Associations Among Helicopter Parenting, Motivation, and Mindset

By

Ashlyn K. Blaschke

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Education Specialist
School Psychology

At
The University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

November 12th, 2021
Graduate Studies

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of
Ashlyn K. Blaschke presented on November 12, 2021

Dr. Mary Beth Leibham, Chair

Dr. Michael Axelrod

Dr. Karsten Powell

APPROVED:______________________________________

Dean of Graduate Studies
Associations Among Helicopter Parenting, Motivation, and Mindset

By

Ashlyn K. Blaschke

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2021

Under the Supervision of Dr. Mary Beth Leibham

Helicopter parenting, a type of overparenting, is a unique pattern of behaviors that typically includes excessive and developmentally inappropriate parental involvement. Rather than allow their child to embrace developmentally appropriate and typical childhood challenges, helicopter parents intervene prematurely and solve problems for their child (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011). Helicopter parenting has been associated with lower levels of self-determination and autonomy in children and adolescents and higher levels of extrinsic motivation, performance-goal orientation, and maladaptive perfectionism (Schiffrin, Liss, Miles-McLean, Geary, Erchull, & Tashner, 2014; Schiffrin & Liss, 2017). Further, since helicopter parents attempt to prevent their child from experiencing failure, it is likely that children of helicopter parents have limited opportunities to develop growth mindsets (i.e., the belief that success often involves mistakes and repeated efforts; Haimovitz & Dweck, 2016). Using an online survey methodology, this study assessed college students’ self-reported experiences with helicopter parenting, intelligence mindsets, and goal orientations. The results suggested that helicopter parenting was associated with a mastery goal orientation, but was not associated with intelligence mindset.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Mary Beth Leibham, for her continuous support. Her dedication to my learning and success in this process was crucial to the completion of this thesis. In addition to Dr. Leibham, I extend my thanks to Dr. Michael Axelrod and Dr. Karsten Powell for agreeing to be a part of my thesis committee and offering their support and feedback on this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Mary Beth Tusing and Dr. Melissa Coolong-Chaffin along with my graduate program cohort for their encouragement and positivity throughout my thesis development and graduate school. Finally, I would like to thank my family for always believing in me and providing unconditional love and support throughout my schooling.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.................................................................................................................. vi

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION..................................................................................................................1

Parenting Styles..................................................................................................................1

Helicopter Parenting.........................................................................................................3

Achievement Goal Orientation and Mindset.......................................................................4

Helicopter Parenting and College Students......................................................................7

Current Study....................................................................................................................8

Research Questions.........................................................................................................9

II. METHOD.............................................................................................................................10

Participants.......................................................................................................................10

Measures..........................................................................................................................10

Procedures.......................................................................................................................11

III. RESULTS .......................................................................................................................12

Statistical Analyses...........................................................................................................12

IV. DISCUSSION ..................................................................................................................17

Limitations and Future Research......................................................................................23

REFERENCES..................................................................................................................25

APPENDICES....................................................................................................................29
A. Helicopter Parenting Instrument..................................................29

B. Intelligence Mindset Scale.........................................................31

C. Achievement Goal Questionnaire – Revised..................................32
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Correlations Among Helicopter Parenting, Achievement Goal Orientations, and Mindset

17
Introduction

Parenting Styles

Parents play a significant role in their children’s development. Parenting behaviors have been associated with numerous outcomes for children including psychosocial adjustment, risk-taking behavior, academic achievement, and life satisfaction (Aunola, Stattin, & Nurmi, 2000; Baumrind, 1996; Bean, Bush, McKenry, & Wilson, 2003; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Parenting attitudes and behaviors have been categorized into four main parenting styles, namely authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved (or neglectful), with each style being characterized by varying levels of parental responsiveness and demandingness (Baumrind, 1965; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Parental responsiveness refers to the extent to which a parent responds to their child with warmth, acceptance, and support, in addition to engaging their child in decision-making processes. Parental demandingness refers to the extent to which a parent exerts control, power, and demands obedience from their child (Baumrind, 1965; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Authoritative parents set and hold high expectations for their child, are responsive to their child’s needs, work with their child to solve problems, value their child’s sense of autonomy, and support their child’s growing levels of independence (Baumrind, 1966, Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Authoritative parents exhibit behaviors that are high in both demandingness and responsiveness. This style of parenting has been associated with positive developmental outcomes, including self-regulation, independence, academic achievement, and fewer problem behaviors (Aunola et al., 2000; Bean et al., 2003; Lamborn et al., 1991).

Authoritarian parenting style is characterized by high demandingness and low responsiveness. Authoritarian parents enforce strict rules and expectations for their child, are
inconsistently responsive to their child’s emotional needs, and exert high levels of control over their child (Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). They are not flexible in their rules and expectations. While children of authoritarian parents often have higher levels of academic achievement and are less likely to engage in problematic behaviors than their peers, they are more likely to have low self-esteem, decreased well-being (including the increased chance of developing internalizing symptoms), and low levels of perceived autonomy and independence (Lamborn et al., 1991; Pinquart & Gerke, 2019).

Permissive parenting style is characterized by low demandingness and high responsiveness. While permissive parents are responsive to their child’s emotional needs and show high levels of warmth, they do not consistently enforce rules and expectations for their child (Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Permissive parenting has been associated with higher levels of social competency and orientation towards peers, as well as increased deviant behavior such as school misconduct and alcohol and/or drug use (Lamborn et al., 1991; Mak, Yin, Cheung, & Oon, 2020; Pinquart & Gerke, 2019).

The uninvolved parenting style is characterized by low demandingness and low responsiveness. Uninvolved parents do not enforce rules and expectations for their child, have little control over their child, are inconsistently responsive to their child’s needs, and are often neglectful (Baumrind, 1996; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Uninvolved parenting has consistently been associated with the most negative child outcomes among the four parenting styles. These outcomes include low levels of competence and increased negative self-perceptions, problem behavior, and psychological distress (Khalid, & Aslam, 2012; Lamborn et al., 1991; Pinquart & Gerke, 2019).
**Helicopter Parenting**

Parenting styles have received more attention recently as the concept of helicopter parenting, a form of overparenting, has gained more attention. It is likely that helicopter parenting is not an entirely new type of parenting, but rather, a new pattern of the basic dimensions of parenting (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). This unique parenting approach consists of high warmth and support, high control, but low autonomy granting (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). While helicopter parenting and authoritative parenting share similar aspects of parenting behaviors, helicopter parenting often involves excessive levels of support and involvement at times when it’s developmentally appropriate, such as adolescence and young adulthood (Lemoyne & Buchanan, 2011). Instead of allowing their child to encounter developmentally appropriate challenges, helicopter parents tend to resolve or prematurely remove all challenges for their children, thereby decreasing opportunities for them to develop coping skills and/or become more independent (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011). Helicopter parenting is particularly concerning for adolescents and emerging adults since the adolescent years are a period of time when increasing independence from parents is necessary to become self-reliant (Arnett, 2000). Further, adolescence is a time period during which an individual’s identity take shape – this is the period when they explore their likes and dislikes, who they are as a person, and seek out their purpose in life. Adolescents need increased independence in order to explore different activities, learn from mistakes, discover themselves, and develop autonomy (Arnett, 2000). Thus, the level of parental involvement and control that characterizes helicopter parenting may not be optimal for helping youth develop autonomy and self-motivation because it limits opportunities for exploration and learning from mistakes.
Excessive parent involvement can occur in multiple contexts including a child’s daily home activities, academics, social life, and/or career. If children are not able to experience and navigate challenges while they are young, they may miss important learning opportunities to develop necessary skills for confronting future challenges on their own (Hong, Hwang, Kuo, & Hsu, 2015). Ideally, as children get older, parents should gradually encourage them to independently complete learning tasks, set goals, monitor their own performance, and confront challenging tasks. Of course, parents should support their children through these tasks, but increasingly relinquish their own control and encourage their children to take more responsibility for working on these tasks independently (Hong et al., 2015).

**Achievement Goal Orientation and Mindset**

Goal orientation, an important component of motivation, refers to the underlying reasons why students engage in their schoolwork and achievement behavior (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). Specifically, motivational theorists believe that there are two contrasting goal orientations that represent different perceptions of success and reasons for approaching and engaging in achievement activity: mastery goal orientation and performance goal orientation (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). While these orientations have different underlying goals that drive achievement behavior, it is important to note that they are not mutually exclusive constructs. Students likely have varying levels of both mastery and performance orientations at any given time and these levels can change depending on the context (Ames, 1992; Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). For example, a student may have a high mastery- and low performance-goal orientation for math-related tasks, but a low mastery- and high performance-goal orientation for English-related tasks.

The primary objective underlying mastery goal orientations is developing competence and mastering information and skills (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). This desire for developing
competence guides achievement-related behavior and task engagement (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). For example, students with high levels of mastery goal orientations are likely to ask meaningful questions, remain engaged in class activities, and devote time to studying or practicing related content and skills. Goal orientation theory is a bit nuanced in that there are thought to be two types of mastery goal orientations. One type is mastery-approach orientation (Cury, Elliot, Da Fonseca, & Moller, 2006). This includes students who approach activities with the goal of completely mastering the task or learning the content. The second mastery orientation is mastery-avoidance orientation, which includes students who approach activities with the goal of not missing any important information or any opportunity to learn more (Cury et al., 2006).

Multiple positive outcomes have been associated with mastery goal orientations. Specifically, students who report a mastery-orientation typically demonstrate high levels of persistence and adaptive coping mechanisms when faced with challenges (Elliot & Dweck, 1988). These students also are less likely to give up when encountering difficulty and strategize to overcome academic challenges. Mastery orientation has also been related to increased self-regulated learning and solution-oriented self-instruction (Elliot & Dweck 1988; Graham & Golan, 1991; Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). Further, mastery goal orientation has been associated with intrinsic motivation, which in turn promotes sustained engagement in a task or activity across time (Cury et al., 2006).

A mastery goal orientation has also been linked with a growth intelligence mindset (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Haimovitz & Dweck, 2016). Haimovitz and Dweck (2016) describe a growth mindset as the belief that competence can develop over time through practice and effort, in contrast to a fixed mindset, which is the belief that intelligence is innate and cannot be changed with effort. The type of intelligence mindset students possess is likely associated with
their motivation and learning. Students with a growth mindset believe that they can develop their intelligence through hard work, the right strategies, and good instruction (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2016). These students may learn and achieve more due to their increased efforts and perseverance when faced with difficulty (Elliot & Dweck, 1988).

Performance goal orientation stems from a desire to demonstrate competence (Ames, 1992). Whereas mastery-goal-oriented students desire to fully understand content, performance-goal-oriented students have the desire to achieve high grades and/or demonstrate their competence to others (Elliot & Dweck, 1988). Elliot and Dweck (1988) suggested that the most important goal of performance-oriented students is sustaining the impression that they have high ability and avoiding the impression of low ability. Performance goal orientation has been associated with maladaptive behavior cognition, and affect in students, especially with tasks involving challenge or difficulty (Ames, 1992; Elliot & Dweck, 1988). Performance-oriented students are more likely to be extrinsically motivated, seek feedback that flatters them, and view errors or failure on challenging tasks as signs of incompetency (Ames 1992; Cury, 2006).

As with mastery goal orientations, there are two types of performance goal orientations. A performance-approach orientation entails seeking opportunities to demonstrate one’s competence relative to other people. More specifically, students with performance approach goals strive to do better than others and seek out opportunities that showcase their high ability (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). A performance-avoidance orientation entails seeking opportunities that will preserve the impression that one is competent. Students with performance avoidance goals want to avoid looking incompetent (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). Both types of performance goal orientation are focused on protecting one’s image and demonstrating competence. More negative outcomes have been found for students with a performance-
avoidance orientation compared to students with performance-approach orientation (Kaplan and Maehr, 2007). Specifically, low self-efficacy, increased anxiety, avoidance of help-seeking, self-handicapping strategies, and low grades have been associated with performance-avoidance goals (Urdan, Ryan, Anderman, & Gheen, 2002).

Students with a performance goal orientation are more likely to have a fixed intelligence mindset (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Haimovitz & Dweck, 2016). Those who endorse a fixed mindset believe that they were born with a certain amount of intelligence that cannot be changed even after more practice or effort (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2016). Students with a fixed mindset may doubt their ability, stop trying, and achieve less when faced with difficulty (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2016). Students who have a fixed mindset do not see an increase in effort, change in strategy, or engagement with instruction as meaningful ways to overcome difficulty. Parent views of failure (i.e., their own mindset) can predict a child’s fixed or growth intelligence mindset (Haimovitz and Dweck, 2016). Parents who engage in helicopter parenting behavior attempt to prevent their child from experiencing failure altogether, which prevents their children from making the connections between failing, learning from the mistake, trying again, and then achieving success.

**Helicopter Parenting and College Students**

In addition to being associated with lower levels of coping and problem-solving skills, helicopter parenting has also been associated with decreased academic achievement during emerging adulthood, such as lower grades, GPA, and academic motivation (Luebbe, Mancini, Kiel, Spangler, Semlak, and Fussner, 2018; Schiffrin et al., 2014; Schiffrin & Liss, 2017). Further, helicopter parenting has been associated with less adaptive decision making in young adults (Luebbe, et al., 2018). Specifically, in one study, helicopter parenting was associated with
college students having a more dependent, avoidant, and less rational decision-making style (Luebbe et al., 2018). When parental over-involvement occurs, it can result in college students being over-reliant on their parent to complete tasks or resolve challenges for them (Luebbe et al., 2018). In academics, this can result in a parent doing homework and projects for their child.

While there is minimal research examining the associations among helicopter parenting, goal orientations, and intelligence mindsets in college students, it is plausible that the three variables are related. In one study that focused on helicopter parenting and college students’ academic motivation, Schiffrin and Liss (2017) examined both self-determination theory and goal orientation theory. They found that both parent- and child-reported helicopter parenting behaviors were positively correlated with performance-approach orientation and performance avoidance orientation for young adults (Schiffrin & Liss, 2017). In other words, performance goal orientations increased as reported helicopter parenting behaviors increased. While Schiffrin & Liss (2017) did not examine intelligence mindset, their study revealed a link between helicopter parenting and goal orientation.

**Current Study**

It is important for students to experience challenges, be open to failures, and use failures effectively during their educational experiences (Schiffrin & Liss, 2017). Students who have mastery goal orientations are thought to be more willing to embrace challenge while at the same time endorsing a growth mindset. In other words, these students don’t shy away from learning challenges and understand that repeated efforts after confronted with failures will likely lead to success (Elliot & Dweck, 1988; Cury et al., 2006; Graham & Golan, 1991). On the other hand, students with performance goal orientations are thought to be less willing to embrace challenge and likely to endorse a fixed mindset. In other words, these students avoid learning challenges
for fear of appearing incompetent and tend to believe that competence or intelligence is something that is innate as opposed to something that is developed through increased effort. Since helicopter parenting involves preventing children from experiencing failures, it is plausible that adolescents and young adults who have experienced helicopter parenting would be more likely to endorse performance-oriented goals and a fixed intelligence mindset given their limited experience with challenges. The current study seeks to explore the associations among helicopter parenting, goal orientations, and intelligence mindsets in a sample of college students.

**Research Questions**

1. What are college students’ reported experiences with helicopter parenting?
2. To what extent do college students endorse growth and fixed intelligence mindsets?
3. To what extent do college students endorse performance and mastery achievement goal orientations?
4. What are the relationships among helicopter parenting, intelligence mindsets, and goal orientations?
Method

Participants

Participants included 216 college students at a regional public university in the Midwest. Eight participants did not complete the survey so their data was removed from further analyses. In the final sample of 208 participants, 169 (81.3%) identified as female, and 4 (1.9%) participants indicated they preferred not to respond. 35 (16.9%) identified as male. Mean age of participants was 19.84 years (SD=1.5). Most of the participants (87%) identified as White/Caucasian, 1% as African American/Black, 6.8% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% as Hispanic, and 3.9% as Other. Nearly half (44.9%) of the participants were first-year students, 20.8% were second-year students, 17.9% third year, 11.6% fourth-year, and 4.3% were fifth-year or more.

Measures

Demographics. A demographic survey was created for this study and assessed participant age, biological sex, race/ethnicity, and year in school.

Helicopter parenting. The Helicopter Parenting Instrument assessed participants’ typical interactions with parents (Odenweller 2014; see Appendix A). The Helicopter Parenting Instrument was designed for and developed among college-aged students. This scale included 15 Likert-style items that were rated from 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree (α = .86). Sample statements included "My parent considers oneself a bad parent when he or she does not step in and ‘save’ me from difficulty” and "My parent insists that I keep him or her informed of my daily activities.”

Intelligence mindset. The Intelligence Mindset Scale assessed each participant’s endorsements of fixed and growth intelligence mindsets (Dweck, 2000; see Appendix B). This
scale included eight Likert-style items that were rated from 1 strongly disagree to 6 strongly agree. One sample item that assessed fixed mindset was “Your intelligence is something about you that you can't really change very much”. One sample item that assessed growth mindset was “You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.” Two intelligence mindset subscales were created, namely a fixed mindset subscale (α = .74) and a growth mindset subscale (α = .89).

**Goal orientation.** The *Achievement Goal Questionnaire - Revised* assessed how much each participant endorsed a performance goal orientation and a mastery goal orientation (Elliot & McGregor 2001; see Appendix C). This scale included 12 Likert-style items that were rated from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree (α = .86). For example, one item that assessed performance goal orientation was “My aim is to perform well relative to other students.” One item that assessed mastery goal orientation was “My aim is to avoid learning less than I possibly could.” Four goal orientation subscales were created, namely a mastery-approach subscale (α = .79), a mastery-avoidance subscale (α = .68), a performance-approach subscale (α = .81), and a performance-avoidance subscale (α = .81).

**Procedures**

The Psychology Department online research participation system (SONA) was used to recruit participants and direct them to the online Qualtrics survey. Because SONA is primarily used by the psychology department, professors in the Education and Communication Sciences departments were contacted and asked if they would share the study link with their classes. Participants may have earned extra class credit through participation in this survey by professor discretion. After completing initial demographic questions, participants completed the
intelligence mindset, goal orientation, and helicopter parenting scales. Data was collected during the 2019-2020 academic year.

Results

Research Question 1

What are college students’ reported experiences with helicopter parenting?

A helicopter parenting score was calculated by averaging the total score for the Helicopter Parenting Instrument. Scores on the Helicopter Parenting Instrument ranged from 1.33 to 6.27 (M= 2.95, SD=1.0). Most students (72%) indicated that they were thinking of their mother when reporting on experienced helicopter parenting behaviors, compared to participants who were thinking of their father (13.2%) or both parents (14.6%). A one-way ANOVA was used to determine if there was a difference in experienced helicopter parenting between participants who identified their mother, their father, or both parents as the parent(s) they were thinking of when responding to the survey questions. There were no statistically significant differences in levels of helicopter parenting between participants who identified their mother (M=2.95, SD =1.00), their father (M=3.00, SD=1.10) or both parents (M=2.84, SD=.96) as the parent(s) they were thinking of when responding to the survey questions, F (2, 202) = .230, p < .795.

An independent samples t-test was used to analyze whether there were sex differences for reported experiences with helicopter parenting. There were no significant differences between males (M =3.0, SD =.95) and females (M =2.95, SD =1.01) for reported experiences with helicopter parenting, t (202) = -.279, p < .782.
A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze participant ethnicity with helicopter parenting scores. Results suggested that participants’ ethnicity was significant for level of helicopter parenting, $F(4, 200) = 5.278, p < .001$. Post-hoc analyses using the Tukey post hoc criterion for significance indicated that helicopter parenting was significantly higher for participants who identified as Asian/Pacific Islander ($M=3.94, SD=.76$) than for those who identified as White/Caucasian ($M=2.84, SD=.97$).

A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze participant class level with helicopter parenting scores. There were no significant differences in helicopter parenting for participants’ class level; $F(4, 200) = .345, p < .848$. First year ($M=3.00, SD=1.02$), second year ($M=2.92, SD=1.00$), third year ($M=2.80, SD=.93$), fourth year ($M=3.07, SD=1.15$), and fifth year or more ($M=2.90, SD=.83$) reported similar levels of experienced helicopter parenting.

Research Question 2

To what extent do college students endorse growth and fixed intelligence mindsets?

Scores on the Intelligence Mindset Scale ranged from 1.5 to 4.63 ($M=3.02, S=.42$). Two intelligence mindset scores were calculated, namely a fixed mindset score ($M =2.50, SD =.80$) and a growth mindset score ($M=4.15, SD=.98$). These scores were calculated by averaging survey items that assessed each respective mindset.

An independent samples t-test was used to analyze whether there were differences in endorsement of fixed mindset between males and females. Results indicated that there were no significant differences in endorsement of fixed mindset between males and females, $t(202) = .514, p <.538$. An independent samples t-test was used to analyze whether there were differences in endorsement of growth mindset between males and females. There were also no significant
differences in endorsement of growth mindset between males and females, $t (203) = .315, p < .753$.

One-way ANOVAs were used to analyze whether there were differences in endorsement of mindset between ethnic groups. Results indicated that there were no significant differences in endorsement of fixed mindset; $F (4, 200) = .970, p < .924$, or growth mindset; $F (4, 201) = .226, p < .924$, between ethnic groups.

One-way ANOVAs were used to analyze whether there were differences in endorsement of mindset between participants’ class level. Results indicated that there were no significant differences in endorsement of fixed mindset between class levels; $F (4, 200) = .770, p < .546$. There was also no significant difference in endorsement of growth mindset between class levels; $F (4, 201) = 1.710, p < .149$.

Research Question 3

To what extent do college students endorse performance and mastery achievement goal orientations?

Scores on the Achievement Goal Questionnaire ranged from 1.83 to 3.68 ($M=3.68$, $SD=.66$). Four achievement goal scores were calculated, namely a mastery-approach score ($M = 4.0, SD = .70$), a mastery-avoidance score ($M=3.3, SD=.91$), a performance-approach score ($M=3.7, SD=.87$), and a performance-avoidance score ($M=3.7, SD=.96$). These scores were calculated by averaging survey items that assessed each respective mindset.

Independent samples t-tests were used to analyze whether there were differences in goal orientation between males and females. Results indicated there were no differences in mastery-approach orientation, $t (200) = 1.628, p < .105$, mastery-avoidance orientation, $t (201) = .842, p < .401$, between sexes. There were also no differences in performance-approach orientation,
$t(201) = .265, p < .791$, between sexes.

A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze whether there were differences in endorsement of goal orientation between ethnic groups. Results indicated that there were no significant differences in endorsement of mastery-approach $F(4, 198) = .256, p < .906$, or mastery-avoidance, $F(4, 199) = 1.867, p < .118$, between ethnic groups. There were also no significant differences in endorsement of performance-approach, $F(4, 200) = .206, p < .935$, or performance-avoidance, $F(4, 199) = .458, p < .767$, between ethnic groups.

One-way ANOVAs were used to analyze whether there were differences in endorsement of achievement goal orientation among students’ class levels. There were no differences in achievement goal orientation across class level for mastery-approach orientation, $F(4, 198) = 1.672, p < .158$, mastery-avoidance orientation, $F(4, 199) = 1.257, p < .288$, performance-approach orientation, $F(4, 200) = .967, p < .427$, or performance-avoidance orientation, $F(4, 199) = .408, p < .803$.

**Research Question 4**

**What are the relationships among helicopter parenting, intelligence mindsets, and achievement goal orientations?**

A bivariate correlational analysis was computed to analyze the relationships between helicopter parenting, mindsets, and goal orientations (See Table 1). Results indicated that a fixed mindset was negatively associated with mastery-approach, $r(202) = -.172, p < .014$, and mastery-avoidance orientations, $r(203) = -.182, p < .009$. There was no statistically significant relationship between fixed mindset and performance-approach, $r(204) = -.051, p < .467$ or performance-avoidance orientations, $r(203) = -.125, p < .076$. 
Results indicated that growth mindset was positively associated with mastery-approach, $r(203) = .189, p < .007$, and mastery-avoidance orientations, $r(204) = .196, p < .005$. There were also positive associations between growth mindset and performance-approach, $r(205) = .173, p < .013$, and performance-avoidance orientations, $r(204) = .182, p < .009$.

Results suggested that there was not a statistically significant relationship between helicopter parenting and performance-approach, $r(204) = -.087, p < .216$, or performance-avoidance, $r(203) = .028, p < .695$. However, there was a statistically significant relationship between helicopter parenting and mastery-approach, $r(202) = -.160, p < .023$. There was not a statistically significant relationship between helicopter parenting and mastery-avoidance, $r(203) = -.107, p < .127$.

Results suggested that there was not a statistically significant relationship between helicopter parenting and fixed intelligence mindset, $r(204) = .110, p < .118$. There was also not a statistically significant relationship between helicopter parenting and growth intelligence mindset, $r(205) = .027, p < .704$. 
Table 1. Correlations Among Helicopter Parenting, Mindset, and Achievement Goal Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fixed Mindset</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.56**</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>-0.172*</td>
<td>-0.182**</td>
<td>-0.051</td>
<td>-0.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Growth Mindset</td>
<td>-0.56**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.189**</td>
<td>0.196**</td>
<td>0.173*</td>
<td>0.182**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Helicopter Parenting</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.160*</td>
<td>-0.107</td>
<td>-0.087</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mastery Approach</td>
<td>-0.172*</td>
<td>0.189**</td>
<td>-0.160*</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.392**</td>
<td>0.524**</td>
<td>0.208**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mastery Avoidance</td>
<td>-0.182**</td>
<td>0.196**</td>
<td>-0.107</td>
<td>0.392**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.347**</td>
<td>0.415**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Performance Approach</td>
<td>-0.051</td>
<td>0.173*</td>
<td>-0.087</td>
<td>0.524**</td>
<td>0.347**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.691**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Performance Avoidance</td>
<td>-0.125</td>
<td>0.182**</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.208**</td>
<td>0.415**</td>
<td>0.691**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships among helicopter parenting, achievement goal orientations, and intelligence mindset in college students.
On average, the participants in this study reported low levels of experienced helicopter parenting on the *Helicopter Parenting Instrument*. Given various concerns with helicopter parenting (e.g., inhibited autonomy development, less experience with challenges), it is encouraging that participants reported low levels of experience with helicopter parenting. This low level of reported helicopter parenting is consistent with previous research on young adults’ experiences with helicopter parenting (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Schiffrin, Liss, Miles-McLean, Geary, Erchull, & Tashner, 2014). This could be explained by the increased levels of independence and decreased dependence on parents that young adults typically experience throughout their college careers. However, it is possible that participants were impacted by social desirability and minimized their reported experiences with helicopter parenting. In other words, it is possible that participants understand the importance of being independent as they reach their young adulthood years and did not want to acknowledge or disclose the extent of their parents’ involvement in their lives.

There were no significant differences between males and females in experienced helicopter parenting, which is consistent with previous research (Kouros, Pruitt, Ekas, Kiriaki, & Sunderland, 2016). Helicopter parenting measures are typically phrased in ways that either capture young adults’ experiences with their mother’s helicopter parenting behavior (e.g., “My mother regularly wants me to call or text her to let her know where I am”), or are neutral (e.g., “My parent regularly wants me to call or text them to let them know where I am”). This study included one question at the end of the survey to clarify which parent the participant was primarily thinking of when reporting on experienced helicopter parenting. This study found that a majority of students indicated that they were primarily thinking of their mother when reporting on experienced helicopter parenting (72%). However, there were no significant differences in
experienced helicopter parenting between participants who identified their mother, father, or both parents as the primary parent they were thinking of.

There was a difference between racial/ethnic groups and experienced helicopter parenting. Experienced helicopter parenting was higher for students that identified as Asian/Pacific Islander than for those that identified as White/Caucasian. This difference could potentially be due to cultural differences between parenting styles and associated outcomes. For example, authoritarian parenting style has been associated with decreased well-being among Europeans and Americans, including low self-esteem, increased chance of developing internalizing symptoms, and low sense of autonomy and independence (Lamborn et al., 1991; Pinquart & Gerke, 2019). In contrast, aspects of authoritarian parenting style behavior and increased parent involvement is considered a typical part of parenting in Chinese and Chinese American culture (Huang, Cheah, Lamb, & Zhou, 2017). This has been associated with a variety of positive outcomes for Chinese and Chinese American children, such as increased academic performance, including self-regulated learning, and increased well-being (Chao, 1994; Huang, et al., 2017). Participants in this study were sampled from a university that has a strong international/exchange student program and, while information on international/exchange student status was not collected in this study, there is a chance that some participants in this study were international exchange students.

Individuals who believe intelligence is fixed across a lifetime do not see an increase in effort, change in strategy, or engagement with instruction as meaningful ways to overcome difficulty (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2016). Students participating in this study reported an overall low to moderate amount of endorsement of fixed mindset. Individuals who endorse a growth mindset believe that their intelligence can change over time and increase through hard work, the
right strategies, and good instruction (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2016). Students participating in this study reported a moderate to high level of growth mindset endorsement. If participant reports were not impacted by social desirability, it is hopeful that there was a higher endorsement of growth mindset than fixed mindset. However, the low to moderate endorsement of fixed mindset indicates that there is still room for participants to improve in moving towards a growth mindset. 

As young adults enter and continue through their college career, they will likely encounter challenges and difficulty that they have not previously experienced. College students that endorse a growth mindset will be more likely to increase their efforts when faced with difficulty and are likely to learn and achieve more due to their perseverance (Elliot & Dweck, 1988).

Students who endorse a performance goal orientation have the desire to appear competent to others, and are more likely to be extrinsically motivated, seek feedback that flatters them, and view errors or failure as signs of incompetency (Ames 1992; Cury, 2006). Individuals with a mastery goal orientation have the desire to develop competence and master information and skills (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). Students participating in this study reported a moderate to high level of both performance-approach and performance-avoidance endorsement. This indicated that there is still room for growth for participants to develop a more mastery goal orientation overall. Students reported a moderate to high amount of mastery-approach orientation and a moderate amount of mastery-avoidance orientation. Previous studies examining associations among helicopter parenting and goal orientation have found that college students can endorse a moderate to high level of both performance and mastery goal orientations (Schiffrin & Liss, 2017). This may be explained by the research supporting that performance and mastery orientations are not mutually exclusive and can be experienced in combination (Ames, 1992; Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). For example, if a student is on the math team at school, they may want
to improve their math skills because they enjoy math, which would align with mastery orientation. The student may also want to look skilled to their teachers and teammates, which aligns with performance approach orientation. Additionally, they may also want to avoid looking like a failure in front of their teacher and team, which aligns with performance avoidance orientation.

Previous research suggests that students who have a performance goal orientation are more likely to endorse a fixed intelligence mindset and less likely to endorse a growth mindset (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Haimovitz & Dweck, 2016). The current study found a negative relationship among fixed mindset and both mastery-approach and mastery-avoidance orientations. As expected, when student endorsement of fixed mindset increased, their endorsement of both mastery-goal orientations decreased. Contrary to previous research, there was no relationship found between endorsement of a fixed mindset and performance-approach or performance-avoidance goal orientation. Participants in this study reported an overall low to moderate amount of fixed intelligence mindset ($M=2.5$) on the 6-point Intelligence Mindset Scale. In contrast, participants in this study reported an overall moderate to high amount of both performance-approach ($M=3.7$) and performance-avoidance ($M= 3.7$) orientation on the 5-point Achievement Goal Questionnaire. The lack of significant relationship between fixed mindset and either of the performance goal orientations may be due to the overall lower amount of fixed intelligence mindset reported by participants.

Previous research suggests that students who have a mastery goal orientation are more likely to have higher endorsement of growth intelligence mindset and lower endorsement of fixed mindset (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Haimovitz & Dweck, 2016). There was a positive relationship between growth mindset and both mastery-approach and mastery-avoidance. As
expected, when participant endorsement of growth mindset increased, the endorsement of a
mastery goal orientations also increased. However, there was an unexpected positive relationship
between growth mindset and both performance-approach and performance-avoidance. As
participant endorsement of growth mindset increased, performance goal orientations also
increased. Participants in this study reported similar levels of both mastery-approach
orientations, performance-approach orientations, and growth mindset. The positive relationships
found between growth mindset and all achievement goal orientations may be due to the similar
overall levels of endorsed goal orientations and growth mindset reported by participants. As
mentioned, college students can endorse a moderate to high level of both performance and
mastery goal orientations (Schiffrin & Liss, 2017), as performance and mastery orientations are
not mutually exclusive constructs.

Previous research has found that students who experience helicopter parenting are more
likely to have higher endorsement of performance orientations and lower endorsement of
mastery orientation (Schiffrin et al., 2014; Schiffrin & Liss, 2017). Consistent with this research,
there was a negative relationship between experienced helicopter parenting and mastery-
approach orientation. As experienced helicopter parenting increased, endorsement of mastery-
approach orientation decreased. However, there was no relationship found for helicopter
parenting and performance-approach or performance-avoidance orientation.

Parents who engage in helicopter parenting behavior strive to prevent their children from
experiencing failure, which limits the opportunities for their child to experience failing, learning
from their mistakes, and working to overcome those mistakes (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011. It is
hypothesized adolescents and young adults who have experienced helicopter parenting may be
more likely to endorse a fixed intelligence mindset given their limited experience with
overcoming failure. It was hypothesized that higher levels of experienced helicopter parenting report by college students would be related to higher levels of fixed mindset. However, the current study found no correlation among experienced helicopter parenting and growth or fixed mindset. The unexpected result could be due to participants reporting an overall low amount of helicopter parenting in this study.

**Limitations and Future Research**

There are a few limitations to the present study. First, the data for this study was collected through self-report measures. Self-report measures may reflect participants’ desires to show themselves in a more positive light due to social desirability, rather than rate themselves honestly. Helicopter parenting and its associated negative outcomes for adolescents and young adults have been increasingly portrayed in the media, such as news reports, parenting magazines and websites, and social media, and is often portrayed in a negative manner. The term “Helicopter Parenting” was used in the title of the online survey. Consequently, there is a chance that participants who have some knowledge of the negative associations of helicopter parenting under-rated their experiences with helicopter parenting and parent involvement in order to not paint themselves or their parents in a negative light. Second, this study assessed helicopter parenting, which is only one type of overparenting, and namely a parenting behavior that entails excessive involvement and sheltering children from challenges. Future research could assess helicopter parenting in addition to other, more specific forms of overparenting, including parenting strategies that involve placing excessive demands on children and/or parenting strategies that involve over-valuing children by prioritizing children’s needs above parents’ needs and scheduling all household activities around a child.
The current study included students from one mid-sized university in the Midwest, and the participant demographics lacked racial and ethnic diversity. A large majority of participants identified as female and White/Caucasian, which could have significantly influenced the findings of this study. This also limits the generalizability of results to broader populations. The study of helicopter parenting has been primarily done with participants of White, middle-class backgrounds (Schiffrin & Liss, 2017). There was one significant ethnic difference found in experienced helicopter parenting between those that identified as White/Caucasian and Asian/Pacific Islander. This warrants future research with a more diverse sample and a variety of colleges/schools, which will also increase the generalizability and reliability of results. Additionally, future research should expand the age range of participants to include adolescents, as this is a critical developmental period for building skills in independence and autonomy.
References


Appendix A

Helicopter Parenting Instrument

DIRECTIONS: The following questions ask about your interactions with your parent(s). Please answer each item with your primary parent in mind. Remember there are no right or wrong answers, just answer as accurately as possible. Use the scale below to answer the questions.

1. My parent tries to make all of my major decisions.
2. My parent discourages me from making decisions that he or she disagrees with.
3. If my parent doesn't do certain things for me (e.g., making doctor appointments, doing laundry), they will not get done.
4. My parent overreacts when I encounter a negative experience.
5. My parent doesn't intervene in my life unless he or she notices me experiencing physical or emotional trauma. *
6. Sometimes my parent invests more time and energy into my projects than I do.
7. My parent considers oneself a bad parent when he or she does not step in and "save" me from difficulty.
8. My parent feels like a bad parent when I make poor choices.
9. My parent voices his or her opinion about my personal relationships.
10. My parent considers himself or herself a good parent when he or she solves problems for me.
11. My parent insists that I keep him or her informed of my daily activities.
12. When I have to go somewhere (e.g., doctor appointment, the bank) my parent accompanies me.
13. When I am going through a difficult situation, my parent always tries to fix it.
14. My parent encourages me to take risks and step outside of my comfort zone. *

15. My parent think it is his or her job to shield me from adversity.

Response Scale: Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7)

*Reversed Item
Intelligence Mindset Scale

DIRECTIONS: This questionnaire has been designed to investigate ideas about intelligence.

There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your ideas. Using the scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1. You can learn new things, but you can't really change your basic thoughts.
2. Your intelligence is something about you that you can't really change very much.
3. You have a certain amount of intelligence and you really can't do much to change it.
4. No matter who you are, you can significantly change your intelligence level.
5. To be honest, you can't really change how intelligent you are.
6. You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.
7. No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.
8. You can change even your basic intelligence level considerably.

Response Scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Mostly Disagree, Mostly Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

Fixed Mindset Items: 1, 2, 3, 5

Growth Mindset Items: 4, 6, 7, 8
Achievement Goal Questionnaire – Revised

DIRECTIONS: This questionnaire has been designed to investigate ideas about motivation. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your ideas. Using the scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

1. My aim is to completely master the material presented in class.
2. I am striving to do well compared to other students.
3. My goal is to learn as much as possible.
4. My aim is to perform well relative to other students.
5. My aim is to avoid learning less than I possibly could.
6. My goal is to avoid performing poorly compared to others.
7. I am striving to understand the content as thoroughly as possible.
8. My goal is to perform better than the other students.
9. My goal is to avoid learning less than it is possible to learn.
10. I am striving to avoid performing worse than others.
11. I am striving to avoid an incomplete understanding of the course material.
12. My aim is to avoid doing worse than other students.

Response Scale: Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)

Mastery-approach Items: 1, 3, and 7
Mastery-avoidance Items: 5, 9, and 11
Performance-approach Items: 2, 4, and 8
Performance-avoidance Items: 6, 10, and 12