

# Individual outliers essay sample

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An outlier is an individual who behaves in an unusual manner, “ a scientific term to describe things or phenomena that lie outside normal experience.” This is the definition Malcolm Gladwell uses to describe a successful person. In this book, subtitled “ The Story of Success,” Gladwell attempts to explain why some people are more successful than others. He does this by identifying cultural and social factors that contribute to opportunities in individual’s lives. Through a series of case studies he insists that society has fostered the mentality that successful people are self-made. Conversely, Gladwell claims that they “ are invariably the beneficiaries of hidden advantages and extraordinary opportunities and cultural legacies that allow them to learn and work hard and make sense of the world in ways others cannot.” These successful people are on top of the pyramid because of the combination of opportunity and time. The first part the book focuses partially on opportunities that arise as a result of the time that is dedicated to the activity in which one wants to succeed, a concept Gladwell refers to as “ The Matthew Effect.” Part two emphasizes cultural advantages.

Gladwell demonstrates the “ The Mathew Effect” by utilizing The Beatles, which were not native musical geniuses who succeeded only after 10, 000 hours of practice. This case reveals, not only how the amount of time dedicated to practicing an activity can lead to success, but also how timing can influence the likelihood of success. Similarly, Gladwell utilizes case studies, in the second part of the book, to exemplify his ideas regarding cultural advantages. He examines the cultural legacy of failure and how certain circumstances can transform failure into success. Overall, the viewpoint that Gladwell intends for his readers to understand is that success

arises from a balance of accumulated benefits: “ When and where you are born, what your parents did for a living, and what the circumstances of your upbringing were.” These factors appear to have a substantial effect on how individuals perform in the world. One of the main topics discussed in this book is the impact that a person’s culture has on his or her success.

Individuals are always intrigued by the attributes that constitute a successful person. They think that personal qualities and characteristics such as the type of personality, level of intelligence, type of life style, or the presence of special talents are the factors that have aided them in reaching success.

Outliers, was written to disprove these wide-held assumptions.

It illustrates that instead of these personal qualities, we need to know where the person is from in order to understand how he succeeded the way they did. It is not only important to understand where successful individuals came from, but also the timing of the occurrences in their lives play important roles. In organizational behavior there is a theory called “ Cultural Theories”, which concentrations on the experiences, cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs shared by the people within an organization. A successful organization is nourished by the organizational culture that accompanies it. Gladwell gives an example of airlines and how the culture of the airlines affects the company’s success. Towards the end of the book he dedicates a chapter to plane crashes and how the quality of a pilot is dependent upon the pilot’s origin and the cultural values he has been exposed to. This is because parents play a huge role in teaching their kids to be confident and standing up against those in charge. Parents teach their children behaviors

that will be useful in life, but there are also behaviors that are learned through observation, these enhance the individual's personality.

To illustrate his viewpoint, Gladwell employs Hofstede: Power Distance Index (PDI) which predicts who is prepared to stand up to their boss when something goes wrong. The evidence that is presented helps to understand the way that the incidence of national plane crashes relates closely with Hofstede's PDI. He concluded that a high PDI means that the junior crew is unlikely to question the captain when he makes a mistake or even if they are perceived to be in trouble. This is what Gladwell refers to as culture shaping the success of an organization. If the people in the organization are from different cultures it will be hard for them to communicate with each other and it will create problems, which in turn affects the organization. In his example it led to plane crashes and people losing trust in the airline company. In order for someone to thrive they need to understand where they come from and associate their culture with those around them. Gladwell made a strong emphasis on culture in his book, but he also stressed timing.

He said that being born in the right era/decade helps you match your skills. He gave an example of success for youngsters playing hockey correlates strongly with being born before January 1. If an individual is born prior to January, he played with youngsters. This meant he was bigger, stronger and more coordinated and gave the youngsters an advantage to improve themselves. Those that were born closer to January were the ones to maximize their skills. These kids had an opportunity to succeed because of when they were born. However, in an article written in the Ivey Business Journal by John S. McCallum, McCallum discusses how much timing really <https://assignbuster.com/individual-outliers-essay-sample/>

matters in success, he even states “ Don’t tell me what to buy; tell me when to buy it.” Timing should be at the top of every executive decision. The question should not only be if the decision is right, but if the time is right for the decision to be made to create success in the company. The information provided by Gladwell in his book is based primarily on historical facts and events. He wrote about scientific research, but does not adapt an academic perspective to it. On the other hand, he calls upon subjective evidence to describe concepts in a general way for others to understand. In the epilogue, Gladwell’s viewpoint shifts to a more personal one.

He begins to describe his own Jamaican heritage by also, applying the theory of success that he himself has developed. He describes the opportunity and cultural aspects that allowed his mother to get to where she has, and how that has given him the opportunity to be where he is today. I feel that the information provided in this book has been based on sound research. However, there is some of that information that can be skewed. I say this because there is always an exception to the rule and I think that the concepts set fourth by Gladwell have enough information to be back up as true, but also can be flipped upside and proven wrong. Not everything that we see comes out the way it is expected to. The impact that this book has made in my every day life or even in the workplace is that it has allowed me to see success in a different way. I thought that success was achieved through hard work and commitment, but Gladwell has expanded that train of thought. According, to the information in his book success is something that happens out of opportunity. Although hard work and commitment can be

useful to obtain success, there are factors that can enhance the opportunity to succeed.

For example, I feel that if I live by “ The 10, 000- Hour Rule” I can achieve my ultimate goal. Gladwell claims “ If you work hard enough and assert yourself, and use your mind and imagination, you can shape the world to your desires.” I have understood that once you work towards what you want to achieve and put the best of yourself you will triumph. One of the most important things that will help me in my everyday life is to remember, “ Practice isn’t the thing you do once you’re good. It’s the thing you do that makes you good.” I believe this quote is the overall essence of this book. It helps to understand the practical value that is needed to succeed apart from all of the aspects that Gladwell states as endeavors to be successful in this world.

Ultimately, the individual must remember that it is not them that made them who they are, but it was with the opportunities they had that granted them the luck that accompanied them. Consequently, I wouldn’t recommend anyone to read this book. Don’t get me wrong it is a great book, and it gives excellent explanations overall as to why some individuals are more successful than others. I feel, however, that it concentrates too much on the explanations of these reasons of success. Although this provides for a better understanding of Gladwell’s viewpoints, it is more of a book to skim through and have a general knowledge about success seeing as it does not provide a recipe for success. Instead, it simply informs the reader as to why certain people were more successful than others rendering their personal experiences rather than comparing a population at large.

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