Gender Differences in Growth Mindset, Group Identity, and Social Skills
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Abstract
Promoting a growth academic mindset among high school students is associated with numerous positive life outcomes including overcoming obstacles, cultivating grit, taking risks, celebrating personal growth, and so on. This study specifically focuses on understanding the ways social skills and social identity relate to mindsets. Additionally, it is not known if these relations differ between male and female students. Gender differences may exist because of their different socialization process, resulting in varying levels of academic mindsets. Based on a cohort of students from one high school in urban New Jersey (n=285), gender differences in the relations among social skills, sense of social identity, and their levels of academic mindsets were examined. Preliminary analysis indicates female students report a marginally significant higher levels of growth mindsets than males (mean = 2.69, sd = 0.28 vs. mean = 2.61, sd = 0.30; p ≤ .10). For female students, the level of social skills is significantly correlated with their social group identity (r = 0.23, p ≤ .05). Group identity is significantly correlated with their mindset (r = 0.24, p ≤ .05). For male students, only the level of social skills is correlated with their group identity (r = 0.36, p ≤ .01). Additional work is ongoing to understand the relations among mindsets, social skills and social identity. Implications for educators in promoting student’s growth mindsets will be discussed.

Keywords: gender differences, growth mindset, group membership, social skills, high schoolers.
Introduction and Overall Model

Research highlights the importance of young people’s growth mindsets, social skills, and group identification in promoting positive youth development. However, to date, no study has looked at the interrelations among these factors among urban 9th grade students and how it may differ by gender.

- **Growth Mindset**: Belief that abilities can be nurtured through dedication and hard work, originated from psychologist Carol Dweck (Dweck 2006).
- **Social skills**: Can promote a growth mindset and are likely associated with a positive group identity with peers.
- **Gender intensification theory**: The relations between social skills, group membership, and growth mindset may differ between males and females.

Results and Findings

**Pearson Correlation** Separated by Females and Males

### Females:

- Social Skills → Group Membership: \( r = 0.085, p = 0.458 \)

### Males:

- Social Skills → Group Membership: \( r = 0.085, p = 0.080 \)

Research Question

Do gender differences exist among the interrelations between growth mindset, social skills, and group identity? If so, how does it differ between males and females?

Data

Effective language that paints an understandable and detailed portrayal of the demographics of the population:

One cohort of 9th grade students in an urban New Jersey high school. In this school, 72% of the students are Latinx and 27% African American. A total of 202 students completed the survey which represents 92.1% of the freshman class. There were more male (58.2%) than female (41.8%) participants.

Measures

To measure students' social skills, they completed the Social Skills Improvement Survey, which is based on the Social Skills Improvement System (Gresham and Elliott).

The survey consists of 75 questions, measuring different aspects of social skills such as communication, cooperation, and self-control. This measure has been empirically validated among high school students and is a widely used measure of students' social emotional needs.

- **Group membership** is based on 13 questions.
- E.g., “I can trust group members”
- **Growth mindset** is based on 20 questions from Carol Dweck’s scale.
- E.g., “You are a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that”

Method

For each of these domains in the survey, the sum score was first calculated. Subsequently, we applied Pearson correlation on the overall sample to examine the relationships among the three variables. Next, we separated the analyses by males and females.

- **Gender differences can exist** between social skills, group membership, and growth mindset.
- **For male students**, social skills are positively correlated with a growth mindset (r = 0.361) and correlated with group membership. Group membership is not correlated with having a growth mindset.
- **For female students**, all hypothesized relationships are correlated with each other. Social skills are positively correlated with growth mindset (r = 0.254, p = 0.023). Social skills are also positively correlated with group membership (r = 0.034). Group membership is also positively correlated with a growth mindset (r = 0.240).

References

References
