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True Grit, The Universal Quality: A Cross-Cultural Exploration of Resilience and Determination Among Different Races, Cultures, and Backgrounds

In life, we often face difficult challenges that test our strength and perseverance. The ability to overcome these adversities is often described as having "true grit." But what exactly does this term mean? True grit is not just about resilience; it encompasses passion and perseverance towards long-term goals. According to psychologist Angela Duckworth, who popularized the concept, grit is the "sustained interest and effort" in one's pursuits over time (Duckworth). Understanding true grit helps us appreciate its importance in achieving success, no matter the obstacles we encounter. When I started to think about the concept of true grit, I became curious about how it applies to people from all around the world and from different backgrounds. I decided to research the universality of True Grit; to understand its essence across all backgrounds to better understand how it presents in different cultures. Individuals with grit do not give up easily, they remain focused and tirelessly work towards their objectives. What fascinated me is the idea that no matter where someone comes from, they can show true grit and overcome challenges in their own unique way. Through examining various documentaries and literary works, I learned that true grit transcends cultural, racial, and social barriers and is instead defined by characteristics of resilience, passion, and perseverance.

The two main components of true grit are passion and perseverance. According to Angela Duckworth it entails “working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and

interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress” (Duckworth et al, 1087–1088). In my review of the multi study report *Measuring Grit*, I learned that people who have a personality trait of conscientiousness and self-control were grittier than those who did not display these characteristics (Schmidt). Thus, a person who has passion or a strong feeling toward a personally important value/preference will be motivated and disciplined in their intentions and behaviors to persist and achieve their goal. Perseverance builds the determination to continue pursuing despite difficulties, and passion plays a critical role in true grit because it refers to a person having a strong commitment to one's goals.

Barack Obama's journey to becoming the first Black president of the United States is a testament to his grit and perseverance. Born in Hawaii to a Kenyan father and an American mother, Obama faced identity challenges and the complexities of being biracial in America according to his memoir, *The Dreams from My Father* (Barack- 5:03). Despite many obstacles, he excelled academically, attending Harvard Law School, where he became the first Black president of the Harvard Law Review. President Obama's political career was marked by determination; he worked as a community organizer in Chicago, served as an Illinois state senator, and then as a U.S. senator. As outlined in his memoir *The Audacity of Hope*, his 2008 presidential campaign was a significant test of resilience and steadfastness, as he faced not only political challenges but also questions about race and identity (233). President Obama's ability to inspire hope and mobilize a diverse coalition of voters demonstrated his enduring commitment to change. His passion and perseverance in navigating and overcoming numerous hurdles along this arduous path underscores qualities of true grit that defined his historic breakthrough as the first black president and the 44th president of the United States (44th President of the United States).

Another example of grit transcending culture is the Japanese people, particularly in the aftermath of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. This devastating natural disaster caused immense destruction, loss of life, and challenging conditions due to the consequences like the Fukushima nuclear crisis. Despite the overwhelming adversity, the Japanese people displayed incredible determination and resilience in several ways such as community support; many communities come together to support one another, showcasing strong social bonds and a collective effort to rebuild and recover. They worked tirelessly to rebuild their homes, infrastructure, and lives. The reconstruction efforts were massive, but the people demonstrated unwavering commitment to restoring their communities. And even in the face of such chaotic and traumatic events, people-maintained order and discipline, which was widely noted and admired globally in publications like *Learning from Megadisasters* (Ranghieri, Federica, and Mikio Ishiwatari, (4). This helped in efficient disaster management and recovery processes. The true grit demonstrated by the people of Japan serves as an inspiring example of how communities can endure and overcome significant challenges through resilience and collective action.

Along with passion, individuals with true grit maintain long-term focus, learning from setbacks and remaining undeterred by difficulties. For example, César Chávez and Dolores Huerta were activists who co-founded the United Farm Workers and championed farmworkers' rights. Despite facing systemic discrimination, their persistent advocacy and leadership exemplify grit as they worked tirelessly for social justice (Smithsonian). Another example is Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani education activist, who displayed passion and true grit through her courageous advocacy in her fight for girls' education in a region where such activism was met

with significant resistance and danger. Despite oppressive tactics and after surviving a Taliban attack, she persisted in her mission. Her relentless advocacy, even in the face of danger, highlights her commitment to her cause and earned her the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 (Yousafzai).

Resilience and true grit are interconnected as both involve the ability to persist in the face of stumbling blocks and difficulties. Those who possess resilience can adapt to changing circumstances and find new ways to overcome challenges, while true grit helps them maintain focus and determination, transforming obstacles into steppingstones toward success. Katherine Johnson displayed resilience and true grit as an African American woman in the mid-20th century, a period marked by racial and gender discrimination. Despite the societal barriers she remained steadfast in her pursuit of excellence. She played a pivotal role in the critical NASA missions, including calculating the trajectories for John Glenn's orbital flight and the Apollo 11 moon landing (space.com). Her ability to thrive in a challenging environment, overcome prejudice, and make groundbreaking contributions to space exploration exemplifies her resilience and determination to succeed against the odds.

True grit not only encompasses perseverance but also the courage and passion to stay committed over the long term. Individuals with true grit have a capacity for hard work, they are willing to persevere and put in the necessary effort to improve and succeed. They understand that success is not immediate and requires sustained hard work. Having perseverance refers to the sustained effort and determination to keep working towards a goal regardless of the difficulties encountered (dictionary.com). Bethany Hamilton displayed incredible perseverance and true grit following a life-changing shark attack at age 13, which resulted in the loss of her left arm. Despite this setback, she returned to surfing showcasing her determination and courage. Her

ability to adapt her technique allowed her to succeed in competitive surfing, winning numerous championships and earning respect in the surfing community. Beyond her personal achievements, Bethany inspires others with her story, promoting messages of resilience and hope, and proving that her spirit remains undaunted by adversity (bethanyhamilton).

People who possess grit are more likely to achieve their aspirations because they are willing to face setbacks head on and adapt as necessary, which is why cultivating true grit is essential for personal development and success. It empowers individuals to set clear goals, embrace persistence, learn from failures, nurture passion, and adopt a growth mindset, all of which are crucial for overcoming life's challenges and achieving long-term objectives. Cultivating my own grit and perseverance has been a journey shaped by my experiences as a full-time employee, full-time college student, wife, and mother of three. Despite the demands of my job, educational pursuits, and home life, I was determined to develop a research project on the universality of true grit. Balancing these demanding roles required me to develop a tenacity and resilience I hadn't fully realized existed within me. Each day presented its unique challenges, juggling work obligations while meeting my children's needs and squeezing in precious hours for my research project. I learned to prioritize and manage my time effectively, often working late into the night or waking up before dawn to study. This relentless pursuit of my goals taught me the power of perseverance, determination, and sacrifice. Despite the exhaustion, setbacks, and occasional self-doubt, my commitment to understanding what drives people with true grit kept me motivated. This journey not only deepened my appreciation for the stories of others who embody grit but also revealed my own capacity for resilience, illustrating that with dedication and hard work, it is indeed possible to overcome even the toughest challenges. I have gained valuable insights that are preparing me for future challenges and achievements.

Through this research, I discovered that despite cultural differences, true grit has a universal nature, and the core components of true grit remain consistent. People from various walks of life demonstrate grit by remaining committed to their goals, adapting to challenges, and drawing strength from their uniqueness. I also found that true grit is a vital quality among people from countless cultures and backgrounds. It represents the human experience of striving for success amid challenges, showcasing how determination and resilience with a little bit of passion can lead to remarkable achievements. We can all cultivate our own true grit. Each one of us has the capacity to develop the strength to persist through obstacles and ultimately reach our full potential. By understanding and appreciating this universality, it helps to foster respect and empathy across cultures, highlighting that the capability for true grit is within all of us regardless of race or our cultural identities.

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