

How environmental factors influence personal decisions in malcolm gladwell's the ...

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Environmental Influence

Does the environment you're in influence the decisions you make? This is not a commonly asked question because the most logical answer is no, your choice are your choices. However imagine the two same scenarios, going down the stairs to the subway, but in one of these scenarios it's during the middle of the night with the lights flickering while the other scenario has a brightly lit subway during the bustling daytime. People may think that they are in charge of their own destiny and that their choices are their choices, but there is evidence to proof that there are many more factors than just personal choice when it comes to decision making.

The Tipping Point, by Malcolm Gladwell, talks about the idea of environmental factors subconsciously influencing the decisions of different individuals. One of his examples goes into the life of a man named Goetz. Goetz was the average angry man who seemed to look for things to complain about. There are homeless constantly roaming the neighborhood, people constantly miss the trashcan, why does nobody else care, are things that are easily solvable by just moving. However Goetz seemed to enjoy the idea of putting himself as the victim. Moving to his everyday routine, he left the " impromptu street party"(Gladwell, 135) of his apartment and walked to the nearest subway entrance everyday in order to get to work. Homeless would purposely jam the token taker, while another homeless person would open a side door, so that paying customers could either pay the homeless man holding the side door open in order to get to the train, or hop over the stalls. Graffiti would cover every inch of the station and every inch of the

train's walls. There was a constant fear of problems arising in his everyday life whether it be fear of being late to work because of issues entering the subway or the train being unable "to go more than 15 miles per hour" to fear of getting mugged while walking home. Goetz was constantly surrounded by this sort of environment that he almost went numb to it. The Saturday he got on that train, "There were about twenty people in the car, but most sat at the other end, voidng the four teenaagers, because they were, as eyewitnesses would say later, 'horsing around' and 'acting rowdy.' Goetz seemed oblivious" (133). Goetz was so use to this sort of chaotic behavior that surrounded him 24 hours a day, he didn't even notice that he should've been bothered by the fact everybody stayed away from these four teens, and stayed away himself. Instead he sat down in the midst of them and when they provoked him, instinctively reached for his gun and shot the four teens. He had been numb to this for so long, that when he was set off he even went as far as to make sure what was provoking him was kicked, or shot, while they were on the ground when he fired a fifth shot into Cabey's spinal cord after saying that he seemed "all right" (134). However even after this horrific behavior and fleeing, "Goetz turned himself in to a police station" only one week after the shooting, showing that he did show some sort of remorse for his actions, especially since the general public were praising him as if it was a heroic act. This clearly shows that Goetz was not one hundred percent in control that day as he showed regret for what h

While Gladwell uses Goetz's situation, there are many more examples that we can find even in our own daily lives. For example, if we are at the mall with our friends versus if we are at the museum with our friends, we will act

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accordingly based on the stigma of the environment. There is actually no law that states that someone must be silent or quiet inside of a museum and you can't get kicked out for being too loud, to an extent. However because there are things in a museum that indicate quietness such as books, and readings, and people being focused; while mall's have things that indicate leisure and fun such as food malls, toy train rides, and shopping, we act based on what's around us. Humans naturally have connotations attached to certain things such as books equal quite, food equals fun, etc. We can take this idea and extend it further to everybody's daily lives. If people act quite because of the museum's environment, what can we surround the streets in to promote more civilness when out in public? The big idea behind allowing the individual to choose to be more civil or more quite, is that it must seem as if it's solely their choice. If we chose to enforce civilness with police and fines and weapons, the product would be the same if we made all the streets clean with nice drinking fountains and maintaining it, but the issue is that option one would brew a feeling of oppression that will burst while option two promotes the individual to want to keep up the image of where they are. The individual that is in the suburbs is more likely to act as if they are in the suburb rather than the individual who is in the ghetto who is more likely to act as if they are in the ghetto due to ingrained nature of knowing how much you need to protect yourself depending on what is surrounding you.

This is why the same subconscious idea of, your decisions being influenced by your environment, carries out to every example of humans acting how they act. If you follow a couple going to a business party, do they really care about how your co-workers' children are doing or where they got the lamp in

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the living room? Probably not but because the party is related with business, the nice outfits, classy drinks, importance of it all, may encourage you to act professional which in turn makes you choose to act a lot more friendly towards your co-workers than you normally would.

The environment you are in has a significant influence on the decisions you make whether you notice it or not. If we can fully grasp this idea, it can be turned into something positive for everyone and if it is already being used against us we need to understand how they do it in order to better defend ourselves. There are so many factors into what we do and why we do it that it needs to be understood in order to solve some mysteries of human actions. Helping people truly choosing the right path they wanted rather than the ones they were put into due to their environment.