INTRODUCTION

- Sport has many benefits for both children and adults. For example, it seems to positively impact youth and adult health and development (Coakley, 2011).
- Grit, a function of perseverance and passion, is thought to be important to these processes but is understood as an extension of sport participation.
- Yet, there are correlations between grit and a variety of extracurricular activities (Duckworth, 2016).

Research Questions

- Does sport participation help develop grit?
- Do childhood sport experiences shape adults’ grit?
- Do adult sport experiences impact adults’ grit?
- Do changes in sport commitments such as starting or quitting sport participation at different stages of the life course lead to different levels of adults’ grit?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- Duckworth’s theory of grit defines grit as the combination of passion and perseverance. When developed, grit inoculates against stress and enables one to push through challenges and encourage success (Duckworth et al., 2014).
- Specifically, grit helps people to successfully overcome challenges (Duckworth, 2016).
- Sport participation is thought to be a common pathway to develop grit but more information is needed to understand whether this association exists, the extent to which sport participation matter, and the role of grit in sports contexts.

HYPOTHESES

- Adults who participated in organized youth sports while growing up will be more likely to perceive that their athletic experiences positively affected their work ethic.
- Participation in organized youth sports while growing up will be positively related to adults’ grit.
- Adults’ regular sport participation in the past year will be positively associated with adults’ grit.
- Turning points in sport participation will be associated with adults’ grit such that longer durations of sport participation will be positively associated with grit.
- Perceptions of the development of grit in childhood will be positively associated with indicators of adults’ grit.
- Sport participation develops grit beyond respondents’ perceptions of the impact of their childhood sport experiences on their work ethic.

DATA & METHODS

- 2018-2019 National Sports and Society Survey (NSASS) data is used.
- N = 3,993 respondents in the NSASS.
- Descriptive statistic & nested multiple regression analyses were conducted.

RESULTS

- Organized youth sport participation is positively associated with perceptions of athletic experiences in the form of work ethic– which offers a proxy for grit developed through sport in childhood.
- Similarly, there is evidence that organized youth sport participation is positively associated with adults’ grit.
- Yet, it is then revealed that only continual organized youth sport participation is positively associated with adults’ grit.
- Adults’ sport participation is positively associated with adults’ grit.
- Perceptions of the effects of athletic experiences had on work ethics are positively associated with adults’ grit; also, continual organized youth sport participation and adults’ regular sport participation remain positively associated with adults’ grit after controlling these.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the results suggest that sport participation leads to increased levels of grit over the life course. Adults who participated in organized youth sport reported higher levels of grit than those who did not. This is seen throughout the life course, as participation in organized youth sports leads to grittier children (at least according to adults’ retrospective perceptions) and grittier adults. Additionally, adults who participate in sport regularly are grittier than adults who do not.

Future research should include longitudinal data to assess repeated measures of grit and sport participation throughout the life course. This would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how grit develops and changes in connection with sport participation over the life course.

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