011). However, it is worth noting that quantification does not always support the understanding of complex, dynamic, and multi-dimensional wholes of a subject (Creswell, 2013; Morrow & Crivello, 2015). In fact, if researchers only focus on what is already quantified, they risk ignoring factors that are more significant in explaining important connections, realities, and relationships from the perspective of the targeted sample (Morrow & Crivello, 2015).

It is important to acknowledge that qualitative methods allow for the recognition of personal experiences and the formation of in-depth understanding of details that are otherwise overlooked with quantitative generalization; the open-ended structures of qualitative methods make it possible to get beneath superficial responses and rational thoughts to gather information from an emotional response, account for human beliefs, imaginations, and emotions which may lead to uncovering what drives a person’s decisions or influences his or her behavior (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011; Levitt et. al, 2018; Locke & Lloyd-
Sherlock, 2011; Morrow & Crivello, 2015). Qualitative research offers to generate theories that are more ecologically valid and contextually sensitive, persuasive, and relevant in order to develop a sense of the whole phenomenon (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011). Qualitative inquiry is also richly descriptive, which means that words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, this study aims to incorporate qualitative design as the main method for data collection when it comes to the exploration of the connections among the three constructs for the young adult’s perspective.

This selection of this study design was further encouraged by another advantage of qualitative methods which includes the ability to minimize the power imbalance between researchers and participants as it allows for the expression of the meanings seen from participants and their view of the world, rather than that of the researchers. This power imbalance is reduced through: the use of stories involves giving participants the power and control over the content they share (Glenis & Amohia, 2017), the empathic and empowering atmosphere of equality in qualitative interviews may conceal power differences (Raheim et al., 2016), and with the researcher’s dependence on the trust of participants to get their stories (Raheim et al., 2016); all of which are essential in order to explore lived experience in-depth. This information further strengthens the argument of adapting a qualitative method when exploring the connections in a wholistic manner and aids in revealing the complexity among the constructs which increases the potential of uncovering new and unexplained findings.

**Theoretical Framework: Attachment Theory**

In this section, I demonstrate why attachment theory is the most appropriate framework for grounding this research based on the evident links between the styles of attachment and the three constructs of this study (quality of parent-child relationships, self-compassion, and academic motivation). I begin with background information on attachment
theory and then discuss how secure and insecure attachments connect to each of the study constructs. I also discuss how attachment continuity from early childhood into adolescence and adulthood can explain parent-child relationships in young adults and its connection to self-compassion and academic motivation.

According to the studies on attachment during infancy and childhood, Bowlby’s (1969, 1988) observations of children who were separated from their caregivers along with Mary Ainsworth’s lab-based observations of the infant-mother interactions shaped our understanding of attachment today as it is defined as the infant’s perceived access to a stable and consistent caregiving relationship. Bowlby (1969, 1988) also proposed that all humans are born with an innate psychobiological attachment system that motivates infants to seek proximity to a caregiver to increase the likelihood of survival. Proximity seeking behaviors are reflected in verbal and non-verbal communication patterns between the infant and the caregiver (Çevik, 2018). Moreover, Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) developed three attachment classifications: secure, insecure-avoidant and insecure-ambivalent. Each attachment classification was observed and determined through children’s reactions upon the mother’s parting or departure and return. Accordingly, Ainsworth and colleagues (1978) observed that upon the mother’s departure, securely attached children were noted to be distressed, but almost immediately reassured with the return of their mother and resumed playing and exploring. Children classified as avoidant were noted as unmoved by the mother’s departure or return and they were often misperceived as calm. They felt that their signals for comfort would not be responded to.

Meanwhile, ambivalently attached children were noted as angry, passive, and preoccupied or distressed at the mother’s departure. These children showed rejection upon the mother’s return or appeared inconsolable (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Lastly, disorganized attachment occurs when the attachment figure is seen as a source of safety,
simultaneously frightening; in this case, the child shows signs of fright or dissociation (Main & Solomon, 1990). Note that Ainsworth and colleagues (1978) initially focused their research on “mothers” as primary caregivers. However, more recent research has shown that children can form multiple attachments with other primary figures including fathers/family members.

**Secure attachment in childhood and constructs.** According to Ding and colleagues (2014), attachment theory reinforces the importance of the early parent-child relationships in developing appropriate cognitive, social, and emotional skills. They also stated that secure attachment in early childhood predicted better cognitive and behavioral outcomes (Ding, Xu, Wang, Li, & Wang, 2014). Ainsworth and colleagues (1978) suggest that in order to establish a secure attachment relationship, caregivers would have to be emotionally available and respond with sensitivity to their infants’ needs rather than imposing their own agendas.

Attachment theory also addresses the connection between secure attachment and self-compassion along with its associated components including self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. According to Bowlby (1969), one of the key evolutionary changes that emerged with mammals was an attachment between the caregiver and the young. Interestingly, self-compassion was found to tap into this evolved mammalian physiological system (Gilbert, 2005), which could explain how children raised in safe and secure environments are able to relate to themselves in a caring and compassionate way, while those raised in stressful, insecure, or threatening environments tend to be colder and more critical toward themselves (Gilbert & Proctor, 2006). Further studies on the connection between attachment and self-compassion suggest that individuals' ability to have self-kindness and their sense of belonging are pathways through which attachment relates to mental health (e.g. Raque-Bogdan et al., 2011). Recent findings suggest that secure parent-child attachment fosters positive attitudes toward both self and others, providing a foundation for desirable psychological states including mindfulness and self-compassion (Dudley,
Eames, Mulligan, & Fisher, 2018; Shaver, Mikulincer, Sahdra, & Gross, 2016). Therefore, when individuals experience feelings of connectedness and soothing when raised in safe, secure and supportive environments, they are more likely to relate to themselves in a caring and compassionate manner (Neff & McGehee, 2010).

Bowlby’s (1973) concept of a secure base also suggests that children who are confident that their caregivers are responsive and available will be both more attentive and more willing to engage with the environment. In one study, the security of attachment was especially related to better attention and participation, less insecurity about the self, and a higher-grade average (Jacobsen & Hofmann, 1997). Empirical evidence indicates that parental involvement and disciplinary measures are associated with school-oriented interests, academic achievement, and general school adaptation (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994), since attachment to mother and father was positively associated with perceived support in class (Duchesne & Larose, 2007). According to Carr (2009), the secure attachment style is likely to promote environmental exploration in infants because they feel safe knowing that their caregiver is consistently available when they need to retreat to a secure base. Moreover, Aviezer, Resnick, Sagi, & Gini’s (2002) found that securely attached youth achieved high scores on scholastic skills, verbal abilities, and emotional maturity. In addition, self-perceived attachment to parents is related to self-perceived competence in high school (Learner & Kruger, 1997).

Overall, most if not all of the studies suggest the importance of a secure parent-child attachment relationship to the development of self-compassion (Dudley, Eames, Mulligan, & Fisher, 2018; Neff & McGehee, 2010; Shaver, Mikulincer, Sahdra, & Gross, 2016) and academic performance among children (Aviezer, Resnick, Sagi, & Gini, 2002; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994). However, more research is required to explore the connection between secure attachment in early childhood and academic
motivation throughout adulthood as many studies focused more on the performance and grades of children and youth. Therefore, this study uses academic motivation instead of academic performance when exploring the connections among the three constructs which adds to the literature about how parent-child relationships are linked to academic motivation from young the perspectives of young adults.

**Insecure attachment in childhood and constructs.** Insecure attachment has been associated with lower cognitive level and greater behavioral problems in early childhood (Ding, Xu, Wang, Li, & Wang, 2014). According to Ainsworth and colleagues (1978), mothers of avoidantly-attached children tend to display inhibition of emotional expression and aversion to physical contact while mothers of ambivalently attached children tend to be inconsistently available, with little to no display of sensitivity to the child’s signals, and they tend to discourage autonomy. With the disorganized attachment style, children are noted to back away from the mother, freeze in place, or appear dazed upon reunion with their mothers (Ainsworth et al., 1978). According to Steven, Paetzold, & Kohn (2016), an important factor in the development of disorganized attachment is childhood maltreatment or abuse, which was shown to correlate strongly with disorganized attachment in children.

Secure attachment plays a positive role in developing self-compassion and self-acceptance and lays the foundations for the development of openness and kindness toward others (Shaver et al., 2016). On the other hand, when it comes to the connection between insecure attachment and factors of self-compassion (self-judgment, isolation, overidentified with negative emotions), individuals raised in insecure, stressful, or threatening environments tend to be colder and more critical toward themselves (Neff & McGehee, 2010). It is worth noting that self-criticism or self-judgment tap into the threat-focused physiological systems, which involve aggressive dominance and fearful submission (Neff & McGehee 2010). Results from a study on anxious solitude (AS), self-compassion, and attachment security, found that youth
who had insecure attachments with both mothers and fathers exhibited the lowest self-compassion in fifth grade (Carr, 2009). Peter & Gazelle, 2017). Moreover, Joeng and colleagues (2017) examined how self-compassion and fear of self-compassion mediate anxious and avoidant attachment, results suggested that those individuals who are fearful of self-compassion may need to accept feelings of vulnerability and increase their self-compassion in order to manage their anxiety in an effective manner (Joeng et al., 2017).

On the other hand, studies on the connection between insecure attachment and academic motivation suggest that insecure attachments discourage infants from fully exploring the environment because they would be preoccupied with whether the caregiver will be available, thus making it difficult to develop the same level of exploratory interest (Carr, 2009). Moss and St-Laurent (2001) found that avoidant and ambivalent children scored lowest on mastery motivation and goal orientation in play with objects.

The findings that connect insecure attachment styles with the three study constructs raise awareness about the power of parent-child relationships on shaping children’s ability to cope during hardships (Carr, 2009; Joeng et al., 2017) and academic motivation (Moss and St-Laurent, 2001). Research is needed that explores cases wherein children are faced with life-changing events (i.e. divorce, parent addiction, etc.) and how these experiences are perceived to impact later feelings of self-compassion and academic motivation among young adults. Accordingly, this study aimed to fill this gap by using qualitative methods to explore the perspectives of young adults about the connection among the three constructs.

**Attachment continuity in adolescence.** Attachment theory states that people develop internal working models through interaction with their parents during infancy which are relatively stable and continue to influence individuals’ cognition, emotion, and social behaviors across the lifespan (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Walls, 1978; Bowlby, 1973). Therefore, when considering secure attachment in adolescence who have the internal working
models that support feelings of worthiness, results indicated that they were less threatened by
the stressors and have higher levels of resilience and adapt well (Seiffge-Krenke, 2006).
However, in adulthood, variables such as coping, well-being and environmental stress all
influence stability and change in attachment relationships with parents (Jones 2018;
McConnell & Moss, 2011). Also, since there is no significant continuity in attachment within
a high-risk sample that has a less stable environment and less stable relationships than a low-
risk sample (McConnell & Moss, 2011; Weinfield, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2000), it is important
that caregivers provide a balance of supportive affection, discipline, and encouragement of
independence for the continuity of secure attachment in adolescence (Cozolino, 2006).

Overall, attachment theory serves as a useful guiding framework for this study as it
makes connections between parental experiences in childhood and the long-term outcomes in
adulthood, which might allow us to understand the quality of the parent-child relationships as
perceived by the sample. Through this framework, I found that secure attachment was
associated with positive parental relationships, which had a healthier impact on children’s
mental and psychological health (Raque-Bogdan, 2011), higher self-compassion (Joeng et al.,
2017), and higher mastery motivation (Moss and St-Laurent, 2001). This allowed us to
understand how the quality of attachment could impact self-compassion and academic
motivation through the quality of parent-child relationships as it underscores the role of
parents in helping children feel more self-compassionate and motivated for achievement
across the lifespan. Meanwhile, insecure attachment styles including avoidant, ambivalent
and disorganized were associated with poor parent-child relationships quality including
neglectful and abusive parenting (Steven et al., 2016), which is associated with increase self-
criticism (Neff & McGehee, 2010), and reduced motivation to explore and master skills in the
environments (Moss & St-Laurent, 2001).
The Present Study

A thorough review of the literature determined that a number of studies focused on the association between the quality of parent-child relationships and the development of self-compassion, or on self-compassion and academic motivation. Apart from two studies (Neff, 2003b; Neff & Germer, 2017) that explored parents’ responses to children’s failure and its impact on children’s self-compassion and motivation to do better, few studies used a holistic approach that combines the three constructs and explores the connection between them. Since holistic methods serve to disrupt the fixed notion of a construct and the things involved in that category, “it contributes to new understandings of lived experience in the pursuit of helping others” (Read, 2016, p.669). Therefore, the main purpose of the present study was to embed a holistic approach when exploring the self-perceived connections among parent-child relationship quality, self-compassion and academic motivation among university students. I aimed to fill an important gap in the literature by focusing on the subtle complexities in the self-perceived connections among these three constructs, which could provide new insights that might inform efforts to develop services to support university students academically.

Another important gap in the literature that this study addressed is a qualitative focus to explore the connections among the quality of relationships with parents, academic motivation, and self-compassion. Previous studies provided important quantitative findings on the nature of each construct and offered important insights on the associations among the constructs. For example, through surveys and questionnaires, the results of several studies showed that having supportive and warm responsive parents is positively associated with a higher level of self-compassion in children (Burns, Loh, Byles, & Kendiga 2018; Medeiros, Gouveia, Canavarro, Moreira, 2016; Neff, 2003b; Siegel & Hartzell, 2003) and that self-compassionate students are less likely to experience self-handicapping or burnout in academic settings (Oksana et al., 2018; Williams, Stark, & Foster, 2008).
However, as mentioned earlier, few to none of these studies on the connections among the three constructs adopt qualitative methods for data collection. This could be the reason behind the evident lack of perspectives of young adults/university students, which could offer newer information that could reshape our understanding of the connections in order to inform our clinical implications to strengthen our support systems for young adults and university students. A lack of qualitative methodology in the existing literature could also explain why there is no literature and minimal understanding of the complexity of connections among the three constructs. Therefore, findings and implications of this study aimed to fill this evident gap in the literature and promised to bring a new perspective from the targeted sample with the help of rich data retention and in-depth analysis through qualitative methods using one-on-one semi-structured interviews.

Finally, previous literature regarding the three constructs confirms that low self-compassion is associated with self-handicapping behaviors and narcissism among university students, which might lead to school burnout through low self-compassion (Akin & Akin, 2015; Barnett & Flores, 2016). In this study, I focused on the unique experiences of undergraduate students to better understand the self-perceived associations among the quality of parent-child relationships and self-compassion and academic motivation. It is especially important to focus on the experience of university students because studies continue to show that they are more vulnerable to experiencing anxiety and depression (Andrews & Wilding, 2004); a growing body of evidence suggests that mental health problems are increasing among students in institutions of higher education (Eisenberg, Golberstein, & Gollust, 2007). Therefore, this research study focused on how the perceived relationship quality of parents and self-compassion might be associated with motivation for academic success specifically among young adults/university students.
In conclusion, this research study sought to better understand the benefits of self-compassion and its connection to the quality of parent-child relationships and academic motivation among university students. Adopting a qualitative methodology, I aimed to give young adults a voice to express their experiences and tell their stories in their own words, rather than conform to categories and terms imposed on them by researchers through surveys and questionnaires. This study’s findings could benefit students by educating them on the role that self-compassion plays while raising awareness about the significant role their parents play in fostering academic motivation. Findings of this study could also provide more relevant and effective implications to support students struggling with low motivation, self-handicapping, or burnout based on the results of the connections with students’ self-compassion and their relationships with parents along with other elements that are uncovered in the study.

The main purpose of the study was to explore the connections among the quality of parent-child relationships, self-compassion, and academic motivation as perceived by university students through the holistic approach and qualitative methods. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Do university students perceive a connection between the quality of their relationships with parents and their feelings of self-compassion?
2. Do university students perceive a connection between their feelings of self-compassion and their academic motivation?
3. Do university students perceive a connection between the quality of their relationship with parents and their academic motivation?

Based on earlier findings that relate insecure or threatening environments to lower self-compassion and higher self-criticism (Neff & McGehee, 2010), I anticipate that undergraduate students who perceive their relationships with parents as being characterized
by high maternal criticism and stress will report having lower self-compassion, as compared with students who report feeling supported by both parents or who report coming from families characterized by greater self-compassion. Moreover, since self-compassion is associated with increases in student’s academic motivation (Breines & Chen, 2012; Neff & Germer, 2017), I speculated that those students with higher self-compassion would display higher academic motivation than those with lower self-compassion. I speculated that participants who perceive their parents as being supportive will also report having higher academic motivation, as compared with students who perceive their parents as being more critical.
Methods

Participants

This study included nine undergraduate students ranging in age from 17-25 years. Students were drawn from different disciplines and different years of academic study (first through the fourth year). Students were recruited through announcements at the beginning of lectures which took place at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. After obtaining ethics clearance from Brock University's research ethics board (File # 18-007 - TARDIF-WILLIAMS; refer to Appendix A), information regarding the present study was distributed to professors and interested students via email and recruitment posters. Details including the researcher's contact information and the requirements for participation were provided on the following documents: oral script (refer to Appendix B), recruitment posters (refer to Appendix C), invitation letters (see Appendix D), and consent forms (refer to Appendix E). One participant self-identified as male and eight participants self-identified as female (see Table 1). Most of the participants reported that their parents had some post-secondary education ranging from high school diplomas to graduate degrees (Masters/Ph.D.). As shown in Table 1, five out of the nine participants were in their first year, three of the nine participants were in their fourth year, and one participant was in his third year of study. Seven out of the nine participants were enrolled in the psychology program, while one participant was enrolled in the philosophy program, and another participant was enrolled in the child and youth studies program. Most of the participants reported having an average ranging from a B to an A with the lowest grades ranging from 49% to 70% and the highest grades from 85% to 100%.
Table 1  
**Background Information on Each Participant**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnic Background</th>
<th>Program of Choice</th>
<th>Year of Study</th>
<th>Parents’ Education</th>
<th>Average grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>M:Diploma F:Masters</td>
<td>75% - 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>M:Diploma F:Diploma</td>
<td>78% - 99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American/ European</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>M:Diploma F:Law Sch. M:Undergrad F:Undergrad</td>
<td>69% - 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>M:Undergrad F:Undergrad</td>
<td>48% - 80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>West African</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>M:Diploma F:Ph.D</td>
<td>60% - 95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>M:Highsch. F:Highsch</td>
<td>60% - 95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Southeast Asian</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>M:Diploma F: N/A</td>
<td>60% - 85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isla</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>3th</td>
<td>M:Undergrad F:Undergrad</td>
<td>88% - 97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jena</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>M:Diploma F:Trades</td>
<td>70% - 96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Pseudonyms were used for each of the nine participants
This research study focused on young adult university students because this group is known to struggle more often with anxiety and depression than any other age group (Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, & Hefner, 2007). According to Andrews and Welding (2006), there is an increase in student consultations to student health services on university campuses, and this has created concerns over increasing financial difficulties and other pressures, which may affect student mental health and academic performance. According to a Canadian study by Silverthorn (2016), 46.2% of the students surveyed were employed during the school year, however, 96% were working a low-skill, low-income service sector job. One in four (23.7%) students reported that their physical health was affected by nutritional insecurity such as food, while less (20.1%) reported that their mental health had been impacted. Additionally, nearly half of the respondents (49.5%) reported that they had to sacrifice buying healthy food to pay for essential expenses including rent, tuition, and textbooks (Silverthorn, 2016). Moreover, financial difficulties made a significant independent contribution to depression and relationship difficulties and independently predicted anxiety (Andrews & Welding, 2006). Therefore, focusing on university students is timely and important and could shed new insights on how self-compassion and supportive relationships with parents might assist them in adapting to university challenges.

**Procedure**

The data collection process took place over a period of three months and began at the beginning of fall 2018. Participants were recruited by making announcements in undergraduate classes and posting recruitment flyers at Brock University. Interested individuals then contacted the researcher (via email) to set a time and place to go over the consent form, complete the demographic questionnaire and SCS-SF measure, and then take part in the semi-structured interview.
Interviews were conducted at one of Brock University’s Child and Youth Studies research labs that provided a private, quiet, and confidential space. The researcher reviewed the consent form with each participant and all participants provided signed consent before starting the data collection process. The interview was audio-recorded and participants were given the chance to pause the interview at any point in time. Once the interview was completed, the participants received a $10 gift card to be redeemed at Tim Horton’s to reimburse them for their time and they were verbally thanked for their time and effort. Participants were also reminded that they would be emailed a copy of their transcript as an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of the conversation and/or to add and clarify any points.

**Ethical Considerations**

The present study raised important ethical concerns since the topic involved personal relationships and self-compassion, which may trigger emotional distress among the undergraduate student population. There were additional ethical considerations as the literature review provided evidence of risk factors related to the post-secondary student population including food insecurity and financial difficulties which makes them more prone to anxiety and depression (Silverthorn, 2016). According to Tracy and Hinrichs (2017), relational ethics remind researchers of their duty to embrace an ethical self-consciousness in which they are mindful of their character, actions, and consequences upon others. Also, there may be some psychological risks associated with participation including reflection on past experiences with parents which might cause emotional distress or discomfort. For example, interview questions might trigger feelings of embarrassment when asked about academic motivation with struggling students, and strong emotions as a reaction to some of the questions regarding family history and/or lack of compassion. Therefore, it was essential for us to address these concerns and to provide mental health resources if a participant felt distressed or triggered by some of the interview questions. It is worth noting that no
participant withdrew her/his participation in this study. In addition, each participant was asked to indicate if they wished to receive a feedback letter once the study was completed. In fact, two out of nine participants opted to edit their responses on the transcriptions; when comparing original and edited transcripts, only minor changes were made to better articulate some responses and to correct minor errors.

Measures

**Self-Compassion Scale Short-Form.** This qualitative research employed a demographic section, SCS-SF, and a semi-structured interview to gather participants’ perspectives. The SCS-SF (Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011) is a 12-item version of the original 26-item Self Compassion Scale (refer to Appendix G). It was created by choosing 12 items from the original SCS that had high correlations with both the total score on the SCS and their respective subscale scores, which presented the breadth of the original subscale content. For example, by exploring the participants’ answers on the scale (refer to Appendix G), I was able to assess their self-kindness (Question 2 on the SCS-SF) over self-judgment (Question 11); common humanity (Question 5) over isolation (Question 4); and mindfulness (Question 3) over over-identification with emotions (Question 9). Responses on the SCS-SF are indicated using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always) and a total score is calculated by taking the mean of the 12 items after reverse scoring negatively worded items; higher scores reflect greater self-compassion (Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011). Overall, total scores on the SCS-SF have shown adequate internal consistency with estimates of Cronbach’s alpha around .85, total scores also have been found to correlate highly (.98) with the 26-item SCS (Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011). It is worth noting that a definition of self-compassion was provided during the interview protocol to clarify the term and distinguish it from other terms like self-indulgence to ensure participants understand what they should refer to and provide relevant information. Although Neff
(2003a) suggested that the original 26 item SCS is a “psychometrically sound and theoretically valid” measure of self-compassion (p. 244), the SCS-SF also has demonstrated good validity and reliability in non-clinical samples (Hayes, Lockard, Janis, & Locke, 2016). The purpose of including this (arguably more quantitative) scale as a data collection instrument was to gather more information about the level of self-compassion for each participant to add to the richness of what they shared in terms of his or her self-perceived self-compassion and the three factors.

**In-depth semi-structured interview.** Following the completion of the demographic section and the SCS-SF, participants took part in a semi-structured interview which was designed to assess the perceived quality of parent-child relationships, self-compassion, and academic motivation. This type of interview was chosen because it permits individual responses and shapes the structure and flow of the dialogue allowing for more flexibility to each participant (Wengraf, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). In addition, such a model allows each interview to unfold uniquely and diversely manner based on the dialogue created between each participant and the interviewer (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007), and it is considered useful when aiming to explore a topic in detail or furthering a body knowledge in a specific area (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, choosing a one-on-one interview set up instead of a focus group provided a private space for each participant to speak his or her mind while eliminating any element of peer pressure and perceived peer judgment (Morrow & Crivello, 2015). The 14-item-interview lasted 30-70 minutes and all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were analyzed based on the described quality of relationships with parents, level of self-compassion, and motivation to succeed in achieving academic success.

Although the interview questions were constructed from general to specific and were open-ended in nature, they allowed for in-depth reflection which enabled participants to engage in the content and provide more relevant details. The interviews began by gathering
basic background information about each participant including aspects such as goals in life and what it is like to be a university student. This part of the interview process aimed to build rapport with the participants and to get a sense of each participant’s background experience.

The main interview centered around three lines of questioning. The first line of questioning was designed to gather information from participants related to their perceptions of the connections among their self-compassion and relationship quality with parents. For easy reference, the questions are provided beside each section and assigned the numbers that correspond to the interview protocol (refer to Appendix H). First, the interview began with questions about the participants’ perceived quality of parent-child relationships (Questions 3, 6). Next, the interview protocol included the following questions about the perceived connection between parent-child relationships quality and self-compassion (Questions 5, 7).

The second line of questioning was designed to gather information from participants on their self-compassion in connection with their academic motivation. This line of questioning also tapped into participants’ thoughts about how their parents’ expectations have shaped their inner dialogues when faced with disappointment and failure. Again, the interview began with questions about participants’ perceived level of self-compassion; they were asked to verbally describe their level of self-compassion. These verbal descriptions were explored alongside participants’ responses on the SCS-SF to gain a more complete understanding of participants’ experiences about self-compassion (question 12). Next, the interview involved participants’ views related to the connection between self-compassion and academic motivation (questions 13, 14). The third line of questioning was designed to gather information related to participants’ perceptions of the quality of their relationships with parents and the link to their academic motivation (questions 4, 11). The remaining questions at the beginning of the interview protocol were used to collect general information and helped to transition the conversation into the more focused points (question 1, 2, 8, 9, 10).
Pilot Study

Two separate interviews were conducted with two young adults who have attended post-secondary institutes. The first interview was conducted with a young female aged 24 years who had attained an undergraduate degree from University of Toronto. The second interview was conducted with a young man aged 25 who had completed a college degree and is currently employed as a technician. Before the start of each interview, I spent time explaining the purpose of the study, the definitions of each concept and explaining about the piloting process. This introduction to the study took approximately 10 minutes before beginning each interview, which helped to clarify and answer questions in order to familiarize the interviewees with the process.

After conducting both interviews, I made key adjustments for maximum productivity and to obtain meaningful and relevant data within the time limit of the interview. For example, when I asked the first questions about goals and aspirations, I realized that participants could hold very specific or very broad descriptions and either lose focus of the purpose of the interview or get stuck and not know what to mention next. Therefore, I learned to redirect the conversation to capture the required details while respecting the information provided by the participants for the success of the interview. I also took out the following question “Are their expectations the same with all your siblings? Why or why not?” which reflects on parent relationships with other siblings and did not seem relevant to the main focus of the study. I also included a definition of self-compassion before the interview for participants after the second pilot interview where the candidate appeared to misuse the term in one of his answers after reviewing the SCS-SF. As a result, the new reformed interview protocol underwent necessary modifications that allowed it to refocus the discussion to uncover rich and relevant data from participant responses with maximum efficiency and productivity.
The goal at this point was to practice catching phrases that refer to the main constructs of the study and ask probing questions to get as many details on the subject, rather than accepting surface answers. It was especially important to establish a safe social environment with the interviewees, were they were reminded that their information will remain confidential and won’t be used in the study, as they were being asked about personal questions which could trigger feelings of embarrassment or emotional distress. Overall, the piloting process proved to be a success and adequately prepared us for what lays ahead when conducting subsequent interviews and highlighted the interview questions that would require additional attention or probes to obtain more detailed responses from the participants.

Analysis

After completing the interviews, I transcribed the data and sent the transcriptions to each participant giving them a chance to proofread and/or edit any of the information to their satisfaction. Then I transferred all the digital transcripts to the computer software, NVivo, to assist with the analysis process. Since I turned to a holistic and qualitative perspective to examine the connections among the three constructs, I needed to use an inductive approach to analysis. Analyses of participants’ responses were undertaken in several distinct steps. The first step was to ensure familiarity and engage with the content by reading through the interview transcripts multiple times, making thorough notes throughout each one, and identifying preliminary concepts or ideas that emerged (Charmaz, 2005). This process allowed for the examination of patterns, commonalities, and differences among the transcripts. Once preliminary themes were determined, the second step in the analysis was to re-read each transcript and to consider how these key ideas contributed to an understanding of the research questions explored in this study (refer to Table 2, 3 and 4). It is worth noting that these initial observations were not pre-established or derived from previous literature, rather they were revealed throughout the process and served as a means for establishing themes for
the data as a whole. Next, a *Qualitative thematic Analysis* (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017) was used to identify the dominant themes found within participants’ responses during the interview. According to (Wengraf, 2001), thematic analysis is important for discovering patterns in the data collected. Therefore, the first step in the analysis was to carefully make notes of each transcript, detailing the general ideas of each participant and to identify any preliminary concepts, themes, or ideas that emerged (Creswell, 2013). This process of analysis enabled distinct ideas in the data to be brought forth and reinforced some of the existing literature on self-compassion.

To identify the dominant themes, the following three steps were taken with all nine interview transcript: (1) a list was generated outlining the many different themes in participants’ responses under each research question; (2) the list of themes were revised and filtered to reduce repetition and redundancy (Wolcott, 1990); and (3) using the filtered coding categories to identify the dominant themes evident in participants’ responses to each question (refer to Tables 2, 3, and 4). The dominant themes displayed information on participants’ backgrounds and their perceived connections among the three constructs to answer each of the three research questions. For each of the research questions, each of the dominant themes contained multiple subthemes that tackled and classified similar responses and experiences (refer Tables 5, 6, and 7). For example, under the theme *Perceived high Self-Compassion And high Academic Motivation*, three subthemes included participants’ perceived ability to problem solve, have optimism, have realistic expectations, and have a passion for field. It is worth noting that several responses fell under multiple themes based on the complexity of the content and information that intersected. For example, when one participant discussed her parents’ unrealistic expectations and harsh responses when she fails to achieve them, which makes her feel unworthy, it was presented under both themes of *Perceived negative parent-child relationships and low self-compassion*, and *Perceived negative parent-child*
relationships and low academic motivation because it touched on feelings of self-judgment inhibiting both self-compassion and low academic motivation. The final component in the analytic process involved considering links among the three constructs in university students’ responses. Overall, the primary goal of this analysis was to allow for personal and unique stories to emerge, which added details necessary to link the complex connections.

I have also integrated the scores from the SCS-SF with the qualitative descriptions in an effort to: help researchers understand what the interview data adds to the statistical analysis of the quantitative methods, provide more context to the qualitative portion of the data, give participants an idea of the measure, and to create discussion points. This quantitative measure was also used as a different source of data to enhance the credibility of the study (Lapan, 2011). I also used a comparative approach which focused on the participants’ demographic and cultural backgrounds in order to better understand the differences which explain the situation of each participant and the connections they perceive among the three constructs.

Statement of self-reflection. In order to empower the participants to be the owners of their own stories, I took some steps to ensure that my biases were monitored and reduced. This process included: regularly meeting with my supervisor throughout the study to reflect on biases, monitoring self-perceptions by keeping a journal about own beliefs, biases, and changes in thinking, checking my understanding with the participants during the interview and accepting their corrections, and reminding myself of the research goal which is to gather data and answer research questions of the study. My positionality as a graduate student might have made the participants more comfortable in communicating their experiences with me because of the closeness in age which helped with establishing trustworthiness.
Table 2
Dominant themes reported by participants as perceived connection between quality of parent-child relationships and self-compassion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response rate (%)</th>
<th>Participants perceived a connection (%)</th>
<th>Dominant themes (n = number of responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>Theme 1: Perceived positive parent-child relationships and high self-compassion (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>Theme 2: Perceived negative parent-child relationships and low self-compassion (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>Theme 3: Perceived complex relationships and high self-compassion (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Dominant themes reported by participants as perceived connection between self-compassion and academic motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response rate (%)</th>
<th>Participants perceived a connection (%)</th>
<th>Dominant themes (n = number of responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>Theme 4: Perceived high self-compassion and high academic motivation (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>Theme 5: Perceived low self-compassion and low academic motivation (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
Dominant themes reported by participants as perceived connection between parent-child relationships and academic motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response rate (%)</th>
<th>Participants perceived a connection (%)</th>
<th>Dominant themes (n = number of responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>Theme 6: Perceived positive parent-child relationships and high academic motivation (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>Theme 7: Perceived negative parent-child relationships and low academic motivation (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>Theme 8: Perceived complex parent-child relationships and high motivation (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5
**Research Question 1, Themes, and Sub-Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do participants perceive a connection between parent-child relationships and their feelings of self-compassion?</td>
<td>Theme 1: Perceived positive parent-child relationships and high self-compassion</td>
<td>1. Warm and compassionate response; role model; parents with realistic expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme 2: Perceived negative parent-child relationships and low self-compassion</td>
<td>2. Dominating parents, parents’ unrealistic expectations; parents’ harsh criticism; carelessness and neglect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme 3: Perceived complex relationships and high self-compassion</td>
<td>3. Physical distance; lack of communication; complex and external relationships; self-empowerment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Pseudonyms were used for each of the nine participants

### Table 6
**Research Question 2, Themes, and Sub-Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 2: Do participants perceive a connection between their feelings of self-compassion and their academic motivation?</td>
<td>Theme 4: Perceived high self-compassion and high academic motivation</td>
<td>4. Problem-solving; optimism about success, realistic expectations; passion for field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme 5: Perceived low self-compassion and low academic motivation</td>
<td>5. Self-indulgence and procrastination; parents with unrealistic expectations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Pseudonyms were used for each of the nine participants

### Table 7
**Research Question 3, Themes, and Sub-Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 3: Do participants perceive a connection between the quality of their relationship with parents and their academic motivation?</td>
<td>Theme 6: Perceived positive parent-child relationships and high academic motivation</td>
<td>6. Trustful and supportive environments; effective responsiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme 7: Perceived negative parent-child relationships and low academic motivation</td>
<td>7. Negative family dynamics; negative criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme 8: Perceived complex parent-child relationships and high motivation</td>
<td>8. Ambivalent relationships; influential figures; opposite effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme 8: Perceived complex parent-child relationships and high motivation</td>
<td>9. Ethnic and cultural influences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Pseudonyms were used for each of the nine participants
Findings

The findings are presented in correspondence to each of the three research questions guiding this study. I begin by addressing the findings from the SCS-SF, which provide additional details about each participant’s level of self-compassion on the following dimensions (Self-Kindness, Common Humanity, Mindfulness, Self-judgment, Isolation, Overidentification with negative emotions). I then highlight responses that address directly the three research questions. Before presenting the findings specific to each of the research questions, it is important to acknowledge each participant’s perceived level of self-compassion as assessed on the SCS-SF, which provides more context and background details that allow me to make connections between each participant’s experiences overall self-compassion and perceptions of relationship quality with parents and academic motivation. Table 8 provides participants’ self-compassion scores including the six factors that contribute to the overall score (refer to Table 8). According to Raes, Pommier, Neff, and Van Gucht (2011), the average mean of the total self-compassion is 2.5, with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-compassion. For scoring purposes, in this study, the means were calculated for each subscale and a grand mean was calculated that represented an overall self-compassion score. In spite of this study interest in participants’ perceived self-compassion through the in-depth interview, it is important to acknowledge the richness that these scores add to the study since they helped further identify those participants who confused self-compassion with other terms (i.e. self-indulgence) based on their conflicting answers, even after being provided with a definition of self-compassion during the interview protocol. Therefore, the SCS-SF scores are acknowledged throughout the sections to add more confidence to our understanding of the participants’ true level of self-compassion. It is worth noting that all the data contracted from each measure is equally important and that no measures were preferred over another.
Table 8

Participants’ perceived level of self-compassion: Self Compassion Scale- Short Form Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (pseudonym)</th>
<th>Self-kindness</th>
<th>Self-judgment</th>
<th>Common Humanity</th>
<th>Isolation</th>
<th>Mindfulness</th>
<th>Overidentification</th>
<th>Self-compassion score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isla</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jena</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means are calculated for each subscale, and a grand mean is calculated that represents an overall self-compassion score.
Taken together, findings from the SCS-SF results suggest that Bella, Jena, and Shane are the only ones that are considered to have high self-compassion, while Emily and Cathy have the lowest self-compassion and the rest had average self-compassion. It is also important to note that during the interview, three out of nine participants stated having high self-compassion when answering the interview questions while scoring low on the self-compassion scale. For example, when asked if her quality of relationships with parents influences her self-compassion, Grace stated:

Well, I think my relationship with my Dad would kind of give me higher compassion for myself because it's like the way I approach everything is the opposite… So, like my parents smoke and I don't like to smoke. My Dad is an alcoholic… I don't want to be an alcoholic… so if he has low self-compassion then I want to make myself look better then and have higher self-compassion.

With the exception of the case noted above, participants’ self-compassion scores tended to align with their interview responses pertaining to the questions on self-compassion; this finding reinforced the accuracy of participants’ descriptions when addressing self-compassion and its connection to self-perceived parent-child relationships quality and academic motivation. It is also worth noting that based on the results of the SCS-SF, five out of the nine participants showed a tendency to overidentify with emotions, with one participant scoring very high on the self-compassion scale overall. Only two participants (i.e., Bella and Jenna) scored very low on the overidentification with emotions subscale.

**Research Question #1: Do Participants Perceive a Connection Between Parent-child relationships Quality and Feelings of Self-Compassion?**

**Theme 1: Perceived positive relationships and high self-compassion.**

**Subtheme: Warm and compassionate responses.** Two out of the nine participants described having positive relationships with both mother and father who were said to be
“warm and supportive” and these participants felt that these positive relationships were directly related to their strong feelings of self-compassion during hardships or personal failings. Bella mentioned:

For like the first 18 years of my life, Dad was the person I would go to for all my ideas and …he just had a lot of things to teach me about the world and we had really great conversations and like a great relationship for as long as I can remember…and with my Mom, it started off not great… and throughout the years, like it’s gotten a lot better as we get along now I think she’s a very reasonable and kind person.

When asked how the relationship with her parents affects her coping with failure, Bella mentioned that:

I always had my Dad there to talk to who would reason it out with me. [I trust him because he is always able to tell me that I’m wrong when I am]. I took the responsibility on myself to change as a person and I worked hard on learning how to control my own emotions and my behavior.

Having a trustful relationship with her father allowed Bella to be mindful of her shortcomings and learn to take responsibility to rectify her actions. Having a parent who is inviting to talk to, warm and compassionate in his or her responses also encouraged her to avoid self-judgment and harsh self-criticism. It became apparent that her relationship with her father promoted self-kindness and mindfulness (two factors associated with self-compassion) as he encouraged her to be realistic about her failings and not associate it with her personal abilities. It is worth noting that Bella’s score on the SCS-SF was the highest among the participants. Jena, who also described having a strong trustful relationship with both mother and father, had the second-highest self-compassion score (refer to Table 8).

**Subtheme: Role model.** Four out of the nine participants (Cathy, Grace, Holly, Isla) revealed that they had divorced parents and all of them described sharing a “very close”
relationship with one of their two parents. Most of the participants described their single parent (mostly all mothers in this case) in the image of a role model, where their parent’s response to failure and coping strategy is mimicked by the participants. For example, Holly stated that:

My parents are no longer together, as I got older my relationship with my Mom grew and I feel like I take a lot from her because when I do get down sometimes, I do beat myself up but I always know this is just one small bump in my life, like, I know not to take it too personally. I tell myself ‘it'll get better’ because of my Mom. She takes the ‘try again’ route because her whole life has been a rollercoaster in so many things, but I’ve never seen her quit once, so I don’t resort to quitting.

Cathy, Isla, and Grace also discussed looking up to their single parents (mothers) who taught them to overcome obstacles through sharing and remodelling actions in response to challenging situations. They also stated seeking their single parent’s support when encountering problems in academia to feel reassured and reminded of the reality of the situation, especially after they described “catastrophizing” (Isla) or being in a “pretty bad mood” (Grace) after getting an unexpectedly low grade. Isla also stated that she could copy her mother’s good and bad habits and she stated:

My Mom has been a single mother since I was two, so I guess she has taught me a lot of independence and feeling like I can do things by myself. But, she's not great at making decisions, so sometimes I have difficulties making decisions too.

Moreover, these participants also mentioned gathering strength during hardships after role modelling their mothers. For example, Holly shared how her mother’s coping with separation made her stronger, “I guess it makes me stronger and helped me mature faster because I don't get really sensitive about certain things so now even if it goes through bumps, I know how to deal with it.” In other words, these four participants reported being able to
cope with stressful situations including academic challenges based on their close relationships with their mothers who not only taught them about coping with hardships but also supported them when encountering difficult moments as young adults and post-secondary students.

**Subtheme: Parents with realistic expectations.** In this study, eight out of the nine participants expressed having at least one parent who holds and communicates more realistic expectations about their academic performance. Of the eight participants, two reported having both parents with realistic expectations (Bella, Jena). Both participants stated that their positive relationships with parents, who recognize their capabilities and have realistic expectations, help them feel competent and empowered. For example. When asked about her opinion on her parents’ expectations, Jena stated that:

“Our expectations are high, but I wouldn’t say they are unrealistic because I never grew up feeling like I had to be afraid I wouldn’t meet them. They were always tailored to what I was capable of, but they do expect me to do my best. I never had that worry and I didn’t frequently do very badly because I had the support network to do well.

When asked to clarify what she meant by “support group”, Jane said:

I mean in terms of my family and having a good home and friends to some degree. I always had my parents and I never felt I was going to be punished for not doing what they wanted from me if I disappointed them in any way. Their approach was to tell me and let me know that they are disappointed, and I can do better, but I certainly was not made to feel ashamed or small, they just would not have done it.

Here, Jena retrospectively discussed how she felt close to her parents who have expectations that are tailored around her abilities, which allows her to feel less shame when experiencing failure (low grade) and have higher motivation to do better instead of fearing to tell her parents about the bad grade like some of her classmates, she was not afraid of
communicating her situation to her parents. As a result, having positive relationships with both parents, which fosters open communication and trust, encouraged participants to perceive their parents as understanding towards their abilities and supportive through hardships or failure without letting them feel shame or self-judgment. Taken together, while it is not surprising that parents could have positive relationships with their children and set realistic expectations for them, it is interesting how these relationships could be perceived to influence their children’s self-compassion in a positive manner. According to the participants in this study, having parents who hold realistic expectations entails understanding their children’s abilities and providing positive feedback so that they can learn from their mistakes and failings while promoting self-kindness and enhancing self-compassion.

**Theme 2: Perceived negative relationships and low self-compassion.**

**Subtheme: Dominating parents.** Only one out of the nine participants (Emily) expressed having a challenging relationship with both parents. Emily stated sharing a negative relationship with both parents as she perceived them to be forceful and dominating. She argued that her parents do not respect her choices which creates problems because does not feel as though she can make decisions for herself. In turn, this makes her feel unworthy, unsupported, and stressed. Emily expressed feeling unsupported when she stated that:

> My parents pressured me to attend university in this location so most of my biggest regrets are the fact that people have made these big decisions in my life for me. At the same time, they do not show up to the things I choose like Maui Thai practice, which impacted my value of self-worth.

**Subtheme: Parents with unrealistic expectations.** Emily who perceived a connection between negative relationships with parents and low self-compassion related it to her parents’ unrealistic expectations. She described her parents as being excessively demanding which
often led to unpleasant feelings when she failed to achieve their standards. She described this feeling in the following way:

If I was a machine, maybe they would be realistic. I could get straight A’s and I can fit a D in Math and my parents would flip out, they would lecture me constantly dragging on for weeks and weeks. When I ask them to buy me something, they would say ‘but you didn’t do all on your Math so what’s the point?’ It makes me feel like my shortcomings were the reason for them not to take care of me.

As a result, Emily stated feeling powerless when doing what her parents tell her in order to please them, which implies overidentification with negative emotions. She also said that she does not have the life that other girls her age have because she is constantly studying and missing out on events and leisure activities with her friends, which makes her feel isolated with a barrier between her life experiences and her peers creating a disconnection or lack in commonality. It is worth noting that Emily scored lowest on the self-compassion scale (scoring a two out of five).

Two other participants also stated having at least one parent who held unrealistic expectations for them (Cathy, Donna). Interestingly, these two participants argued it was either because their parent did not know them well enough and overestimated their abilities (Donna) or that their parent wanted to impose their authority because they felt that they knew what was best for their child (Cathy). Either way, all these participants who reported having unrealistic parent(s) also stated sharing negative relationships with them (they also reported developing a better relationship with their other supportive parent).

**Subtheme: Parents’ harsh criticism.** Cathy and Donna’s perceived a connection between the negative relationships shared with their father and low self-compassion through their fathers’ harsh criticism. Cathy described it in the following way:
He would say ‘this is not good enough’ like ‘I’m disappointed in you’, and then he would often get frustrated in a situation like that and mention that he had worked so hard, for me to be able to do things and then it would just make me feel bad.

As a result, Cathy stated that when she receives a bad grade, she would not show her father because he would point out her flaws and make her feel bad about herself. Donna described how “Dad sulks about things when he focuses on something gone amiss” and she expressed feeling stressed when she mentioned that “I will get uncomfortable when he is upset. Dad is the main source of income and his lack of willingness to put up with continued failure would eventually lead to me losing funding for university.” Both Cathy and Donna felt their fathers contributed to their negative self-judgment by reacting negatively to their failures.

**Subtheme: Neglectful parent.** Grace and Isla’s expressed feelings of disappointment and resentment towards their fathers whom they identified as careless and neglectful. It is important to note that neither of these two participants directly mentioned their fathers when addressing the connection between their quality of parent-child relationships and self-compassion. However, a connection between negative relationship quality and low self-compassion was hinted at by Grace who explained that her father does not care about her upbringing and how that disappoints her. She stated that “I always tried to love him despite his issues, which he wouldn't change for anyone, and then recently he was arrested for drinking and driving so I'm just like no you're pretty done.” She also stated that her father is not good at coping with failure. As a result, Grace revealed being hard on herself in order to avoid becoming like her father. She expressed the need to get a well-paying job to have a better lifestyle than the one her parents afforded her.

On the other hand, Isla stated that after her father moved out and remarried, “I did not have a great relationship with his new wife, so I started to see him less and less and by the time I was sixteen I just wasn't welcome at his house anymore.” In her response, Isla shared
that “My relationship with my Dad probably hasn't affected my achievements very much, I went through a depression and I kind of wondered if having that separation with my Dad contributed to that.”

**Theme 3: Perceived complex relationships and high self-compassion.**

**Subtheme: Physical distance.** Interestingly, although four out of the nine participants perceived their relationships with their parents to be complex and ambivalent, they reported very high levels of self-compassion. First, participants who described having a distant-positive relationship with their parents referred to it as “complex” due to the physical distance of at least one parent (Holly). For example, Holly said that her relationship with her father was not as strong as it once was because of the divorce, remarrying, and moved away. However, she mentioned that she still sees her relationship with her father as being positive overall because he always supports her choices. Despite her father’s distant location, she explained that having a positive relationship with both her parents allows her to communicate with them about her failings and struggles; her parents always supported her with warmth and reminded her not to be “too hard” on herself and to “seize future opportunities to do better”.

**Subtheme: Lack of communication.** Some participants described their relationships with their parents to be positive yet distant due to lack of communication, misunderstanding, and social strains (Shane, Bella, Jena). These relationships were also described as “complex,” for example, Shane acknowledged his parents’ concern about the decisions he makes that are linked to his academic future which was created by a lack of communication and understanding of his desires as he described. When asked how this parental relationship impacts his self-compassion, he clarified that:

My father is very caring and loving, he showed a lot of affection. However, he is closeminded, he tries to empower me but his words don’t have much weight.
Meanwhile, when my mother tries to empower me, it usually ends up doing a 180-degree turn and comes to me as ‘you failed.’

Shane also expressed having a negative relationship with his mother when he was younger, yet he disclosed that with time and as he matured, he was better able to understand why his mother responded that way. He related it to her negative experiences and the hardships she endured growing up. Through mindfulness and compassion, Shane demonstrated having the ability to maintain a positive relationship with both his parents. He explained that taking the initiative to appreciate his parents’ struggles allowed him to take the positives out of the negatives in their messages, which enabled him to utilize his parents’ experiences and wisdom and apply it in his academic journey to fully prosper and succeed.

On the other hand, Bella explained that the reason she was able to be “proactive” about her relationship with her mother was due to her father’s support “always being the voice of support and reason.” In alignment with Shane’s response, being mindful of the situation and one’s actions, she was able to improve her relationship with her mother. Unlike Shane, Bella cited her father’s support and guidance as the reason behind her success at improving her relationship with mother.

Similarly, due to her father’s lack of communication skills, Jenna stated it is “frustrating” when he “explodes” during an event of an academic failure as she conveyed:

He cares tremendously and the way he deals with caring is sometimes he yells, but you know it’s yelling in the sense of you can do better than this! He doesn’t know how to express these emotions…like he would get angry because he didn’t understand.

Like Shane and Bella, Jenna is also aware of the reason her father gets very upset and yells implying that she is mindful of her father’s intentions and with his reaction, which shows the good practice of self-compassion. It is worth noting that these three participants were the only ones who scored very high on the self-compassion scale.
**Subtheme: Complex relationships with parents and external relationships.** Two out of the nine participants perceived a connection between a more “complex and external” parent-child relationships and high self-compassion (Holly, Jena). An external relationship, in this case, is the relationships participants have outside their direct family circle and includes extended family, friends and community members. Holly was the only participant that addressed the importance of having her grandmother in her life and how her choices are shaped by her grandmother’s teachings. After describing her strong relationship with mother and distant relationship with father, Holly focused more on her grandmother when asked about the connection between parent-child relationships and self-compassion. She stated that:

> There were times where my grandma’s actions influence me because whenever she is so hard on me, I'm kind of just like ‘maybe you're right, maybe I shouldn't be doing this because it's not in my favor.’ Her wisdom sometimes takes over.

Although Holly felt that her grandmother was hard on her, she also felt that her grandmother was loving and supportive of her decisions. Holly’s perception about self-compassion suggests that its mostly influenced by her mother who is very compassionate and serves as a role model (as mentioned earlier). Jena also mentioned the importance of having another external relationship in relation to self-compassion. According to Jena, both parents were positive and supportive of her, but she also mentioned the role her high school teacher had in influencing her self-compassion. She stated that:

> I had a high school teacher who was very influential, who had a way of just explaining this frightening stuff. He taught all of us explicitly that grades are not you, they are just a number and you get grades by working for them and you’re like OK, I got it, thank you for that.

Interestingly, when asked how all these relationships influence her self-compassion, Jena stated that “my parents definitely play the biggest role! because of the way I was
brought up, I am able to remind myself of my self-worth and know how to work through hardships and being realistic.”

**Subtheme: Self-empowerment.** When it came to his perceived connection between parent-child relationships and self-compassion, Shane portrayed having self-empowerment when he discussed spirituality and religious guidance helped him cope with some of the negative experiences he has with his parents especially when they fight amongst themselves. He explained that practicing spirituality and religion helped him cope with his struggles. Shane reported being an effective member of his family since he contributes to resolving his parents’ issues with each other and overcomes his obstacles independently. For example, when his parents need him to mediate between them during an argument, he would be the one to step in and reason with both of them. Shane also stated that “The spiritual will tie with the emotions because you feel good about yourself no matter how many rocks people throw at you, you’re going to be able to come back, faith reassures you that there is good in the world.” Therefore, spirituality/religion gives Shane faith that good still exists allowing him to have optimism, so he does not overidentify with negative emotions or feel isolation. It is worth noting that Shane scored relatively high on the self-compassion scale even though he was one of the participants who had high overidentification with emotions on the SCS-SF (refer to Table 8).

On the other hand, Grace who has a supportive single mother discussed the role of self-empowerment when she shared her desire to be a better person and make better choices than her parents. She stated that:

I think that when my parents have negative attributes about themselves, it teaches me to do better and I tell myself ‘okay I will be better than them’ and only be positive about it, because my dad never graduated high school and my mom only achieved high
school, so I am always learning from their choices and I tell myself I should be better and go to university and get myself on the right track out of the lower-income level.

When asked how the relationship with her parents influences her self-compassion, Grace reported feeling down at times due to her family dynamics “I think mentally it's kind of shaken me up, I do have a couple of days where I could be a little depressed” but then she tries to think positive thoughts. Grace’s experiences highlight how having a desire to do better than one’s parents can contribute to self-empowerment and motivation for success.

**Research Question #2: Do Participants Perceive a Connection Between Their Feelings of Self-Compassion and Academic Motivation?**

**Theme 1: Perceived high self-compassion and high academic motivation.**

**Subtheme: Problem-solve.** Three out of the nine participants (Shane, Bella, Jena) perceived a connection between their feelings of high self-compassion and their overall academic motivation through learning how to problem solve effectively to overcome challenges, which was reported to improve their level of academic motivation. Shane described the connection between self-compassion and academic motivation as a “self-sustained battery,” reminding him to have self-kindness and common humanity when experiencing academic challenges. As a result, he stated to be better at targeting problems and working on overcoming the challenges and to have higher motivation to move past challenges and succeed academically. Moreover, Bella mentioned being able to recognize where the issue lies when making a mistake or failing to achieve academically. She stated:

> I think it really helps to instead of attribute things as being wrong with me, to attribute them to be parts of my behavior or parts of myself that I can change. It allows me to be proactive in perusing my goals. Instead of focusing on what’s wrong with me I focus on what the problem is and what I can do to solve it.
According to Shane, Bella, and Jena, having self-kindness when encountering academic challenges allows them to effectively troubleshoot the issue and problem solve, which enhanced their motivation to try again. When comparing participants’ demographic information with the level of self-compassion, I found that these three participants are all over the age of 22 and scored highest on the self-compassion scale in comparison to the rest.

**Subtheme: Optimism.** Moreover, two other participants (Grace, Holly) reported a connection between their feelings of high self-compassion and their overall academic motivation through having optimism about achieving success. For example, Holly stated that having self-kindness allows her to be optimistic and encourages her to believe she can achieve success, which enhanced her academic motivation. She stated that “when I'm in doubt, I tell myself that ‘it will get better, I will do better next time’, and then getting the feeling of a good mark after I told myself, it feels good and it becomes a snowball.” Grace also shared how self-compassion is very influential in her academic motivation as it allows her to be optimistic. “My level of self-compassion influences it quite a bit. I told myself ‘it's fine it's just one bad grade I could pick myself back up I can pull myself together’.”

**Subtheme: Student realistic expectations.** Furthermore, some participants expressed the importance of being mindful and having self-compassion that encourages them to be realistic and maintain high levels of academic motivation. According to Bella, Donna, and Grace, a bad grade is less shocking when they believe that the quality of effort put into it was not enough. Bella explained that when someone receives a bad grade, it is either the person’s fault for not understanding the requirements of the assignment or the assignment might be unrealistic and not unreasonable. Donna also reported that:

Ultimately the more self-compassionate I am, the more likely I am to think that I could get my success if possible. Just being honest and realistic with myself about my
circumstances and trying to keep the focus on the fact that I’m not going up against some kind of inherently doomed academic fate due to a flaw in my personhood helps.

Donna and Grace both agreed it would be difficult to accept a bad grade that was not expected, however, they both stated that “it wouldn’t hurt as much” if they were expecting a bad grade and agreed to have more motivation to work on their mistakes, learn from them and try again until they achieve a better grade.

**Subtheme: Passion for field.** Finally, all six participants (Shane, Bella, Donna, Holly, Isla, Jena) perceived a connection between high self-compassion and high academic motivation because self-compassion encourages pursuing a passion for the academic field, over performance. For example, Donna described how her feelings of self-compassion allowed her to choose the academic field she is passionate about instead of following her parents’ decisions for her. Donna stated, “I wanted to eventually work in a psychology field because that was what I was interested in.” Bella also shared her passion for the academic field stating, “I have done well so far, and I am really interested in my program and what I’m studying. It’s all leading towards hopefully a career in research.” She also confirmed that she does not think of dropping out because she is doing so well. Jena’s response was also related to being passionate about the field of study as she stated, “I have a general interest in humanity and what it means to be a human, which is why I chose a course of psychology. it affects my life and academics in every way.”

It is worth noting that these three participants along with the rest of the six (Shane, Holly, Isla) who perceived a connection between their feelings of high self-compassion and their overall academic motivation through passion expressed having very low chances of dropping out believed that they had more confidence at completing the program of study within a targeted timeframe for completion of the post-secondary program.

**Theme 2: Perceived low self-compassion and low academic motivation.**
**Subtheme: Self-indulgence and procrastination.** This section discusses the responses of three participants (Cathy, Donna, Isla) who perceived a connection between their feelings of low self-compassion and their lower academic motivation through developing habits such as procrastination which requires one to be self-indulgent. Isla suggested that because she copies the habits of her mother who supports her and acts like a role model, she tends to copy her bad habits along with the good ones. Isla stated the following, “I’ve learned to procrastinate from my Mom who procrastinates a lot, I guess it’s related to motivation because when I sit down to do an assignment, I often don't start any work for a couple of hours.” Isla also suggested that procrastinating increases her stress and overidentification with negative emotions which often inhibits her academic motivation.

On the other hand, Cathy described how her inability to cope with stress leads her to withdraw and become self-indulgent, which lowers her academic motivation. She stated:

I’ve never been good with carrying stress, I’ll be extremely stressed and then be like ‘yeah, I don’t think I’m going to school.’ During last year of high school, I started skipping school a lot, I didn’t want to get back because I wasn’t doing good. But, when my Mom found out, we talked about what was bothering me and how I could fix it. Then I went back to school and boosted all my grades.

Along with Cathy’s self-indulgence, Donna linked her lower motivation with procrastination. She argued that the educational standards for students and the grading criteria set by the general education system labels students based on their grades as she stated that:

I was not someone who got very good grades in the beginning, no matter how good a grade I got it was never really ‘good enough’ and I was urged to do better (by the education system and parents). That external motivation actually killed off my work ethic. So, I settled into a failure student self-image and internalized the idea that I
couldn’t be ‘smart’ by the standards and that nothing I did would ever be good enough. It gave me a serious motivation and a procrastination problem.

**Subtheme: Parents with unrealistic expectations.** On the other hand, Cathy and Emily, the only two participants who self-reported holding lower feelings of self-compassion, described having parent(s) who impose their decisions on them and set expectations that satisfy the family’s standards. Both participants also expressed being negatively criticized when failing to achieve these standards, which increased their feelings of self-judgment and decreased their academic motivation. For example, Emily was the only participant who expressed concern about finishing her degree in a shorter timeline than the typical one set by the educational institute as she stated that:

> My parents told me that ‘after high school, you go to university and get your degree, then you get your Master's because you need to get your Ph.D. but if you want to get married before you get your Master's, that's fine just make sure you get a Ph.D. before you get pregnant. They kind of pre-planned my life out. If I continue at the speed, I would graduate my program by the time I'm 20 if I speed myself that way, but I'm pretty sure I will crash and burn. If I receive a bad grade, I would cry a lot and not tell them because I won’t hear the end of it.

Emily communicated that her father has high expectations for her and wants her in male-dominated fields because he did not have a boy, while her mother is under the impression that all Emily’s choices affect the family, therefore, the family has high expectations of her. Cathy also perceived her father as “pressuring” when it comes to planning for her educational future. Both participants argued that these actions taken by their parents do not motivate them to improve their performance academically because their parents encourage self-judgment when participants fail to achieve their “unrealistic
expectations”. Emily also mentioned that she kept academic decisions away from her parents as she stated:

I’ve always wanted to do all that pleased my parents even if I'm not happy, but I love my psychology class, I chose it for myself… ‘you do what is best for the family not yourself’, it's a quote from my mother but I believe that what I study in college is not for the family to choose, it's for me to decide. I didn't tell them I applied, and I got accepted and that was it.

When discussing their own choices, despite their parents’ disapproval, both participants discussed being very satisfied with their choices and having high motivation to complete the program and dismissed any reference to the option of dropping out. Interestingly, when comparing the demographic section to the SCS-SF, I found that both Cathy (18-year-old) and Emily (17-year-old) scored lowest on the self-compassion scale, which might be related to their age. However, Holly who is also 18 years old received a moderate score on the scale, which clarifies that not all individuals aged 18 years or younger have low self-compassion.

**Research Question #3: Do Participants Perceive a Connection Between the Quality of Parent-Child Relationships and Academic Motivation?**

**Theme 1: Perceived positive parent-child relationships and high academic motivation.**

**Subtheme: Trustful and supportive environment.** Interestingly, two out of nine participants (Bella, Jena) perceived a connection between positive parent-child relationships that fostered a trustful and supportive environment and high academic motivation. Both participants stated having parents who support a safe environment which allows them to openly communicate their struggles and trust their parents to respond appropriately. Such quality of the environment was perceived to have a positive impact on their academic
motivation. For example, when asked how her relationship with her parents influences her academic motivation, Bella stated that:

I’ve never been made to feel inadequate in any of my academic pursuits, like anytime that I have achieved something in school, I would always share it with one of my parents, they would always encourage that, but I have always done well so there haven’t been any problems with that.

Both Bella and Jena argued that having a positive social environment with their parents increased their ability to have high academic motivation because they feel supported and guided to troubleshoot problems and feel capable to achieve success which encourages motivation.

**Subtheme: Parents’ effective responsiveness.** Moreover, those participants (Cathy, Donna, Holly, Isla) who perceived a connection with having at least one positive parent and high academic motivation related it to their parent’s sensitive responses. Donna and Holly described how well their parents understood them. For example, Cathy’s mother uses positive reinforcement to motivate her because she understands that Cathy needs that response to do better, and Cathy described:

My Mom will try to motivate me with positive reinforcement. If I think I’m going to do bad, she’ll say ‘well if you fail, it’s OK, but it’s not OK!’ ‘It’s not the end of the world and you could always do better next time’ or ‘you know don’t beat yourself up about it’ you know, because I tend to do that.

Another example is Donna who stated that “I usually prefer it when Mom is being the positive one because I can take my failures quite hard, especially if it was something I was personally invested in, so she takes the optimistic role and I usually appreciate that.” Holly and Isla also referred to their mothers as their supporters who truly know how to help them
and improve their motivation to do better academically. This highlights the importance of parent-child relationships even when only a single parent is available to provide support.

**Theme 2. Perceived negative parent-child relationships and low academic motivation.**

*Subtheme: Negative family dynamics.* Two out of the nine participants (Shane, Grace) perceived a connection between negative parent-child relationships and low academic motivation. Although Shane and Grace described having a loving relationship with both his parents, they both described the struggles of maintaining a high academic motivation when their parents fight among each other and create a negative dynamic. According to Shane, he feels emotionally drained after trying to stop his parents from fighting and complains about having low energy that would make him less motivated to study. He stated that:

> The current situation now is not very motivating as I see your parents fighting frequently. I don’t have the motivation to read as I keep thinking and trying to help both of them and providing the best advice and pointing out mistakes in a very kind and compassionate way. It takes away from your energy.

On the other hand, Grace described feeling the need to move out of her house because the toxic environment her father creates makes it hard for her to stay motivated to do well academically. She stated that:

> I don't like being at home, I like it much better being away from home like moving three hours away was probably good for me, even if we moved out of the house that my Dad was in it's still a toxic environment for me so I don't really enjoy being home and I'd rather be out.

*Subtheme: Negative criticism.* According to Cathy and Emily, negative criticism from their parents often led to them have less motivation to perform better. Cathy stated that:
Dad would be like ‘this is not good enough, I’m disappointed in you!’ Then he would often get frustrated and say things like ‘I have worked so hard, for me to be able to do things’ and then it would just make me feel bad.”

As a result, Cathy keeps bad grades away from her father to avoid the criticism that makes her feel bad. Cathy stated that her father often discourages her when he criticizes her performance.

I think about my Dad a lot like what he says, then I tell myself ‘what he says is true.’

But I know it’s not true and then I think I’m not a good person. Sometimes my Dad will criticize the things I do and I’m like ‘OK, I’ll do better but sometimes I’ll just be like ‘it is what it is, I can’t do better,’ and then if I failed that’s on me.

Emily also described how she has to achieve certain standards to satisfy both her parents who have very high and unrealistic expectations of her. Emily stated that:

I've grown up in this environment where anything less than a 90 is a failure. If I came home with a 75, then I was coming home with an F. One day I got a really bad grade on a math quiz and I was terrified to even tell my mother. I feel like my parents’ expectations of me or kind of unnecessarily high like I'm not going to get straight A’s all the time. Both Cathy and Emily admitted to hiding their low or failing grades from their parents to avoid criticism and unhelpful responses.

It is also worth noting that when these participants perceived having a negative relationship with a parent most of them mentioned having this relationship with the father over the mother. This seemed to be the case for participants living with a single parent, usually, the mother (Cathy, Grace, Isla) as they suggested having stronger relationships with their mothers over fathers. In this study, the participants stated having negative relationships with their fathers due to e.g. alcoholism (Grace), neglect (Isla), strict parenting (Cathy, Donna, Emily), and dominating approaches (Cathy, Emily). Nevertheless, one out of the nine
participants described having a negative relationship with both her mother and father which serves as a reminder that negative relationships with mothers or both parents during early adulthood still exist.

**Theme 3: Perceived complex parent-child relationships and high academic motivation.**

**Subtheme: Ambivalent relationships.** Shane, Bella and Jena’s discussed how there was more to their relationships with their parents than simply positive experiences and addressed how these complexities encouraged them to hold high academic motivation. Shane explained that despite his parents’ critical feedback and arguments with each other, he still feels the obligation to make both of them proud. He recognizes the hardships his parents face to provide him and his sibling with a better life. Although he described his father’s way of encouraging him to be ineffective and his mother’s approach “wearing him down,” he tries to take the good out of their words and strives to find the passion that motivates him. When asked about his parents’ contribution to his journey towards success, Shane reported that “Of course! My parents take credit for being my mentors and being my friends. I would not be where I am if any of those were missing, and yes I would owe them credit.”

On the other hand, Bella was motivated to change herself after sensing her mother’s resentment while simultaneously receiving support from her father. She explained that this combination of experiences led her to take responsibility for her actions and better herself and improve her relationship with her mother. Jena also added that although her relationship with both her parents is generally positive, she revealed that her father can be hard to communicate with when he is feeling angry and yells at them as she stated:

My Dad doesn’t know how to express these emotions sometimes. It’s frustrating sometimes but it’s not yelling in the sense of ‘your garbage,’ it’s yelling in the sense of
you can do better than this’ or ‘why aren’t you trying harder?’ I know that Dad’s being explosive, it’s like whatever, we all know it’s not meant to be harmful.

Subtheme: Influential figures. Holly and Jena discussed having high academic motivation because of other, nonparental, figures in their lives. According to Holly, both her mother and grandmother positively influence her academic motivation and offer support through academic failures by using different means. Holly described how her mother offers affection and compassion in response to Holly’s struggles, while her grandmother pushes Holly to achieve better by reminding her of the opportunities within her reach. Holly mentioned that both approaches create the necessary balance by allowing her to accept failure as a part of the journey to success and reassuring herself of her capability to succeed.

Moreover, Jena mentioned the important role teachers play in supporting her academic motivation and surviving academic life as she stated that “I learned many important things about the academic way of thinking from the high school teacher I had who was very influential.”

Subtheme: Opposite effect. An interesting connection between the quality of parent-child relationships and academic motivation was noted by one participant. Grace discussed sharing a positive relationship with her mother, but she also described how both of her parents motivate her academically because of their own academic struggles. For example, Grade described how:

My parents have negative attributes about themselves, so I'm like ‘OK, I will be better than that and only be positive about it’, because my Dad never graduated high school, and my Mom achieved high school, I tell myself that I should be better than that, go to university and get myself on the right track out of the lower-income level.
Grace described how she finds academic motivation through her parents’ own lived experiences and struggles especially since they often face socioeconomic struggles. She stated the desire to leave the low-income lifestyle in pursuit of a more stable financial future.

**Subtheme: Ethnic and cultural influences.** Findings related to ethnic and cultural influences have been perceived to impact the connections among the quality of parent-child relationships, self-compassion, and academic motivation. When it comes to the first research question, Emily discussed having negative parent-child relationships and low self-compassion as a result of coming from a cultural background (West African) that promotes a parent-directed upbringing (refer to Appendix F). She stated that her culture recognizes success based on performance, “In my culture, being the first-born child means you're seen as the pride of a family. I'm also a girl, so that makes things ten times harder, my parents believe that I should be perfect.” As a result, she expressed sharing a negative relationship with both parents because she perceived them as dominating and related it to their cultural upbringing. She explained that due to the cultural expectations that fall on her parents to be in control of their children, she feels her parents do not respect her choices. She also does not feel encouraged to make decisions for herself; in turn, this makes her feel unworthy, unsupported, and stressed. Emily expressed feeling unsupported as she reported, “I don't get that support because I'm going against what they wish and it makes me feel sad, so emotionally it is very straining and it gives me a lot of stress, which impacted my value of self-worth.”

Culture is once again brought up by Shane who comes from a region (Middle East) where “the young male son has to be responsible for everything in the household as well as taking care of his family and siblings.” However, since he perceived reaching crossroads where he is pushing away from that norm in order to take control over his choices, he also stated that it got him through some challenges for “going against the tide” and met a few difficulties with his disapproving parents. Shane also explained that the reason he did not
perceive a good relationship with his mother during childhood was because, in Middle Eastern culture, women are expected to get married and have children at a young age, which meant his mother had to deal with the hardships of being a young parent whether she is prepared for it or not. Shane also stated that apart of the reason behind having complex relationships with his parents was a lack of communication, which was also influenced by their culture that disapproves of open emotional expression. However, Shane clarified that cultural traditions at the same time introduced him to spiritual and religious practices. He perceived being able to develop mindfulness and compassion, which allowed him to better understand his parents’ duties and struggles and enabled him to maintain a positive relationship with both his mother and father and build high self-compassion and academic motivation.

When it comes to the second and third research question, Emily expressed that both her parents come from West African culture where education is more important for males than females, she communicated that her father has high expectations for her and wants her in male-dominated fields because he did not have a boy, while her mother is under the impression that all Emily’s choices affect the family, therefore, the family has high expectations of her. She argued that her parents encourage self-judgment when she fails to perform up to their standards, which inhibits her motivation for academic achievement.

Summary of Findings.

The themes that emerged from the interview data have been outlined to answer the three main research questions which guided this study. Three of these themes (Perceived Positive Parent-Child Relationships and High Self-Compassion; Perceived high self-compassion and high academic motivation; Perceived positive parent-child relationships high academic motivation) discussed the perceived connections among positive parent-child relationships, high self-compassion, and high academic motivation. In this case, participants
highlighted the importance of trust, open communication and constructive feedback with their parents which helps build their self-kindness and mindfulness. Those participants also perceived a connection between high self-compassion which allowed them to be optimistic, set realistic expectations, problem solve, and pursue their passion for the field, which in turn enhanced their academic motivation through having the trustful and supportive environments built by parents who are compassionate and sensitive responses.

The other three themes (Perceived negative relationships and low self-compassion: Perceived low self-compassion and low academic motivation; Perceived negative parent-child relationships and low academic motivation) discussed the perceived connections among negative parent-child relationships, low self-compassion, and low academic motivation. In this case, participants described having parents that are dominating, unrealistic, harsh, and neglectful, which enhanced feelings of low self-worth, self-judgment, or pressure to achieve standards that they perceived as too high and unrealistic. In turn, these participants explained how their struggle to cope with stress allows them to be self-indulgent and procrastinate. Some described having low self-compassion and low academic motivation as a downward spiral (Isla). Some participants highlighted that their parents’ negative criticism and toxic family dynamics that do not nurture an environment that enhances their motivation to study.

Finally, two main themes discussed the perceived connection among complex parent-child relationships, high self-compassion, and high academic motivation. Complex relationships enhanced self-compassion through having parent(s) that are either physically distant, lack effective communication skills yet continue to establish strong positive relationships with participants through compassion and support, and/or by having the support of external relationships (extended family, community members), and/or having self-empowerment that allows participants to learn to be self-compassionate on their own. These participants perceived high motivation through finding the good in the bad and feeling
ambivalent about the relationships, though the support of external influential figures or through learning from parents’ downfalls and shortcomings. Only three notable demographic categories provided relevant results including age, ethnicity within the perceived connections, and student generation through parents’ level of education. In this case, findings suggested that participants over 22 years of age scored moderate to high on the scale, while participants aged 18 years and younger scored moderate to low on the scale. Moreover, ethnic background and cultural values were discussed when some participants (Shane, Emily) described their perceived connections among the three constructs. Note that neither Shane or Emily shared the same backgrounds or experiences yet similarities between their struggles were evident. On the other hand, parents’ level of education determines whether participants are a first- or second-generation student, which has been shown to shape parents’ expectations of the student.
Discussion

This qualitative study utilized in-depth interviews with young adults to explore their perceived connections among quality of parent-child relationships, self-compassion, and academic achievement. This study explored connections among these latter variables using qualitative methods and focused on young adults based on the stresses (i.e. responsibility, social pressures) during the transition from adolescence to adulthood, which often puts them at higher risk of experiencing depression and anxiety (Andrews & Wilding, 2004). Findings from this study hold implications for clinical and counselling services that could inform young adults about self-compassion and coping with adversities. Moreover, through in-depth interviews, I was able to draw on the young adults’ perceived connections and offer insights that either supported existing research findings and/or offered new insights.

Taken together, this study’s findings suggest that the connections among the three constructs are not as simple and direct as portrayed in the existing literature. For example, for the most part, research findings suggest positive associations among the quality of parent-child relationships, self-compassion, and academic motivation. However, this study’s findings highlight the complexities of these connections as some young adults perceived a combination of positive and negative associations among the three constructs. In discussing the findings relative to each research question explored in the present study, it is important to recall attachment as the initial grounding framework for the study and compare it to the findings that underplay the role of attachment when considering the perceived connections among the three constructs. Note, the only three demographic items that were included in the discussion are age, ethnic background, and parents’ education level as the rest of the five items (gender, study discipline, year of study, lowest achieved grade and highest achieved grade) were not perceived by the young adults as relevant with the three constructs investigated in this study.
Perceived Connections Between the Quality of Young Adults’ Relationships with Parents and Feelings of Self-Compassion

The first key finding in this study involved the importance of having positive relationships with parents who respond with warmth and compassion, especially during difficult academic situations (e.g. bad grade), to the young adults’ feelings of self-kindness, self-compassion, and mindfulness. This finding is consistent with the results of other studies that highlight the importance of having parents who encourage children to have compassion for their own failings and suffering which can help their children to forgive and be more accepting toward themselves (Burns, Loh, Byles and Kendiga 2018; Neff, 2003; Neff & Faso, 2015; Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrick, 2007). In addition, it was noted that these supportive parents enhanced the young adults’ feelings of self-kindness and mindfulness by reminding them to be realistic about the situation and to set realistic goals. Consistent with previous studies, these two findings underscore the importance of having a safe environment that fosters open communication and trust through warm and compassionate parents that can promote positive relationships and enhance self-compassion in their children (Cozolino, 2006; Neff, 2003b; Neff, 2019; Neff & McGehee, 2010; Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Another key finding highlighted how dominating, unrealistic, harsh and critical, or neglectful parents were linked to young adults’ feelings of unworthiness, high self-judgment, and pressure to satisfy parents when making mistakes promoting fear of failure. This finding is consistent with the literature that suggests individuals with insecure, stressful, or threatening environments tend to be colder and more critical toward themselves involving aggressive dominance and fearful submission (Neff & McGehee 2010).

However, a major finding in this study relates to young adults’ perceptions that self-compassion is supported by copying their single parent’s self-compassion and coping strategies. A large body of knowledge regarding the connection between self-compassion and
parent-child relationships suggests that self-compassionate parents are more likely to have children that display compassion and have acceptance towards self (Neff, 2003; Neff & Faso, 2015; Neff & McGehee, 2010). However, literature does not address if this association is conditioned on having two compassionate parents and whether children could still develop a high self-compassion through only having one compassionate parent in the cases of young adults with single parents. This major finding stresses the strength of having a positive relationship with at least one parent which can make young adults strive to emulate their parents’ behaviors. Therefore, it would be helpful to study the power parents have over young adults, especially in the cases of positive relationships with single parents, and how it motivates them to emulate their parents’ coping mechanisms. It would also be interesting for future research to examine experiences with family adversity (i.e. parental divorce experiences) might allow young adults to develop greater strength in the face of adversity and greater self-compassion. Exploring the influence of parent-child relationships could also explain why some young adults who score high on self-compassion can still have high overidentification with emotions in spite of having self-empowerment and spirituality as guiding practices for coping with challenges.

Moreover, in one case, a distant/neglectful relationship with a parent was perceived to be linked to mental illness (depression), which was an unexpected finding. In this case, the young adult assumed a causal relationship between her mental health and her relationship with her father, a relationship that has not been empirically documented in the psychological literature. Instead, recent studies suggest that secure parent-child attachment fosters positive attitudes toward both self and others, providing a foundation for desirable psychological states including mindfulness, and self-compassion (Shaver, Mikulincer, Sahdra, & Gross, 2016). This study finding highlights the role of distant, less supportive family relationships (e.g., sometimes stemming through parental divorce) which could have a significant negative
impact on young adult’s mental health. It also suggests that university students who report mental health challenges might also be experiencing poor parent-child relationships, which should be recognized by counselling clinics and other facilities that support the mental well-being of young adults and post-secondary students.

Another major study finding highlights the possibility of having parents who are physically distant or poor communicators yet caring and loving and the enhancement of self-compassion amongst young adults. This finding acknowledges that parent-child relationships can have both positive and negative components simultaneously which does not risk young adults’ ability to develop and maintain high self-compassion. More recently, studies that generalize and set binary terms (positive, negative) for quality of parent-child relationships (Cozolino, 2006; Dykas & Cassidy, 2007; Ding, Xu, Wang, Li, & Wang, 2014; Jacobsen & Hofmann, 1997; Joeng et al., 2017; Shaver, Mikulincer, Sahdra, & Gross, 2016) tend to overlook exceptional family conditions (physical distance, communicative barriers) along with the complexity of family dynamics. Therefore, this novel finding highlights the uniqueness of individuals’ family dynamics and clarifies that being physically distant or having low communication should not prevent parents and young adults from establishing positive relationships or limit the enhancement of the young adult’s self-compassion.

Moreover, some young adults in this study mentioned having close relationships with their grandparents while others described having an influential community figure (teacher) that enhanced their ability to cope with academic challenges, which is also a major finding. This major finding acts as a reminder that parents are not the only figures that influence young adults’ feelings of self-compassion because young adults feel the need to have at least one caring adult that they can trust and learn from about coping with hardships and having self-compassion. Although this finding is consistent with existing literature that associates self-compassion with attachments and relationships with multiple caregivers (Gilbert &
Proctor, 2006; Neff & McGehee, 2010; Shaver, Mikulincer, Sahdra, & Gross, 2016), there is little known about the influence that extended family and community members can have on young adult’s self-compassion in comparison to parental influence. Future studies could compare the level of self-compassion between young adults who learned it from parents and young adults who learned it from external influential figures including extended family or influential community members.

Finally, another major study finding highlights the benefits of self-empowerment which allows the young adults to strengthen their relationships with parents and improve on their self-compassion through spiritual and religious practices as it reminds them to be mindful and to have common humanity. Some literature on self-compassion discusses Buddhist teachings that train individuals to practice mindfulness, which is one of the main factors of this construct (Duncan, Coatsworth, & Greenberg, 2009; Neff, 2003a; Shaver, Mikulincer, Sahdra, & Gross, 2016). Other studies discuss the benefits of religious practices in encouraging self-compassion among young adults (Farnsworth, Mannon, Sewell, Connally, & Murrell, 2016; Sadegh, Naeini, & MirzaMohammadi, 2018); one study, in particular, suggests that practicing spirituality and religion strengthens individuals’ connection with their community including relationships with parents (Garrett, 2019). Therefore, this finding is consistent with the existing literature and adds to it by highlighting the importance of spiritual and religious guidance for young adults and university students to encourage self-compassion and to establish and maintain healthy relationships with family and the community. Future studies could explore how different religions advocate for self-compassion and mindfulness which are embedded in their teachings even when they do not necessarily acknowledge or use the term self-compassion.

It is worth noting the three young adults who scored highest on the self-compassion scale in this study attributed it to either having both supportive parents and/or external
supportive figures or through self-empowerment with the help of spirituality and religious practices. However, interestingly, the young adult who highlighted the positive impact of spiritual and religious practices on his feelings of self-compassion also reported that he continued to have high overidentification with emotions. More research is needed to investigate the variables that could foster overidentification with emotions. Moreover, it was unclear why one of the young adults in this study stated having higher self-compassion in the interview yet scored low on the Self Compassion Scale. I speculate that she might have been unclear about the definition of self-compassion and/or might have had complex family dynamics and parental relationships that made it challenging to track how it impacted her self-compassion. Therefore, future studies could explore why contradictions might occur when measuring self-compassion among young adults using interview and survey questions.

**Perceived Connections Between Young Adults’ Feelings of Self-Compassion and Academic Motivation**

In this study, the participants suggested that high self-compassion enhances their ability to problem-solve, set more realistic and logical goals, and have more optimism, which improves their motivation for academic achievement. This has shown to be consistent with the existing literature that associates self-compassion high cognitive functioning including problem solving (Arslan, 2016), setting realistic goals (Neff, 2003; Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrick, 2007; Neff & Volk, 2009), and being optimistic (Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007).

Moreover, young adults in this study felt that having high self-compassion contributed to their pursuit of a field of passion, which also enhanced their academic motivation and reduced the thought of dropping out. Interestingly, some young adults from this study who perceived feelings of low self-compassion reported pursuing an academic field of passion and less desire to drop out of their post-secondary program. This could imply that having low self-compassion does not mean giving up on pursuing desired goals or dropping out, which is
a major finding. This finding contradicts existing body of knowledge addressing the positive association between high self-compassion with motivation for learning approach goals (Akin, 2008; Hope, Koestner, & Milyavskaya, 2014; Neff, 2003b), autonomous motivation (Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007), and self-improvement motivation (Breines and Chen, 2012). There seems to be a lack of literature on individuals that have low self-compassion and high motivation. Future studies could further explore the connection between one’s feelings of lower self-compassion and high motivation for academic pursuits.

Moreover, some of the young adults in this study perceived having low coping skills when feeling stressed and reported engaging in self-indulging behavior (e.g. procrastination) which undermined their academic motivation. Meanwhile, others related this connection to their parents’ poor role modeling practices that they mimicked. These findings highlight the degree of influence parent’s actions and responses have on young adults’ motivation such as adapting self-indulging behaviors, which is a major finding. Although previous studies that reported self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification were associated positively with performance-approach goals, self-handicapping, and burnout which were linked to perceptions of being harshly evaluated (Akin, 2008; Akin & Akin, 2015; Barnett & Flores, 2016; Church, Elliot, & Gable, 2001; Oksana et al., 2018), they do not measure the degree of impact parents have on their older children’s’ ability to cope in a healthy manner which in turn is linked to their academic motivation. Future studies could explore how parents’ actions and responses resonate with young adults and to what degree they impact their motivation for achievement.

Moreover, when exploring the link between young adults’ background information and their feelings of self-compassion, it was noted that those who perceived a connection between feelings of high self-compassion and academic motivation were all over the age of 22 and scored highest on the self-compassion scale, as compared with the other young adults
in this study. This finding suggests that with age, one might develop stronger feelings of self-compassion and a stronger desire for academic pursuits. Also, young adults aged 18 years and younger in this study perceived a connection between negative self-compassion and low academic motivation and scored low on the Self-Compassion Scale, a finding which supports the notion that younger adults might still be developing their feelings of self-compassion (Neff, 2009). Among the few studies that explore the connection between self-compassion and age, one of which suggests that older adolescent/younger adults (specifically girls) aged 16-18 might be at higher risk of depression in comparison to younger ages (Bluth, Campo, Futch, & Gaylord, 2017). Therefore, the young adult females in this study might still be developing their feelings of self-compassion or be at higher risks of depression. Future studies could also explore the relevance of age in connection to self-compassion and academic motivation.

**Perceived Connections between the Quality of Young Adults’ Relationships with Parents and Academic Motivation**

The first finding focuses on the importance of having positive relationships with parents who are supportive and sensitive in their responses which guides young adults through hardships and motivates them to achieve success in an academic setting. This finding aligns with previous studies which shows that warm, democratic, and firm parenting along with parental autonomous motivation (Moë, Katz & Alesi, 2018) and parental process praise (Gunderson et al., 2018) allows youth to develop positive attitudes toward their academic achievement (Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989). These studies emphasize the important role that parents play when assisting and guiding their children to pursue academic pursuits (Bariroh, 2018). Future studies could explore whether self-compassion plays a role in parents’ strategies to help motivate their children to achieve academic success.
Another study finding pertains to the young adults who stressed that having a home environment where parents fight regularly creates a tense dynamic making it stressful and challenging for them to study and complete academic assignments as it is unmotivating and uninspiring. This finding is also consistent with the studies that identified an association between insecure attachment styles including avoidant, ambivalent and disorganized with poor parent-child relationships quality (Steven et al., 2016), and linked it to low motivation to explore and master skills in order to achieve success (Moss & St-Laurent, 2001; Simons-Morton & Chen, 2009).

However, one of the young adults in this study discussed having a negative relationship with her neglectful father, but she explained how she learned from her father’s mistakes and that it helped her avoid the things she does not want in her life and increased her motivation to achieve academically to become better than the parent. This finding contradicts existing literature on the connection between negative parent-child relationships and low motivation for achievement (Józsa, Kis, & Barrett, 2019; Moè, Katz & Alesi, 2018). Rather, this finding suggests that throughout the hardships of having negative relationships with parents, young adults can learn to find lessons from these experiences which could enhance their academic motivation and support them in their path to achieving academic success. Future studies should explore how having a positive relationship with one parent and a negative with another impact motivation to achieve academic success among students.

Interestingly, in this study, not every positive parent can be a good role model as one of the young adults stated that role modelling her mother also meant adapting her procrastination habits. Some studies on procrastination and parent-child relationships suggest that parents who are more involved in regulating their children's behaviour, specifically mothers, had adult children with low procrastination (Chen, 2017; Milgram, Mey-Tal, & Levison, 1998), whereas, both paternal and maternal alienation were positively associated
with procrastination (Chen, 2017). Therefore, this finding highlights the important role of the parent in reducing procrastination among young adults.

Moreover, based on the experiences of the two young adults in this study who discussed the influences of ethnic practices (Middle Eastern, West African) on the connections among the three constructs, there were similarities evident in spite of the difference in region and tradition. Both cultures seem to have similarities when it comes to assigning distinct gender roles to each individual and the cultural expectations placed on the parents that require them to maintain control of their children’s decision or disapprove when their children make their own decisions without the parents’ involvement. It was interesting how culture was perceived to play a role in parental upbringing and expectations, which in turn influences the quality of parent-child relationships. These findings are consistent with a large body of research on the cultural differences in parenting which shows that every individual is impacted by the culture that he or she is a part of and that parenting practices are deeply rooted in cultural values (Faircloth & Gürtin, 2018; Raval, Ward, Raval, & Trivedi, 2018; Selin, 2014; Sung, 2010). These cultures believe in a hierarchy in family order, hard work/education, respect for elders and one reason for that is due to the very competitive education enrollment that determines college entrance and access to desirable career choices (Raval et al., 2018).

However, these two young adults described having two different qualities of relationships with their parents, self-compassion, and academic motivation as one claimed his relationship with parents is complex and improving, his self-compassion and academic motivation are high through the spiritual and religious practices that were introduced to him through his Middle Eastern culture. Meanwhile, the other young adult in the study stated having negative relationships with parents, low self-compassion, and low academic motivation as a result of the West African cultural influence on her parents’ expectations and
unequal gender role assignment. This is also consistent with the study that discusses these differences between the two cultures with respect to parenting and child-rearing practices which include differences in tradition and religious influences. According to Selin (2014), Middle Eastern families mostly follow the rules of Arabic culture in parenting children guided by Islamic teachings and local traditions that direct parenting. Meanwhile, in West African culture, parenting is presented as the gradual socialization of the child in the values, expectations, and practices of adult life to make the child understand that he or she is part of a group that cares and expects respect in return (Selin, 2014). These findings conclude that culture plays a pivotal role in influencing parenting styles and expectations of the children. Moreover, findings highlighted the link between parents who lack effective communication skills to the family’s cultural norms that often (not always) failed to support emotional expression especially when they come from regions such as the Middle East and West Africa. Future studies could further examine how self-compassion is developed in young adults who come from cultures and backgrounds that do not encourage emotional expression such as the cases noted in this study.

Furthermore, it was noted that some young adults in this study experienced equally strong yet different struggles with their parents’ expectations, which could also be linked to their status as first or second-generation university student. For example, when comparing the struggles of a first-generation student with a second-generation student in the study, I noticed that the second-generation student perceived having parents who set high expectations, which was described as unrealistic and stressful, while the first generation university student perceived struggles with university due to the lack of understanding the parent had about his or her academic experiences, which was also stated to be stressful and frustrating. It is also worth noting the role socioeconomic class could play a role in shaping these parent-child relationships and parental expectations, where lower-income parents were found to have
higher expectations for their children in comparison to higher-income families (Raval et al., 2018). Therefore, this finding suggests that parent’s achievement of post-secondary education does not determine their expectations of their children as much as socioeconomic status.

**Perceived Connections Among the Quality of Young Adults’ Relationships with Parents, Feelings of Self-Compassion, and Academic Motivation**

Taken together, when putting all these findings in connection to one another to serve the purpose of a holistic exploration, I concluded that some young adults’ perceptions of positive relationships with both parents, who are compassionate, warm, and realistic encourage their own feelings of self-compassion. Positive parent-child relationships and high self-compassion were also connected with high academic motivation where young adults are motivated to identify problematic issues and work to resolve them and feel optimistic about achieving success. Some findings highlighted the importance of having at least one parent who is trustworthy and responsive in order to maintain high self-compassion and high academic motivation.

Moreover, a key study finding suggests that not every parent who is compassionate and responsive is always a good role model as they might have low coping skills and low motivation that young adults might copy. Another finding stressed the impact of having a negative relationship with one or both parents (i.e., parents were perceived as dominating, harsh, unrealistic, or neglectful) on self-compassion and academic motivation as it made the young adults feel judged, isolated and unmotivated. Furthermore, a connection was indicated between having a neglectful distant parent and mental illness such as depression. Nevertheless, findings suggested that sharing a negative relationship with a parent and not feeling very self-compassionate does not necessarily equate to having low motivation to pursue academic goals.
Next, an interesting finding of this study addressed the complexity of the relationships shared between the young adult and his or her parents which in some cases helped them develop greater feelings of self-empowerment and spirituality encouraging feelings of self-compassion and academic motivation. Meanwhile, other cases highlighted the importance of having at least one adult figure that is influential and supportive of the young adult and inspires them to have high self-compassion and academic motivation. Collectively, these important study findings were revealed through the use of holistic perspective and qualitative methods which allowed for the unravelling of the unique stories of each young adult’s experiences. It was also interesting to find how culture and socio-economic status play a role in shaping the parents’ expectations which in turn influences their relationship with children.

Finally, an interesting observation when comparing results of the Self Compassion Scale Short-Form and the interview responses involved the two young adults who scored highest on self-compassion. Both had positive relationships with both parents who were married, were 22 years of age, and studied in their fourth year of university. Meanwhile, the other two young adults in the study with the lowest self-compassion scores had at least one negative relationship with a parent, one of them had divorced parents, both were 18 years and younger, and studying in their first year. Based on these findings, I can recognize that the quality of parent-child relationships and age are evident factors that could associate with the level of self-compassion. Since this study is unable to generalize these findings on all young adults, future studies could explore how family dynamics, age, year of study impact self-compassion using a large representative sample of young adults.

**Counselling Implications**

Based on the current literature, self-compassion is understood to be a coping mechanism that allows individuals to have self-kindness, to understand common humanity, and to practice mindfulness when encountering hardships and adversities (Neff, 2003a; Neff,
Self-compassion is important because it effectively combats negative mental and psychological states such as anxiety and depression (Leary et al., 2007; Marshall & Brockman, 2016; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007; Neff & Vonk, 2009) and associates with happiness and life satisfaction, optimism and acceptance (Neff, Hsieh & Dejitterat, 2005; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007).

Overall, this study’s findings suggest that although having compassionate and supportive parents can assist young adults to develop and maintain high self-compassion and academic motivation, having negative relationships with parents does not necessarily mean that young adults are doomed to never know or learn to have self-compassion or academic motivation. Instead, young adults can still learn to have self-compassion by focusing on their parents’ strengths and by developing meaningful external relationships with extended family and/or community members who are influential and positive, or engaging in spiritual and religious practices that allow one to be mindful and realistic about negative situations in order to set effective goals that could enhance academic motivation. Also, not every parent who is compassionate and responsive is always a good role model as they might have low coping skills and low motivation that young adults might copy.

Therefore, young adults struggling with adversities should be offered counselling services that educate them about coping mechanisms (such as self-compassion) and teach them to implement it in order to overcome academic challenges and learn to cope with adversities in a healthy manner which can be utilized in the future. This study’s findings hold implications for student mental health clinics around colleges and university campuses, which have a high population of young adults. First, that counselling services should communicate that having negative relationships with parents or complex family dynamics does not prevent young adults from learning how to adapt and cope with the situation or learn how to develop feelings of self-compassion and a desire to focus on academic pursuits.
Counselling services could also inform young adults that they could develop relationships with non-parental, influential figures (e.g., grandparents, extended family, and teachers) in their lives who display healthy coping mechanisms and have high motivation. These services can also empower young adults who are struggling to achieve academic motivation through helping them set realistic expectations and goals that are achievable and reassuring them of their capabilities and also how to recognize and accept when they might not be able to reach an academic goal. Further, it will be important for counselling services to recognize the diversity in cultural practices that shape self-compassion and academic motivation among young adults, which are often a reflection of the values to which their families adhere (e.g., which might not adhere to traditional Western values). Therefore, counselling services could employ representatives for spiritual and religious guidance for the students who express interest and need for these practices to encourage feelings of self-compassion and academic motivation. Counselling services should also develop effective strategies to help young adults who deal with family members experiencing substance abuse difficulties especially alcoholism.

Finally, these clinics could create programs that allow young adults to overcome adversity and enhance their self-compassion and academic motivation through self-empowerment and resilience, to support fellow peers who struggle with feelings of low self-compassion and low academic motivation. This latter strategy might be especially useful for younger students who might still be developing a sense of self-compassion and who might benefit more by receiving some academic guidance.

**Theoretical Implications**

**Early parenting and attachment.** Before conducting and interpreting the findings of this study, it was proposed that attachment reinforces the importance of early parent-child relationships in developing appropriate cognitive, social, and emotional skills (Ding et al.,
Attachment was also used to explain the importance of having positive parent-child relationships to foster secure attachment, which provides children with the appropriate social environment needed to thrive as adults; it encourages parents to provide a balance of supportive affection, and discipline for adolescence to ensure secure attachment continuity (Cozolino, 2006). Attachment to parents was positively associated with perceived support in compassion towards self and motivation for academic achievement (Allen, Moore, Kupermine, & Bell, 1998; Duchesne & Larose, 2007; Joeng et al., 2017; Neff & McGehee, 2010; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994).

This understanding made attachment a suitable theoretical framework for the purpose of this study. However, after comparing the study findings to attachment, it seemed to be less relevant as the data itself did not address the quality of parent-child attachments, other than the young adults’ own account of their current relationships with their parents. In fact, in several cases, these relationships seem to be shaped more recently through divorce or paternal neglect while in other cases the young adults thrived in spite of these poor parental relationships. As a result, attachment was shown to partially contribute to young adult’s perceived ability to cope with hardships and the ability to have high academic motivation as most of his or her perceptions credited parents or influential figures who are currently supportive and sensitive in their responses. This weakens the argument about the importance of having a secure attachment to the primary caregiver in order to develop coping skills and motivation for achievement in adolescence or adulthood.

**Quality of relationships in young adults.** Throughout the findings of this study, it was becoming less about early parenting quality or attachment, rather, the data emphasized the importance of having current positive parent-child relationships who give young adults the care they need and teach them about self-compassion through either leading by example or sharing and communicating knowledge. This makes positive relationships in young adults
the main focus of the theoretical framework, therefore, instead of viewing attachment and quality of early parenting as the main reason behind the connections among the three constructs, attachment becomes one way to measure a certain aspect of parenting.

However, it is also worth noting that some of the participants stated having positive parent-child relationships throughout their lives and linked it with the ability to cope with hardships and maintain high academic motivation. For example, some participants perceived a connection between positive parent-child relationships from childhood and higher levels of self-compassion (i.e. self-kindness and mindfulness) through early parental sensitivity and compassion. Thus, positive parenting in early childhood, such as attachment in childhood, and good quality relationships with at least one influential figure in young adulthood enables them to recognize the importance of having someone to go to when they make mistakes, someone to be compassionate towards them and to teach them compassion for themselves. Therefore, the theoretical importance lies in the positive connections that young adults are able to form with positive adult role models that are available to them throughout their lives. This new theoretical framework could also explain cases of individuals who have negative relationships with parents and high self-compassion or high academic motivation. For example, one of the young adults in this study stated having a neglectful, alcoholic father yet continued to have high academic motivation and perceived high feelings of self-compassion.

**Limitations and Future Research**

Although this study combined two unique approaches such as qualitative and holistic methods to explore the connections among the three constructs and provided new findings that build on existing knowledge, some limitations need to be addressed. First, while each participant communicated their story based on personalized experiences and perceptions, the findings of this study cannot be meaningfully generalized to a broader population. However, these findings can inform the design of future studies focused on a diversity of young adults.
and university students including young adults with physical disabilities, mental health challenges or who come from specific cultures, religions, or communities (e.g. LGBTQ). Some of these groups could be marginalized, which makes it more important to acknowledge their struggles and learn how they cope with them.

Also, future research could explore the connections among the three constructs with people of various ages and across the lifespan to better understand the connections among relationship quality with parents, self-compassion and academic motivation. This would be particularly useful for counselling services that support a range of students including children, youth, adults, and the elderly. It would also be beneficial to further explore how males and females have different experiences as a function of family-based cultural practices and how it student’s coping mechanisms. For example, in this study, some of the participants discussed how their family’s culture assigns specific roles for each gender and then parents tailor their responses and expectations accordingly. Future studies could explore the role of gendered family-based cultural practices in supporting self-compassion and academic motivation among university students.

Lastly, in this study a couple of participants did not seem sure about the difference between self-compassion and self-indulgence and some seemed hesitant to express the benefits of self-compassion beyond the brief definition that was provided for them during the interview; this finding might reflect the fact that the concept of self-compassion is relatively new to the literature on coping mechanisms (Raes, 2011). Future studies could also explore a causal relationship among the three constructs explored in the study. Age might also be a factor as younger adults could still be developing their concept of self-compassion. Therefore, future studies could provide participants with a more detailed definition of self-compassion in the invitation letter and before the interview process to answer their questions and bring more clarity about the term especially with younger participants. However, a
strength of this study lies in the methodological approach which used semi-structured one-on-one interviews to capture the young adults’ reflections on the quality of their relationships with their parents and its role in supporting self-compassion and academic motivation. Despite this study’s limitations, the findings add to the growing body of research on the links among the three constructs of the study.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this qualitative study suggests that the connections among the quality of relationships with parent(s), self-compassion, and academic motivation are perceived by young adults to be meaningfully connected. To begin, young adults highlighted the importance of positive relationships with one or both parents (or another influential adult figure), who are compassionate, warm, and realistic with their expectations, in supporting feelings of self-compassion. In turn, young adults discussed how positive relationships with parents and/or influential adult figures connect with feelings of self-compassion and motivation to pursue academic goals, which makes them feel positive about working to resolve them. However, this study’s findings point out that some young adults who shared more negative relationships with their parents still developed feelings of self-compassion and were academically motivated because they strived to overcome what they perceived as their parents’ negative coping styles and felt empowered to effect change in their lives. Overall, this study’s findings were revealed through the use of qualitative methods which allowed for the unravelling of young adults’ unique experiences. In addition, the holistic perspective of this study allowed for newer findings to emerge about the connection among the three constructs stressing the uniqueness of individual experiences. Moreover, instead of attachment, quality of parenting offered a better framework for understanding the developmental importance of positive relationships in encouraging the development of self-compassion and academic motivation among young adults.
References


doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190464684.013.27


Appendix A (REB clearance)

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<td>TARDIF-WILLIAMS, Christine - Child and Youth Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>File:</td>
<td>18-007 - TARDIF-WILLIAMS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student:</td>
<td>Samara Goldsworthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor:</td>
<td>Christine Tardif-Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>A Qualitative Exploration of the Connections Among Quality of Relationship with Parent(s), Motivation for Academic Achievement, &amp; Self-Compassion in Young Adults</td>
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**Ethics Clearance Granted**

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The Brock University Social Science Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University’s ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 9/27/2018 to 9/1/2019.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 9/1/2019. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page at http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

1. Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
2. All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
3. New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
4. Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research.

Approved:

Lynn Dempsey, Chair
Social Science Research Ethics Board

Robert Steinbauer, Chair
Social Science Research Ethics Board

Note: Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.
Appendix B

Oral Script for the Recruitment in Classrooms

Introduction:
Hello, my name is Samara Goldsworthy, I am a second-year master’s student from the CHYS department at Brock. I am working with professor Dr. Christine Tardiff Williams, also from the Child and Youth Studies department, on the concept of "self-compassion". Our goal is to build on existing knowledge that relates to the importance of developing and practicing self-compassion. We plan to explore the unique connection among the quality of relationship with parent(s) and its connection to academic motivation through the development or hindrance of self-compassion in young adults. Findings of this research could give undergraduate students a voice and raise awareness about the need for self-compassion to overcome the stresses of being an adolescent trying to achieve academic success.

Invitation:
For this study, we are aiming to recruit 12 male and female undergraduate students from 17 to 25 years of age. Participants will receive a $10 gift card from Tim Hortons or Starbucks coffee shop.

*Interested participants will be required to commit to the following 3 steps:

1. Email principal student investigator (me) about your interest. You will then receive an invitation letter and set a time and place to conduct the first meeting.
2. 1st meeting: For the first meeting, you will sit with the principal student investigator (myself) to review and sign the consent form, conduct and submit a short questionnaire consisting of a demographic section and a 12-item Self-Compassion Scale, set a date and time for the second meeting to conduct the interview, and select a gift card based on preference. The duration should be approximately 15 minutes.
3. 2nd meeting: On the second meeting, a one-on-one interview will be conducted, and the gift card of your choice will be granted. The nature of the interview questions encourage reflection on personal experiences and may target memories that could trigger some emotional distress. An example of the interview questions is “How would you describe your parent(s)’ expectations of you? Are they realistic?”. The duration should be approximately 45-70 minutes.

The location where the meetings will take place is completely confidential and private space.
If you are interested or have further questions, please refer to the PI or me using the contact information listed on the ad

Please note that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University’s Research Ethics Board File Number: 18-007 - TARDIF-WILLIAMS

Your participation will be greatly appreciated, Thank you for your time.
SELF-COMPASSION & MOTIVATION STUDY

MALE & FEMALE STUDENTS 17-25 YEARS OLD ARE NEEDED FOR A STUDY ON THE CONNECTIONS AMONG QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENT(S), ACADEMIC MOTIVATION, & SELF-COMPASSION IN YOUNG ADULTS

This study is a graduate thesis project from the Child and Youth Studies Department at Brock University.

Interested participants will be required to commit to the following 3 steps:

1. Use contact the information below and email principal student investigator about your interest; receive an invitation form; set a time to conduct the 1st meeting

2. 1st meeting: 15 minutes to review and sign the consent form; conduct and submit a short questionnaire consisting of a demographic section and a 12-item Self-Compassion Scale; agree on a location, date and time for the second meeting; select a gift card based on preference

3. 2nd meeting: 45-70-minute interview; collect the gift card

*Get a $10 gift card from Tim Hortons or Starbucks coffee shop*

To find out more about the study and your eligibility as a participant, please contact

Principal Investigator: Dr. Christine Tardif-Williams
Phone number: (905) 688-5550 x4557
Email: cttardifwilliams@brocku.ca

Principal Student Investigator: Samara Goldsworthy
Email: sa16pp@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board File Number: 18-007 - TARDIF-WILLIAMS
Appendix D

Invitation Letter
September 2018

Title of Study: A Qualitative Exploration of the Connections Among Quality of Relationship with Parent(s), Academic motivation, & Self-Compassion in Young Adults

Principal Investigator/Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Christine Tardif-Williams, Associate Professor, Child and Youth Studies, Brock University

Principal Student Investigator: Samara Goldsworthy, master’s Student, Child and Youth Studies, Brock University

I, Samara Goldsworthy, master’s student from the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled a qualitative exploration of the connections among quality of relationship with parent(s), academic motivation, & self-compassion in young adults.

The purpose of this research project is to holistically explore the connection among quality of relationship with parent(s), development of self-compassion and its link to academic motivation from young adults’ perspectives. The targeted sample needed for the success of this study are aged 17-25 year and undergraduate students from different departments and study years.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to meet with the principal student investigator to review and sign the consent form, agree on a location, date and time for the interview, conduct and submit a short questionnaire select a gift card based on preference. You will meet again and conduct the interview and receive your gift card at the end of the interview. Please note, withdrawal from the study does not disqualify you from receiving a gift card.

The first meeting should take 15 minutes to sign and submit the consent form, agree upon a location and date for the interview at your convenience, and conduct and submit a short questionnaire consists of a demographic section and a 12-item Self-Compassion Scale. The second meeting would take approximately 45-70 minutes for the 14-item interview You will have the option to receive either a $10 gift card to a Starbucks or Tim Hortons coffee shop. The nature of the interview questions encourages reflection on personal experiences and targets memories that could trigger some emotional distress. An example of the interview questions is “How would you describe your parent(s)’ expectations of you? Are they realistic?”.

No direct benefits should be anticipated; however, you may value the opportunity to share your story and struggles as a young adult. Acknowledging your journey ad undergraduate students towards academic achievement could provide insights that support you and other students to deal with the pressures of achieving academic success. Findings could inspire future research to advocate on the benefits of self-compassion in promoting mental health to you, young adults, and your families.

Some risks may arise as findings of this study include the discussion of factors that might contribute to the lack of self-compassion. Other risks are involved with the questions in the interview session, where the nature of the questions target personal information which may trigger negative emotions causing you to feel discomfort or distress (i.e., sharing thoughts about your relationship with your parents). We provide a section on resources should you feel distress with any of the interview questions, they can be found in the consent form under the “Risks” section.

This study will be exclusively conducted at Brock University using Brock University students.

Note: Access to all of the research data including participant related documents, questionnaires, and audio files will be restricted to the principal investigator and principal student investigator only.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University’s Research Ethics Board File Number: 18-007 - TARDIF-WILLIAMS

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 x3035, reb@brocku.ca).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (see below for contact information).

Thank you,

Samara Goldsworthy
Master’s Student
(647) 831-2328
sa16pp@brocku.ca

Christine Tardif-Williams
Associate Professor
(905) 688-5550 x4557
c tardifwilliams@brocku.ca
Appendix E

Consent Form

Date: September 2018
Project Title: A Qualitative Exploration of the Connections Among Quality of Relationship with Parent(s), Academic motivation, & Self-Compassion in Young Adults

Principal Investigator/Faculty Supervisor: Christine Tardif-Williams
Department of Child and Youth Studies
Brock University
(905) 688-5550 Ext.4557, ctardifwilliams@brocku.ca

Principal Student Investigator (PSI): Samara Goldsworthy, Student
Department of Child and Youth Studies
Brock University
(647) 831-2328, sa16pp@brocku.ca

INVITATION
You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this research project is to holistically explore the connection among quality of relationship with parent(s), development of self-compassion and its link to motivation for achievement of academic success from young adults’ perspectives. This study is interested in young undergraduate students aged 17-25-years, undergraduate students from different faculties and departments.

WHAT’S INVOLVED
As a participant, you will be asked to meet with the principal student investigator to review and sign the consent form, set a date and time for the second meeting to conduct the interview, conduct and submit a short questionnaire consisting of a demographic section and a 12-item Self-Compassion Scale, and select a gift card based on preference. On the second meeting, a one-on-one interview will be conducted, and the gift card of your choice will be granted. The nature of the interview questions encourages reflection on personal experiences and targets memories that could trigger some emotional distress. An example of the interview questions is “How would you describe your parent(s)’ expectations of you? Are they realistic?”.

The first meeting will be located at the lab in the Plaza building (room Plaza 511C), where it is completely confidential and private. The duration of the first meeting should be approximately 15 minutes.

The second meeting will be located at the lab in the Plaza building (room Plaza 511C), where it is completely confidential and private. The duration of the second meeting should be approximately 45-70 minutes for completing the interview and collecting the gift card. Please note, withdrawal from the study does not disqualify you from receiving a gift card.

This study will be exclusively conducted at Brock University using Brock University students only.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS
No direct benefits should be anticipated; however, you may value the opportunity to share your story and struggles as a young adult. Acknowledging your journey ad undergraduate students towards academic achievement could provide insights that support you and other students to deal with the pressures of achieving academic success. Findings could inspire future research to advocate on the benefits of self-compassion in promoting mental health to you, young adults, and your families.

There also may be risks associated with participation including reflection on past experiences with parents, there might cause emotional distress or discomfort, interview questions that might trigger feelings of embarrassment when asked about academic motivation with struggling students, and strong emotions as a reaction to some of the questions regarding family history and/or lack of compassion.

HELPFUL RESOURCES
Below are steps to be taken should you feel distressed or discomforted with any of the questions during the interview session.

1. Before the interview session begins, you will be reminded of your right to skip through a question or withdraw completely from the study and withdraw all data and information from the study.
2. You will be reminded of the resources available to counsel you during episodes of distress or discomfort.
3. You will be reminded of your rights and resources when showing signs of distress.
4. You will be provided with the necessary information about the accessible services, where they are found, and what to expect.

The resources will include:

1. Brock’s personal counselling services: Website: https://brocku.ca/personal-counselling/

The following information will help ensure that the process of coming to Personal Counselling services is straightforward and stress-free.
• Arrive at the Student Wellness and Accessibility Centre (ST 400) and check-in at reception.
• If it is your first appointment, you will be given a demographic and contact information form to complete.
• If you haven't already downloaded, completed, and brought along the intake form, then please arrive 15 minutes early to complete this form while waiting for your appointment.
• A confidentiality document is available for you to read and your counsellor will review this with you during your first appointment.
• Brock Student Sexual Violence Support Centre 24-hour texting support line: 289-990-7233.

Personal Counselling after hours: 905-327-2244

2. Good 2 Talk 24-hour hotline: 1-866-925-5454
3. Niagara Distress Centre: 905-688-3711
4. COAST (Niagara Crisis Outreach and Support Team): 1-866-550-5205
5. Niagara Health System, St. Catharines Hospital Emergency Department, 1200 Fourth Ave. St. Catharines, ON L2S 0A9: 905-378-4647
7. Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre (CARSA inc.) 24-hour crisis line: 905-682-4584
8. Access Line Niagara 24-hour, 7 days per week confidential help: 1-866-550-5205

CONFIDENTIALITY
All information you provide is considered confidential. Pertaining to the demographic and questionnaire data, because our interest is in the average responses of the entire group of participants, you will not be identified individually in any way in written reports of this research. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study; however, with your permission, anonymous quotations from the interview may be used. Following the interview and transcription, we will send you a copy of the transcripts to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. A copy of the transcriptions will be emailed to you through your student email. You will be given up to 1 week to read and confirm the accuracy of the information and send a response back to the principal student investigator about your confirmation. The review process should take 1 week to be done. Your Data will be kept on hold should you fail to respond with your feedback until further notice.

Please note that during the interview, an audio recording will take place. You are encouraged to use pseudonyms when referring to family members or anyone else involved in your answers as a way to conceal their identity and protect their privacy.

Data collected during this study will be locked in a cabinet at the principal investigator’s (Dr. Christine Tardif-Williams) office at Brock University. The consent form which holds your name and signature will be locked away in a different cabinet from the number-coded questionnaire data, which ensures that your names cannot be linked to any personal identifiers. A master list that links identifiers with study codes will be created to de-identified data. The master list will be destroyed once data collection is complete.

Please note that all audio files will be kept on a password-protected computer that will be secured when not in use. Audio files will be permanently deleted (destroyed) from the computer within 4 weeks of the scheduled interview.

All Data will be kept for 1 year from the time of collection. Once this process has been carried out, all questionnaires, consent forms, interview responses, and audio files will be immediately destroyed (by November 5th, 2019).

Please note that access to all of the research data including participant related documents, questionnaires, and audio files will be restricted to the principal investigator and principal student investigator only.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. You may also request the withdrawal of your data when you decide to withdraw consent.

PUBLICATION OF FINDINGS
Findings of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Feedback about this study will be made available by June 2019 upon request. An email will be sent regarding the summary of the research findings. Please indicate in the box below if you wish to obtain a hard copy executive summary of the findings.

Note: Your data will be used as-is if you do not respond or provide feedback. You will need to contact either the principal investigator or the principal student investigator if you wish to withdraw your data from the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE
If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Samara Goldsworthy and Christine Tardif-Williams using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University. File number: 18-007 - TARDIF-
WILLIAMS. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca. Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM

Please check the boxes below if you agree with the following statements.

________ I agree to participate in this study.

________ I give permission for you to audio record my verbal responses during the interview.

________ I agree to allow direct quotes (with a pseudonym) to be used in oral and written publications associated with this research study.

________ I would like to receive a feedback letter in July 2019 outlining this study’s findings via email.

E-mail Address: ____________________________________________

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: __________________________________________________________________

Signature: _____________________________ Date: ____________________
Appendix F

Demographics

Age: ____________________________________________________________

Gender: ____________________________________________________________

Ethnic Background: ______________________________________________________

Program Name: __________________________________________________________

Year of Study: ____________________________________________________________

Parent(s) highest level education: ___________________________________________

Average Overall Grade: (circle answer)

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<th>B</th>
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Lowest Grade Achieved: ______________________________________________________

Highest Grade Achieved: _____________________________________________________
Appendix G

Kristin Neff's Self Compassion Scale- Short Form (SCS-SF)

HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
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1. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
2. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don’t like.
3. When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
4. When I’m feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
5. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
6. When I’m going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
7. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.
8. When I fail at something that’s important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
9. When I’m feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that’s wrong.
10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
11. I’m disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
12. I’m intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don’t like.
Appendix H

Interview Protocol
Note: Following all these questions, the interviewer will ask “why? or why not?”

Quality of Relationship with Parent(s)

1) Tell me a little bit about yourself as a young adult? What is your goal in life?
2) What is an ideal parent-child relationship in your opinion?
3) How would you describe your relationship with your parents? How has it changed since childhood, if it did?
4) How has this relationship influenced your achievements?
5) How has this relationship taken you to where you are (mentally, physically)?
6) How would you describe your parent(s)’ expectations of you? Are they realistic?
7) How do your parent(s) respond when you experience failure or fail at achieving an expectation?

Academic motivation

8) How and why did you decide to enroll in post-secondary education?
9) What is a successful student to you?
10) What does academic achievement mean to you?
11) How does your relationship with parents influence your motivation to perform in school?
12) How do you handle academic challenges or an unexpectedly low grade? What do you tell yourself?
13) Have you ever considered quitting/dropping out? Why or why not?
14) How optimistic are you when it comes to graduating on time?