



Associations between Organized Activities and Performance Character: A Critical Review

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BACKGROUND

- After-school programs, with their affordances of enriching activities, are well suited to help youth develop performance virtues. For example, the goal-directed activities help promote persistence and strategic thinking. Experiences of team work and bouncing back after failure could foster responsibility and strong work habits (Vandell et al., 2007).
- While there is growing interest in character development among researchers in the field of organized activities, no systemic review has been done summarizing existing research on organized activities and performance character.
- To move forward, researchers need to know the achievements and gaps in current research.

Research goal: Provide a critical review of research on organized activities and performance character.

METHOD

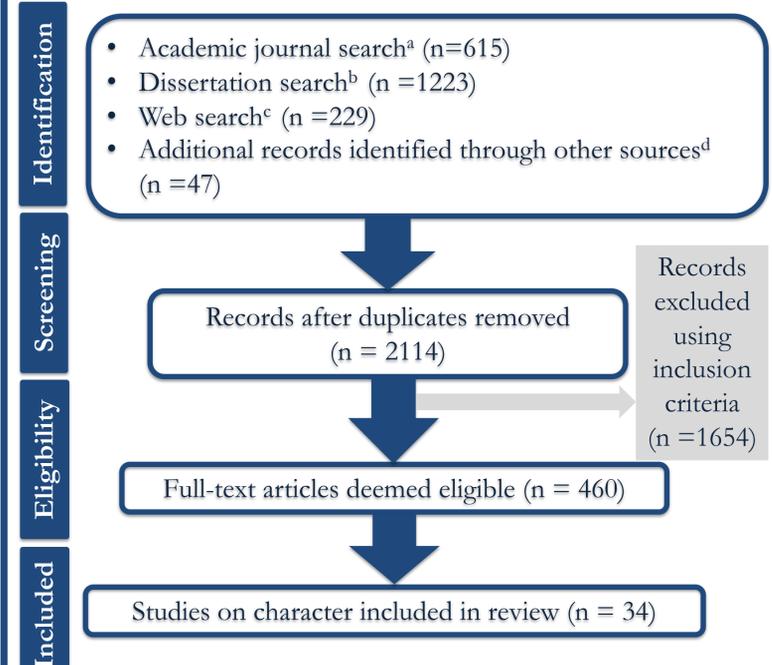
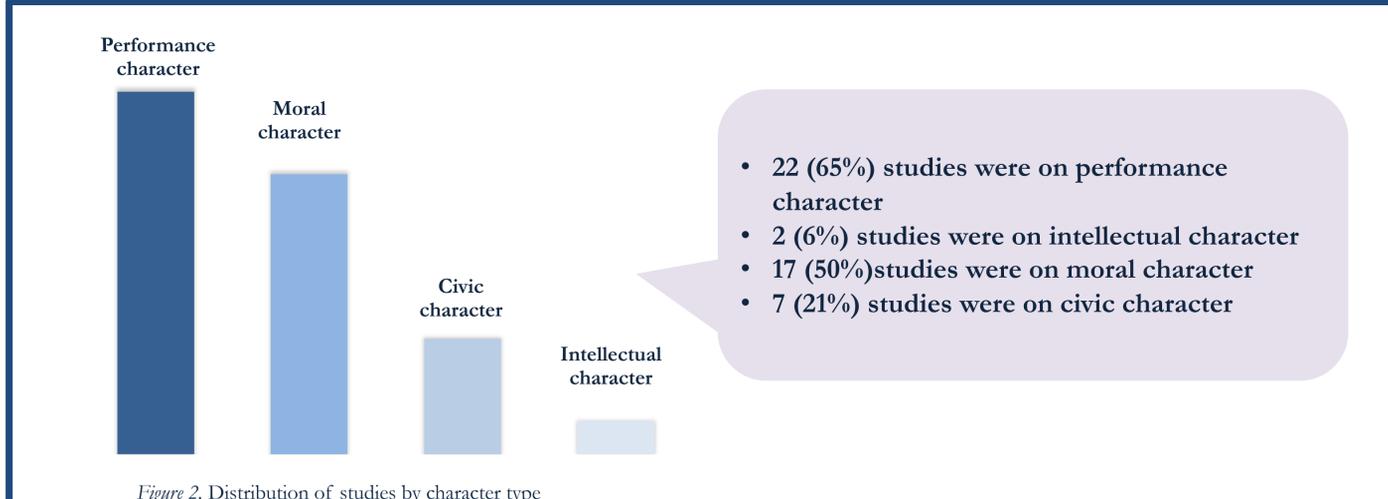
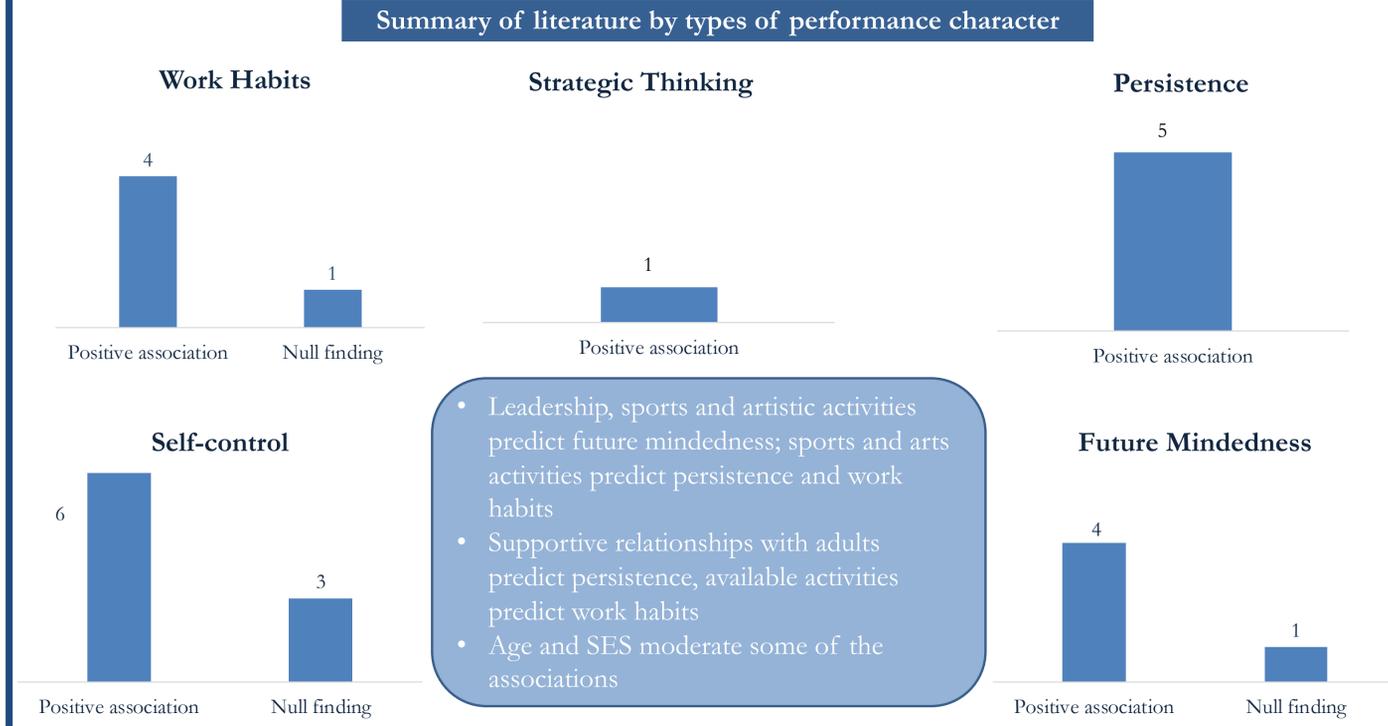
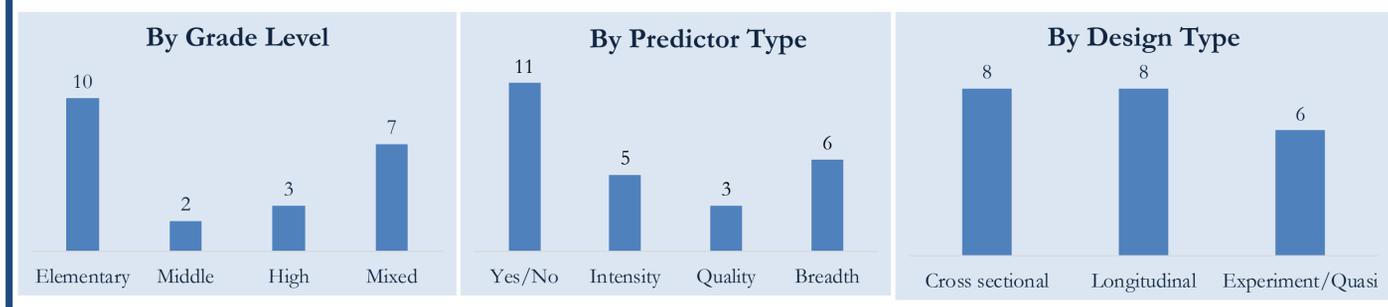


Figure 1. Flow chart of literature search and screening process
Notes. ^aAcademic journal searches were conducted using databases including PsycINFO, Eric, EconLit, and Sociological Abstracts; ^bDissertation searches were conducted using ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I, and Dissertations & Theses @ University of California; ^cReports and evaluations were from organizations including After School Alliance, 21st Century Community Learning Center, Wallace, Mott, NOIST, ExpandedED school, LA's BEST, and SF Beacons; ^dReferences from major review articles and articles recommended by experts.
Studies were included if they examined organized activities, were quantitative, had more than 10 participants ages 6 to 18 years at recruitment.

RESULTS



A Review of Studies on Performance Characters



FINDINGS

- Among the 34 studies examining associations between organized activities and character, over half focused on performance character.
- Most studies on performance character have been done on elementary school students. The most-often used organized activity indicator is Yes/No participation, and program quality is the least-often used activity indicator. Multiple types of study design are represented in existing research.
- While performance character is conceptualized in multiple ways in existing research, self-control is the most often studied performance character, followed by work habits, persistence, and future mindedness.
- In general, research find that organized activities are positively associated with performance character. However, the associations differ across various performance characters, predictors, and sample characteristics.

DISCUSSION

- While previous research has found participation in organized activities is associated with academic gains (for a review, Vandell et al., 2015), fewer studies have examined performance character as outcomes. Considering that performance character is important for individuals to overcome challenges and accomplish tasks in multiple contexts (Baehr, 2017), it is necessary that more research is done to examine how performance character develop in the context of organized activities.
- Research should go beyond using just dichotomized participation variables to examine multiple aspects of activity participation and how they are related with performance character.
- While general positive associations between organized activities and performance character has been found in previous research, little is known about the mechanisms underlying these associations. Therefore, research should examine processes linking participation in organized activities and the development of performance character.
- A theoretical framework is needed to guide more empirical research examining how specific activity indicators are related to specific performance character.

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