

Fostering Creative Compassion in Honors Students
Through Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Mindfulness

by

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ABSTRACT

This quasi-experimental, concurrent, mixed method, action research study sought to evaluate how an elective 1-credit course informed by mindfulness and culturally sustaining pedagogy influenced honors students' academic self-efficacy, self-compassion, and their meaning-making about what it means to be an honors student. Theoretical perspectives and research guiding the study included: academic self-efficacy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, mindfulness, and third space. Drawing from these perspectives, the 9-week Creative Compassion course utilized poetry and rap as a way to enact culturally sustaining pedagogy and also as a vehicle for students to practice mindfulness. Findings from quantitative data from pre- and post- surveys of a treatment and control population, as well as qualitative data (open-ended survey questions, focus groups, and student artifacts) from the treatment population are presented here. This study revealed the following: practices informed by culturally sustaining pedagogy positively impacted students' mindfulness, these same practices allowed for the creation of a third space within the classroom, and improving student self-compassion should be an increased priority. Additional implications for research and practice are also presented.

DEDICATION

For my students. I started this journey for you and I finished it because of you.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Situated Context.....	3
Problem of Practice	4
Innovation	5
Purpose of the Study.....	9
2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH GUIDING THE PROJECT	10
Introduction.....	10
Academic Self-Efficacy	10
Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy	13
Mindfulness and Self-Compassion	16
Honors Colleges and their Enrollment Trends	17
Prior Cycles of Action Research	19
Conclusion	21
3 METHOD	23
Introduction.....	23
Research Design	23

CHAPTER	Page
Participants and Sampling	26
Innovation	28
Data Sources and Collection	32
Data Analysis	39
4 FINDINGS	52
Introduction.....	52
Research Question #1 Findings.....	52
Research Question #1 Summary of Findings	67
Research Question #2 Findings.....	67
Research Question #2 Summary of Findings	82
Research Question #3 Findings.....	83
Research Question #3 Summary of Findings	89
5 DISCUSSION	91
Introduction.....	91
Discussion	91
Limitations of the Study	95
Implications for Practice.....	96
Implications for Research.....	99
Lessons Learned	100
Concluding Thoughts	101
REFERENCES	103
APPENDIX	

APPENDIX	Page
A COURSE RECRUITMENT LETTER	109
B SURVEY RECRUITMENT LETTER	112
C FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT LETTER	114
D PRE- AND POST- SURVEY INSTRUMENT	116
E RESEARCH QUESTIONS WITH CORRESPONDING SUB AND PRIMARY CONSTRUCTS	123
F PILOT SURVEY	126
G SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS	130
H TRANSCRIPTION OF COURSE FEEDBACK	132

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Project Timeline and Protocol	24
2. CCPR Course Schedule and Brief Class Descriptions by Week	30
3. Course Participant Overview	32
4. Data Collection Measures and Timeline	33
5. Research Questions with Corresponding Data Collection Tools and Justifications....	33
6. Academic Self-Concept and Self-Confidence of Students; Coefficient Alpha Estimates of International Consistency for Pilot Survey	36
7. CCPR Course Schedule and Assignments by Week.....	38
8. Focus Group 1 Participant Overview.....	43
9. Focus Group 2 Participant Overview.....	44
10. Student Artifact Word Count Overview	45
11. Coefficient Alpha Estimates of International Consistency for Pre-/Post- Surveys ...	54
12. Paired Samples T-Test Matrix: Statistically Significant Differences of Sub- Constructs	55
13. Survey Response Frequencies (Academic Self Esteem Construct) from Pre-Survey	57
14. Survey Response Frequencies (Goals and Pathway to Goals Construct) from Pre- Survey	58
15. Descriptive Statistics of Sub- and Primary Academic Self-Efficacy Construct from Pre-Survey.....	60
16. Descriptive Statistics of Sub- and Primary Academic Self-Efficacy Construct from Post-Survey	60

Table	Page
17. Difference in Descriptive Statistics of ASE Constructs from Pre-/Post- Surveys of Treatment Population.....	61
18. Difference in Descriptive Statistics of ASE Constructs from Pre-/Post- Surveys of Control Population.....	61
19. Difference in Means, Standard Deviations, and Paired t-Tests of Pre-/Post- Treatment Group Results for ASE.....	63
20. Difference in Means, Standard Deviations, and Paired t-Tests of Pre-/Post- Control Group Results for ASE	63
21. Frequency Coding for Question 52 of Surveys.....	64
22. Survey Response Frequencies (Accept Without Judgment Construct)	69
23. Survey Response Frequencies (Act with Awareness Construct).....	70
24. Descriptive Statistics of Mindfulness Constructs from Pre-Survey	71
25. Descriptive Statistics of Mindfulness Constructs from Post-Survey.....	72
26. Difference in Descriptive Statistics of Mindfulness Constructs for Treatment Population	72
27. Difference in Descriptive Statistics of Mindfulness Constructs for Control Population	73
28. Difference in Means, Standard Deviations, and Paired t-Tests of Treatment Group Mindfulness.....	74
29. Difference in Means, Standard Deviations, and Paired t-Tests of Control Group Mindfulness.....	74
30. Frequency Coding for Question “How would you define an Honors student?”.....	84

Table	Page
31. Characteristics of Honors Students as Identified by Focus Group Participants	86

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Visual Depiction of Nonequivalent Comparison Group Design	26
2. Blackout Poem Submitted by Sergei During the CCPR Course.....	46
3. Sample of Audit Trail Used When Conducting Pre-survey Analysis	50

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

There is no formal standard for university honors colleges or programs. Speaking broadly, honors programs give students who have distinguished themselves through a portfolio of achievements access to more intimate learning environments (such as smaller class sizes) with students of similar academic performance. Furthermore, honors colleges “are essentially more formal, larger version of honors programs, and there are often extra resources, even designated buildings and residences, for their students” (Bruni, 2015). Students who participate in honors, whether a program or a college, often have access to opportunities they would not have had access to otherwise. Alternatively, students may be able to curate similar experiences on their own, but the accessibility of doing so would be much more limited and restricted. Therefore, it should be no surprise that spots in honors programs are often coveted and have competitive admissions processes.

Similar to the difficulty in pinning down an exact experience for honors programs and colleges, it is equally nearly impossible to define what it means to be an honors student, or identify attributes that are consistent of honors students. When I use “honors student” as a qualifier in my context, it simply means the student made an application to Barrett, the Honors College at Arizona State University (ASU) and was admitted based on merit. This is the only characteristic I can safely assume of all honors students at ASU; beyond this, honors students are just as complex as the larger student body. Some are gifted, or have “above-average intelligence, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity” (Renzulli, 2011, p. 81); some are high-

achieving, which means they perform at an impressive level on standardized achievement tests, although there is no consensus on what percentile qualifies as high-achieving; some are a combination of both or perhaps neither. However, due to the competitive admissions processes of honors colleges specifically, and corresponding maintenance standards, honors students typically have high levels of achievement and strong academic performance. This academic success can make it difficult to identify if honors students are in a state of vulnerability or are perhaps “experiencing psychological distress” that can accompany “unhealthy achievement motives” (Speirs Neumeister, 2004, p. 228) often instigated by *perfectionism*, or the “tendency to hold and pursue unrealistically high goals” (Mehr & Adams, 2016, p. 132).

Speirs Neumeister (2004) identified two different dimensions of perfection in gifted college students: socially prescribed and self-oriented. Both of these groups of perfectionists may have histories of achievement, but their motivation for this achievement differs; self-oriented perfectionists’ motivations are linked to the desire to achieve whereas socially prescribed perfectionists achieve for the sake of avoiding failure (Speirs Neumeister, 2004). Although avoiding failure is not intrinsically bad, it can have unhealthy psychological ramifications because students are “motivated to maintain their reputation of competency because their self-worth depends on their reputation” (p. 227). Long and Lange (2002) asserted honors students are more likely to link their grades with a “sense of identity and self-worth,” and Schwartz (2005) contended honors or honors-caliber students are more interested in succeeding than in learning. Fear of failure is often associated with “high levels of anxiety, depression, and negative feelings of self-worth” (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). This heavy presence of perfectionism in honors students

may explain why high negative stress is so prevalent in honors students (Rice, Leever, Christopher, & Porter, 2006). So, although honors students often give outward indications of succeeding, it is important for honors staff and faculty to be attuned to the struggles honors students are experiencing from their own expectations of themselves. It is for this reason I conducted a study to evaluate how a mindfulness-informed innovation incorporating culturally sustaining pedagogy impacted Barrett West students' academic self-efficacy and self-compassion.

Situated Context

Barrett, the Honors College was founded in 1988 and is housed at ASU. The Honors College has a dedicated dean, staff, and faculty on each of ASU's metropolitan Phoenix campuses: Downtown Phoenix, Polytechnic, Tempe, and West. In many ways, Barrett offers students a small, intimate learning experience housed within a much larger institution. For fall 2017, ASU reported enrollment of 59,198 undergraduate students ("ASU Facts at a Glance," 2017), and the undergraduate enrollment within Barrett was 7,236 ("Facts and Figures," 2017). The learning environment is even more intimate for students enrolled at the West campus. ASU has 4,063 undergraduate students enrolled at ASU West ("ASU Facts at a Glance," 2017), and 274 of those students are in Barrett ("Facts and Figures," 2017). The unique structure of ASU's "one university in many places" model allows for Barrett students at West to benefit from all of the resources of a Pac-12, Research I institution, while being able to study at a campus that echoes the environment of a small, liberal arts college. As a Program Manager, whose duties include overseeing student engagement and student retention initiatives for Barrett West, my motivation to conduct this action research study was fueled by a desire to help our

students orient themselves to their education in such a manner that they are successful beyond academic achievement (with specific emphasis placed upon personal wellbeing) and carry that success on with them as they pursue their post-graduate opportunities.

Problem of Practice

In my role as Program Manager, I often interact with students in informal environments. This can be through programming activities, relaxed one-on-one meetings such as getting coffee or lunch, or interacting with students through my responsibilities in the residence halls. Through these interactions, I have observed honors students being incredibly unkind to themselves. Their understanding of what it means to be an honors student seems to be grounded in how many accolades they can collect, and how well they perform on any type of measured assessment. Furthermore, I have often observed them making unkind comparisons of themselves against other students; for example, if student A makes an achievement, student B may celebrate this achievement of the other student briefly, but then view student A's achievement as a reminder of what student B *did not* achieve. It seemed to me there was a complete lack of *self-compassion*, or kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness directed inward (Neff & Dahm, 2015). Mehr and Adams (2015) conducted a study that negatively correlated self-compassion with maladaptive perfectionism, meaning the higher a student's maladaptive perfectionism was, the lower their self-compassion was.

I suspected the honors college was capable of exacerbating some students' stressors because of its challenging curriculum and its interruption to their trend of "established perfect grades" (Speirs Neumeister, 2004, p. 270). In her work on perfectionism, Speirs Neumeister (2004) noted that both types of perfectionists (socially

prescribed and self-oriented) identify a history of “non-challenging” curriculum as a reason for the development of perfectionism; students were never forced to reconcile “earning grades that were less than perfect” and therefore adopted those “perfect” grades as their standard for success (p. 270).

Further, people with low self-efficacy can be “vulnerable to chronic stress” (Khan, 2013, p. 3). Due to the significant role academic self-efficacy plays on student success in college (Vuong, Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2010; Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Robbins, Lauver, Le, Davis, Langley, & Carlstrom, 2004; Khan, 2013) and the role self-compassion plays in overall wellbeing (Neff & Dahm, 2015) it is particularly concerning that Barrett West students may have been suffering from a decreased presence of both.

Therefore, my study was designed to determine if we could increase students’ academic self-efficacy and self-compassion through an innovation created with specific relation to mindfulness and culturally sustaining pedagogy. Furthermore, I also explored how this innovation would impact students’ understanding of what it means to be an honors student. As previously mentioned, there is no formal standard for honors colleges or programs, or even a shared definition of what these colleges and programs encompass, but by understanding what our own students perceive to be inherent to honors and how they interpret classification as honors in higher education, this will hopefully lay the groundwork to move towards a shared understanding.

Innovation

In order to address the perceived low self-compassion and low academic self-efficacy of Barrett West students, I created a 1-credit “Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap” course, where the curriculum was informed by mindfulness-based

practices and culturally sustaining pedagogy. The notion of extending generosity to one's self is what led me to the construct of mindfulness, which emphasizes not just present-moment awareness, but also the non-judgmental acceptance of said awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Linehan, 1993; Teasdale, 1999). Mindfulness is recognized for many benefits, not least of which is its ability to help the practitioner of mindfulness respond to situations in a reflective manner, rather than reflexively (Bishop et al., 2004). Many definitions of mindfulness are divided into two parts: one's awareness of what is taking place, and the way one orients oneself to that experience—with the goal to orient oneself in a nonjudgmental awareness of present-moment experience (Buchheld, Grossman, & Wallach, 2001). Scholars seem to use “acceptance” and “non-judgment” as interchangeable concepts. Further, almost every author who curates a definition for mindfulness uses one of these two terms as a crucial part of the definition (see Leary & Tate, 2007; Feldman, Hayes, Kumar, Greeson, & Laurenceau, 2007; Cardaciotto, Herbert, Forman, Moitra, & Farrow, 2008; Feldman, 2012; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Linehan, 1993; Teasdale, 1999; Bishop et al., 2004). Neff (2003) defined self-compassion as having three main components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Self-kindness is described as “being kind and understanding toward oneself in instances of pain or failure rather than being harshly self-critical” (Neff, 2003, p. 85). Common humanity is viewing the experiences one has as “being part of the larger human experience” rather than viewing those experiences as separating and isolating (Neff, 2003, p. 85). Lastly, Neff (2003) defined mindfulness as “holding painful thoughts and feelings in balanced awareness rather than over-identifying with them” (p. 85). So

although not interchangeable, it is clear self-compassion and mindfulness are inherently related.

I utilized the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, created at the University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness, as a beginning inspiration for the ASU Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course. The purpose for the MBSR program is to help people overcome a variety of challenges, from “medical and psychological conditions” to “demands and stressors inherent in the everyday lives of human beings” (Kabat-Zinn, 2017, p. 4). MBSR has been used to influence abbreviated mindfulness-interventions in different professions that have all yielded positive success in regards to stress-management and psychological health benefits (Irving, Dobkin, & Park, 2009; Mackenzie, Poulin, & Seidman-Carlson, 2006; Dobie, Tucket, Ferrari, & Rogers, 2015). Further, research has shown that an abbreviated MBSR program incorporated into an academic course yielded positive psychological health benefits, one such benefit being improving the self-compassion of student-participants (Bergen-Cico, Possemato, & Cheon, 2013). The Bergen-Cico, Possemato, and Cheon (2013) study was not the only research study to find positive results between self-compassion and MBSR programing; Birnie, Speca, and Carlson (2009) also found positive results regarding the enhancement of self-compassion through participation in an abbreviated MBSR program. They concluded that changes in self-compassion were directly related to participants’ changes in mindfulness, or increased exposure to mindfulness activities. I looked at the mindfulness activities detailed within the MBSR and utilized those activities to generate prompts for students’ writing that would require mindfulness skills in order to complete such as awareness of surroundings, self-reflection, so on and so forth. Then, with the

prompts for writing established, I examined research on culturally sustaining pedagogy as inspiration for what shape the student writing should take.

It was important to me to treat the course with the respect it deserved and utilize a pedagogical theory when considering the course deliverables. I selected culturally sustaining pedagogy for this purpose because of its asset-based approach to students of culturally and socioeconomically diverse backgrounds (see Paris & Alim, 2014). The student enrollment at Barrett West encompasses a wide variety of students, including students from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds. Paris and Alim (2014) presented culturally sustaining pedagogy as a way to make education a more inclusive space for diverse students. After exploring methods in which culturally sustaining pedagogy has been adopted in various classrooms, I decided student assignments would take the shape of poems, and written presentations of rap. Poetry and rap have both been utilized successfully to employ culturally sustaining pedagogy within the classroom (Buffington & Day, 2018). Both forms of writing allow for students to play linguistically with language (Hanauer, 2010; Bradley & Dubois, 2010) and manipulate it in ways often not permitted by traditional student assignments, such as essays. The focus of the assignments, then, becomes the content alone and not the structural delivery of the content such as strict adherence to a citation style or proper grammar and punctuation. Further, I found the use of rap music and free-verse poetry helpful in recruiting participants to the innovation who may have otherwise been uninterested in the posted topic: mindfulness and self-compassion. I also found students who were uninterested in the idea of poetry to be enticed by rap music and vice versa.

Purpose of the Study

Ultimately, the purpose of my action research was to increase Barrett West students' levels of academic self-efficacy and self-compassion. Additionally, I hoped to better explore students' understanding of what it means to be an honors student. I designed my study so that I could answer the following research questions:

RQ1: In what way does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course affect students' academic self-efficacy?

RQ2: In what way does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course affect students' self-compassion?

RQ3: What does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course do to students' understanding about what it means to be an honors student?

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH GUIDING THE PROJECT

No one lives in this room /
without confronting the whiteness of the
wall /
behind the poems, planks of books, /
photographs of dead heroines. /
Without contemplating last and late /
the true nature of poetry. The drive /
to connect. The dream of a common
language.

Adrienne Rich, The Dream of a Common Language, 1978

Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the context and purpose of this action research study. In Chapter 2, I review theoretical perspectives and supporting scholarship. In addition, I describe my previous cycles of action research. I conclude with implications of the theoretical perspectives and supporting research.

Academic Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is grounded in social cognitive theory. In order to better understand self-efficacy, there is value in understanding social cognitive theory, of which academic self-efficacy derives. Social cognitive theory centers on a person's agency and proposes that achievement depends on a variety of interacting factors such as one's behaviors, personal beliefs, and environmental conditions (Bandura, 1986). One of the "core features of human agency" as posited by Bandura (2001) is self-reflectiveness (p. 10). It is in his discussion of self-reflectiveness that efficacy is first introduced. Bandura (2001) defined self-efficacy as "people's beliefs in their capability to exercise some measure of control over their own functioning" and he further refers to efficacy beliefs as the

“foundation of human agency” (p. 10). Self-efficacy is especially important because people need to believe in their abilities, or believe they “can produce desired results” in order to have incentive to “act or to persevere in the face of difficulties” (Bandura, 2001, p. 10). Bandura goes on to state it is “on the basis of efficacy beliefs that people choose what challenges to undertake, how much effort to expend in the endeavor, how long to persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, and whether failures are motivating or demoralizing” (p. 10). It is clear how self-efficacy can determine the way a person orients themselves to their experiences.

If self-efficacy is “one’s belief in their capability to produce designated levels of performance for events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994, p.1), then academic self-efficacy is a person’s belief in their academic abilities to produce desired results or outcomes. Khan (2013) stated “beliefs may determine the outcome of a task more than capabilities, because belief greatly influences effort” (p. 1). Furthermore, Khan (2013) posited that academic self-efficacy and stress coping skills are two different concepts that work together. If a student is presented with a stressful task and they do not believe they are capable of successfully completing the task (low self-efficacy), they are likely to quit (Khan, 2013). It is no surprise then that academic self-efficacy is shown to be a contributing factor to academic success (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Khan, 2013).

Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols (2007) conducted a study of 192 freshmen students in order to evaluate differences in academic self-efficacy of first generation and non-first generation students. Non-first generation students were found to have higher academic self-efficacy; this indicated “some students may enter college better prepared, and as a result, have higher levels of self-efficacy, allowing them to perform better” (Khan, 2013,

p. 1). Vuong, Brown-Welty, and Tracz (2010) cited empirical data that indicated a correlation between academic self-efficacy, college stress, and “their joint effect on academic success for immigrant and minority students” (p. 52). In a 2012 study conducted by Galyon, Blondin, Yaw, Nalls, and Williams, academic self-efficacy was shown to have a stronger relationship with exam performance than class participation (Khan, 2013).

In addition to showing the positive relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic performance, it has been shown that the academic self-efficacy of students can be positively increased (Van Dinther, Dochy, & Segers, 2011). One of the suggested methods for improving the academic self-efficacy of students is to have students participate on projects or tasks that are “process oriented rather than outcome oriented” (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007, p. 16). In other words, the act of learning should be where focus is directed, rather than directing a student to perform for the sake of outcomes, such as grades (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007; Lane, Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004).

Therefore, after reviewing the literature surrounding academic self-efficacy and how to positively increase it, I decided that the Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course would focus on student participation. Students were encouraged to go to class, participate in the activities, and complete the poetic assignments because these acts are already an end, rather than a means to an end. It is the acts themselves that are meaningful, rather than a demonstration of mastery of a topic.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) played a significant role in the creation and design of the Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course. In order to understand and appreciate CSP, it is important to first discuss culturally *relevant* pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (1995) introduced the term culturally relevant pedagogy and her work is recognized as a “landmark in research, theory, and practice because it promoted the idea that students of color possess a rich, complex and robust set of cultural practices, experiences, and knowledge that are essential for learning and understanding” (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017, p. 4). Culturally relevant pedagogy moved away from prior notions of “cultural deprivation and deficit explanations” that previously plagued the literature surrounding minority students (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017, p. 5). Further, research on culturally relevant pedagogy posited that if the cultural identities of students were embraced within the classroom, we would see positive student performance outcomes. Culturally relevant pedagogy theorists argued that White students performed better than their peers because

the epistemological origin of school knowledge, values, culture, content, examples, analogies, and practices is heavily steeped in a Eurocentric and patriarchal worldview, experience, and ideology, it thus omits the experiences, history, contributions, and culture of people of color, the poor, and women (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017, p. 10).

It is clear racial awareness and cultural competence are key components of the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy. In addition to these two components, the notion of care is also important to culturally relevant pedagogy. Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017)

posited that culturally relevant pedagogy is not achievable if caring is absent; at its foundational level, culturally relevant pedagogy is about authentic and meaningful relationships.

Thus, as self-efficacy stems from social cognitive theory, so CSP builds upon the foundation of culturally relevant pedagogy. In addition, and perhaps equally, CSP derives from asset-based pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014). Asset-based pedagogy is a counter to deficit-driven approaches to teaching. Deficit approaches “view the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being of many students and communities of color as deficiencies to be overcome if they are to learn the dominant language, literacy, and cultural ways of being demanded in schools.” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 87). However, CSP strives to foster linguistic, literacy, and cultural pluralism “as part of the democratic project of schooling” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 85).

It was important to me to incorporate CSP into the creation of this innovation, because this theory, more than any other, does not rely on the intrinsic value of supporting all students as a defense of diversity, but, rather, recognizes that the incorporation of appreciation of diversity into education has more value than just a moral one. CSP recognizes the presence and appreciation of diversity as a necessity of the success of all students. People who are diverse in race, gender, and other aspects bring unique knowledge (Phillips, 2014). Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) used the term “funds of knowledge” to refer to “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge” (p. 133). CSP argues for valuing all funds of knowledge equally and not disproportionately assigning value to “White middle-class norms” as historically has been done in education (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 86). By doing this, interactions with

students are no longer “filtered through a lens of contempt and pity (e.g. the ‘achievement gap’)” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 86). It is for this reason I viewed the Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course as pedagogically-informed by CSP and an innovation designed to create a *third space* for students.

A third space is a social environment of development “in which students begin to reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond” (Gutierrez, 2008, p. 148). Piazza (2009) noted educational environments are a key place for students to negotiate their understandings of themselves, others, and their communities (p. 18). A third space allows for students to bring their own funds of knowledge to the topic they are learning (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Rather than entrenching students in a curriculum intended to encourage them to conform to the dominant culture, or mainstream culture, each student is not only allowed, but encouraged, to bring their unique perspectives and ways of being to the classroom.

It is these notions of CSP and third space that led me to decide upon poetry as the student artifacts of the CCPR. Gee (1990) once said “at any moment we are using language we must say or write the right thing in the right way while playing the right social role and appearing to hold the right values, beliefs, and attitudes” (p. 142). Free-form poetry may allow students to remove themselves from the restrictions of writing the right things in the “right way.” Hanauer (2010) utilized poetry as a resource to help students express themselves in a second language for this very reason. He stated the act of writing poetry allowed students to use their own voices, speak in English, but with the style and cultural craft of the students’ mother tongue. In designing the innovation, I believed the utilization of poetry as student artifacts would allow students to focus on

self-reflection and their own understandings without being limited by the restrictions of traditional rules associated with narrative non-fiction. Furthermore, Piazza (2009) argued our use “of language is rooted in social practices, and that these social practices can transform our understandings of use of language” (p. 17). By encouraging students to write poetry and be in community together in the CCPR, I wanted to come a step closer to achieving Rich’s (1978) dream of a common language.

There has been a hesitation in academia to link rap music with poetry (Bradley & Dubois, 2010; Wood, 1999) that could be attributed to cultural differences between “Euro-American and African-American sensibilities” as well as “the reluctance of academic poets and critics to embrace popular culture” (Wood, 1999, p. 129). Ranking and Loffreda contended: “We are captive, still, to a style of championing literature that says work by writers of color succeeds when a white person can nevertheless relate to it—that it ‘transcends’ its category” (as cited by Lerner, 2016, p.64).

Yet even with this lack of recognition in much of academia, “in the past thirty years rap has led a renaissance of the word, driving a return to poetry in public life” (Bradley & Dubois, 2010, p. xxx). Furthermore, poetry and rap are both documented as being effective ways to incorporate CSP into classroom settings (Machado, Vaughan, Coppola, & Woodard, 2017; Buffington & Day, 2018).

Mindfulness and Self-Compassion

With roots in ancient Asian traditions, mindfulness first became mainstream in the West with Jon Kabat-Zinn’s work at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in 1979 (Williams, 2015). As mentioned in Chapter 1, I used a derivative of Kabat-Zinn’s work, the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, to inform my CCPR

course. MBSR has been tested and proven successful in reducing stress and an adaptation of it called “mindfulness-based cognitive therapy” has been shown to be successful at reducing depression (Williams, 2015, xii). Williams (2015) contended part of the success behind mindfulness is it can help us “learn to act in a more flexible way, see our thoughts as mental events, and treat our own minds and bodies with more warmth and compassion” (xiv).

Brehm (2017) connected mindfulness and poetry; he argued on behalf of incorporating a mindful and meditative approach to the act of reading poetry. Brehm (2017) also argued for experiencing poetry rather than interrogating it, or in his words, “noticing and appreciating rather than interpreting and explaining” (p. 188). Although Brehm’s thoughts are about the reading of poetry, I believe they also extend to the act of writing poetry. He stated “poems are not obliged to make perfect sense” (Brehm, 2017, p. 191) in the same way other written work ought to. This is not to say I think the craft behind poetry is careless; I do not. Rather, poetry requires different skills, ones that can lend themselves to mindfulness. In the words of Brehm (2017), poetry requires “presence, alertness, patience, care” (p. 192). If poetry is a mindful act and mindfulness can teach us how to treat ourselves with more warmth and compassion, I was hopeful poetry could also serve as a resource for increasing honors students’ self-compassion.

Honors Colleges and their Enrollment Trends

Peer-reviewed research surrounding enrollment trends of minority and low socioeconomic (low SES) students in honors colleges and programs across the nation is sparse. However, there is a wide array of student writers bringing attention to the lack of diversity in honors colleges through their respective institution’s newspapers, blog posts,

and other forms of online media (see Hemperly, 2015; Weber, 2012; Mendoza, 2010). Their frustration is also echoed by these students' younger counterparts reflecting on the lack of diversity in Advanced Placement and honors courses in high school (Shumate, 2011; "Honors Programs Fail to Support Minority Students," 2016).

When I originally applied and was admitted to the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College Leadership and Innovation doctorate program, I was a Program Coordinator Senior for Barrett, the Honors College and one of my professional obligations was to recruit students to Arizona State University's West campus, and more specifically, the Honors College. Not only was this my professional obligation, it was my passion. It was a concern about this obligation that led me to the doctoral program: often times a high school student's financial circumstances determined her/his levels of academic achievement. This often led to these students being unable to make a truly compelling application to an Honors College, not due to a lack of achievement, but rather, a lack of opportunities available for these students. For example, students who attend underfunded high schools often do not have the same opportunities as their more affluent peers (such as access to Advanced Placement coursework, dual enrollment, etc.). Minority and low socioeconomic status (SES) students are more acutely vulnerable to the admissions processes of four-year institutions (Killgore, 2009; Burke & McManus, 2011; Davies & Guppy, 1997) and the financial cost of pursuing a degree in higher education (Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Kaltenbaugh, St. John, & Starkey 1999).

Even after successfully navigating admissions and financial aid processes, "as many as one out of five accepted low-income students" are at risk of not matriculating to their selected institution in the fall semester (Varner, 2016, p. 40). And although the

research of diversity in enrollment for honors colleges and programs are limited, there is much research surrounding the lack of diversity in schools or programs that have selective admissions processes (Price, Grant-Mills, 2010; Killgore, 2009; Burke & McManus, 2011). The disproportionate access to higher education by low socioeconomic and minority students is a “wicked problem” that falls outside of the scope and timeline of this action research study (Jordan, Kleinsasser, & Roe, 2014). However, by utilizing CSP, I hoped to create opportunities and resources for low SES and minority students who are *currently* enrolled in my institution. By constructing this more supportive environment, I hoped to positively contribute to one part of the larger problem and accomplish a “small win” (Weick, 1984) and therefore create a more welcoming environment for the minority and low SES students who will enroll at Barrett West in the future. This was especially important to me because Ford (1998) argues the retention of “culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD)” students is in itself a recruitment strategy for CLD students (p. 289). Therefore, by creating resources and opportunities that contribute to the success of our current diverse student population, we create the framework to recruit more diverse students in the future. In this way, I felt as though I could still pay homage to my original intent of enhancing recruitment practices for minority and socioeconomically diverse students, even though the focus of my current study has evolved away from this original goal.

Prior Cycles of Action Research

Initially, my problem of practice was about the way selective programs have disproportionately high Caucasian and affluent student enrollment trends. I looked at my setting specifically: an honors college located at a large southwestern, public, non-profit

institution. Had I continued with my original problem of practice, it was clear my original innovation ideas would have needed drastic adjustments; I did not have the authority to enact the changes I wanted as they are so foundational to the recruitment and admissions processes.

My research in this area led me to explore the idea of *soft skills*. Could students be admitted based on demonstrated potential, rather than (or in addition to) demonstrated achievement? If so, what skill sets would a prospective student need to be able to demonstrate in order to consider them for admission? Right around this point, my work role changed; I continued examining soft skills, but I looked at their relationship to retention, instead of recruitment.

The research question guiding my first cycle of research, Cycle 0, was: *How are soft skills of Barrett West students perceived by honors faculty in relation to academic success?* There were three participants in the study, all of whom were faculty for the Honors College. I had two primary goals in interviewing faculty: (a) to determine if faculty think that soft skills are necessary for students to be successful in an academic environment, and if the answer was yes, (b) to start to identify which set of soft skills are the most pertinent to academic success. With these goals in mind, some of the questions that I asked during the interview were: “Besides academic knowledge, what are skill sets you think our honors students at ASU West must have in order to be successful? Why?” and “Please list up to five soft skills that you think are integral to student success.”

Due to these interviews taking place in Cycle 0, I did not transcribe the interviews after conducting them. Rather, I listened to the voice recordings of the interviews and took notes of major themes or ideas that were presented in the course of the interview. I

then compared these to the notes that were taken during the course of the interview. I also identified limitations of the interview, or moments where it would have been appropriate to ask a follow up question or request elaboration for a particular answer, but in the course of the interview, I failed to do so. This was important for any future follow up interviews that might take place, as well as just identifying an area to improve professionally when conducting interviews. The most unexpected theme that emerged from conducting interviews with honors faculty was the notion that soft skills at a foundational level have to do with how a person relates to other people and how a person relates to their self. This was the first time I encountered the term *self-compassion* in relation to my study and at the time, I was unaware how important it would come to be.

In October 2017, I conducted a pilot survey which attempted to measure three constructs that emerged from the faculty interviews: “academic self-esteem,” “academic goals and pathways,” and “involvement outside of the classroom.” The questions designed to measure each construct were entirely original. In this pilot survey, I focused my attention on students’ relationships to their academic self-concept and self-confidence. I discuss this pilot survey more in-depth, as well as the evolution of the survey to include constructs regarding self-compassion and mindfulness further in Chapter 3.

Conclusion

Academic self-efficacy and self-compassion both have the ability to positively impact students’ success. Culturally sustaining pedagogy and mindfulness practices were the inspiration for the innovation intended to improve academic self-efficacy and self-compassion: a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course. The research

method designed to evaluate the effectiveness of this innovation is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of a “Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap” course on the academic self-efficacy and self-compassion of honors students enrolled at Barrett West. This quasi-experimental, concurrent, mixed method, action research study sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: In what way does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course affect students’ academic self-efficacy?

RQ2: In what way does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course affect students’ self-compassion?

RQ3: What does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course do to students’ meaning-making about what it means to be an honors student?

This chapter will explain the research design of the study, including the innovation at the center of the research.

Research Design

This action research study is a quasi-experimental, concurrent, mixed method design (Kemmis, 2008; *Research Methods*, 2010; Gonzalez Castro, Kellison, Boyd, & Kopak, 2011). Action research is designed for reflective research in order to improve the current setting or practices of the researcher in their educational role and context (Kemmis, 2008). In my current role as Program Manager, I often witness students push themselves to unhealthy points of stress due to a lack of self-compassion or a sense of urgency to “keep up” with what they perceive to be expectations of honors students. By conducting this study, I hoped to explore the relationship between mindfulness and

academic self-efficacy and self-compassion to see if there is a way the college can further support these students in a more holistic nature.

The study is quasi-experimental because the recruitment of participants did not allow for random assignment to treatment and control groups. As identified in *Research Methods in Psychology*, the prefix “quasi” means “resembling” and it is also noted quasi-experiments are frequently conducted in educational settings to evaluate a type of treatment, or, in this case, an innovation (*Research Methods*, 2010). This study is a concurrent mixed method study (Gonzalez Castro, Kellison, Boyd, & Kopak, 2011); in other words, I collected both quantitative and qualitative measures in my study at the same time. Furthermore, the study is a nonequivalent comparison group design.

Certain necessary intricacies were introduced by having the innovation take the shape of a course. One such intricacy was that for students to be eligible to enroll in Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap (CCPR), they had to agree to participate in the corresponding research study, specifically releasing permission to utilize their student work for analysis. The primary reason for this was because the course was being piloted by the honors college and therefore needed to be studied for effectiveness.

Study timeline. The timeline for this study fit into the larger Arizona State University academic calendar. Table 1 details the specific timeframes for the various project protocols.

Table 1

Project Timeline and Protocol

Timeframe	Procedure	Action
August 2018 to September 2018	Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invitations distributed to honors

		students to recruit students for treatment and control groups
September 2018	IRB Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study approved on September 6, 2018
September 12 to 17, 2018	Pre-survey data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre- surveys distributed to control and treatment groups
September 10, 2018 to November 19, 2018	Innovation (CCPR course)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation takes place for treatment group • Continued data collection (student artifacts)
November 26, 2018	Focus group data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two focus groups took place with members of the treatment group
November 26 to 30, 2018	Post-survey data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-surveys distributed to control and treatment group • Focus groups of treatment group
December 2018 to January 2019	Data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of results from pre- and post- surveys • Coding and analysis of student artifacts • Coding and analysis of focus groups

Setting. The setting for this study was Arizona State University’s (ASU) West campus where I serve as the Program Manager for Barrett, the Honors College. In fall 2017, there were 7,236 students enrolled in the Honors College, and 274 of them were located at the West campus in Glendale, Arizona (“Facts and Figures,” 2017). Students enrolled in the Honors College have access to the Barrett resources on each campus.

Resources at the West campus for Barrett students include five full-time staff, three dedicated honors faculty (plus additional guest faculty), and an Associate Dean. In addition to resources such as a residential experience, a vigorous engagement calendar, professional development opportunities, and traditional honors coursework (such as the required freshman The Human Event course), students have the opportunity to participate in elective honors courses in order to satisfy their honors requirements. These courses can vary between one and three credits depending on their outlined rigor.

Participants and Sampling

The primary focus of this study was on students enrolled in the treatment—the CCPR innovation. However, in order to establish a cause and effect relationship between the independent and dependent variable (the innovation and the treatment group), I facilitated a quasi-experimental study utilizing a nonequivalent comparison group design. The nonequivalent comparison group design was a necessary structure due to the recruitment process of student-participants. As pictured in Figure 1, there was an experimental and a control group, both of which took both the pre- and post-assessment (survey), but only the experimental group underwent a treatment (innovation).

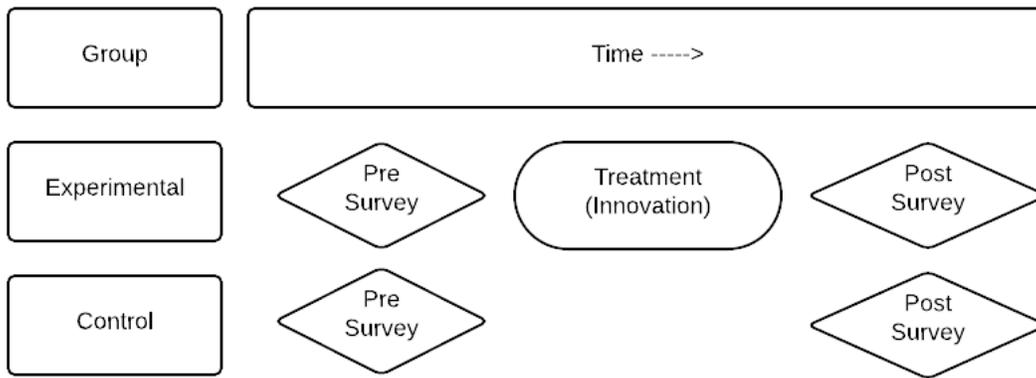


Figure 1. Visual depiction of nonequivalent comparison group design. Adapted from Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators by C. A. Mertler, 2014, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Originally, I hoped to only enroll Barrett West students of a specific academic year (such as sophomores) into the CCPR in order to eliminate as many extraneous factors as possible. This would have been doubly beneficial because honors course enrollment is limited to 22 students, which is a small n in terms of quantitative research. However, due to many students already having a full load of classes for fall 2018, it ended up making the most sense to open course enrollment to all Barrett West students.

In order to recruit student participants in the CCPR innovation, I sent out a Course Recruitment Letter (Appendix A) to all students in the Honors College with a major located at the West campus. Although there were many students who expressed interest in the course, only 16 were able to commit to the outlined timeframes.

I did not make the pre- and post- surveys mandatory for students who enrolled in CCPR. Therefore, the survey had a separate recruitment letter, which was sent not only to students who enrolled in CCPR, but also the entire Barrett West student population, because Barrett West students not enrolled in the CCPR became my natural,

nonequivalent comparison group (i.e., control group). See Appendix B for the Survey Recruitment Letter. One of the ways I recruited student participation in the pre- and post-surveys was by offering an incentive to students who took the survey offered at both points during the semester. There were 129 respondents to the pre-survey and 100 respondents to the post-survey.

Lastly, I recruited participants for focus groups. The focus groups were designed specifically for students enrolled in the CCPR; therefore, only 16 students were eligible to participate in a focus group. I ended up conducting two focus groups, with a combined total of 11 participants. Similar to the survey, the focus groups were not mandatory for students enrolled in the CCPR, so they also had a separate recruitment letter, provided in Appendix C.

Overall, there were 147 participants in my study; 16 of those participants were students who completed the CCPR innovation. The remaining 131 were students not enrolled in the CCPR, but who took either the pre- or post- survey, or took the survey both times it was offered.

Role of the researcher. Due to limited staff in my department, it was necessitated that the researcher also function as the instructor of the CCPR course. With this context, I viewed my role as facilitating opportunities, activities, and discussion for mindfulness learning through creative poetry, rather than an expert who bestows technical knowledge upon the class. I viewed my primary role as instructor-researcher to eliminate barriers or hesitations for students to bring their own knowledge to the forefront.

Innovation

Although I think there is intrinsic value to pursuing mindfulness that is an end in itself, I recognize in order to serve a population I am acutely interested in, the benefits of participating in such activities had to be presented in a way the students could identify as urgent or necessary. Therefore, knowing Barrett students are required to complete a certain number of honors credits prior to graduation, I created this innovation—the CCPR course—as a 1-credit honors course. By assuming the structure of a course, students who might not otherwise have the luxury of mindfulness or idleness, could now partake in such activities with the reassurance of knowing these activities would help them fulfill their honors requirements to graduate.

Although I designed the CCPR innovation with the intention to impact both self-compassion and academic self-efficacy, the course curriculum often encompassed discussing self-compassion and similar sub-constructs also affiliated with mindfulness. For example, themes discussed during class included: introduction to mindfulness, navigating stressful communications, interpersonal mindfulness, responding versus reacting, mindfulness-mediated stress responses, perception and creative responding, how conditioning and perception shape our experiences, and overcoming self-doubt. Therefore, “mindfulness” and “self-compassion” were terms we used often in class. Academic self-efficacy, on the other hand, while of acute interest to my research, was much more latent in terms of deliverables. In other words, if someone were to ask a student enrolled in the CCPR when it was offered in fall 2018 what the course encompassed, I anticipate the student would use the terms mindfulness and self-compassion at some point during their explication, but they likely would not associate the

course with academic self-efficacy, even though the course curriculum was equally designed with academic self-efficacy in mind.

Course deliverables took the shape of poetry/rap submissions to align with the research surrounding culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) and third space. CSP advocates for a shift away from the prioritization of “linguistic, literature, and cultural hegemony” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 86) and prioritizes a shift towards “fostering linguistic and cultural flexibility” (p. 87). As discussed in Chapter 2, both rap and poetry have a history saturated in linguistic and cultural flexibility. Furthermore, poetry and rap allow for the writer to play with language in a way where the content created and its corresponding delivery can circumnavigate hierarchies of “Dominant American English” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 87) that exists in more traditionally accepted mediums of writing such as essays.

The course schedule for the CCPR innovation and brief descriptions of each class period are provided in Table 2. Throughout the course, the same themes (e.g., kindness, inheritance, self-expression) were revisited over multiple sessions. So although certain themes may have had a dedicated class period (or perhaps the class period was named for a theme), it was certainly not the only time this topic was addressed.

Table 2

CCPR Course Schedule and Brief Class Descriptions by Week

Class	Overarching Theme	Brief description of class topics
1	Introduction	Introduction to mindfulness Introduction to creative expression (special focus on poetry and rap) Using creative expression to articulate one’s identity

2	The importance of self-expression	Poetry as a way to communicate in both linear and non-linear ways Re-envisioning the self Re-envisioning systems that define us
3	The history of rap and poetry	A brief history of poetry The history of rap in relation to the black civil rights movement The relationship art has with oppression and revolution
4	Creating something out of “nothing”	Awareness of the world and surroundings Specific attention paid to mindful awareness Acute focus
5	Compassionate examinations of the world	Looking outwards with compassion Treating the world how we want to be treated
6	Directing compassion towards the self	Looking inwards with compassion Treating ourselves how we want to be treated
7	Inheritance	The history of sampling in rap music and the history of sampling rap music The use of poetry and other art forms in reinvention
8	Poetry as a way to communicate	Looking at poetry and art in relation to the <i>Allegory of the Cave</i>
9	Poetry as an act of kindness	Looking at the semester’s creative works and thinking towards the future

As shown, there were nine class sessions which comprised this innovation. The nine sessions were necessitated by constraints due to the research component of this innovation and the timelines associated with said research (such as getting IRB approval). Due to enrollment for the course being limited to students who consented to participating in the research component, the first class functioned as an information session students could attend without any obligation to enroll in the course itself. This was to ensure full

transparency with the students about the course, its subsequent expectations, as well as the accompanying research.

The first class (the unofficial information session) covered topics such as: the design of the course, along with the expectations for the remaining class sessions, and how that tied into the larger research component. This agenda allowed for students to attend the class and fully understand the research study prior to being asked to consent to participate in the study. Further, although consent for the study was required for students to be eligible to register for the CCPR, if the students did register for the course and later decided they wanted to withdraw from the research component, they could still stay enrolled in and complete the course with no penalty. All of the students who attended the first, non-committal class, registered for both the course and agreed to participate in the research study. Further, every student who signed up for the course/research study completed both the course and research study. Table 3 shows an overview of the course participants. All names used are pseudonyms to protect the students' identities.

Table 3

Course Participant Overview

Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity/Race	Age	Classes Missed
Oksana	Female	Black	20	
Misha	Male	Hispanic	19	
Nika	Female	Hispanic	18	
Diana	Female	Hispanic	19	1
Irina	Female	Hispanic	18	
Sergei	Male	Hispanic	20	1
Viktor	Male	Hispanic	19	
Andrei	Male	Two or more	19	1
Bogdan	Male	Hispanic	20	
Ivan	Male	White	32	1
Sabina	Female	White	18	

Elena	Female	Hispanic	19	
Raisa	Female	Asian	18	
Lera	Female	Black	19	
Adam	Male	White	45	
Selena	Female	Hispanic	19	1

Data Sources and Collection

There were three data sources for this study: pre- and post- surveys, semi-structured focus groups, and student artifacts (weekly poetry/rap submissions). Table 4 elaborates upon the timeline of data collection measures.

Table 4

Data Collection Measures & Timeline

Measure	Data Collection Timeline
Pre-innovation survey	September 12 to September 17
Innovation duration -Weekly poetry submissions (13)	September 10 to November 19
Semi-structured Focus Groups	November 26
Post-innovation survey	November 26 to November 30

Furthermore, Table 5 shows how these data collection sources align with each of the research questions of the study.

Table 5

Research Questions with Corresponding Data Collection Tools and Justifications

Research Question	Data Collection Instrument	Justification
RQ1: In what way does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course affect students' academic self-efficacy?	Pre- and post-surveys	Questions about construct of academic self-efficacy will measure pre- and post- innovation. Open-ended questions as they relate to academic self-efficacy will also be evaluated.

Focus Groups

		Students are asked to reflect upon academic self-efficacy together in a group.
RQ2: In what way does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course affect students' self-compassion?	Pre- and post-surveys	Questions about construct of self-compassion will measure pre- and post- innovation. Open-ended questions as they relate to self-compassion and mindfulness will also be evaluated.
	Student Artifacts	Students were asked to answer "who are you?" at the beginning and end of the innovation. Will compare evolution.
RQ3: What does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course do to students' meaning-making about what it means to be an honors student?	Pre- and post-surveys	Open ended questions about students' understanding of honors will be evaluated.
	Focus Groups	Students are asked to reflect upon what it means to be an honors student together in a group.

Pre- and post- surveys. The first instruments in my study were pre- and post-surveys (see Appendix D), which were distributed both at the beginning of the semester and at its conclusion to the control and treatment groups. The pre- and post- survey were the exact same instrument; no changes were made to the order of questions or the questions themselves. The survey was comprised of 52 questions. The beginning of the survey had 17 questions designed to collect participant demographic information, such as gender and race/ethnicity. The last two questions were open-ended: "How would you define an honors student?" and "Do you have any thoughts about academic self-efficacy,

mindfulness, or the contents of this survey that you would like to share?” The remaining 33 questions were 6-point Likert-style questions designed to measure certain constructs.

I designed the survey to measure two primary constructs: “academic self-efficacy” and “mindfulness.” Each of these constructs contain two sub-constructs. The “academic self-efficacy” construct contains sub-constructs for “academic self-esteem” and “goals and pathway to goals” and the questions associated with these two sub-constructs are entirely original. Lastly, the “mindfulness” construct contains sub-constructs “accept without judgment” and “act with awareness.” In order to measure these sub-constructs, I used questions from the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004). The order of these questions were assigned randomly. Appendix E details each of the questions in relation to their appropriate sub-construct and primary construct. Although this is the only survey instrument I utilized during the dissertation cycle of action research, I did use a pilot survey in prior cycles of research which helped me to refine the instrument.

Pilot survey. The pilot survey I created (provided in Appendix F) measured three constructs: “academic self-esteem,” “academic goals and pathways,” and “involvement outside of the classroom.” I piloted this survey in fall 2017 and conducted a reliability analysis of the three aforementioned constructs within the survey. Table 6 demonstrates the alpha coefficient of each construct (also called Cronbach alpha), as well as the overall alpha score (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005). This report was generated through SPSS and helps to measure the internal consistency of each construct and reliability of the survey. The internal consistency indicates whether each item measures the same construct and to what extent it manages to do so (Cronbach, 1951). In other words, it ensures the variance

in each question “be attributable to the principal factor running through the test” (Cronbach, 1951, p. 320). Therefore, with my coefficient alpha of the overall constructs being .882, this indicates that 82% of the variance in my survey is due to the common factors in the survey questions.

Table 6

Academic Self-Concept and Self-Confidence of Students; Coefficient Alpha Estimates of International Consistency for Pilot Survey (n=18)

Construct	Within Construct Items	Coefficient Alpha
Academic Self-Esteem	Items 1 – 6	.904
Academic Goals	Items 7 – 14	.842
Involvement Outside of the Classroom	Items 15 – 19	.628
Overall Alpha	Items 1 – 19	.882

Cronbach (1951) wrote that having an alpha above .80 is ideal, so I was very pleased with the results of my overall alpha. However, the construct focused on a student’s involvement outside of the classroom had a lower coefficient alpha of .628. In reviewing the questions with a more critical perspective engineered by the coefficient alpha, I realize they ranged from asking participants to indicate involvement, asking participants their knowledge about involvement opportunities, and asking participants about their intentions. Therefore, for the updated version of the survey that was distributed in fall 2018, I removed the “outside involvement” construct, but kept “academic self-esteem,” and “goals and pathway.” Although I did not pilot the constructs “act with awareness” and “accept without judgment” from the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills, Baer, Smith, and Allen (2004) cited each of these constructs as having alphas of .86 and .83

respectively (p. 198). For this reason, I was confident including them in the updated version of the pre- and post- survey.

Open-ended survey questions. One of the major differences in the survey instrument I utilized for my dissertation research versus the pilot survey is the use of open-ended questions at the end of the survey. I asked two open-ended questions “How would you define an Honors student?” and “Do you have any thoughts about academic self-efficacy, mindfulness, or the contents of this survey that you would like to share?”

Focus groups. Focus groups are interviews with a group of people who have knowledge about a particular topic (Merriam, 2009). One of the benefits of a group format are participants can “consider their own views in the context of others” (Merriam, 2009, p. 94). A less structured interview (focus group) assumes “individual respondents define the world in unique ways” and require questions to be more open-ended and the format to be flexible so the researcher can “respond to the situation at hand” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). Therefore, towards the end of the semester and after the innovation ended, I conducted optional semi-structured focus groups for the treatment group (the students who were enrolled in the CCPR course). The reason I chose to make the semi-structured focus groups optional is because the focus groups were part of the research study and not the course itself. The questions and protocol I used for the focus groups are provided in Appendix G.

Student artifacts (poetry/rap submissions). Hanauer (2010) identified poetry as a constructivist act because the construction of meaning is done by the students themselves; the goal of writing poetry is to “produce self-understandings of what is important to [the students] as human beings in the world and specifically and uniquely

how [the students] have experienced the world” (p. 9). Hanauer (2010) recognized that poetry has an “ability to provide insight through linguistic negotiation” (p. 15). The use of poetry as a student artifact was a crucial part of the CSP theory I utilized in designing the CCPR because of its capacity to be culturally inclusive not only in content, but in construction, as well. In addition, Hanauer (2010) also stated that writing poetry has earned a spot in clinical therapy because the art of writing it allows for “therapeutic self-discovery that allows strong emotions to be explored, explicated, and expressed” (p. 16). It is this inclusive nature of poetry that led me to select it as the format of student artifacts during the CCPR.

The course schedule for the CCPR innovation and brief descriptions of student assignments are provided in Table 7. All assignments were due the subsequent week following when they were assigned. Therefore, if an assignment was given during class one, it was due at the beginning of class two.

Table 7

CCPR course schedule and assignments by week

Class	Overarching Theme	Assigned	Brief description of assignment
1	Introduction	Who are you?	In your own words, and as many words as you deem necessary, answer the question ‘Who are you?’
2	The importance of self-expression	Recreate something and make it better	Take something you’ve inherited and recreate it into something new.
3	The history of rap and poetry	A poetic Response	Find a poem, song, or rap that moves you (positively or otherwise). Write a response poem.
4	Creating something out of “nothing”	Blackout poems (3) Repetition poem	Blackout poems: (Visual guidelines were provided during class)

5	Compassionate examinations of the world	Love poem	Repetition poem: Create a poem/rap and prioritize focusing on repetition (of words, sounds, syllables, etc.) Create a love poem. Rather than focusing on romantic love, create a love for an inanimate object, utilizing this assignment as an opportunity to practice observation techniques provided in class.
6	Directing compassion towards the self	Exploring shame	Explore something you feel shame about, or feel as though you are expected to feel shame about.
7	Inheritance	Where are you from? Free writes (2)	In your own words, and as many words as you deem necessary, explore where you're from. Free writes: No prompt or parameters. Submit what you would like to write about.
8	Poetry as a way to communicate	My Honest Poem	My Honest Poem: As your final assignment, please revisit the question "Who are you?" And submit a poem of as many words as you deem necessary. Rudy Francisco's 'My Honest Poem' is a beautiful anchor for this assignment.
9	Poetry as an act of kindness		

Data Analysis

Collecting both quantitative and qualitative data allowed me to enhance data analysis by evaluating data individually (by source type) as well as evaluating the complementarity of quantitative and qualitative data. This second part is a way to triangulate the data collected, which strengthens the overall quality of research and allows for increased credibility and validity (Merriam, 2019). Below I provide analysis strategies for each type of data as well how I addressed validity and reliability issues in my analysis.

Pre- and post- surveys. I utilized the online platform Qualtrics to distribute both the pre- and post- survey. As mentioned above, the survey was sent to all 297 students enrolled in Barrett, the Honors College with a major located at ASU's West campus, not just students enrolled in the CCPR course. In addition, it was not mandatory for students in the CCPR to take the survey. Qualtrics showed that I received 130 responses on the pre-survey and 111 responses on the post-survey. Prior to analysis, I utilized SPSS to identify duplicate values and then used a random number generator to determine which duplicate values to delete. After cleaning the data, I had 129 respondents for the pre-survey (117 in the control group and 12 in the treatment group) and 100 respondents for the post-survey (89 in the control group and 11 in the treatment group). Additionally, I created new variables for each primary and sub-construct to be measured. This allowed for evaluating constructs as a whole, in addition to individual questions. After I finished cleaning the data, I was able to begin analysis.

The first stages of analysis applied to the actual instrument. Although in the creation of the instrument, I had piloted an early version of the survey and evaluated the internal consistency of my original sub-constructs, "academic self-esteem" and "goals and pathway to goals," both of which had an alpha above the ideal .80 (Cronbach, 1951) and the borrowed sub-constructs of "act with awareness" and "accept without judgment" were reported to also have alphas above .80 (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004), it was still necessary to determine the Cronbach alpha of constructs of the administered dissertation-cycle survey instrument. I utilized the pre-survey to determine the alpha coefficients of each primary construct and sub-construct, because the pre-survey had a larger number of

participants than the post-survey and would therefore provide more information. This data shows how reliable the information collected from the survey instrument is.

After analyzing the reliability of the constructs, I wanted to determine the agreement between the constructs. In order to determine the agreement between constructs, I conducted a paired-sample *t*-test, determined the absolute difference between factors, their standard deviations, and their significance levels (*p*-value); this allows for thoroughly comparing each construct against one another. The closer the *p*-value is to 0.00 between constructs, the higher the significant relationship between the constructs. *P*-values higher than 0.05 are considered to have no statistically significant relationship when confidence levels are specified to 95%, which is what I utilized to determine compatibility (Greenland et al., 2016). At this point, I finished evaluating the reliability of the instrument, and moved on to interpreting the data collected from students.

Initially, I used descriptive statistic techniques for evaluating the data. This includes generating response frequencies for questions within each primary and sub-construct, as well as the new variables for each primary and sub-construct. I only generated response frequencies for the pre-survey, due to the pre-survey having a larger sample of data, and therefore being able to provide more insight into trends. In addition, I generated survey response descriptive statistics for each sub-construct and primary construct. Due to descriptive statistics providing a more holistic perspective of data, I did repeat the descriptive statistics process for both sets of data that were collected (the pre- and post- results).

Finally, in order to determine the impact of the CCPR innovation on the treatment group, I conducted paired sample *t*-tests of the pre- and post- data. I decided to not use the Bonferroni correction, even though there are several constructs to measure, due to the small sample size of the treatment group; instead, I elected to use the significant level of 0.05 (*p*-value), which indicates a 95% confidence level. As Greenland et al. (2016) stated, the *p*-value operates as a “statistical summary of the compatibility between the observed data and what we could predict or expect to see if we knew the entire statistical model were correct” (p. 339). If the *p*-value is less than 0.05, then I could reject the null hypothesis to conclude that a significant difference between pre-treatment and post-treatment exists.

Open-ended survey questions. I also utilized two open-ended questions “How would you define an Honors student?” and “Do you have any thoughts about academic self-efficacy, mindfulness, or the contents of this survey that you would like to share?” in the survey instrument. Due to these questions being open-ended, I employed in-vivo coding techniques to create initial codes.

Codes that initially emerged for “How would you define an Honors student?” included: go above and beyond, extra (effort/work), normal, enrolled in an Honors College, hardworking, challenge-oriented, community, smart, resources, opportunities, goals, passionate, enjoys learning. From there I narrowed these codes down to seven categories: honors students are normal, inherent attributes, work ethic, community, more than or different, passion for learning, motivated by resources and opportunities. I then created new variables for each of these codes in SPSS and did frequency coding of the times each code was used in the pre- and post- surveys. I also looked more closely at the

written statements of students in the treatment group (enrolled in the CCPR course) as my research questions are focused specifically on the evolution of this population.

For the second open-ended question, “Do you have any thoughts about academic self-efficacy, mindfulness, or the contents of this survey that you would like to share?” I created qualifiers in SPSS for each of the following: survey feedback, reflection on institutional practices, self-reflective, comments about mindfulness, and comments about academic self-efficacy. I then analyzed the frequency coding of these qualifiers for the pre- and post- survey results. I also looked more closely at the written statements of students in the treatment group (enrolled in the CCPR course) as my research questions are focused specifically on the evolution of this population.

Focus groups. I conducted two focus groups. The first focus group had seven participants, lasted for one hour and one minute, and the transcript of the recording was 10,913 words in length. Table 8 provides a participant overview of the first focus group.

Table 8

Focus Group 1 Participant Overview

Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity/Race	Age	Classes Missed
Oksana	Female	Black	20	
Viktor	Male	Hispanic	19	
Andrei	Male	Two or more	19	1
Bogdan	Male	Hispanic	20	
Sabina	Female	White	18	
Raisa	Female	Asian	18	
Selena	Female	Hispanic	19	1

The second focus group had four participants, lasted for 38 minutes, and the transcript of the recording was 5,398 words in length. Table 9 provides a participant overview of the second focus group.

Table 9

Focus Group 2 Participant Overview

Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity/Race	Age	Classes Missed
Irina	Female	Hispanic	18	
Sergei	Male	Hispanic	20	1
Elena	Female	Hispanic	19	
Adam	Male	White	45	

Due to the fact the two focus groups took place in quick succession at the end of November on the same day, I utilized an inductive approach to the qualitative analysis of the focus groups (Neuman, 2000). In other words, my initial analysis of the focus group data was a complete read through of the data all at once. For the first read through of the data, I made “preliminary jottings” (Saldana, 2013, p. 20), which took the form of 35 unique codes for both focus group transcripts. Then I began grouping those codes into like-groups, which helped me identify subthemes.

Flick (2014) recommended the following analytic dimensions when analyzing focus group data: contents/what is said, process/how is the group interaction, and what development occurs over the duration of the focus group (p. 257). Further, he recommended applying these techniques to evaluating individual focus groups, but also looking at consistencies and variations across the focus groups. I utilized the strategies proposed by Flick for my analysis. In addition, I paid specific attention to agreement between participants and tension between participants.

Student artifacts (poetry/rap submissions). Over the duration of the CCPR course, I collected 13 poetry/rap assignments from each student. Table 10 shows the word count of student artifacts by student, the total word count of each assignment, as well as the word count of each students' total writing throughout the course.

Table 10

Student Artifact Word Count Overview

	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8		Student Totals
	Who are you?	Recreate something and make it better	A poetic response	Repetition Poem	Love Poem	Exploring Shame	Where are you from?	Free Writes (2)	My Honest Poem	
Oksana	129	247	227	203	80	161	138	276	740	2201
Misha	145	403	315	444	215	1496	236	1640	787	5681
Nika	560	1487	618	691	503	181	369	730	1201	6340
Diana	81	142	86	131	63	145	86	244	122	1100
Irina	346	134	390	232	337	293	431	499	501	3163
Sergei	150	129	98	61	141	90	108	255	333	1365
Viktor	374	236	229	104	206	187	149	253	307	2045
Andrei	278	359	306	94	207	140	121	202	467	2174
Bogdan	128	188	210	61	98	67	197	38	516	1503
Ivan	158	232	340	166	132	93	117	313	421	1972
Sabina	313	224	338	158	211	248	440	389	246	2567
Elena	792	441	139	43	100	121	145	211	107	2099
Raisa	99	172	30	78	90	90	220	237	400	1416
Lera	199	479	327	222	144	527	419	289	271	2877
Adam	228	544	231	162	104	101	219	280	232	2101
Selena	695	310	395	490	120	190	97	396	364	3057
	4675	5727	4279	3340	2751	4130	349	6252	7015	4166
							2			1

Due to the unique format of blackout poems, I have not included these as part of the word count overview. Figure 2 shows an example of a blackout poem, which was submitted for the course.

ing absurdly on the ground. And then something happened to his rear-most foot, and he went head-long and rolled sideways just in time to graze the feet of his brother and partner, following head-long. The two were then kicked, knelt on, fallen over, and cursed by quite a number of over-hasty people.

Now when Hall and Henfrey and the labourers ran out of the house, Mrs. Hall, who had been disciplined by years of experience, remained in the bar next the till. And suddenly the parlour-door was opened, and Mr. Cuss appeared, and without glancing at her rushed at once down the steps toward the corner. "Hold him!" he cried. "Don't let him drop that parcel! You can see him so long as he holds the parcel."

He knew nothing of the existence of Marvel. For the Invisible Man had handed over the books and bundle in the yard. The face of Mr. Cuss was angry and resolute, but his costume was defective, a sort of limp white kilt that could only have passed muster in Greece. "Hold him!" he bawled. "He's got my trousers! And every stitch of the Vicar's clothes!"

"Tend to him in a minute!" he cried to Henfrey as he passed the prostrate Huxter, and coming round the corner to join the tumult, was promptly knocked off his feet into an indecorous sprawl. Somebody in full flight trod heavily on his finger. He yelled, struggled to regain his feet, was knocked against and thrown on all-fours again, and became aware that he was involved not in a capture, but a rout. Everyone was running back to the village. He rose again and was hit severely behind the ear. He staggered and set off back to the Coach and Horses forthwith, leaping over the deserted Huxter, who was now sitting up, on his way.

Behind him as he was half-way up the inn steps he heard a sudden yell of rage, rising sharply out of the confusion of cries, and a sounding smack in someone's face. He recognised the voice as that of the Invisible Man, and the note was that of a man suddenly infuriated by a painful blow.

In another moment Mr. Cuss was back in the parlour. "He's coming back, Bunting!" he said, rushing in. "Save yourself! He's gone mad!"

Mr. Bunting was standing in the window engaged in an attempt to clothe himself in the hearth-rug and a *West Surrey Gazette*. "Who's coming?" he said, so startled that his costume narrowly escaped disintegration.

"Invisible Man," said Cuss, and rushed on to the window. "We'd better clear out from here! He's fighting mad! Mad!"

In another moment he was out in the yard.

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Bunting, hesitating between two horrible alternatives. He heard a frightful struggle in the passage of the inn, and his decision was made. He clambered out of the window, adjusted his costume hastily, and fled up the village as fast as his fat little legs would carry him.

Figure 2. Blackout poem submitted by Sergei during the CCPR course.

Although the blackout poems were a powerful exercise for the course, and a wonderful experience, they did not lend themselves well to analysis so I omitted them.

Student artifacts/assignments were collected digitally prior to each class, then, as the instructor-researcher, I documented each submission, read them twice (the first time without providing notes and the second time making notes), and then provided written feedback to the students. This contributed to a fluency with the artifacts which allowed for an intentional narrowing of which submissions to utilize for analysis. The final submission, “My Honest Poem,” relates well to my second research question, *In what way does participation in a CCPR course affect students’ self-compassion?* It is for this reason I analyzed every poem submission for this assignment.

The remaining assignments had considerable value in practicing mindfulness and self-compassion exercises, but I did not provide further analysis on any other full assignment because they do not directly relate to the research questions of this study.

Validity and Reliability. Due to the mixed-method research design, I employed different techniques to evaluate the trustworthiness of the quantitative and qualitative data that is collected, detailed below. Merriam (2009) contended that the trustworthiness of research in applied fields is especially necessary because “practitioners intervene in people’s lives” (p. 209). The trustworthiness of the data can be asserted insofar as to the extent of rigor that was utilized in carrying out the study (Merriam, 2009).

For quantitative data, validity refers to the “ability of the measurement procedure to yield scores that represent the true amount of the indicator” (Smith & Glass, 1987, p. 111). One of the ways to ensure validity is to measure the internal consistency of the instrument being used, which I have demonstrated in previous sections when discussing the alpha coefficient of my instrument. There are two threats to the validity of my

quantitative data that I was particularly aware of during the study: *reactivity* and the threat of *maturation*.

Reactivity is the term for “measurement procedures that allow the subjects to alter, distort, or misrepresent the true state of their characteristics” (Smith & Glass, 1987, p. 111). In other words, the subject may intentionally distort the data they provide in order to give the appearance of something. An example of this may be a student scoring themselves high on their ability to manage their time because they have the perception that good students manage their time effectively and they want to be viewed as a good student. However, I believe the mixed methods design of this research allowed for me to further contextualize the data beyond the numeric values presented by the survey instrument.

The second quantitative threat to validity is that of maturation, which refers to when “certain events internal to the research subjects may be responsible for the differences on the dependent variable” (Smith & Glass, 1987, p. 111). An example for maturation would be a student who demonstrates improved academic self-efficacy after the innovation, but the growth they would naturally undergo over the course of the semester contributes to that improvement, rather than the innovation. The primary way I have worked to ensure validity and reduce the threat of maturity is by conducting a quasi-experimental non-equivalent group design, which allowed me to use the control group to determine if there was a natural development that occurred over the course of the semester, separate from the innovation.

I employed various strategies to promote the validity and reliability of my qualitative data: triangulation, researcher’s position and reflexivity, peer review and

examination, audit trails, and rich descriptions (Merriam, 2009). I utilized triangulation in my study by using multiple sources of data to confirm the findings. The researcher's position or reflexivity refers to the critical self-reflection by the researcher specifically regarding their (my) own "assumptions, worldview, biases, theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study that may affect the investigation" (Merriam, 2009, p. 229). In addition to constantly reflecting on the study and my positionality in relation to the study, I also have the added benefit of peer review and examination which also helps identify researcher bias. The peer review and examination strategy is inherent to the structure of my doctoral program as I have the benefit of three professional committee members who provide their insights regarding the "process of research, congruency of emerging findings, and tentative interpretations" (Merriam, 2009, p. 229).

The final two strategies I utilized to ensure the validity and reliability of my qualitative data were audit trails and rich descriptions, which I view as similar methods, although certainly not synonymous or interchangeable. Audit trails are a detailed account of the steps I took during the research. Figure 3 shows a small sample of one of my audit trails.

- Cross referenced survey with SPSS file to make sure it was correct
 - Verified values matched
- Changed names of variables to include context/descriptions
 - D: demographic
 - PE: prior education
 - ASE: Academic self esteem
 - GPG: Goals and pathway to goals
 - ANJ: Accept without judgment
 - AWA: Act with awareness
 - OE: Open ended
- The scale automatically assigned to Likert-style questions was 1: Strongly Agree to 6: Strongly Disagree. I wanted an increasing ordinal scale (1: Strongly Disagree to 6: Strongly Agree), I reverse coded questions with positive implications (highlighted in yellow)

Primary Construct	Sub Construct	Q #	Question text
Academic Self Efficacy	Academic Self Esteem (ASE)	17	On the whole, I am satisfied with my academic performance.
		22	I feel that I have a number of good qualities that aid me as a student
		30	I am able to do assignments/tasks as well as most other students
		39	I feel I have made academic accomplishments that are worthy of pride
		45	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with other students
		46	I have a positive attitude about my academic abilities
	Goals and Pathway to Goals (GPG)	20	I have defined for myself what it means to be successful in life
		23	I have set goals for myself about my progress at college
		28	I know what I want to do after I graduate
		32	I know what the requirements are to graduate
		35	I feel confident about my current major and how it will help me achieve my goals

Figure 3. Sample of audit trail used when conducting pre-survey analysis.

Although audit trails are often discussed in the validity and reliability of qualitative data, Figure 3 shows that I also found value in employing this method when analyzing my quantitative data. Another example of an audit trail I employed were the detailed coding decisions I made in the data analysis section of this chapter. Lastly, I used rich descriptions to contribute to the validity and reliability of my research. Rich descriptions are similar to audit trails in that they also include a focus on detail, but the aim of the descriptions are to ensure the study is contextualized enough so that readers “will be able

to determine the extent to which their situations match the research context” and therefore whether results of said research are transferable to the readers’ own setting (Merriam, 2009, p. 229). All of these strategies contribute to the overall trustworthiness of my data and subsequent findings.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The goal of this study was to explore the influence of a “Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap” (CCPR) course on the academic self-efficacy and self-compassion of honors students enrolled at Barrett West. The quantitative data sources gathered to address the guiding research questions of this study were pre- and post-surveys. The qualitative data sources gathered were focus groups and student artifacts. In this chapter, I present findings from analysis in relation to each research question.

The following research questions were examined:

RQ1: In what way does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course affect students’ academic self-efficacy?

RQ2: In what way does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course affect students’ self-compassion?

RQ3: What does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course do to students’ meaning-making about what it means to be an honors student?

Research Question #1 Findings

To examine research question one, *in what way does participation in a CCPR course affect students’ academic self-efficacy?* I analyzed quantitative data from the pre- and post- surveys, qualitative data from the same surveys (in the form of open-ended questions), as well as focus groups. I present each of these respective collections of data analysis and then I present a summary of findings in relation to the first research question that connects the data together.

One of the stages of analysis for surveys with multiple constructs, such as the one I have used, is to look at the reliability and agreement between constructs. This analysis is provided in this section dedicated to discussing the first research question data analysis, although some of the analysis may also have implications upon the second research question.

Reliability and agreement between constructs on pre- and post- surveys.

Table 11 shows the coefficient alpha, or Cronbach Alpha, of each primary construct (“academic self-efficacy” and “mindfulness”) as well as their sub-constructs, “academic self-esteem,” “goals and pathway to goals,” “act with awareness,” and “accept without judgment.” The sub-construct “goals and pathway to goals” falls below .80, which is the ideal marker to show that each question measures the construct (Cronbach, 1951).

However, when considering the primary construct “academic self-efficacy” of which “goals and pathway to goals” is a sub-construct, the coefficient alpha is .821. This shows me that if I were to conduct another survey, I should revisit the questions which comprise the “goals and pathway to goals” sub-construct, but on the bright side, the data measured by the primary “academic self-efficacy” construct is still reliable. For the purpose of this study and the current data I have collected, I will therefore place more emphasis on the primary constructs, rather than the sub-constructs.

Table 11

Coefficient Alpha Estimates of International Consistency for Pre- and Post- Surveys

<i>n=129</i>			Coefficient Alpha
Construct	Sub Construct	Construct Items	
Academic Self-efficacy			.821

	Academic Self Esteem	17, 22, 30, 39, 45, 46	.855
	Goals and Pathway to Goals	20, 23, 28, 32, 35, 38, 40, 47	.681
Mindfulness			.869
	Act with Awareness	19, 24, 26, 33, 34, 36, 42, 43, 48, 49	.832
	Accept without Judgment	18, 21, 25, 27, 29, 31, 37, 41, 44	.892
Overall		17 through 49	.878

In addition to determining the reliability of the constructs, it is important to also determine the agreement between constructs, since my research up until this point hints at a relationship between these constructs, and now there is data to verify if this is correct or not. First, I looked at the agreement between sub-constructs. The absolute difference in the mean between each sub-construct is shown below in Table 12.

Table 12

Paired Samples T-Test Matrix – Statistically Significant Differences of Sub-Constructs

	Goals and Pathway to Goals	Accept without Judgment	Act with Awareness
Academic Self Esteem	AD= .09810 SD= .67146 p= .102 df= 126	AD= 2.09449 SD= 1.02586 p= .000 df= 126	AD= 1.71234 SD= .86932 p= .000 df= 126
Goals and Pathway to Goals		AD= 1.99639 SD= 1.09014 p= .000 df= 126	AD= 1.61424 SD= .83262 p= .000 df= 126
Accept without Judgment			AD= .38215 SD= 1.03624 p= .000 df= 126

Note. AD = absolute difference between factors, SD = standard deviations, p = significance levels, and df = degrees of freedom. Confidence levels specified at 95%.

The smallest difference in means is between “goals and pathway to goals” and “academic self-esteem” at 0.098, as well as “accept without judgment” and “act with

awareness” at 0.382. Each sub-construct lined up with their designated partner for the overall primary constructs. The greatest variance is between “academic self-esteem” and “accept without judgment.” This is interesting because these two constructs have a p -value of 0.00, which indicates that there is a highly significant relationship between the two constructs. Further, the p -value between “goals and pathway to goals” and “academic self-esteem” was 0.102, which suggests there is no statistically significant relationship between the two constructs, even though they were both designed as sub-constructs of overall “academic self-efficacy.” The combination of “goals and pathway to goals” not meeting the ideal alpha coefficient, as well as not displaying a statistically significant relationship with its corresponding sub-construct, “academic self-esteem,” means that when evaluating data, we could treat the data collected from “goals and pathway to goals” as less reliable than the other constructs.

I also looked at the agreement between primary constructs. In a paired sample t -test of the primary constructs “mindfulness” and “academic self-efficacy,” the absolute difference between factors is 1.838, the standard deviation is 0.7305, the degrees of freedom is 26, and the p -value is 0.00. This suggests looking at “academic self-efficacy” as a primary construct will be more valuable than looking at its sub-constructs. However, both “mindfulness” as a primary construct shows reliable and trustworthy data, as well as the parts of the whole, “act with awareness” and “accept without judgment.”

Pre- and post- survey quantitative data analysis. Now that reliability and agreement between constructs has been established, I present the survey response frequencies and descriptive statistics for the academic self-efficacy constructs, then

paired sample *t*-tests so the change in academic self-efficacy of the students who took the CCPR can be evaluated.

Frequencies and descriptive statistics for academic self-efficacy. I examined the response frequencies for each question and organized this information by sub-construct. This allows for portioning the data into smaller sets for analysis. Table 13 shows the survey response frequencies for academic self-esteem, which is a sub-construct of academic self-efficacy.

Table 13

Survey Response Frequencies (Academic Self Esteem Construct) of Pre-Survey

N=129 Item	Response to Frequency Percent					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
On the whole, I am satisfied with my academic performance.	33 26%	66 52%	24 18.9%	3 2.4%		1 .8%
I feel that I have a number of good qualities that aid me as a student	35 27.6%	66 52%	22 17.3%	2 1.6%	2 1.6%	
I am able to do assignments/tasks as well as most other students	30 23.6%	75 59.1%	16 12.6%	5 3.9%	1 .8%	
I feel I have made academic accomplishments that are worthy of pride	45 36.9%	47 38.5%	23 18.9%	7 5.7%		
I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with other students	34 27.9%	54 44.3%	20 16.4%	10 8.2%	3 2.5%	1 .8%

I have a positive attitude about my academic abilities	37 30.3%	52 42.6%	25 20.5%	5 4.1%	3 2.5%
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One of the things I realized immediately by looking at the response frequencies for questions related to academic self-esteem, is that by and large, students seemed to have strong academic self-esteem. There were a few outliers, but the outliers were not as substantial as I thought would be the case, although this does not mean the existing outliers are any less crucial for the honors college to focus their attention on.

Next, I looked at response frequencies of questions associated with goals and pathway to goals; these frequencies are displayed in Table 14.

Table 14

Survey Response Frequencies (Goals and Pathway to Goals Construct) of Pre-Survey

Item	Response to Frequency Percent					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have defined for myself what it means to be successful in life	29 22.8%	58 45.7%	28 22.0%	6 4.7%	4 3.1%	2 1.6%
I have set goals for myself about my progress at college	47 37%	57 44.9%	14 11.0%	6 4.7%	3 2.4%	-
I know what I want to do after I graduate	30 23.6%	46 38.6%	28 22%	5 3.9%	5 3.9%	10 7.9%
I know what the requirements are to graduate	33 25.6%	68 52.7%	19 15%	6 4.7%	1 .8%	-
I feel confident about my current major and how it will help me achieve my goals	53 41.7%	52 40.9%	16 12.6%	3 2.4%	2 1.6%	1 .8%
I know what I need to do to get good grades in my courses	43 35.2%	66 54.1%	12 9.8%	1 .8%		
I have spoken with staff or faculty at my	20 15.5%	36 29.5%	31 25.4%	9 7.4%	21 17.2%	5 4.1%

institution about how to achieve my goals I know what courses I need to take to satisfy the requirements of my major	41 33.6%	63 51.6%	15 12.3%	2 1.6%	1 .8%
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For this sub-construct of academic self-efficacy, there did seem to be more uncertainty within the honors population. One particular area that stood out to me are students who stated “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to the question “I have spoken with staff or faculty at my institution about how to achieve my goals.” I did split the data file and learned that two of the students who disagreed with this statement in the pre-survey were part of the treatment group, and I ran frequencies for the treatment group for this same question in the post-survey and at that time, there was no disagreement with this statement. Rather, students in the treatment group indicated on the post-survey that 3 strongly agreed, 5 agreed, and 3 slightly agreed with the statement they connected with staff or faculty at their institution about how to achieve their goals.

The response frequency data allowed me to start exploring possible causes and effects of trends emerging in the data. In order to further analyze the data, I transitioned to looking at descriptive statistics for the constructs. Table 15 shows the overview of descriptive statistics for the pre-survey in order to look at minimums, maximums, means, and standard deviations. All of the constructs are organized on an increasing ordinal scale, meaning the higher the number (between 1 and 6), the more positively the student relates to the construct. Therefore, although I originally suspected honors students may have low academic self-efficacy, the pre-survey shows that honors students tend to rate

their academic self-efficacy high, as well as its two sub-constructs: academic self-esteem and goals and pathway to goals.

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics of Sub- and Primary Academic Self-Efficacy Construct from Pre-Survey

N= 127 Item	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard Deviation
Academic Self Esteem (ASE)	4.9711	2.33	6.00	.69551
Goals & Pathway to Goals (GPG)	4.8730	3.00	6.00	.59056
Academic Self- efficacy (ASE & GPG)	4.9156	3.50	5.93	.54379

In addition to looking at descriptive statistics of the pre-survey, I also pulled the same information for the post-survey, as shown in Table 16. There is very little difference in the means, but each of the academic self-efficacy sub-construct minimums increased. This seems to imply that even though improvement is slight, we did something in the fall 2018 semester that reached students who started the semester on the “bottom.”

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics of Sub- and Primary Academic Self-Efficacy Construct from Post-Survey

n=95 Item	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard Deviation
Academic Self Esteem (ASE)	5.0105	3.33	6.00	.71327
Goals & Pathway to Goals (GPG)	4.9632	3.25	6.00	.57827
Academic Self- efficacy (ASE & GPG)	4.9835	3.50	6.00	.57242

I decided to look at the descriptive statistics of the pre- and post- survey again for academic self-efficacy, but this time I separated the data by whether students were in the treatment or control group. Table 17 shows results of this effort for the treatment population.

Table 17

Difference in Descriptive Statistics of ASE Constructs from Pre-/Post- Surveys (pre- N=12/post- N=11)

Item	Mean Pre-/Post-	Minimum Pre-/Post-	Maximum Pre-/Post-	Standard Deviation Pre-/Post-
Academic Self Esteem (ASE)	4.8056/5.0758	2.67/4.00	5.83/6.00	.97399/.69667
Goals & Pathway to Goals (GPG)	4.9063/4.9432	3.75/4.13	5.75/6.00	.62642/56003
Academic Self-efficacy (ASE & GPG)	4.8631/5.0000	3.86/4.07	5.71/5.93	.69617/.56785

Note. Results shown are for treatment population.

For academic self-efficacy and its sub-constructs, we can see that all of the means, minimums, and maximums increased. This means the population as a whole moved higher along the academic self-efficacy scale.

The descriptive statistics pre- and post- results for the control group are displayed below in Table 18.

Table 18

Difference in Descriptive Statistics of ASE constructs from Pre-/Post- Surveys (pre- N=115/post- N=84)

Item	Mean Pre-/Post-	Minimum Pre-/Post-	Maximum Pre-/Post-	Standard Deviation Pre-/Post-
Academic Self Esteem (ASE)	4.9884/5.0020	2.33/3.33	6.00/6.00	.66327/.71907

Goals & Pathway to Goals (GPG)	4.8696/4.9658	3.00/3.25	6.00/6.00	.58947/.58384
Academic Self-efficacy (ASE & GPG)	4.9211/4.9813	3.50/3.50	5.93/6.00	.52891/57637

Note. Results shown are for control population.

There is nearly nonexistent movement in the maximums for the control group because this population began the semester with high maximums for academic self-efficacy, which did not allow for additional room to increase. However, the control group does show increased minimums for “academic self-esteem” and “goals and pathway to goals.” This means something happened over the course of the semester that allowed for students at the lower end of the spectrum to be reached and provided a shift forward, even though the overall means do not notably increase.

Paired sample t-tests of academic self-efficacy. Paired sample *t*-tests with the significance level set at 0.05 were conducted in order to compare the pre- and post-survey means for each sub-construct as well as the overarching constructs. The lower the *p*-value, the higher the significance of the relationship; In other words, with a significance level set to 0.05, any *p*-value less than 0.05 will show a significant relationship in change between the pre- and post- results. If the *p*-value is higher than 0.05, then there are too many extraneous or unaccounted influences to argue the results are statistically significant.

In Table 19, the difference in means between pre- and post- evaluations, standard deviations, and paired *t*-test values are outlined for the treatment group. As shown by this information, even though participants showed improvements in each area, there is no statistically significant improvement in academic self-efficacy or its sub-constructs.

Table 19

Difference in Means, Standard Deviations, and Paired t-Tests of Pre-/Post- Treatment Group Results for ASE

Construct	Sub Construct	N	Difference	Std. Deviation	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Academic Self-efficacy (ASE)		11	0.1039	0.5850	10	0.569
	Academic Self Esteem	11	0.2121	0.8303	10	0.417
	Goals & Pathway to Goals	11	0.0227	0.6933	10	0.916

Note. ASE = Academic self-efficacy. Sig. (2-tailed) = *p*-value, df = degrees of freedom. Confidence levels specified at 95%. *Indicates results were statistically significant.

In addition to evaluating the difference in means, standard deviations, and paired *t*-tests of pre- and post- treatment group results, I also looked at these same measurements of the control group. As shown in Table 20, there is also no statistically significant improvement in academic self-efficacy or its sub-constructs within the control group.

Table 20

Difference in Means, Standard Deviations, and Paired t-Tests of Pre-/Post- Control Group Results for ASE

Construct	Sub Construct	N	Difference	Std. Deviation	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Academic Self-efficacy (ASE)		83	-0.0013	0.7676	82	0.988
	Academic Self Esteem	83	-0.0803	0.9916	82	0.463
	Goals & Pathway to Goals	83	0.0611	0.7930	82	0.484

Note. Sig. (2-tailed) = *p*-value, df = degrees of freedom. Confidence levels specified at 95%. *Indicates results were statistically significant.

Pre- and post- survey open-ended questions. On the surveys, question 52 asked respondents *Do you have any thoughts about academic self-efficacy, mindfulness, or the contents of this survey that you would like to share?* When coding, I ultimately narrowed down respondent answers to five categories: survey feedback, reflected on institutional practices, self-reflective, mindfulness comments, and comments about academic self-efficacy. Table 21 shows the frequency coding for each of these categories for both the pre- and post- survey for all students, regardless of their grouping in either the treatment or control population.

Table 21

Frequency Coding for Question 52 of Survey

	Survey feedback	Reflected on institutional practices	Self-reflective	Mindfulness comments	Academic Self-efficacy comments
Pre	11	4	23	9	5
Post	7	2	19	8	6

Note. Question 52 was “Do you have any thoughts about academic self-efficacy, mindfulness, or the contents of this survey that you would like to share?”

Five students in the CCPR group answered question 52 on the pre-survey; the survey did indicate what group students are a part of (control/treatment), but it was anonymous, so it is uncertain which students in the CCPR course said what. In specific regard to academic self-efficacy, one comment is of particular relevance:

I know I need to improve my academic self-efficacy as what I internally tell myself and what actually happens in the external world do not match up, especially once I get out of my head. I’m trying to work on this and mindfulness as well, but it’s not easy and is largely a result of my environment at home and school growing up.

One of the major implications that is suggested by this comment is the link of academic self-efficacy with the environment that students are exposed to.

On the post-survey, four students who were enrolled in the CCPR course answered question 52. Although some of the feedback lends well to later research questions, there is no feedback on the post-survey that contributes to understanding how the CCPR contributed to the evolution of students' academic self-efficacy.

Focus group findings. There were two focus groups that CCPR students could participate in. The first focus group was comprised of Oksana, Viktor, Andrei, Bogdan, Sabina, Raisa, and Selena. The second focus group was comprised of Irina, Sergei, Elena, and Adam.

When initially asked about their relationship with academic self-efficacy, Andrei contended he has strong academic self-efficacy, but there are times when it is challenged:

I've always seen myself as someone who can do well in school and I don't think it's just like a natural thing. I think it's I definitely work harder than I think . . . not that I work harder than other people, okay? Well, okay—Because it's the amount of work I put it in, but then sometimes I feel as though I'm not going to do well. And so there are times where I don't believe in my ability to do well, but that's just a personal thing of a mix of time management and just not wanting to do work that I need to just because it's not something that I value doing. So in that sense, there are times when I don't necessarily feel as though I do have that academic self-efficacy.

Oksana equated her academic self-efficacy with her general belief in herself. She stated:

I think mine was related a lot to my belief in myself. It didn't really have to do with academics because I never defined myself by academics, but because I noticed when I first came to school I had a lot of issues with like insecurity and self-esteem, and so I worked hard on some stuff and other stuff, I feel like, "Oh, I can't do this," so I didn't put in the effort. But then as soon as I decided I'm very capable of doing this and that and I don't have to procrastinate, I can start early and I can get this done, I made all As. So it's just belief in myself. I don't think it has anything to do with me being an honors student.

The question Oksana was responding to was *Academic self-efficacy can be understood as a person's belief in their academic abilities. Do you think you possess academic self-efficacy? To what extent (a lot/a little)? Why or why not?* One of the things I will discuss further when looking at RQ3 is that there were many times where students would clarify that they did not think of honors, or the status of being in honors, as different than that of a non-honors student. I mention this because Oksana concluded her statement with "I don't think it has anything to do with me being an honors student" but at no point were students asked to juxtapose their academic self-efficacy with their role within the honors college.

Viktor's assessment of his academic self-efficacy suggested the value of academic self-efficacy because it would link to motivation. Or, if a student believes they can do something, then they are more likely to try hard. Viktor stated:

Efficacy. . . is necessary because in a sense, if you don't have that, I feel as though students will always aim for the bare minimum because they'll be disappointed when they overextend their goals and they realize that, "Oh, that's why I have a

low sense of academic self-efficacy because I always fail, so I might as well just aim for the bottom." Therefore you'll never be disappointed. So I feel like that definitely plays a role.

There were similarities between both focus groups in that students felt as though they demonstrated academic self-efficacy.

One difference is that Sergei asserted he felt he has strong academic self-efficacy, but that he does not act upon it, because his motivation is less in college than it was in high school. The one stark contrast for all of the focus group participants was Elena, who questioned her own academic self-efficacy. Elena stated:

It seems like I doubt my self-efficacy a lot just because I have such high standards for what I want to turn into the teachers for the graders . . . because I want my report to be so well done. I think I'm never going to achieve my standards, so I think, oh I'm not good enough but that's just my standards. And sometimes I end up overdoing simple assignments because of that because I'm always doubting my self-efficacy so I want to overdo it because it's to make sure I don't perform poorly. So it's a struggle for me. I know I can do well. In the long run, I always end up getting the grades I want but individual assignments, I'm always doubting myself if that makes sense.

Lastly, Irina's thoughts about academic self-efficacy were "I think [self-efficacy] it's a skill and some people are just better at it than others but you can definitely build upon it, make it better, make it stronger."

Research Question #1 Summary of Findings

The quantitative data collected for this study shows honors student participants had higher academic self-efficacy than I originally hypothesized. Although participants of the CCPR showed increases in each area of academic self-efficacy, there was no statistically significant improvement, as shown by the paired *t*-test statistical analysis. However, there were themes that emerged from the qualitative data which could be utilized to inform future research surrounding honors students and academic self-efficacy.

Themes that emerged from the qualitative data included the fact that students' identified the amount of effort they exert directly correlates to their belief in their ability to succeed. Yet, this population of students is also passion-oriented and they may exhibit strong academic self-efficacy, but still choose not to exert effort on academic tasks, because their motivation is linked to their interest in the task at hand.

Another key finding was that the academic self-efficacy of these students was not a stagnant quality: it fluctuated. Students with demonstrated records of achievement confessed to doubting their abilities when they are working on assignments or tasks that they have increased anxiety towards.

Research Question #2 Findings

To examine research question two—*in what way does participation in a CCPR course affect students' self-compassion?*—I analyzed quantitative data from the pre- and post- surveys, qualitative data from the same surveys (in the form of open-ended questions), as well as student artifacts.

Pre- and post- survey quantitative data analysis. I transitioned away from looking at frequencies of responses associated with academic self-efficacy and transitioned to the mindfulness constructs. Table 22 shows the pre-survey response frequencies for the “accept without judgment” sub-construct.

Table 22

Pre-Survey Response Frequencies (Accept Without Judgment Construct)

Item	Response to Frequency Percent					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I criticize myself for having irrational or inappropriate emotions.	31 24.4%	26 20.5%	44 34.6%	8 6.3%	15 11.8%	3 2.4%
I tend to evaluate whether my perceptions are right or wrong	39 30.7%	56 44.1%	28 22.0%	3 2.4%	1 .8%	-
I tell myself that I shouldn't be feeling the way I'm feeling	25 19.7%	30 23.6%	28 22%	21 16.5%	21 16.5%	2 1.6%
I believe some of my thoughts are abnormal or bad and I shouldn't think that way	11 8.7%	29 22.8%	30 23.6%	17 13.4%	31 24.4%	9 7.1%
I tell myself that I shouldn't be thinking the way I'm thinking	11 8.7%	23 18.1%	36 28.3%	24 18.9%	28 22%	5 3.9%
I disapprove of myself when I have irrational ideas	17 13.4%	32 52.2%	39 30.7%	20 15.7%	14 11%	5 3.9%
I make judgments about whether my thoughts are good or bad	24 19.7%	48 39.3%	35 28.7%	4 3.3%	11 9%	
I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I shouldn't feel them	14 11.5%	23 18.9%	38 31.1%	15 12.3%	25 20.5%	7 5.7%
I tend to make judgments about how worthwhile or worthless my experiences are	22 18%	43 35.2%	27 22.1%	13 10.7%	11 9.0%	6 4.9%

I also looked at survey response frequencies for the “act with awareness” sub-construct, the results of which are displayed in Table 23.

Table 23

Pre-Survey Response Frequencies (Act With Awareness Construct)

Item	Response to Frequency Percent					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
When I do things, my mind wanders off and I'm easily distracted.	22 17.3%	30 23.6%	40 31.5%	16 12.6%	13 10.2%	6 4.7%
When I'm doing something, I'm only focused on what I'm doing, nothing else	3 2.4%	22 17.3%	47 37%	28 22%	21 16.5%	6 4.7%
I drive on "automatic pilot" without paying attention to what I'm doing	6 4.7%	17 13.4%	42 33.1%	20 15.7%	35 27.6%	7 5.5%
I get completely absorbed in what I'm doing, so that all my attention is focused on it	3 2.4%	32 25.2%	48 37.8%	23 18.1%	19 15%	2 1.6%
When I'm reading, I focus all my attention on what I'm reading	12 9.4%	35 27.6%	34 26.8%	23 18.1%	17 13.4%	6 4.7%
When I do things, I get totally wrapped up in them and don't think about anything else	5 3.9%	19 15%	46 36.2%	39 30.7%	17 13.4%	1 .8%
I don't pay attention to what I'm doing because I'm daydreaming, worrying, or otherwise distracted	8 6.6%	27 22.1%	38 31.1%	22 18%	24 19.7%	3 2.5%
When I'm doing tasks, such as cleaning or laundry, I tend to daydream or think of other things	33 27%	47 38.5%	23 18.9%	9 7.4%	8 6.6%	2 1.6%

I tend to do several things at once rather than focusing on one thing at a time	18 14.8%	28 23%	42 34.4%	22 18%	12 9.8%	
When I'm working on something, part of my mind is occupied with other topics, such as what I'll be doing later, or things I'd rather be doing	16 13.1%	47 38.5%	33 27%	16 13.1%	9 7.4%	1 .8%

The response frequencies to questions associated with “act with awareness” were not quite as shocking to me because they do not imply such harsh standards on one’s self. However, one of the things I started to consider by looking at this data is I wonder if there is such a fluctuation in students’ abilities to “act with awareness” not because they *cannot* focus on a task, but perhaps because they are committing themselves to too many tasks at once.

As shown in Table 24, honors students rate their mindfulness on the lower side of the spectrum (although still slightly positive with an average of 3.0777). Furthermore, mindfulness and its sub-constructs had students who scored themselves very low, as shown by the minimums for each construct.

Table 24

Descriptive Statistics of Mindfulness Constructs from Pre-Survey

N= 127 Item	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard Deviation
Act with Awareness (AWA)	3.2588	1.20	5.20	.77175
Accept without Judgment (ANJ)	2.8766	1.00	5.11	.77175
Mindfulness (AWA & ANJ)	3.0777	1.53	4.92	.69859

In addition to looking at descriptive statistics of the pre-survey, I also pulled the same information for the post-survey, as shown in Table 25. There is very little difference in the means, but the minimums of “act with awareness” and the primary construct “mindfulness” both increased, while the minimum for “accept without judgment” remained steady. This seems to imply that even though improvement is slight, we did something in the fall 2018 semester that reached students who started the semester as outliers on the lower end of the spectrum.

Table 25

Descriptive Statistics of Mindfulness Constructs from Post-Survey

N= 95 Item	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard Deviation
Act with Awareness (AWA)	3.2211	1.60	5.50	.81943
Accept without Judgment (ANJ)	2.8924	1.00	4.89	.90738
Mindfulness (AWA & ANJ)	3.0654	1.63	4.89	.72368

I decided to look at the descriptive statistics of the pre- and post- survey again for mindfulness, but this time I separated the data by whether students were in the treatment or control group. Table 26 shows results of this effort for the treatment population.

Table 26

Difference in Descriptive Statistics of Mindfulness Constructs for Treatment Population (pre- N=12/post- N=11)

Item	Mean Pre-/Post-	Minimum Pre-/Post-	Maximum Pre-/Post-	Standard Deviation Pre-/Post-
Act with Awareness (AWA)	2.8167/3.5091	1.80/2.20	4.00/4.80	.78258/.90494
Accept without Judgment (ANJ)	2.5556/2.8889	1.44/1.00	3.78/4.78	.81236/1.14612

Mindfulness (AWA & ANJ)	2.6930/3.2153	2.00/1.63	3.74/4.68	.59242/.91053
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In the treatment population, we can see the minimums only increased for “act with awareness.” In addition, the overall means and maximums increased for all three constructs. Therefore, even though there was no significant change overall, the mass of the population moved because people shifted upward as a whole (not just students who started on the bottom). The descriptive statistics pre- and post- results for the control group are displayed below in Table 27.

Table 27

Difference in Descriptive Statistics of Mindfulness Constructs for Control Population (pre- N=115/post- N=84)

Item	Mean Pre-/Post-	Minimum Pre-/Post-	Maximum Pre-/Post-	Standard Deviation Pre-/Post-
Act with Awareness (AWA)	3.3049/3.1833	1.20/1.60	5.20/5.50	.75926/.80583
Accept without Judgment (ANJ)	2.9101/2.8929	1.00/1.00	5.11/4.89	.97754/.87988
Mindfulness (AWA & ANJ)	3.1178/3.0457	1.53/1.63	4.92/4.89	.69881/.69990

One notable difference with the control group is this population began the semester with high maximums, and therefore the increase in maximums was little to none. In addition, neither the treatment or control group showed improvements in the “accept without judgment” sub-construct.

Evaluation of change in mindfulness pre- and post- CCPR innovation. Paired sample *t*-tests with the significance level set at 0.05 were conducted in order to compare the pre- and post- survey means for each sub-construct as well as the overarching

construct of mindfulness. In Table 28, the difference in means between pre- and post- evaluations, standard deviations, and paired *t*-test values are outlined for the treatment group. As shown by this information, the “mindfulness” construct, and “act with awareness” sub-construct show statistical significance. However, their significance is slight with 0.034 and 0.035 *p*-values, respectively.

Table 28

Difference in Means, Standard Deviations, and Paired t-Tests of Treatment Group Mindfulness

Construct	Sub Construct	N	Difference	Std. Deviation	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mindfulness		11	0.4833	0.6514	10	0.034*
	Accept without Judgment	11	0.3434	0.8909	10	0.230
	Act with Awareness	11	0.6091	0.8276	10	0.035*

Note. Sig. (2-tailed) = *p*-value, df = degrees of freedom. Confidence levels specified at 95%. *Indicates results were statistically significant.

In addition to evaluating the difference in means, standard deviations, and paired *t*-tests of pre- and post- treatment group results, I looked at these same measurements of the control group. If the control group also showed statistically significant improvement in certain areas, then an argument exists the treatment group’s improvement is not because of the treatment, but some unaccounted for factor or factors. Table 29 shows the aforementioned data for the control group population.

Table 29

Difference in Means, Standard Deviations, and Paired t-Tests of Control Group Mindfulness

Construct	Sub Construct	N	Difference	Std. Deviation	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mindfulness		83	-0.1242	1.0421	82	0.281
	Accept without Judgment	83	-0.1296	1.3006	82	0.366
	Act with Awareness	83	-0.1185	1.1501	82	0.351

Note. Sig. (2-tailed) = *p*-value, df = degrees of freedom. Confidence levels specified at 95%. *Indicates results were statistically significant.

As shown in Table 29, there are no statistically significant results in any construct area for the control group. Therefore, although the improvement of mindfulness in the treatment group is small, we can assume the improvement is due to the treatment—the CCPR innovation course.

Pre- and post- survey open-ended questions. On the surveys, question 52 asked respondents *Do you have any thoughts about academic self-efficacy, mindfulness, or the contents of this survey that you would like to share?* Five students in the CCPR answered question 52 on the pre-survey, and two of those responses relate to compassion or other constructs of mindfulness. One student stated “It’s hard when other students become jealous of one’s academic success but don’t realize the amount of effort and stress it can take to achieve such success. That is why we must uplift others.” Another student stated “I think that it is vital to be mindful and to make everybody feel like they have a say.”

On the post-survey, four students who were enrolled in the CCPR course answered question 52. One student commented specifically on the CCPR innovation, stating “this semester, taking both Creative Compassion and History of Ideas, has challenged me to take pause to truly appreciate the opportunities I have and the successes I have found!” History of Ideas refers to the requisite honors course all honors students who are admitted to Barrett as juniors are required to take. Another student stated:

Learning more about these concepts has made me reevaluate how I go about defining my own success and happiness. It has allowed me to sit down and really ask myself what it is that I want to be doing and how to go about doing those things to be successful in my own terms.

One of the evolutions in the pre-survey feedback compared to the post-survey feedback of the treatment group is that the pre-survey answers focus on the community students are a part of, or how students relate to others, or are perceived by others, such as “It’s hard when other students become jealous of one’s academic success but don’t realize the amount of effort and stress it can take to achieve such success.” The post-survey feedback is much more grounded in self-reflection and personal considerations, such as the comment previously cited about developing one’s “own success and happiness.” Although there is nothing wrong with considering how one relates to the world, mindfulness and its sub-constructs (including self-compassion), are personal in their very nature.

Student Artifact Findings. I had the distinct pleasure of teaching 16 students in the 1-credit, 9-week CCPR course. Students completed 13 poetry/rap assignments, the final of which I discuss here. The very first assignment/prompt students were given was *Who are you?* The final submission was an intentional revisiting of this question, but this time, utilizing Rudy Francisco’s poem, *My Honest Poem*, as a framework (Button Poetry, 2015). So although the final assignment prompt was called *My Honest Poem*, in many ways, it could have also been categorized as *Who are You? Part II*. I take a closer look at portions of each students’ submission below.

A portion of Oksana's poem shows the tumultuous relationship she has had with herself in specific relation to the expectations she has of herself.

I've never been in the military, but I've certainly been in war /
I kept beating myself up over things that were not mine to fix /
I tore myself apart daily, and couldn't make eye contact with myself in the mirror/
I still pick at my flaws and imperfections but that's just it! /
I finally realize that perfection doesn't exist! (Oksana)

Her first poem for the course also explored an evolution of her relationship with herself. The final line of her first poem was "I welcome the storms, as in them / I am alive."

In Nika's work, she articulated the unhealthy expectations she has of herself and how that impacts her.

I over push myself, I underestimate my abilities... I work nonstop, I'm way too sensitive for my own good, I don't know when to stop, and I hold in my problems, feelings, and tears for as long as I can until I burst. (Nika)

Irina articulated similar themes as Nika in her piece. She opens her work with "I tried to stop myself from crying three times before I started writing this poem." Yet similar to Oksana's work, there is an evolution that she describes in her writing:

For so long I could not be my own best friend. I could not stand the sight of myself /
but if I'm being totally honest on days where it feels like existing is a punishment from some god, I do not want to set myself on fire anymore. /
I have learned to consume myself with myself. Meaning sometimes I fart really loud and give myself a high five. /

I have learned to build myself a shrine at the edge of my self-confidence /
So I can kneel and pray in anticipation of a good ending. (Irina)

Although her line of humor seems starkly out of place, it echoes of the personality she displayed within the classroom: humor and laughter. It was only within her writing that I witnessed her struggle.

Some of the students used their poem to explore their identities as college students: notably, Elena, Raisa, Selena, Sergei, and Viktor. In Elena's poetry, she embraces college:

You see elementary school was so simple /
Then high school was too complex /
But to write is to feel in college /
And to feel is to be honest with yourself /
I am on my journey /
To find out who I am, and who I want to be. (Elena)

Raisa stated an uncertainty about her college path. In her words "I go to college but I'm not sure what exactly I'll do with it yet" (Raisa). Selena talked about the development she has undergone due to her schooling, "I like to think of myself as a new and improved me because of the way college has changed me now from the way high school changed me" (Selena). Sergei and Viktor both used their college status as an introduction to their identities, but their work takes a bit of a darker twist. In Sergei's poem, he confided his dissatisfaction with himself:

And I am an insecure twenty-year-old college student....
And try to live up to people's expectations of me....

My name is [Sergei]. /

And I self-diagnosed myself with anxiety. /

I have a very pessimistic view of society. /

Including myself.

And in Viktor's poem, he confided he tries to avoid dissatisfying anyone:

I'm 19 years old, a college student, /

And I always tend to overthink things, /

I'm like most others my age, /

Drowning in stress and responsibilities....

I will often forfeit my interests and bend to the desires of others, /

Simply because I am afraid, I never want to dissatisfy anyone, especially my

friends....

I love my life, but I'm not comfortable with who I am (Viktor)

Diana's poem is full of aspirations, one that particularly stood out was "I want to be able to say something in existence." Her poem stands out as not being similar to her peers. Adam's poem was similar in that his work was also incredibly unique in theme, with his focus being on his family. Adam shared:

So I guess I'll jump on my motorcycle and go for a ride/

And in the blur of going fast I'll craft a new tale, a tail of adventure /

Where I am an artist /

An author /

A good dad /

That shows my children kindness and teaches love /

A dad of justice and mercy /

Then /

I'll write a better story of myself. (Adam).

Although Adam's poem *is* similar to others in that he does talk about reinvention of the self.

Another theme that emerged in several pieces was this notion of being different in public versus who the student really is privately. Bogdan articulated this through his lines about "faking it" and authenticity:

See, these people remind me that I'm not faking it that bad /

But I'm scared of what's gonna happen /

The moment someone figures me out....

Heaven is full of authenticity /

I know God put a trash can only for fancy. Shoes that match their belts at Peter's

Gate/

As a way to tell us that we can all finally stop pretending (Bogdan)

Selena also presented the idea of faking it in her work. She wrote "I always try to have a smile on my face and my cheeks hurt at the end of the day just like my body rests at night from all the fake happiness that I carry on my back" (Selena). Lera shared similar themes, but expresses them differently, writing:

A different being to the masses, /

A different being within. /

When it comes down to it, /

Am I as happy as I once was? /

Life just happened and I was not prepared. /

...But it never stops for anyone. (Lera)

Admittedly, I do not know if the students worked on their poems in collaboration with each other, but many themes reoccurred throughout the final assignment across student submissions. Another such example is the idea of developing self-love.

Three male students in the course all wrote about self-love or self-appreciation:

Andrei, Ivan, and Misha. Andrei wrote:

I still have a lot to learn about /

Self-empowerment, /

And I shy away from affirmation /

When I know I deserve it. /

Something about not knowing /

How to accept compliments /

Just makes receiving them that much more/

Unbearable....

I want to help others /

The way others have helped me. /

I want to be a voice and an advocate....

Honestly, /

I want to be the best me, and every day /

I get a little bit closer. (Andrei)

Misha only spoke once in class, but he had the second highest word count of all the student submissions throughout the course. In his poem, he wrote:

Even though I don't believe in a god, /
I'm still battling my demons. /
I go through my life with the belief that I'm unworthy of love, /
That I'm undesirable, /
That I'm never good enough, /
That at my core I'm ultimately unlovable and completely undesirable. /
But I'm finally beginning to learn how to love myself, /
And learning how to practice self-acceptance and self-compassion....
I now realize that I have to be the one to extend the hand that was. Never offered
to me growing up... /
That I have to be the one to change, and believe that I am worthy of that change. /
That I have to be able to say "I love myself" and actually believe it. (Misha)

Ivan's work was more concise, but still echoed these themes of developing self-love.

Ivan wrote:

But I never love myself enough/
I've never truly loved all of me/
But I am learning to (Ivan)

Another trend that these three gentlemen shared is throughout the entire course, they used many of the assignments as opportunities to explore their sexual identities and tensions surrounding that identity.

In her writing, Sabina talked about anxiety and the tumultuous relationship she has with herself:

‘What’s up with all the agonizing I do over things I can’t even put into a tangible thought?’ /

I hate this question. /

Because it makes me face the parts of myself that feels inferior. /

Because it makes me feel a disconnect from my person/

Because it makes me face myself. /

Because it makes me. (Sabina)

Sabina’s poetry often had this back-and-forth narrative of acknowledging a perceived flaw and then validating that flaw. Sabina, like Misha, is another student I felt as though I was able to better get to know through her writing, rather than spoken contributions in class.

Research Question #2 Summary of Findings

Paired *t*-tests show statistical significance in the treatment group for the “mindfulness” construct and “act with awareness” sub-construct, with 0.034 and 0.035 *p*-values, respectively; whereas the control group does not show statistically significant results in any construct area. Therefore, although the improvement of mindfulness in the treatment group is small, the positive improvement can be attributed to the CCPR.

Quantitative data also showed honors students demonstrated an even higher lack of self-compassion than I originally suspected through observations. The qualitative data shows students in the CCPR course demonstrated increased self-reflective behavior (suggested by the responses to the open-ended survey questions) and recognized the unkindness/lack of self-compassion they display towards themselves (as shown in the student artifacts).

Research Question #3 Findings

To examine research question three, *what does participation in a CCPR course do to students' meaning-making about what it means to be an honors student?* I analyzed qualitative data from the open-ended questions on the pre- and post- surveys, as well as the focus groups.

Pre- and post- survey open-ended questions. Question 51 of the pre- and post-surveys asked students *How would you define an Honors student?* I utilized in vivo coding to identify various attributes and categories of honors that survey respondents provided. I narrowed these codes down to seven categories: honors students are normal, inherent attributes, work ethic, community, more than or different, passion for learning, motivated by resources and opportunities. Table 30 shows the frequency coding for these categories of all survey respondents for both the pre- and post- surveys.

Table 30

Frequency Coding for Question “How Would You Define an Honors Student?”

	Normal	Inherent attributes	Work ethic	Community	More than or different	Passion for learning	Resources and opportunities
Pre	11	24	29	17	43	57	11
Post	8	17	32	11	31	42	14

Of the total pre-survey respondents, 12 of those students who answered question 51 were enrolled in the CCPR course. Some of the attributes that CCPR students stated honors students possess were: critical thinker, good study habits, honest, prideful, hard-working, accomplished, invested in academic excellence, potentially extraordinary, collaborative, lover of education, and lastly: tired. Of the post-survey respondents, 11

were enrolled in the CCPR course and they identified attributes of honors students as: hardworking, strives to do the best they can, pursuer of knowledge, creative, hardworking, self-motivated, challenges themselves, truthful, charismatic, and lastly: stressed. I have strong suspicions the student who defined honors students as “tired” may be the same student who defined honors students as “stressed.”

One trend that emerged in the responses for question 51 was students rebuking the notion of honors students being different than non-honors students. This was prevalent in all of the survey responses. Examples from the treatment group on the pre-survey include one particular comment “Honors students are just like all other Sun Devils and care about their education.” This same student finishes their statement by stating “However, an honors student will take those extra classes in order to be successful and take advantage of all the opportunities provided to them.” I actually coded this comment in two categories: honors students are normal and honors students are more than or different. This was not the only response to get classified in both categories, although they are contradictory categories.

Although question 51 specifically related to the topic of honors students, there were some answers provided on question 52 of the post-survey, *Do you have any thoughts about academic self-efficacy, mindfulness, or the contents of this survey that you would like to share?*, that also contributed well to answering my third research question. One CCPR respondent stated “I believe that all students have the ability to execute self-efficacy and mindfulness and that they do not have to be an honors student to do so.” Another student stated “I believe everyone can reach that potential if they work really hard towards it.”

On the post-survey, two CCPR students insisted honors students are normal. One student answered *How would you define an honors student?* With the response “A student who is enrolled in honors courses.” Another student stated

A typical honors student is hardworking and get things done, but I feel like being labeled “honors student” means nothing, since we are like any other student but just so happen to be a part of the Honors College.

However, the most prevalent categories for this question, for both the control and treatment population in ascending order were: more than or different, work ethic, and passion for learning.

Focus group findings. There was a lot of variation in how each focus group discussed honors students and addressed the questions, *What are characteristics of an “honors” student?* And *‘Do you think of yourself as an “honors” student?* I have shown the characteristics of honors students that each focus group came up with below and then I will move into the additional commentary provided about honors by participants. Table 31 shows the different characteristics that each focus group suggested comprises honors students.

Table 31

Characteristics of Honors Students as Identified by Focus Group Participants

Focus Group	Characteristics
1: Sabina, Raisa, Oksana, Bogdan, Selena, Viktor, Andrei	Focused, hardworking, diligent, extra, goes beyond minimum requirements, diverse
2: Adam, Elena, Sergei, Irina	Passion-oriented, hardworking, self-motivated, focused on academics, creative, anxious, unrealistic expectations, dedicated, willing to make sacrifices for academics

In the first focus group, Bogdan was very adamant that honors students do not differ from other students in any way except by being enrolled in the honors college. He initially stated:

I would say an honors students, it's just another student who got in the honors' college and then they like to wear that as a thing of being super stressed all the time and all that, perpetuating a stereotype that I don't think exists. So I think it's just another student.

Later in the conversation, he echoed this sentiment again by stating “I don’t consider myself an honors student. I consider myself a student.” Although I don’t know if Raisa agreed with Bogdan’s sentiments regarding stress and perception, she also articulated that she considers herself to be a student first “before honors student.” This was not an unanimous sentiment among the group.

Andrei and Viktor both discussed their identities as honors students in relation to purpose. Andrei stated:

I know it's not particular to every honors student here but I feel like most of us are here with a purpose whereas some people who aren't necessarily honors students are really just kind of here for the college experience beyond the academic side whereas I don't necessarily feel that way.

Viktor echoed his agreement with Andrei, but also articulated that he did not feel as though all honors students were in the honors college because of a clear purpose. He said:

I would say, though, that some honor students, they may know why they're in the honors college. Some may not know why. They just decided to go that route

because it seems like the best idea, but they don't know what they want to do with the honors college.

These comments took place during the beginning of the first focus group, but when discussing success, Viktor reiterated his feelings by saying:

I would say that honors students, sometimes they don't even realize why they're taking advantage of these opportunities. They're just in this constant mindset that, "Oh, I need to succeed and success for me means that I need to put so much on my plate." But do they really know what's the value in doing something or why they're doing it? For the most part, or at least in my case, sometimes I don't even know why I'm doing something. I'm just doing it because I see other people doing it and I feel like I have to and if I'm not, I'm obviously failing somewhere.

His statements echo the concerns of maladaptive perfectionism that I have discussed in earlier chapters. This concern about honors students' relationship with success, or trying to avoid failure, also became apparent in the second focus group.

At the very beginning of the conversation, Irina described honors students in the following way:

We just have real bad habits, like you don't sleep because you're trying to get so much done, or you don't know how to take care of yourself because you just want to succeed and succeed and you forget that you're just a person. That it's fine if you fail.

Although the rebellion against the categorization of honors was less prevalent in the second focus group, Sergei also repeatedly contended that he did not view honors students as different than the general population. Adam stated he did not identify as an

honors student, but in the context of the conversation it was less about rebelling against the categorization of honors, and more about not identifying with established stereotypes.

Adam stated:

I guess I always had the perception of an honors student as somebody who excels at academics, and I don't necessarily excel at academics. I found myself in a very good position to be in the honors college, so a lot of times I don't think of myself as an honors student.

In contrast, Elena stated that she has always viewed herself as honors because "I've always been an honors student, so to me, I've always tried my hardest in everything I did." She further articulated her experience as an honors student by discussing sacrifices she has had to make. She stated:

I've had to sacrifice some of my happiness as opposed—to people who aren't honors students I guess because they don't have to do as much work as I would in high school or even now compared to people who are in Barrett. I find myself having to sacrifice this amount of time to do this work, you know, not going home for a little when they can.

This notion of sacrifice was a reoccurring theme in the second focus group.

Another way the second focus group differed considerably from that of the first is participants discussed honors in context of the community, and not just personal relationships with honors. Adam stated:

[Barrett] it's a group of people together who have all struggled together to learn and gain knowledge and thought and they gather around and that is, I think a measure of success.... Because we own the struggles that we have. I mean we all

talked about anxiety and test taking and whatever it is, you know, grades and whatnot and those goals, but we're all in it together. And I think that's the neat thing about the honors college is I think it is to unique to have a community to bear that with.

Irina echoed his enthusiasm, but also celebrated the diversity and differences within the Barrett community. In her words:

I think that's my favorite part, too, about being in the honors college. There's just so many different people. Being able to go and have our experiences, come back and share those and then build that community. I think that also helps. It's like, we're all in it together, but at the same time, we can all branch out, bring something to the table at the end.

Research Question #3 Summary of Findings

Analysis of the qualitative data shows two significant themes: students perceived a variety of negative attributes of and bad behavior within honors students, and there is a lot of tension surrounding the classification of "honors." Some of the negative attributes and bad behaviors that are perceived to be associated with honors students are honors students are stressed all the time, they (honors students) define success by the level of commitments they have, there is high anxiety in the population, and that students will skip eating or sleeping in order to work. The students who described these behaviors and attributes also admitted to possessing these same attributes or demonstrating these behaviors. Therefore, there is a strong awareness of placing one's goals ahead of one's personal well-being, but there is not an active call to action in this population for fixing this.

Another significant theme that emerged in the qualitative data is the tension, or perhaps even resentment, surrounding the classification of “honors,” specifically from students who fall under that classification. Although a couple of focus group participants were comfortable identifying themselves as honors, many rebuked the notion of honors students differing in any way from non-honors students, even when no juxtaposition was presented. This implies that although there is something attractive enough about the honors college for students to undergo the competitive application for admission, and then subsequently maintain enrollment both academically and financially (there is an increased fee to be in the honors college), they still find something about the membership to the honors college to be unwelcome.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of a “Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap” course on the academic self-efficacy and self-compassion of honors students enrolled at Barrett West. This study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: In what way does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course affect students’ academic self-efficacy?

RQ2: In what way does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course affect students’ self-compassion?

RQ3: What does participation in a Creative Compassion through Poetry and Rap course do to students’ meaning-making about what it means to be an honors student?

In this chapter, I present a culminating discussion on this 9-week course experience, implications for practice, implications for research, limitations of the study, and lastly, lessons learned and closing thoughts.

Discussion

The most notable themes present in the data findings that corresponded with my research questions were the following: a Creative Compassion course that utilizes instructional practices grounded in CSP positively impacted students’ mindfulness; the use of non-traditional, creative assignments and curriculum, inspired by CSP allow for students to create a third space together; and the prevalence of low self-compassion, or a lack of self-compassion, was much more prominent than originally anticipated and therefore self-compassion should be an increased priority of professionals in higher

education who work with students. The following section is organized by each of these themes that emerged from the study.

CSP-informed practices positively impacted students' mindfulness.

Mindfulness has been shown to have positive impacts on people in a wide variety of ways, including “mental and physical health conditions, on social and emotional skills and wellbeing, and on learning and cognition” (Weare, 2012, p.2). These benefits, along with the way mindfulness has been effective in addressing stress and anxiety (Weare, 2012) make the pursuit of increased mindfulness in students a worthy pursuit of educational professionals everywhere.

Furthermore, there is documented research that supports the assertion culturally sustaining pedagogy has a positive impact upon students (Paris & Alim, 2014; Buffington & Day, 2018). However, there is little to no research exploring the relationship between culturally sustaining pedagogy and how its utilization may impact mindfulness. The findings in this study suggest culturally sustaining pedagogy practices can create conditions for mindfulness to increase in students. There are certain considerations to keep in mind, such as the classroom activities were influenced by both culturally sustaining pedagogy *and* mindfulness. However, the course curriculum did not encompass any meditative behaviors normally associated with mindfulness curriculum, nor did it strictly adhere to any established mindfulness curriculum. Mindfulness was ever-present when I constructed the course and facilitated it, but the course was not, in itself, a mindfulness course. Therefore, the positive relationship between the culturally sustaining pedagogy of the course and the increased mindfulness of course participants cannot be ignored.

CSP-informed practices allows for the creation of a third space within the classroom. As addressed in Chapter 2, a third space is an environment where established standards and biases are interrupted in order to be more inclusive of all students' "culture, history, language, and out of school literacies" (Piazza, 2009, p. 17). The research surrounding third space often focuses on third space as being a way to address the opportunity gaps for students who come from minority households (Piazza, 2009; Gutierrez, 2008). Another way to address opportunity gaps is by recruiting more diverse students into accelerated programs; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting (2008) contend the recruitment of diverse student populations is increased by having more diverse students already within accelerated programs and finish these programs successfully (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008). In other words, in order to do a better job recruiting students with diverse backgrounds, institutions equally need to strive to do a better job retaining these students, because that retention directly influences following generations. Therefore, there is much benefit on both the success of current honors students and the recruitment of future honors students associated with effectively creating third spaces for students to learn.

Bostoc (2010) contended one of the major welcome disruptions third spaces provide are:

The traditional social roles and power structures that situated students in a subordinate position in the classroom are replaced by classroom communities where the role of the teacher and student, novice and expert, intersect, creating the potential for authentic interaction and learning to occur (p. 223).

Such disruption was witnessed in the CCPR innovation as the students were the authority on the topics at hand: themselves. My role was to facilitate opportunities for students to challenge that self-knowledge, explore it, and contemplate the implications. Students were not treated as passive recipients of knowledge, but rather, they bestowed the knowledge, and in this way “students become teachers and mentors, and teachers become learners” (Bostock, 2010, p. 222) which is a fundamental characteristic of a third space of learning. The teacher is still a valuable and integral part of the classroom experience because they “facilitate challenging discussions that offer transformative learning that will potentially cross boundaries” (Piazza, 2009, p. 19).

Self-compassion of students should be an increased priority. Of all the data collected, I was most impacted by how unkind these honors students were to themselves. Although I previously attested to witnessing such acts of unkindness, I was unaware of the prevalence of these acts of unkindness. However, the initial data from the pre-survey of both treatment and control populations showed there was a serious lack of self-compassion, or it existed in relatively small amounts. The same students scored their academic self-efficacy high just as they scored their self-compassion low, making me hesitate to attribute the results to a “bad day” or some other coincidence of bad timing when the instrument was distributed. Further, the qualitative data also shows this trend of low self-compassion. As a researcher it was interesting to read weekly submissions from students which verified my concerns about their self-compassion, and overall increased those concerns. As a person, it was incredibly difficult to read some of the students’ writing. There was a lot of unkindness directed inwards that was difficult to process in its sheer volume.

The research I presented in this study surrounding self-compassion largely focused upon it as a sub-construct of mindfulness (Neff & Dahm, 2015; Bishop et al., 2004; Buchheld, Grossman, & Wallach, 2001). Therefore, the innovation approached self-compassion as a means to a larger end (mindfulness) rather than solely an end in itself. Yet the data findings show self-compassion should be an even higher priority than this.

Limitations of the Study

One of the major components of action research is that it takes place in a practitioner setting, and actions that have implications upon the research are made throughout the process of the research. For example, when conducting this research, I had a plan in mind, but throughout the research study, I was constantly calibrating and adjusting that plan to better address the perceived needs of students that were becoming clearer throughout the research process. A perfect example of this is I entered into this research study thinking academic self-efficacy would truly be the main focus of my research, and mindfulness was a way to further understand the students' relationship with academic self-efficacy. However, it became clear from the pre-survey that my initial perceptions about low academic self-efficacy were wrong; based on both the quantitative and qualitative data, the honors students I was studying had stronger academic self-efficacy than I initially suspected. What really stood out as an area of need/development in my research was self-compassion.

With this context in mind, I created my instruments with a specific focus on academic self-efficacy. It was in the analysis stages that I realized only one of my focus group questions asked about mindfulness, which was *If we interpret mindfulness as being*

present in the moment, do you think mindfulness can impact academic self-efficacy?

How? And none of my focus group questions addressed the sub-construct of mindfulness: self-compassion. So although the focus groups were incredibly fruitful, they were still limited in this manner.

Another limitation of this study that was grounded in good intentions is two of the data sources were not mandatory for CCPR participants: the focus groups and the pre- and post- surveys. In an effort to be extremely cognizant that my innovation took the shape of a course, I designed the different data sources with the intent to limit student anxiety about how my research would impact their grades. In the process of doing so, I accidentally limited my research. In the future, I would make all data sources a required component of the course.

Implications for Practice

One of the reasons I pursued an action research dissertation is because I was excited for the opportunity to utilize research to enact change in my profession. As this study comes to a close, I find myself feeling joyous at the opportunity to take what I have learned and apply it to my setting with renewed vigor. And this time, to know that what I have learned is not just from knowledge gained through continued experience, but also knowledge grounded in data. Some of the immediate implications for my practice include: an urgent need to promote and *incentivize* holistic wellness (with special attention to self-compassion and mindfulness) and a need (and incredible value to be gained) from creating platforms for students to express themselves outside of traditional mediums already established in academia.

Incentivize holistic wellness. Right around the middle of the CCPR course, one of my students, Ivan, contacted me via email because he had to miss one of our classes.

This email read:

I won't be in class today. There is a lab due in one of my classes today that I wasn't aware of (all of my other labs have been due on Thursdays). I know this is not a great reason to miss class, but I figure you'd value honesty. I apologize, I will absolutely miss spending an hour with all of you!

(If you are reading this, Ivan, I did appreciate your candor and still do.) One of the things this email put into perspective for me, is that personal wellness is the easiest thing to sacrifice when a student has conflicting obligations. There are hints I already suspected this, after all, it was one of my core reasons for structuring the innovation as a course with credit—so that students could justify the time they would invest. This would imply enjoyment and wellbeing were not justification enough. Yet the email from Ivan shifted my perspective just enough where it all clarified.

Ivan's email is not the only example of students sacrificing their wellness first. Throughout the course of the semester, I had students show up to class sleep deprived due to long nights spent studying. Outside of class, I witnessed students skip meals so that they can run from one commitment to the next without risk of being late. The examples are endless. In the second focus group, members of which included Adam, Elena, Sergei, and Irina, sacrifice was a large theme of discussion. We just never spoke about sacrifice in relation to personal well-being, but in retrospect, I think if I had thought to ask the question, it would have been a fruitful discussion much like the rest.

As a practitioner, these findings suggest we have to find ways to make wellness a priority. Furthermore, we have to create a sense of urgency around wellness or else it will be set aside as it was in the various examples already provided. One such opportunity may include creating additional elective courses where wellness and self-care is the topic primary. More radical than this: perhaps building wellness resources and practices into the curriculum of core classes and not relying on students' ability to take electives. We have to rise to the challenge presented by this tendency for students to treat their health as negotiable.

Creative expression. I have years of experience at the University; years that I have loved, years of interacting with students in various capacities, all of which I have enjoyed immensely. It is without hesitation that I say: the 9-week CCPR experience with the 16 students who participated was one of the most incredible experiences I have had. CCPR classes quickly became the highlight of my week and each class period was sacred. I have the distinct pleasure of staying in contact with all 16 students to this day and I frequently find myself in conversations with these students about how we miss the CCPR course and the community/culture that was developed in the class.

One of the things I was unaware of when starting the CCPR is that Barrett asks students enrolled in honors courses to complete open-ended course evaluations. Due to this, I received course feedback from all of the students who took the CCPR. I did not include this in my method or analysis chapters because this information was not a data source. The full transcriptions of the course feedback is provided in Appendix H, but some comments are also detailed here. One student referred to the course as a “wonderful, loving, and safe experience.” Another student said “I found that I was

always able to relate to the course material and that I could share freely in a safe environment.” Another stated “I have been given the opportunity to be honest and vulnerable with both myself and the people around me. It has been so meaningful to be with people from all experiences and backgrounds and grow.” Yet another said “This course allowed me to open up to myself and gave me room to explore. This in the end helped me find a passion and a better version of myself.” And lastly, another student stated

This course allowed me to take pause this semester and express myself creatively.

This outlet benefited me mentally and emotionally in ways I did not expect....

Professor Billbe (Sasha) established an open and safe environment, in which I was able to connect with my peers in ways I normally do not.

I have to admit, I have read this feedback countless times. Yet as I am writing this, I am no less moved than I was the first time I read it. I believe the statements I have selected show the value of creating spaces for students to relate to each other creatively, and differently than traditional curriculum, as advocated for by culturally sustaining pedagogy. One of my main tasks in moving forward is to find additional ways we can create said spaces with our students. I look forward to wholeheartedly embracing this challenge.

Implications for Research

There are several opportunities for further research that this study points toward. One opportunity for continued research includes looking at the data provided by students in relation to their demographic information, including race/ethnicity, gender, age, and where they are in the honors program (first year versus fourth year, etc.). Another

research component I would be interested in looking at is comparing the self-compassion (or lack thereof) of honors students compared to students not enrolled in the honors college. Is the prevalence of unkindness to the self an epidemic that stems across the university?

Another area of research I am interested in looking at is the tension surrounding the classification of honors. As discussed in Chapter 4, much of the feedback provided by students was a rejection that honors students are different from students not enrolled in the honors college. What stood out as particularly interesting is that none of the research questions, or instruments, asked how honors students differ from non-honors students. Yet at times it felt as though the students' responses were incredibly defensive, if not borderline hostile. And, at the same time, each of the students who provided said responses *are*, by nature of their enrollment in Barrett, honors students. Additionally, by being enrolled in the college, there is a commitment of the students to the college, which at its most basic level is at least an increased financial commitment. Students are therefore paying for their enrollment in a college that they then reject the trappings of (even if the only trapping is the label "honors"). It was fascinating to hear this feedback and I wanted to pursue it further, but the limited time constraints of this study did not allow for detouring from the established research questions.

Lessons Learned

This research study, and the corresponding dissertation, has taught me a lot, not only about the topic at hand, but also about myself. I am hopeful my passion for promoted increased self-compassion in students has been conveyed in the discussion of my findings, as well as the pain I feel at the thought of my students suffering unkindness

(even though much of that unkindness is directed at themselves *by* themselves). Perhaps what I have not made clear up until this point is how I see that lack of self-compassion in myself, as well. Further, I also sacrifice my personal wellness when my professional or academic goals appear to demand it. I provide this insight not only to shed light on my hypocrisy, but because I think it shows just how difficult the challenges before us as practitioners are. I have dedicated myself to the research and study of literature and practices that support self-compassion and mindfulness and yet I still struggle with executing these skills. To try and promote such skills in students who do not also have the benefit of immersing themselves in the body of work that justifies why such skills are important is no small challenge. But it is a worthy one. It is my hope to not only better help my students by promoting self-compassion and overall wellness, but also to do so by leading by example.

Concluding Thoughts

The experience I gained through this research study indicated to me that there is much work to be done in order to make institutions of higher education more well-suited for our incoming honors students. Most notably, holistic wellness of our students can be better promoted through the use and incorporation of culturally sustaining pedagogy throughout areas of the student experience and healthier relationships with success should be promoted within our students.

Higher education professionals should be assessing ways to incorporate CSP into additional areas of the student experience. This research showed the CCPR course had a positive impact upon students' mindfulness, and also created strong student-to-staff bonds, yet the CCPR course was a relatively brief intervention. By incorporating the

inclusive nature of CSP more rigorously into the student experience, and for sustained periods of time, I contend we can have even greater impacts upon students' mindfulness, self-compassion, and overall wellbeing.

Secondly, new metrics of success should be promoted to students who are classified as honors. There is a widespread maladaptive relationship between honors students and their understandings of personal success, from not recognizing when they are currently demonstrating success, to placing rigorous and unforgiving standards upon themselves. This unhealthy relationship was not isolated to a few students, but is shown to be prevalent throughout the study's overall population (including the control group). Clearly there are systems in place that promote this unhealthy relationship to success, whether intentional or not. Higher education professionals that work with honors students should find renewed vigor in identifying what systems are causing these unhealthy perceptions and to then subsequently embrace the challenge of rectifying them. If we as higher education professionals embrace the call to find solutions with the same vigor the participants of the CCPR course embraced the challenges put forth by the course, I have unwavering belief in our ability to succeed.

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APPENDIX A
COURSE RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear student:

My name is Sasha Billbe and I am a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU). I am working under the direction of Dr. Lauren Harris, a faculty member in MLFTC. I am conducting a research study on how a Creative Mindfulness course (CMC) might impact the academic self-efficacy and self-compassion of Honors students enrolled at ASU's West campus.

I am inviting your participation in the study, which will involve enrolling in a 1-credit Honors course. The course will meet for nine weeks between September 10th and November 19th. Course sessions will not begin until IRB approval is granted.

The benefit to participation is receiving 1-credit toward your lower-division Honors requirements. In addition, you will have the opportunity to think about and reflect on your academic self-efficacy and self-compassion. This study will inform future initiatives for Honors students enrolled at ASU West; by participating in the study you will be able to directly benefit current and future students. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Assignments for the class, including regular poetry submissions, will be treated as data for the study. Your data will be confidential. Results from this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. Please note students can withdraw from the research study and still remain in the course. If a participant withdraws from the study, but remains enrolled in the course, their assignments for the class will no longer be utilized as data for the study. Students enrolled in the course who successfully complete all mandatory assignments will receive course credit regardless of participating in the research study. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in the research study. In addition, participants must have a major located at ASU's West campus, and also be admitted to Barrett, the Honors College.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team – Lauren Harris at Lauren.Harris.1@asu.edu or Sasha Billbe at SashaBillbe@asu.edu. By signing below, you are agreeing to be part of the study and agreeing your submitted assignments can be treated as data for the research study.

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

Signature of participant

Date

Printed name of participant

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965-6788.

APPENDIX B
SURVEY RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Student:

My name is Sasha Billbe and I am a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU). I am working under the direction of Dr. Lauren Harris, a faculty member in MLFTC. I am conducting a research study on how a Creative Mindfulness course (CMC) might impact the academic self-efficacy and self-compassion of Honors students enrolled at ASU's West campus.

I am inviting your participation in the study, which will involve completing a survey at the beginning of the fall semester (the survey will not be distributed until after IRB approval is granted) and once more at the semester's conclusion. The survey includes fifty-three questions and you can expect to spend 10-15 minutes completing it.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. In addition, participants must have a major located at ASU's West campus, and also be admitted to Barrett, the Honors College.

The benefit to participation is to think about and reflect on your academic self-efficacy and self-compassion. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your results will be confidential. Results from this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team – Lauren Harris at Lauren.Harris.1@asu.edu or Sasha Billbe at SashaBillbe@asu.edu.

Sincerely,
Sasha Billbe, Doctoral Student
Lauren Harris, Associate Professor

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965-6788.

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear student:

My name is Sasha Billbe and I am a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU). I am working under the direction of Dr. Lauren Harris, a faculty member in MLFTC. I am conducting a research study on how a Creative Mindfulness course (CMC) might impact the academic self-efficacy and self-compassion of Honors students enrolled at ASU's West campus.

I am inviting your participation in the study, which will entail participating in a focus group towards the end of the fall 2018 semester.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. In addition, participants must have a major located at ASU's West campus, be admitted to Barrett, the Honors College, and be enrolled in the 1 credit HON course "Creative Compassion."

The benefit to participation is you will have the opportunity to think about and reflect on your academic self-efficacy and self-compassion. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your data will be confidential. Results from this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used. Due to the nature of focus groups complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. We do ask that you refrain from sharing information from this discussion outside the focus group.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team – Lauren Harris at Lauren.Harris.1@asu.edu or Sasha Billbe at SashaBillbe@asu.edu.

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

_____ Signature of participant	_____ Date
_____ Printed name of participant	
_____ Signature of person obtaining consent	_____ Date
_____ Printed name of person obtaining consent	

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965-6788.

APPENDIX D

PRE- AND POST- SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Demographic Questions

1. What gender describes you?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other (please specify) _____

2. What is your race/ethnicity? (Check all that apply)
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Black or African American
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - White
 - Other (please specify) _____

3. What is your date of birth? _____

4. Do you live on campus?
 - Yes
 - No

5. Are you an in-state or out-of-state student?
 - In-state/AZ Resident
 - Out-of-state/Non-AZ Resident
 - Unsure

6. Do you qualify for a Pell grant?
 - Yes
 - No

7. How would you quantify your financial need?
 - High financial need
 - Moderate financial need
 - Low financial need
 - No financial need

8. Did your high school offer dual enrollment courses?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure

9. If yes, did you participate in/take dual enrollment courses?
 - Yes
 - No

10. Did your high school offer Advanced Placement (AP) courses?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

11. If yes, did you participate in/take Advanced Placement (AP) courses?

- Yes
- No

12. Did your high school offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

13. If yes, did you participate in/take the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program?

- Yes
- No

14. Did your high school offer honors courses?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

15. If yes, did you participate in/take honors courses?

- Yes
- No

16. Were you a member of any clubs or organizations at your high school?

- Yes
- No

17. Did you participate on any sports teams at your high school?

- Yes
- No

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
18. On the whole, I am satisfied with my academic performance.						
19. I criticize myself for having irrational or						

inappropriate emotions.						
20. When I do things, my mind wanders off and I'm easily distracted.						
21. I have defined for myself what it means to be successful in life.						
22. I tend to evaluate whether my perceptions are right or wrong.						
23. I feel that I have a number of good qualities that aid me as a student.						
24. I have set goals for myself about my progress at college.						
25. When I'm doing something, I'm only focused on what I'm doing, nothing else.						
26. I tell myself that I shouldn't be feeling the way I'm feeling.						
27. I drive on "automatic pilot" without paying attention to what I'm doing.						
28. I believe some of my thoughts are abnormal or bad and I shouldn't think that way.						
29. I know what I want to do after I graduate.						
30. I tell myself that I shouldn't be thinking the way I'm thinking.						

31. I am able to do assignments/tasks as well as most other students.						
32. I disapprove of myself when I have irrational ideas.						
33. I know what the requirements are to graduate.						
34. I get completely absorbed in what I'm doing, so that all my attention is focused on it.						
35. When I'm reading, I focus all my attention on what I'm reading.						
36. I feel confident about my current major and how it will help me achieve my goals.						
37. When I do things, I get totally wrapped up in them and don't think about anything else.						
38. I make judgments about whether my thoughts are good or bad.						
39. I know what I need to do to get good grades in my courses.						
40. I feel I have made academic accomplishments that are worthy of pride.						
41. I have spoken with staff or faculty at my institution about how to achieve my goals.						

42. I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I shouldn't feel them.						
43. I don't pay attention to what I'm doing because I'm daydreaming, worrying, or otherwise distracted.						
44. When I'm doing tasks, such as cleaning or laundry, I tend to daydream or think of other things.						
45. I tend to make judgments about how worthwhile or worthless my experiences are.						
46. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with other students.						
47. I have a positive attitude about my academic abilities.						
48. I know what courses I need to take to satisfy the requirements of my major.						
49. I tend to do several things at once rather than focusing on one thing at a time.						
50. When I'm working on something, part of my mind is occupied with other topics, such as what I'll be doing later, or things I'd rather be doing.						

51. How would you define an Honors student?

52. Do you have any thoughts about academic self-efficacy, mindfulness, or the contents of this survey that you would like to share?

Digital survey can be accessed at:

https://asu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cYZuzhP3kPiwvg5

APPENDIX E

RESEARCH QUESTIONS WITH CORRESPONDING SUB AND PRIMARY
CONSTRUCTS

Primary Construct	Sub Construct	Q	Question text	
Academic Self-efficacy	Academic Self Esteem (ASE)	17	On the whole, I am satisfied with my academic performance.	
		22	I feel that I have a number of good qualities that aid me as a student	
		30	I am able to do assignments/tasks as well as most other students	
		39	I feel I have made academic accomplishments that are worthy of pride	
		45	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with other students	
	46	I have a positive attitude about my academic abilities		
	Goals and Pathway to Goals (GPG)	Goals and Pathway to Goals (GPG)	20	I have defined for myself what it means to be successful in life
			23	I have set goals for myself about my progress at college
			28	I know what I want to do after I graduate
			32	I know what the requirements are to graduate
35			I feel confident about my current major and how it will help me achieve my goals	
38			I know what I need to do to get good grades in my courses	
40			I have spoken with staff or faculty at my institution about how to achieve my goals	
47			I know what courses I need to take to satisfy the requirements of my major	
Mindfulness	Accept Without Judgment (ANJ)	18	I criticize myself for having irrational or inappropriate emotions.	
		21	I tend to evaluate whether my perceptions are right or wrong	
		25	I tell myself that I shouldn't be feeling the way I'm feeling	
		27	I believe some of my thoughts are abnormal or bad and I shouldn't think that way	
		29	I tell myself that I shouldn't be thinking the way I'm thinking	
		31	I disapprove of myself when I have irrational ideas	
		37	I make judgments about whether my thoughts are good or bad	
		41	I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I shouldn't feel them	
44	I tend to make judgments about how worthwhile or worthless my experiences are			

Act with Awareness (AWA)	19	When I do things, my mind wanders off and I'm easily distracted.
	24	When I'm doing something, I'm only focused on what I'm doing, nothing else
	26	I drive on "automatic pilot" without paying attention to what I'm doing
	33	I get completely absorbed in what I'm doing, so that all my attention is focused on it
	34	When I'm reading, I focus all my attention on what I'm reading
	36	When I do things, I get totally wrapped up in them and don't think about anything else
	42	I don't pay attention to what I'm doing because I'm daydreaming, worrying, or otherwise distracted
	43	When I'm doing tasks, such as cleaning or laundry, I tend to daydream or think of other things
	48	I tend to do several things at once rather than focusing on one thing at a time
	49	When I'm working on something, part of my mind is occupied with other topics, such as what I'll be doing later, or things I'd rather be doing

Note. The column titled 'Q' indicates the corresponding question number on survey instrument

APPENDIX F
PILOT SURVEY

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Academic Self-Esteem (general feelings about yourself)						
On the whole, I am satisfied with my academic performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I feel that I have a number of good qualities that aid me as a student.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I am able to do assignments/tasks as well as most other students.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I feel I have made academic accomplishments that are worthy of pride.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with other students.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I have a positive attitude about my academic abilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Goals (Where you want to be or what you want to accomplish in the future) & Pathway to Goals (Knowing how you would like to achieve them)						
I have defined for myself what it means to be successful in life.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I have set goals for myself about my progress at college.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I know what I want to do after I graduate.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I feel confident about my current major and how it will help me achieve my goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I know what I need to do to get good grades in my courses.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I know what courses I need to take to satisfy	<input type="checkbox"/>					

the requirements of my major.						
I know what the requirements are to graduate.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I have spoken with staff or faculty at my institution about how to achieve my goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Involvement Outside of the Classroom						
I am currently involved in student organizations on campus.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I feel comfortable talking with staff and faculty outside of the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I look for more information and opportunities to complement the curriculum in my classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I know what resources exist at my institution to help me be successful post-graduation.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I have, or am planning to, participate in research or internship opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Demographic Questions

What gender describes you?

- Male
- Female
- Other (please specify) _____

What is your race/ethnicity? (Check all that apply)

- Hispanic or Latino
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American

- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other (please specify) _____

When is your anticipated graduation year/semester?

- Fall 2017
- Spring 2018
- Fall 2018
- Spring 2019
- Fall 2019
- Spring 2020
- Fall 2020
- Spring 2021
- Fall 2021
- Spring 2022
- Other (please specify) _____

Do you live on campus?

- Yes
- No

Are you currently employed?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

Please indicate your age group.

- 18 - 19
- 20 - 21
- 22 - 23
- 24 - 25
- 26 - 27
- 28 - 29
- 30+

Thank you for your participation in this survey! Your time and consideration are greatly appreciated!

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this survey, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at Sasha.Billbe@asu.edu or (602) 543-6118.

Survey can be accessed online at: <https://goo.gl/forms/L3ibPIIdDBxoKyuNf2>

APPENDIX G

SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What are characteristics of an “Honors” student?
2. Do you think of yourself as an “Honors” student, beyond being enrolled in Honors courses?
3. Academic self-efficacy can be understood as a person’s belief in their academic abilities. Do you think you possess academic self-efficacy? To what extent (a lot/a little)? Why or why not?
4. Do you think academic self-efficacy plays a role in student success? If yes, what role?
5. How do you define student success? Why?
6. What are examples of student success? What are examples of student success you’ve demonstrated?
7. If we interpret mindfulness as being present in the moment, do you think mindfulness can impact academic self-efficacy? How?
8. Other comments? Is there anything else you would like me to know/consider?

APPENDIX H

TRANSCRIPTION OF COURSE FEEDBACK

<p>Q1: What will you take away from this course that is meaningful to you?</p>	<p>Q2: Please write a general evaluation of the course and the professor's teaching of it. Please discuss strengths and weaknesses. Give recommendations on how the professor might improve the course and instruction.</p>
<p>The course itself was a new experience for me. I did not expect a rap/poetry class would be so much fun. The class taught me that I don't have to be a professional poet to write poetry. It taught me to take risks and share my thoughts and feelings into each poem I created.</p>	<p>Sasha was a great instructor allowing her students to be as vulnerable as they want. The feedback she provided to her students after submitting their work allowed her students feel that their work is good outside of expertism.</p>
<p>1. Take a step back and think about myself. 2. Do not stress as much as I do. 3. Poetry is therapeutic and I should write it more often.</p>	<p>Class was perfectly taught. I would not change a thing. Teacher was amazing!</p>
<p>Anyone can write poetry. It is an expression of thought and no one is exempt from either of those.</p>	<p>The course was naturally designed to be more relaxed, which I appreciated, and days that involved full lecture were still enjoyable. It's hard to pinpoint weaknesses when I am motivated to attend a class I thought I wouldn't do well in.</p>
<p>I now value poetry. Before this class I honestly thought poetry was a joke, but I now see and appreciate its value. I also legitimately enjoy writing poetry.</p>	<p>The instructor was passionate and provided wonderful feedback. I have no weaknesses I can think of.</p>
<p>The two biggest things I have taken away from this course is how to be more honest with myself and finding my love for poetry again. This course allowed me to open up to myself and gave me room to explore. This in the end helped me find a passion and a better version of myself.</p>	<p>Overall this course was very insightful on a personal and hysterical level. The free flowing classes allowed for all of us to explore who we are, where we come from, and how we're all connected. It allowed for us to see how poetry can be a tool for this.</p>
<p>I will be able to take away the ease of being vulnerable about my internal feelings. I appreciated the value in music during this class and thought it was a very therapeutic class.</p>	<p>In this course I think it brought out the vulnerable side that was very much needed. The way it was taught was interactive and modern and I liked that very much.</p>
<p>I appreciate the fact that I felt liberated to write my feelings without being restricted by conventional rules on how to write proper poetry. The knowledge I had that Sasha was going to grade the assignment</p>	<p>This course was well taught by Sasha. She allowed class to flow freely and invited students to conversation. The only weakness is the time constraint (50 min.) because we only meet Mondays.</p>

<p>based on how true I was to myself (at least it felt like so) gave me great artistic license and confidence in my poetic abilities.</p>	
<p>I think this has taught me how to be more vulnerable and comfortable since I am such a quiet person when it comes to my private life. Sharing and writing, even discussing poetry has allowed me to be more comfortable about opening up.</p>	<p>General feedback: Loved the course and I'd love to be part of it again. Strengths: focus on content, allows for creativity, no rules to follow (making it raw and authentic) Weaknesses: N/A</p>
<p>My poetry, and how I feel that it has helped me gain a deeper understanding of myself and my past; and how that has contributed to my current circumstance. I also really appreciated the feedback left from the instructor.</p>	<p>I really liked the course and found it extremely helpful and meaningful; perhaps not from an academic point of view, but certainly from a personal point of view, but I think that is exactly what the class was supposed to do. I think the only thing that could be improved about the class was allowing students more time to share their poetry with the class if they so choose.</p>
<p>This course allowed me to take pause this semester and express myself creatively. This outlet benefited me mentally and emotionally in ways I did not expect. It also asked me to consider rap, verse and poetry in ways I hadn't considered.</p>	<p>Professor Billbe (Sasha) established an open and safe environment, in which I was able to connect with my peers in ways I normally do not.</p>
<p>I will appreciate taking the time to sit down and write heartfelt poetry. I will also take away the fact that Sasha took the time to sit, read, and give feedback on my work.</p>	<p>A+. Sasha taught the history of the content well we're learning so well. After, it wasn't so much teaching because you can't teach poetry but it was rather encouraging and inspiring for us to write. Strength: the assignments. The open endedness of writing what we wanted. Weakness: N/A</p>
<p>I think the most important thing I've learned in this course is to take time out of my day/week/month to write as it is very therapeutic. It is important to write as sometimes you don't want to share whatever you are going through with others, but still want to get things off your chest.</p>	<p>Strengths – very distressful, layout of expectations were clear, fun, timely. Weaknesses – honestly none For future course the professor should keep it quite similar. Students will have a great experience.</p>
<p>The power of poetry. The course made clear that we are all poets and poetry is/can be universal.</p>	<p>The course was an excellent space to learn about rap and poetry. It encouraged and enabled students to express themselves in</p>

	personal and meaningful ways. The only limitation was the amount of time we had as this is a single credit course.
I'll take a more genuine and empathetic approach to listening to others. [?] loving people's poems [?] me to realize their [?] and [?], and that we share a lot of them in common.	I admire the teaching style. I'm not much for [indistinguishable], mostly because I had that I'm not good at [?] them but she still [?] them.
I have been given the opportunity to be honest and vulnerable with both myself and the people around me. It has been so meaningful to be with people from all experiences and backgrounds and grow.	This class was a lot of fun to take. I enjoyed how Sasha put few restrictions on what we wrote. The only weakness I can think of is probably the fact that we did not have a lot of time to share poetry/rap/verse outside of what we wrote with each other. Overall, though, this was a wonderful, loving, and safe experience.
From this course, I realized that I am able to write poetry again without being depressed or angry. It was a wonderful experience to reflect on how far I've come as well as to hear feedback on the quality of me (once lost) hobby.	Sasha's lectures were very informative and insightful. I found that I was always able to relate to the course material and that I could share freely in a safe environment.