

Applying gladwells lessons into my own life and experience essay example

[Psychology](#), [Success](#)



What is most surprising about Malcolm Gladwell's book "Outliers" is that it overturns what at least for me was the traditional narrative of how success operates. The American Dream story of success has to do with hard work. Others consider it luck. Others see intelligence and natural inborn ability as necessary for success. Gladwell essentially is saying that it is all three of these things. It takes the hard work of putting in the necessary time to become a "master" of a craft, but also luck, such as with hockey players, of when someone is born plays a role. His central point is that small things early on play a big role in success later on. Opportunity is not something someone is born with, and can be likened to luck. Gladwell demonstrates that the right opportunity at the right time is a key component to success. With the right opportunities at a crucial time every drop becomes a pool and every bit of edge plays a major difference over time. Cultural legacies also matter since this is the framework that one must operate under in virtually all areas. In my own life, I see Gladwell's interpretation of success as being accurate when I think back to personal experiences of success.

Gladwell writes that, "I will argue that there is something profoundly wrong with the way we make sense of success" (Gladwell, 18). He thinks that we often look at the person's characteristics and try to deduce what characteristics they have that have allowed them to become successful. But this is a flawed way of going about looking at things. He writes that most people see success in terms of the "self-made man" which is "a measure of how deeply we associate success with the efforts of the individual" (Gladwell, 18).

Gladwell sees context as more important than descriptions of individuals.

One example from my own life that I tend to keep in mind when reading “Outliers” is the story of my dad’s success. I read often in the media about how the children of wealthy families do not always achieve the same degree of success as their parents. Often this has to do with the fact that since they are already rich, and know that they will receive a large inheritance, there is not as much pressure to be successful in their own endeavors. My dad’s story of success plays into something that is very important for Gladwell—context.

My dad, it is important to note, came from a wealthy family. But although his parents had affluence, he was raised under very strict rules and he was not spoiled. He also had the opportunity of education and he graduated from Seoul University, which is the best university in Korea. He pursued life passionately, and had a knack for making connections with people. He never forgot a face. His family legacy, already successful business people, certainly gave him an advantage, since he was surrounded by those who were already successful in what he set out to do. This legacy afforded him the opportunity to gain the skills he would need to succeed.

My father’s success in business was born out of the economic context of Korea at the time. When he turned 30, Korea was going through one of the worst times ever, financially and economically it was a mess. This was the time when my father had just graduated and so he went into business at one of the worst times in the history of the country to go into business.

Though this is considered the worst time to go into business in Korea

because the economy was doing poorly, that is perhaps not an accurate description. My dad was one of few people going into business at the time, simply because there was little hope for a good return on investment because of the deplorable economic conditions. But because he began building his businesses and making his connections at a time when the economy was doing so poorly, he was in a good position to gain a big share of the market after it rebounded. He struggled in the beginning, but was learning how to do business in a country where very few others were doing so simply because it was not profitable to do so for many at the time. Today, Korea has one of the strongest economies in the world and my dad has in his own right become successful and wealthy not because of his parents wealth but because of his own hard work. Certainly, no one will deny that my dad had intelligence and a work effort that was instilled by his parents that helped him to become successful.

Talent is very important, as Gladwell notes that “Joy and Gates and the Beatles are all undeniably talented. Lennon and McCartney had a musical gift of the sort that comes along once in a generation” (Gladwell, 55).

Gladwell’s point is not that talent is not important, but that most people consider it the most important thing. But really, talent is just one necessary condition of many that enable people to become successful. It depends much on the situation and history into which a person is born. And in this sense, my dad was also lucky to have been born to wealthy parents who were able to get him a good education. From there, he happened to be born just as the economy was doing poorly, but because of that was in a good position when it corrected itself to turn his so far moderate success into a great success.

Opportunity, plus the right legacy, at the right time, do not assure success, but are necessary components of it.

Work Cited:

Gladwell, Malcolm. Outliers: the story of success. New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2008. Print.