

Factors of success

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



Heather N English 001A Midterm Essay 13 February 2013 The Factors of Success Success is a term that many use as a way to describe ideals. Living in a world that exalts the extraordinary, praises the leaders, and puts the best up on a pedestal, it is not hard to guess why achieving success is what the human race strives to do. Youth look up to the exceptional people in their life, media grasps stories of thriving individuals, and the world idolizes those who stand out. People endeavor great struggles and hardships to obtain that blissful feeling of reward and individuals are taught from day one to do whatever it takes to thrive.

The book *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell is a story of success and how it is achieved. Though having many different theories on success, the story focuses on the sociological phenomena of the importance of all the factors it takes to truly be an accomplished individual. Malcolm Gladwell uses different anecdotes and real life examples in his book *Outliers* to illustrate how success is not just solely ambition and other intrinsic factors, but a function of broader points influenced by innate, societal, and cultural factors.

To support the theory on success not only being the indigenous feeling to achieve, Gladwell uses the example of The Matthew Effect, which is basically opportunities based on timing. He explains how the best Canadian hockey players have a birthday closer to January 1st and, “ in the beginning, his advantage isn’t so much that he is inherently better but only that he is a little older” (25). The older the player is, the more experienced, dedicated, and capable he will be, and be scouted to move on to a higher rank. They then start to train with the best coaches and facilities, giving them success.

This is showing how a factor of success is just evidently age, timing, and, “ it is those who are successful, in other words, who are most likely to be given the kinds of special opportunities that lead to further success” (30). Another example of the success by timing and opportunities is the story of the Beatles. The Beatles were invited to play in Hamburg and it was by pure accident that, “ Bruno went to London to look for bands. But he happened to meet an entrepreneur from Liverpool in Soho who was down in London by pure chance” (48).

Obviously the Beatles are one of the most aesthetically pleasing bands of the 20th century and they have considerable talent, but if it were not for that one accidental connection that was established, who knows what would have happened to their success. These examples go to show that opportunities and luck are huge factors in describing what success is. Another factor of describing what constitutes success are societal and cultural perception. Gladwell uses his narrative of Joe Flom’s classmate at Harvard, Alexander Bickel.

He was the top of his class and, “ perhaps the finest constitutional scholar of his generation” (121). As a Jewish man with a thick Brooklyn accent, he did not fit the cookie cutter image they were looking for and the firm was not interested. This goes to show the correlation between perception and success by simply being denied a job because of cultural factors. It is universally known that people judge based on opinions, which causes hindering on success. The way someone was raised in their culture might negatively affect their opportunity for success purely based on someone else’s opinion on their culture.

A Wall Street Journal article titled, Race and ' Privilege', talks about the phenomenon of the term ' white privilege' and how it ties to success. The article says, " We're [whites] privileged that people see us, not a color," and, " we're privileged because society was set up for us, and our silence keeps it in place". As much as society choses to ignore it, a factor of success is cultural race. Some races are considered privileged because they do not have that hindering stereotype targeted on their back and are more likely to get a perception of something different and be presented with more opportunities.

Other races are considered successful solely by the societal factors of just where they live and the culture they grew up in. Cultural and societal factors tie into success as well. The article Asian-American Parenting andAcademicSuccess in Pacific Standard, delves deep into discussing the unique style of Asian American parenting. It goes to say, " Over the past two decades, a spate of studies has examined cultural beliefs that shape Asian-American parenting, and their effect on kids' learning".

Then it goes on to explain how cultural ancient beliefs have shaped how parents raise their kids to this day. The 5th century philosopher, Confucius, has influenced Asian culture and, " taught that human beings should strive their whole lifetime to improve or perfect themselves". These ideas that have transmitted down through generations have statistics to prove that the Asian culture is no stranger to working hard to achieve success and, " such veneration of diligence helps account for the widespread Asian belief that when striving for academic success, effort counts more than innate ability".

The culture embraces the idea of shape parenting and managing by a more hands on style. Because of this more governed culture, Asian Americans come out on top resulting in becoming more successful. However, one of the most important factors of success is the intrinsic motivation that one possesses and the actual time put into what is trying to be achieved. The 10,000-hour rule is another one of Gladwell's theories used to explain success in *Outliers*.

Based on a study by Anders Ericsson, "The emerging picture from such studies is that ten thousand hours of practice is required to achieve the level of mastery associated with being a world-class expert in anything" (40). Or in other words, the most successful people have spent grueling time, hour after hour, to work and become experts at their craft. He uses the example of one of the most influential people, Bill Gates. When he stumbled upon a high school computer in 1968, Gates lived at the computer to learn and program his way into leading one of the top grossing industries in the world.

It goes to show how much practice is needed to go into a craft to reach that threshold of expertise, which then leads to success. If a person has neither stamina nor drive to push them to work to become powerful in what they do, success cannot be achieved. Malcolm Gladwell uses different anecdotes and real life examples in his book *Outliers* to illustrate how success is not just solely ambition and other intrinsic factors, but a function of broader points influenced by innate, societal, and cultural factors.

Combinations of all these factors are what really influence the idea of success. Success is elusive because to acquire such rare opportunities, be raised specifically to always do well, have a culture that pushes to perform

exceptionally, and have the motivation to dedicate 10,000 hours to the craft, can be grueling. However, not having the perfect combination of the factors of success does not mean that success cannot be achieved. Everyone has a different viewpoint of what success means to them and their own innate way of getting on the path to their life fulfillment.

All it takes is the will to have the presence of the mind and the rest is up to the person. No one is able to have a guaranteed success. If they desperately aspire to be the best, there is a path for them. Works Cited Gladwell, Malcolm. *Outliers: The Story of Success*. New York: Little, Brown and, 2008. Print. Seal, Kathy. "Asian-American Parenting and Academic Success." *Pacific Standard*. Pacific Standard Magazine, 13 Dec. 2010. Web. 9 Feb. 2013. Taranto, James. "Race and 'Privilege'" *Wall Street Journal*. Dow Jones & Company, 21 June 2012. Web. 9 Feb. 2013.