

Us and today – the matthew effect: malcolm gladwell's bias

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Ignoring his theories about success, Malcolm Gladwell's books reveal his bias in education and intelligence. He does not believe that intelligence is an inherent value. Instead, he believes that the gravity of education and a child's intellect level is based upon environment, opportunities, and even time of birth.

He argues that these three factors are far more viable to make conclusions on how success and education correlate, rather than factors like race, gender, and social class. One of Malcolm Gladwell's books that specifically exposes his bias in education & intelligence is called *Outliers*. In this book, his bias on the outlook on intellect is enumerated. He believes that everyone isn't given an equal advantage. Only people who been lucky enough to be framed into a system like school quicker or given an abundant of opportunities opposed to someone else are better off in the future.

Malcolm Gladwell uses many central points that lucidly refutes his argument. One of them is called the Matthew Effect. This was a study explained in the book that was done by the sociologist named Robert K. Merton. Reciting the biblical verse Matthew 25: 29 in contemporary text, "For to everyone who has {more} shall be given, and he will have an abundance: but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away"(New American Standard Version 1995).

Metaphorically, in education, this means that once an advantage is obtained, it accumulates until it becomes disproportionate for the opposing candidate. Malcolm Gladwell elaborates that early advantages in life invariably makes the difference between just how intelligent or unintelligent a child ends up

being. We can take a further look at this by anatomizing the way the American educational system works. In his book "Outliers", we will look at how Malcolm Gladwell views the American educational system. As Americans, we all know that there are specific cut-off dates (depending on the state) that stipulates what age a child should be to be eligible to admit into Pre-K, to start that first family-missing year of school.

Boohoo, it's time to go, but what if some children are not eligible for that first year? Say that their birth date overarches the cut-off and they are denied access. The parents decide on holding the child back and when the time comes, they skip pre-k and put them straight into kindergarten; eventually the parents come to a consensus that they will catch up following the years of early learning and middle school. Indeed, they have minimized the qualm for having to start school without mom and dad and have more time to plan and prepare. However, things stay the same, and unfortunately they do not catch up and fall lower and lower down the chain of academic expectations, and accumulate disadvantages as they come in a year late into school. This is because children that were born before the cut-off date & were eligible to start pre-school at a proper age were already predetermined to have a definite advantage over children who didn't.

The crucial and foretelling factors were extra practice and early exposure to an academic environment- they did not miss that first crucial year of instruction & learning that children born after the cut-off already have. In addition, they have already gotten into the flow of school, made a couple of friends and are probably already doing homework. Likewise, they receive the

social and academic advantages of already being in school- it adds up. By the time those born after the cut-off get to the job market, they are premature and lacking in crucial skills and are most likely seen as “unintelligent or incapable”. This shows Malcolm Gladwell’s bias because it is explaining that he thinks that America’s educational system is a widely equivocal factor in the way Americans turn out to be and that there is no singled out group of geniuses or dummies. The educational system is actually a major significant factor in deciding who will be better off or who will not be.

Please note that there are numerous stereotypes that dumb people are just innately unintelligent(on their own culpability for not educating themselves), or that smart people have inbred intelligence- this is critically false. And we see this by the way the Matthew effect portrays itself and Malcolm’s bias. This is to say because the “dumb people” are actually not dumb, but just a step-below the “smart people” and missed out on a crucial year of school that would be the deciding factor of how they would perform academically and their well being in the future. So your time of birth, environment and opportunities truly does have a huge impact on where you subsequently will be in America because of the Matthew effect. If the American society only understood the Matthew in its every painstaking detail, it would definitely change our perspectives on how to cultivate more successful people and produce a greater generation.