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Summer 2021 FURSCA Experience

This summer I have had the opportunity to conduct research with Dr. Andrea Francis and Dr. Mareike Wieth on helicopter parenting, grit, and COVID-19 behaviors. In the past I have had the chance to work with all of these variables and was interested in looking at all of them in one study. The goal of my work during the Summer FURSCA program was to answer the question: is there a relationship between helicopter parenting, grit, and COVID-19 rule following behaviors?

During my first two years at Albion College I was involved in the Student Research Partners (SRP) Program. The focus of my research during this program was helicopter parenting. Findings of this research have recently been published in the Journal of Child and Family Studies (Carr et al. 2021a). Additionally, previous research has found a relationship between helicopter parenting and grit in physician's assistant graduate students further connecting my interest variables (Francis et al., 2020). There has also been much discourse about the idea of positive and negative outcomes of helicopter parenting (Kelly at al., 2017; Luebbe et al., 2016).

Throughout a Spring 2021 semester study I ran, we found a positive relationship between grit and COVID-19 rule following behaviors in Albion College students (Carr et al. 2021b). This means that the more gritty these Albion College students were, the more likely they were to follow COVID-19 safety guidelines. We presented these findings at the Elkin Isaac Research Symposium with the plans to conduct a similar study to this looking at a national sample and compare and contrast results.

In total I was able to collect 48 viable participants for this study via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) which is an online crowdsourcing marketplace where individuals can partake in surveys. These participants were ages 18 to 25 and currently enrolled in a college in the US. Statistical analysis found several significant correlations. Our first correlation found that there is a positive correlation between grit and rule following meaning, that as grit increases so do rule following behaviors. From this we were able to see that the more gritty one is, the more likely they were to follow the COVID-19 safety rules.

Next we looked at grit and dimensions of helicopter parenting. The autonomy limiting dimension of helicopter parentings has been seen to lead to negative outcomes while the information seeking dimension has been seen to lead to more positive outcomes. This analysis found a negative correlation between grit and the autonomy limiting dimension of helicopter parenting. Analysis of grit and information seeking helicopter parenting found no significant correlation. The findings of this analysis supports the idea that autonomy limiting helicopter parenting is a negative dimension because it has a negative relationship with grit while information seeking is a positive dimension because it has no relationship with grit.

Analysis of rule following and helicopter parenting found a negative correlation. This means that the more helicopter parenting one experiences, the less COVID-19 rules they are seen to follow. Interestingly, it did not make a difference if the helicopter parenting one experienced was positive or negative; all helicopter parenting behaviors are negatively correlated to rule following.

This study has allowed me to better understand the complex relationships between grit, helicopter parenting, and COVID-19 rule following behaviors. I believe that these findings could help in the understanding of college students’ behaviors during COVID-19 and possibly assist in developing more effective and personalized safety guideline implementations for students.

Going forward I have plans to conduct more analysis on my data. Analysis up to this point has found individual relationships between all of the variables; however, we would like to know if all of these variables are related which requires further analysis and statistics. I also have plans to begin work on my senior thesis and to present my research at the Elkin Isaac Research Symposium. I really enjoyed my involvement in this program. It allowed me to dedicate more time to my research than I would normally have during the academic year. Being able to focus solely on research gave me the chance to learn more about the process and look more deeply into my specific interests in this field.

Thank you to my mentors for assisting me every step of the way. Thank you to the FURSCA committee for allowing me to have this wonderful opportunity, and a huge thank you to the Bethune Fellows Student Research Endowment for sponsoring and supporting my research!