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Investigation of Continuous Self-Improvement, Resilience*, Optimism & Pessimism

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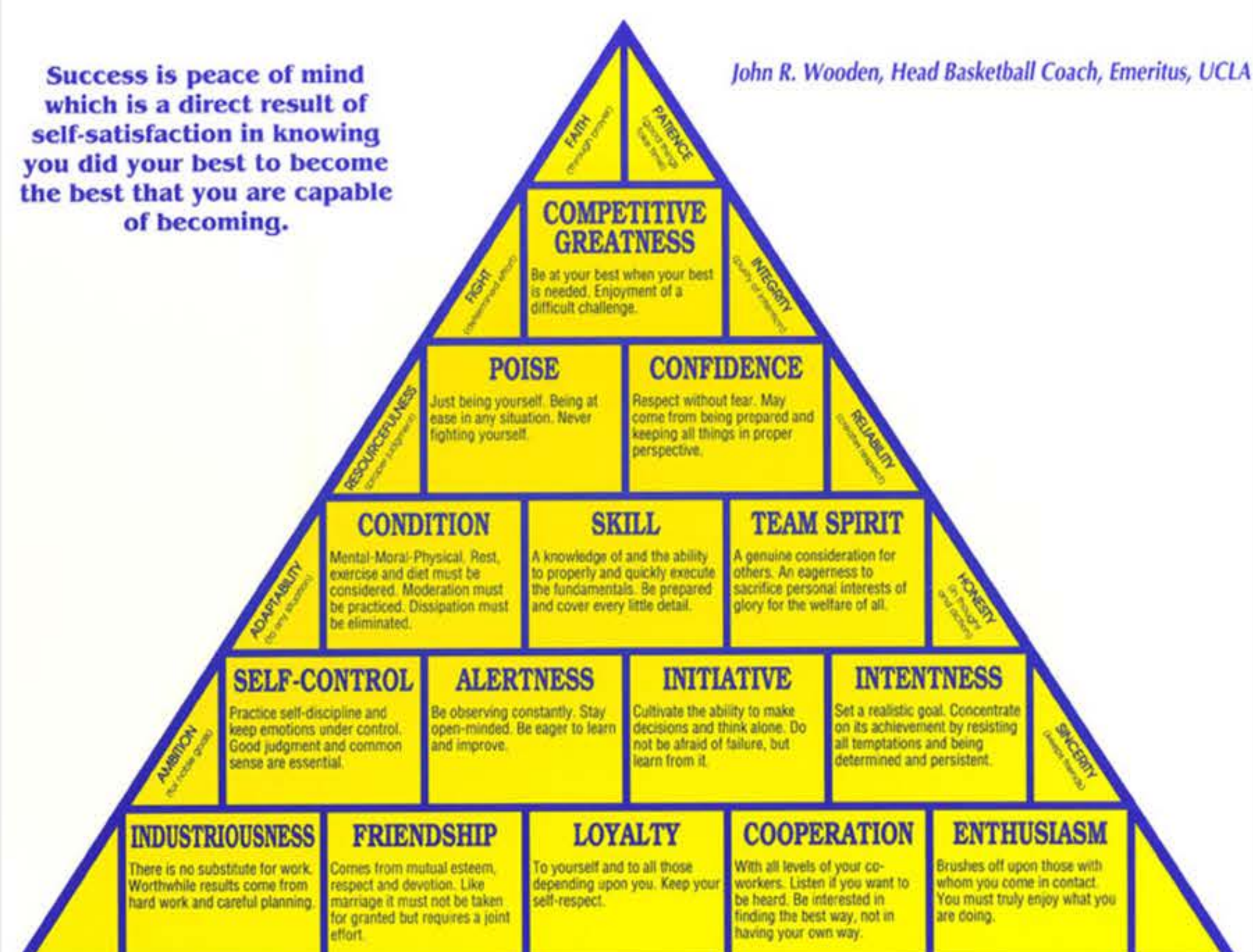
Background

Competitive Greatness

John R. Wooden's father shared two principles which were a major influence for his life: (1) "Don't try to be better than someone else, and (2) Always try to be the best you can be" (Wooden & Carty, 2005, p. 17). The first principle was a reminder that a successful life does not find peace of mind by comparing one's self to others. There is an interconnection between the second principle and Wooden's competitive greatness construct (CG). The definition of CG: "Be at your best when your best is needed. Enjoyment of a difficult challenge" (Wooden & Carty, 2005, p. 90).

Competitive greatness is linked to continuous self-improvement. By making the focus of life primarily on individual growth and development, there are endless opportunities to expand our skills and abilities. In Wooden's words: "We don't have to be superstars or win championships to reach competitive greatness. All we have to do is learn to rise to every occasion, give your best effort and make those around us better as we do it. It's not about winning. It's about learning to give all we have to give" (Wooden & Carty, 2005, p. 91).

Wooden created a pyramid of success as guide to the continuous self-improvement process. In his books, Wooden provides explanations for each of the 15 building blocks. Key words for each block are: (1) hard work and planning (Industriousness), (2) enjoyment (Enthusiasm), (3) mutual esteem & devotion (Friendship), (4) beneficial work (Cooperation), (5) self-respect (Loyalty), (6) discipline (Self-Control), (7) observation & open-mindedness (Alertness), (8) decisions & action (Initiative), (9) realistic goals (Intentness), (10) physical, mental, moral, & spiritual (Condition), (11) timing & performance (Skill), (12) eagerness & sacrifice (Team Spirit), (13) true to self (Poise), (14) respect without fear (Confidence), and (15) loving a difficult challenge (Competitive Greatness).



Background (cont'd)

10-80-10 Principle

According to Urban Meyer (2015, pp. 161-162),

There is a theory about human behavior called the 10-80-10 principle ... Think of your team or your organization as a big circle. At the very center of it, the nucleus, are the top 10 percenters, people who give all they've got all the time, who are the essence of self-discipline, self-respect, and the relentless pursuit of improvement. They are the elite—the most powerful component of any organization ... Outside the nucleus are the 80 percenters. They are the majority—people who go to work, do a good job, and are relatively reliable. The 80 percenters are for the most part trustworthy and dutiful, but they simply don't have the drive and the unbending will ... The leadership challenge is to move as many of the 80 percenters into the nucleus as you can. If you can expand the top 10 percent into 15 percent or 20 percent, you are going to see a measurable increase in the performance of your team.

Continuous Self-Improvement (CSI)

In the academic environment, Wooden's competitive greatness can be linked to Continuous Self-Improvement (CSI). By focusing on individual growth and development, there are endless opportunities to expand our skills and abilities. Meyer's 10-80-10 principle estimates that 10 percent are in "... relentless pursuit of improvement" or CSI. Using an intrinsic reward system, they internalize content and concepts and continuously apply them in new, unique ways. These students appear to feel the satisfaction and receive the validation they are going to be excellent nurses. Not only do they understand the scientific and theoretical aspects of nursing, but they also demonstrate the art and caring nature of an excellent and compassionate nurse.

Methods

Using an educational intervention, the purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between CG/Continuous Self-Improvement and Optimism. Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students (N=53) were participants in this study.

Instrumentation: In the summer of 2016, the first author read most of Wooden's books, and transferred his ideas into Likert-type questions. The name of this quantitative instrument is the Wooden Pyramid of Success Questionnaire (WPSQ; Hilty, 2017) which consists of 229 items. In order for the WPSQ to have content validity, it was a goal for the 229 questions to mirror Wooden's own words. The process of developing the WPSQ was assisted by Wooden's decision to major in English at both the undergraduate and graduate degree levels. CG is one of the scales on the WPSQ.

The measurement of optimism was based on Seligman's 2006 publication. In his book (Seligman, 2006, pp. 33-51) a copy of his optimism test and the scoring procedures are available. There are 10 scales: Personalization Good (PsG), Personalization Bad (PsB), Permanent Good (PmG), Permanent Bad (PmB), Pervasiveness Good (PvG), Pervasiveness Bad (PvB), Hope (HoB=PvB+PmB), Total Bad, Total good, and Good-Bad. The optimism test can also be completed at the <https://www.authenticchappiness.sas.upenn.edu/> website under the heading of questionnaires.

The quantitative measurement of resilience is often associated with Bartone's et al. (1989) article. Bartone's (1989, p. 327) assessment tool was named Dispositional Resilience / Hardiness (DR). The DR consists of three constructs which have operational definitions. "Commitment is the tendency to see the world as interesting and meaningful. Control is the belief in one's own ability to control or influence events. Challenge involves seeing change and new experiences as exciting opportunities to learn and develop" (Bartone, 2017). The DR 45-item assessment tool is available (Bartone, 1989, p. 327).

Methods (Cont'd)

Hypothesis 1: Using SPSS 25 independent t-test, there will be a difference between students scoring high and moderate-low groups on the CG/CSI construct as measured by the optimism and resilience scales.

Hypothesis 2: Using SPSS 25 correlational analysis, it was hypothesized that a significant positive correlation coefficient would be found between the CQ/CSI, Optimism, and Resilience scales.

Hypothesis 3: Using multiple regression with CG/CSI as the dependent variable and Optimism and Resilience as predictor variables, the outcome will be significantly different from zero.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There was a significant difference between students scoring high and moderate-low groups on the CG/CSI construct as measured by the optimism (p=.01) and resilience (p=.049) scales.

Hypothesis 2: There was a significant positive correlational difference between the CQ/CSI and Optimism (r=.382, p=.005), and Resilience (r=.467, p=.005) scales.

Hypothesis 3: Using SPSS 25 multiple regression with CG/CSI as the dependent variable and Optimism and Resilience as predictor variables, the findings were significantly different (F(2,50) = 14.716, R = .609, R-squared = .371). Both Optimism (p=.001) and Resilience (p=.001) were significant predictors of CG/CSI.

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* The 15-item Resilience Scale was used from Hystad et al. (2016).