

Student's Name

Professor's Name

Course

Date

The Definition of Success

The objective of any individual in society is to engage in different activities that will grant him or her success in life. There are numerous definitions of success depending on the aims and objectives of an individual within a particular society. Hence, there is no universal definition of success although the existing definitions attribute success to the realization of a goal. In the book *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell adopts a contrarian perspective of the techniques through which people usually attain a high-level of success. According to Gladwell, a person should make a great effort to become successful, as well as to see and catch the unique chance to overcome different difficulties and find that right way, which will lead to success. Therefore, in the definition of success, it is important to look beyond individual merits. This will require an in-depth assessment of other areas that are associated with an individual such as his or her friends, family background, what an individual's parents did for a living and the socialization processes that defend the life of an individual. For Gladwell, it is only by asking questions about the background of an individual that it will be easier to unravel the logic behind the definition of a successful person.

In *Outliers*, "Gladwell studied the path to success for a variety of people and groups, from the Beatles to Bill Gates to Mozart and Andrew Carnegie" in order to see driving forces that inspire people to succeed (Kevinb). In his conclusion about the factors that distinguished

them from others in terms of achievement, Gladwell asserts that it was not in their extraordinary talent but the extraordinary opportunities that these individuals exploited.

Success, according to Gladwell, is, therefore, a product of “parentage and patronage” considering that it may be possible to consider successful people to be basing their achievement on personal qualities (20). However, it is important to consider the years of advantage and opportunities that other individuals of society do not share, and which were critical for their learning and growth. Moreover, such information assumes that even well skilled, highly intelligent and talented individuals need maintenance and special opportunities in order to climb the top of social success. However, there is no insurance that good luck and positive circumstances are the only basis of success. Instead, it is the ability of an individual to recognize and seize his or her opportunities for personal development. Gladwell observes that there are assertions of the relationship between success and intelligence. He recognizes that the relationship between success and intelligence works only to a certain point (Gladwell 69). This is followed by a faint correlation between intelligence and achievement because success requires practical intelligence, which will provide an individual with the knowledge of what to say, when to say it, and how to say it, with the aim of ensuring that it produces maximum effects. These aspects cannot be gauged in terms of an individual’s intelligence quotient.

In his further deliberations in the definition of success, Gladwell asserts that it is not a product of random effects. Instead, success “arises out of a predictable and powerful set of circumstances and opportunities” (Gladwell 155). Therefore, it is necessary to focus on both the abilities and different motivating aspects, in most cases, for an individual to realize the success. When an individual sets out to achieve goals, the driving factors must influence his understanding and desires towards accomplishing the objective. There must be indicators of the

envisioned success because they will motivate the individual towards realizing the vision further. Inner desire to make something incredible, wonderful or unusual, as well as to share personal talents, skills and knowledge with the whole world, makes people successful on the first stage of the social stairway. The ability to stand out from a crowd of people who do not have the necessary drive towards an objective is critical to the definition of success. In addition, it also provides an opportunity for understanding an individual's weaknesses and strengths thus developing novel ways of attaining the demand of a vision (Canfield 152).

An individual's input is critical in defining success because even if the right opportunities were made available and an individual was unwilling to seize them, then it would be relatively difficult to succeed. Gladwell, therefore, defines success as a combination of the right ecology, practical intelligence, extraordinary opportunities, skills and knowledge, hard work, and persistence. It is notable that these elements may not be available for an individual in any society in equal proportion. In Gladwell's view, the major elements of this formula for defining success include the essence of ecology and the ability to recognize and seize opportunities whenever they present themselves. Successful people are not entirely different from the rest of the society but they are products of legacy and opportunity or community and history. Their success is not in any way mysterious but it is founded on a network of inheritances and advantages, which are critical in making the individuals the people they become (Gladwell 285).

In his definition of success, Gladwell recognizes that society has played a critical role in redefining and developing misleading conceptions about success. This is because, through the media, society dedicates a lot of attention to those who are perceived as materially successful while dismissing those who fall. For the modern society, wealth is displayed as a sign of success although this is a misleading approach because it only emphasizes on the material belonging of

an individual without an assessment of how the individual acquired the wealth. When I was six years old, my father asked me what I wanted to become when I grew up. I gave a stereotypical response that included aspirations to become a baseball player or engineer. He then asked me what I understood by the term success. My response to this question was that success was equal to being a businessperson. While it is possible to assume this responsibility as one coming from an incompetent first-grader, it also communicates a critical aspect of how society defines success. To most of my friends, making tons of money is considered as being successful. This explains why even at six years old, I had been socialized to believe that being successful would entail owning a big business, wearing an expensive suit, and driving an expensive car. Being informed, I had derived my answer to the question for the society in which I lived.

Today, my answer to the same question is completely different because, through the years of experience in the world, as well as interactions with people from different communities, I have understood that success surpasses material possession. Success entails the ability to engage in practices that are defined to attain a goal that influences the lives of others. This is because I believe that each individual in the world is responsible for themselves and others. This aspect of responsibility drives different people towards developing improved living standards in the society. An individual in the field of medicine can be perceived to be successful if he or she uses their skills in transforming the lives of others. This means that medical personnel can engage in research initiatives to develop improved ways of addressing community illnesses. A businessperson can engage in activities with the objective of improving the quality of services or products that are distributed to his or her customer. It is notable that the difference between a successful and unsuccessful individual is on their ability to abide by existing ethical standards whenever they are realizing their objectives. If an individual acquires wealth through corrupt

means that negatively affect the lives of other members of the society, then he or she may be considered as unsuccessful. Consequently, success is about ethics and the desire to uphold the principle of humanity in all deliberations. Therefore, it is the responsibility of individuals to ensure that they follow the existing quality standards and limit the possibility of being exploitative in the process of identifying and seizing opportunities in their environment. When these attributes are transmitted down the subsequent generations, it becomes possible to develop a society in which empathy is considered as the standard of operations since it will require upholding ethical regulations in all deliberations. Consequently, the understanding of success will be similar among many individuals, as it will be guided by ethical practices.

Work Cited

Canfield, Jack. *The Success Principles*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015.

Gladwell, Malcolm. *Outliers: The Story of Success*. London: Penguin, 2009.

Kevinb. "Goals / Purpose: Book Summary: "Outliers. The Story of Success", by Malcolm

Gladwell". *JFD Performance Solutions*, 22 May 2009,

http://www.jfdperfsolutions.com/modules/news/goals_~2F_purpose-

[book_summary~3A_~26quot~3Boutliers._the_story_of_success~26quot~3B~2C_by_ma](http://www.jfdperfsolutions.com/modules/news/goals_~2F_purpose-book_summary~3A_~26quot~3Boutliers._the_story_of_success~26quot~3B~2C_by_ma)

[lcolm_gladwell.html](http://www.jfdperfsolutions.com/modules/news/goals_~2F_purpose-book_summary~3A_~26quot~3Boutliers._the_story_of_success~26quot~3B~2C_by_malcolm_gladwell.html). Accessed 04 March 2018.