

## **Grit and the outdoors: Are first year students impacted by an outdoor experience?**

Carol A Smith, Elon University

Grit is important as a driver of achievement and success, independent of and beyond what talent and intelligence contribute. It is only with effort that talent becomes a skill that leads to success (Duckworth 2016). Participants in the study were enrolled in a First Year Summer Experience, immediately prior to entering university. This cohort participated in a 5-day backpacking course. An open call for participation was made at the time of check in. All but one participant agreed to participate in the study. The participants in the study were similar to the demographic distribution on campus: self-identified as Caucasian; eight men and fifteen women; ranging from 17 to 19 years old. The student sample was not randomly generated, it was consistent with the tenets of qualitative research (Patton, 2002). Participants completed Duckworth's Grit Scale (2004) pre-test and post-test. Responses were compared regarding changes after the 5-day experience. Results closer to 5 shows higher levels of grit: post-test scores were higher than pre-test scores. The three major themes that emerged from the study were students' enhanced immersion and engagement, the value of disconnection in providing opportunities for personal growth and the difficulty of separating because of the conditioned use of technology. These themes represented salient features of students' experiences that were repeated throughout the interviews. Some psychologists are finding that the emerging significant predictor of success is not social intelligence, physical health, or IQ. It's grit. Grit is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals (Duckworth et.al, 2007), regarding the role grit plays in success. While the essence of grit remains elusive, but there appears to be five common characteristics of grit (courage, conscientiousness, perseverance, resilience, and passion). Due to enhanced scores of the post test of the survey, the indication is that an outdoor experience gives students more grit.