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Expository Writing

Essay 1 Rough Draft

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9/9/2015

Environment Conditions and Our Personalities

What makes individuals unique? Most would say a person’s personality makes them who they are. An individual’s personality is the mental characteristics that make them unique from other people. It includes all the patterns of thought and emotions that cause us to do and say things in particular ways. Genetics is one of the main factors that shapes our personalities. Most of us have been told that we are like our parents or act like our parents in a certain ways. That is because of some combination of genes, and the environment we are raised in. Our parents raise us in their own image. Environment plays a big role in shaping personality than heredity. In the article, “The Power of Context,” Malcolm Gladwell gives and environmental argument, which suggests that crimes can be prohibited depending on what the environment is like. Malcolm Gladwell provides evidence throughout his entire essay that explains, the situation people are in has an effect on how they act wherever they are at. Gladwell shows several examples like the broken window theory, which illustrates that maintaining and monitoring environments can prevent serious crimes from happening. Throughout the article, Gladwell shows examples about how the environment plays an important role in influencing a person’s actions. With so many people in the world, it would not be far fetched to believe that there are different types of personalities. People’s personalities and characteristics are created by the environment they live in. The environmental factors that exert pressures on people’s personality formation are the norms among their friends, family and social groups, the culture in which they are raised, and other influence that they experience. The environment to which people are exposed plays a substantial role in shaping their personality; it influences their mood and the way they behave, which then influences their actions. However, motivation to act out of the ordinary can be controlled by making minor changes to the environment. The environment to which we are exposed to plays a substantial role in shaping our personality. Every person on this earth is at the center of their own world. Everyone experiences different situations and scenarios based on their environment. A person’s identity is developed through everyday experience of their surroundings. People change and adapt to the needs placed on them. Regardless, the quality of the people a person is surrounded by will determine the way they choose to meet their needs, whether it is an emotional, financial, physical, or social needs. The way people are treated by others helps to define how they see themselves. A person who is constantly praised by his or her friends or family for being athletic will often come to define himself or herself in that way. Meanwhile, another person who is praised for his or her smartness will define him of herself differently. Malcolm Gladwell asserts the example of graffiti in the subway, which invited the crime on the subway. Graffiti became the symbol of bad environment in the subways. In the mid 1980s, David Gunn, who was hired to apply the broken window theory said, “graffiti were symbolic of the collapse of the system” (Gladwell 152). Graffiti is a bad for the environment because it includes things like gang signs, raciest comments. Which gives bad influences to the people who sees them, and make them want to do the same. People see graffiti as a place to get their anger out, however, what they do no know is they are starting a fight within the community. Gunn insisted to focus more on the graffiti first in solving the subway crimes than any other major techniques. His team started coloring over the graffiti every day and changed the subway environment. He said removing graffiti will reform management and physical changes to the subway system. It will clean the environment of the subways as well as lower the crime in the subways. Gladwell asserts, “that based on the premise that an epidemic can be reversed, can be tipped, by tinkering with the smallest details of the immediate environment” (155). Even though, coloring over graffiti on the subway was not the most shared methods of solving a problem, it certainly is one of the most influential in changing the behaviors of others. People imitate what they see around them. If they see better things than they will learn and do good things. Such environment helps shape the personality of the people. What people see and experience everyday becomes their personality. These include the place they live and the people around them. Their experience in their life as well as the people whom they associated with such as friends, family, or the community as a whole helps define one’s personality.

In addition to shaping our personality, our behavior is also a feature of the environment. We become who we are surrounded by. Our environment around us provide a sense of belonging, foster attachments, construct meanings, and mediate change. People learn what they see around them and act accordingly. It also changes our mood based on our surroundings. For instance, environment in the library asks us to stay quiet, while environment in a game or a music concert asks us to behave completely different. Malcolm Gladwell asserts, “if a window is broken and left un-repaired, people walking by will conclude that no one cares and no one is in charge. Soon, more windows will be broken, and the sense of anarchy will spread from the building to the street on which it faces, sending a signal that anything goes” (152). Gladwell argues that minor illegal offenses accumulates into larger, more serious crime if it is not handled immediately. When a person does a crime and gets away with it, next time he will do the crime again thinking that he will get away just like last time. This goes on and spreads and eventually affects the thinking of the entire community. The more people get away with illegal crimes, the more and more they will do it again. People will just do what they feel right to satisfy their needs. “The impetus to engage in a certain kind of behavior is not coming from a certain kind of person, but from a feature of the environment” (Gladwell 152). Most of the times one tends to make decisions about his or her life according to the people surrounding them and not according to oneself; this causes one to skew away from his or her own principles. Environment creates a unique personality in people that concerns the most important, most noticeable part of an individual’s psychological life. For an action to be committed or to force a certain kind of behavior into someone can be “as simple and trivial as everyday signs of disorder, like graffiti and farebeating” (Gladwell 161). Environment defines a characteristic possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognitions, motivations, and behaviors in various situations. People act act in the same ways or similar ways in a variety of situations. Personality does not just influence how we move and respond in our environment, it also causes us to act in certain ways. Personality is displayed in more than just behavior. It can also be seen in our thoughts, feelings, close relationships, and other social interactions.

Even though our environment controls our behavior and actions, we can control them by making minor changes to our environment. Environment is a crucial piece of the puzzle when we look at behavior because our brain reacts profoundly to its surrounding environment. One of the main reasons we are not simply predestined for a particular behavior by our genes is that our environment can turn those genes on or off. When we learn how to optimize our environment, we learn how to make behavioral change easier and more successful. Gladwell asserts, “Environment tipping points are things that we can change: we can fix broken windows and clean up graffiti and change the signals that invite crime in the first place” (154). Even though the environment influences our behavior and makes us act in certain way, people still have the ability to control their behavior and actions. We can change our behaviors and actions by changing our everyday environment. For instance, when going to work, we see something that bothers us everyday, such as graffiti, we can try taking a different road to the work. By doing so our minds will stay focused on our tasks, and will not be distracted by any unnecessary meanings. And most important of all it will prevent our mood from changing, which will eventually affect our actions. Because when our mood changes from good to bad, we take actions that we often regret taking. Taking these little steps can change our personality in a good way and it creates a better community for everyone to live in. “The power of context says you do not have to solve the big problems to solve crimes” such as bad actions (Gladwell 157). By solving small problems in the community, such as the graffiti, can help eventually put a stop to the major problem that the community or person is dealing with. Gladwell argues, if small rules are enforced all the times, it will force people to think twice before breaking the rules. It will also prevent some individuals from committing major and much worse crime, since they know that law enforcement will not tolerate any kind of rule breaking. Making small changes to the surrounding environment can help people control their actions and behaviors, and eventually create a better community for everyone to live in.

Environment plays an important and a bigger role than genetics in the development of the individual. Genetics factors explain only about half of the variance of personality development, such as our hair and eye colors. The other half is due to environmental factors such as our behaviors and personality. Everyone behaves and acts differently based on the environment. For instance, a person in the United States will act and behaves completely different than a person living in Saudi Arabia. Each will wear different clothes and eat different food that suits them the best in their environment. Environment controls our minds by telling us what to do. However, it is only by actively modifying our environments that we can ever achieve our highest potentials. Because as we prioritize ourselves, we naturally began to surround ourselves with exceptional people like great teachers, skilled coaches and co-workers, and smart and loving friends. Aligning our individual goals with the needs of the planet and people around us is the inevitable progression of personality development.