

BECOMING A SUCCESSFUL PERSON

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CCGL9064: BODY BLOGGING PORTFOLIO

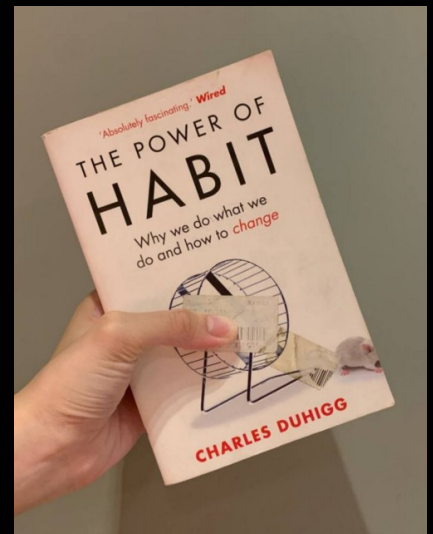
THE STARTING LINE

My blogging project centered on the idea of a successful person, specifically the habits that were deemed productive by society, in light of the growing tendency towards becoming an entrepreneur of the self (Iskra, 2021). To start, I decided to introduce a habit that has always made the list of what makes a “successful” person; waking up early. Supposedly, this habit has allowed such “successful” people like CEOs to get more out of their day; before most of us had even gotten out of bed, they would have already exercised, read a book, and fired off a couple of emails.

Consequently, I planned to wake up at 0630h with the expectation that I would be frustrated and tired. However, I hoped that once I become accustomed to the hours, I would be much more productive throughout the day and slowly become more organised by managing my time better.

In the first week alone, I ‘saved’ 14 hours by waking up at 0630h as opposed to my usual time at 0830h. During those two hours of extra time, I went on daily runs and started working much earlier than I otherwise would have. The sense of accomplishment and validation was further reinforced when my Apple Watch congratulated me for maintaining a 7-day exercise streak.

Although tracking bodies was often approached from a more cautious viewpoint—where it could cause an overreliance on technology and desensitivity to ourselves—I felt proud of what I had done and having it recorded not only helped me visualise how I wanted to start my day better, but also held me accountable (Song, 2021).

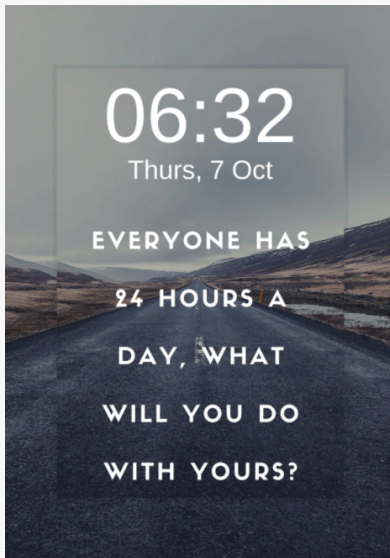


THE BOOK THAT
STARTED IT ALL



Perfect Week (Move)
You've earned this award 1 time for reaching
your Move goal every day of a single week.

FEELING VALIDATED



NOT-SO SMOOTH SAILING

Before beginning, I foresaw that I'd have difficulties, and preemptively changed my phone wallpaper to something a little more motivating. For the first few weeks, it worked, but at around the halfway mark, I had to unexpectedly stay up really late the night prior, which meant I'd only get 4 hours of sleep for that particular day. Too tired, I eventually only woke up at around 10am, and suddenly the same wallpaper that I found so energising the week prior became a source of stress and self-doubt.

Throughout the day, whenever I looked at my phone, I felt frustrated that I had so much trouble becoming a "successful" person. It didn't help that my Watch pinged to notify me that I was "further behind" on my exercise goals that I usually would've been, tenfold increasing my sense of guilt and frustration at my slip-up.

My internalised need for productivity was likely the embodiment of growing up in a society with an economy-centric habitus..

habitus:

socially ingrained habits, skills and dispositions (Iskra, 2021)

Rather than self-indignation, my frustrations should have instead been directed at the culturally-hegemonic definition of what it meant to be successful, which became synonymous with constant productivity.

Funnily enough, I realised I had already practiced a pseudo-"successful" person's morning routine when I was in high school, where I'd wake up at 0545h to get ready for school.

In order to get 7-8 hours of sleep, I had to be asleep by 2300 latest. Between getting home from school at 1900h, I only had a little over 4 hours to squeeze in family dinners, study time, and rest.

Reflecting on that time period, I realised this was a form of institutionalised discipline where people felt like they were constantly under pressure to perform optimally by virtue of competition in schools, without any heed for different social classes (Foucault, 1977).

As someone privileged enough to have hired help at home during my high school days, the time spent at home was reserved for personal necessities as aforementioned. Otherwise, I would have had to help with household chores like cooking and cleaning, effectively cutting that 4 hours for myself in half. To a degree, this societal expectation to have ample time for self-care and improvement could be an unmarked category that expects everyone to have the same level of privilege.

unmarked category:
assumed standard against which is considered marked (Song, 2021)

UNIFORM-DRESSING

Nonetheless, I remained focused on saving time, and came across the idea of “uniform dressing”—where you essentially develop a daily uniform for yourself to wear, with the reason commonly touted being to avoid “decision fatigue”. Supposedly, removing daily wardrobe indecisiveness would save energy and time—a classic example of the entrepreneurial self mindset.



Steve Jobs in his signature uniform; a black turtleneck and jeans

entrepreneurial self mindset:
when people are incentivised to calculate the costs and benefits of each choice they make in order to maximize the returns on their efforts (Iskra, 2021)

When I attempted to incorporate this, I realised that even prior, I had subconsciously tried to avoid wearing the same clothes too often. For some reason, I wanted to avoid outfit-repeating because it seemed synonymous with being unable to afford more. In my quest to be deemed societally presentable by society’s habitus and entrenched consumerism, I had ingrained the need to demonstrate my cultural capital through material items of clothing (Iskra, 2021).

With that realisation, I was puzzled as to why wearing the same thing every day was therefore seen as a “successful” person’s behaviour for those of the upper class, while it was seen as “scrupulous” and “poor” for people of lower classes. The variable ways that uniform-dressing would be perceived based on cultural capital underscores the importance of intersectionality in addressing issues,

intersectionality:
how an individual’s social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privileges (Song, 2021)

When beginning this practice, I sought to understand how “successful” people got to where they are. I didn’t expect miracles to happen, but I encountered difficulties in unexpected ways. Despite everyone having 24 hours in each day, different social classes would have different durations of time for them to actually be an entrepreneur of their selves because of other necessary commitments like cooking and cleaning, that those with enough economic capital could simply pay others to do for them, giving select individuals full ownership over their time. Even the way virtually identical behaviours could be perceived differently reveals the deep entrenchment of the barriers to be a societally-deemed successful person. The systematic barriers that prevent social mobility like cultural and economic capital mean that any attempt to encourage “success” requires intersectionality to account for individuality, but also a paradigm shift in mindset to understand the uniqueness of each person’s circumstances.

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