

Reading Circle

Outliers: The Story of Success by Malcolm Gladwell

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Outliers examines the factors that determine great success, such as the combination of extraordinary talent and the right opportunities seized at just the right time. *Outliers* challenges common assumptions about high achievers as it builds a case for nurture over nature, attitude over aptitude. The Reading Circle explored the policy implications these notions pose for anyone interested in replicating success in their own communities.

Summary

- It's all about access. Like the hockey players that were given the opportunity to excel, community organizations can provide access for neighborhoods that don't have the same advantages as others, like good schools.
- The Matthew Effect: "For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." (Matthew 25:29) The Civil Rights Movement challenged the status quo to change this, and economic development can continue through organizations advocating for change.
- The role of culture: When one college student (Oppenheimer) ran into trouble, he understood the culture and was able to talk his way out of trouble and was placed on probation. Another student (Chris Langan) was from a poor family and was not able to work successfully at staying in two different schools because he and his mother did not understand the culture (did not have the social skills). Organizations must be the intermediary that provides the social skills or teaches the skills for neighborhood residents.
- "He knew that cultural legacies matter—that they are powerful and pervasive and that they persist, long after their original usefulness has passed." The airline pilots and co-pilots' communication styles were dictated by their culture, and those styles did not allow them to communicate effectively with each other or with the control tower. This lack of communication caused the plane to crash. We must develop ways to increase the possibility of success regardless of backgrounds and environments (physical, social and ethnic).
- The culture of organizations is to be competitive, like the culture of honor in Kentucky. That culture led to death.
- Barriers to success:
 - lack of core center of support
 - environment (physical, social, ethnic)
 - paradigm: everything (status quo) is gone (changing)
 - lack of practice (10,000 hours) and effect on schooling
 - not allowing people or organizations to take risks (like Bill Gates did)
 - -job training programs that get you a job at McDonald's but not anything on being an entrepreneur

Memorable Quote

“We must hear the voice of young people, not of privilege.”

--Karl Cassell
Rapid City, Iowa

Questions that remain

The idea that excellence at performing a complex task requires a critical minimum level of practice surfaces again and again in studies of expertise. In fact, researchers have settled on what they believe is the magic number for true expertise: 10,000 hours.” What if we could get a number of people to put in a total of 10,000 hours on innovation? We would have 10,000 hours of collective innovation if, for example, 100 people volunteered to devote 100 hours.