

## Psychology of Environment

It has been well established and accepted that children, particularly prior to adolescence and puberty, need a safe community within which to grow. This setting is usually supplied by the parents (or some authoritative, paternal figure). What could best be described as a *psychology of environment* develops within the children. It is not of much consequence whether the psychology of environment develops in an affluent, upper class setting or a middle class setting or a setting reflective of lower class conditions. What is of the utmost importance is that the growing children trust, respect, and admire the psychology of environment that develops. The children must have a healthy appreciation of how the environment works and how they may best navigate through it. This capability is passed down from parent to child through the understanding of psychology of environment. It must develop on a foundation rooted in ethics, morality and a sense of justice. And while the parameters of the basis of a psychology of environment may bend and give way, they must never break or become destroyed or lost. If so, the child will become broken or destroyed or lost.

About six years ago, my psychology of environment was irrevocably shook and separated from its foundation and I have been fighting desperately to regain a solid footing ever since. Because psychology of environment is similar to the human body, industrially strong, yet fragile and brittle, it is ruggedly vulnerable. My psychology of environment was altered by my biggest superhero: my mother. My relationship with my mother was one of unquestioned admiration: an independent African American mother of four. She was the antithesis to Darth Vader or the Boogey Man. She was my hero. But that changed one fateful day under “the tree.”

In a working class neighborhood of dilapidated homes and few green lawns, not many were interested in botany, but there were many who had an undeniable attraction to “the tree” - which was located in what could only be described at one point in history as a children’s park. This was no ordinary tree for its fruit of choice was crack cocaine. And it was a very fertile tree. Under cover from its canopy and hidden in its shadows, the local drug dealers would operate their illicit enterprise. Now, it was well known in the neighborhood that if one wished to get high, whatever one needed, especially crack, could be found under the tree. One evening, and I can only assume that she did not know I was present, I sat and watched as my mother emerged from our apartment struggling mightily to carry one of our 27” color televisions with the built in DVD player. I watched, at first puzzled and then angered as she headed for the tree. Because the canopy of the tree was so full I could not see all that transpired. I was able to see my mother enter under the tree’s canopy carrying a TV and exit from under the tree absent one television.

The next day I was invited to one of the local toughs house to play *Madden*. To my horror and shock, it was our television that the *Play Station* was hooked up to. I did everything that I could to control my emotions and immediately went home. Now, for a vast majority of my life many relatives have hinted at and made jokes about my mother’s drug problem. But I had never seen it with my own eyes, or perhaps I just refused to open my eyes. But now it began to make sense: the lack of food in the home with great frequency, the numerous trips to the pawn shop, the miscellaneous “friends” that seemed too young to be my mother’s contemporaries, the missing electronics, etc.

This revelation had dramatic effects on me. My psychology of environment was crushed. I often took pride in the fact that we were “from the ’hood” but had not succumb to it. That façade was crushed. Was it not possible to produce quality individuals in the environment from which I sprang? This was the bad time. One of the most easily recognized side effects of a crushed psychology of environment is depression. I was thoroughly depressed. I could not find faith in anything or anyone; not even the savior. I was lost. My grades plummeted. I go into trouble with the law. I made bad decisions, which in turn only continued to reinforce my new understanding of my psychology of environment.

When those very individuals, in whom we entrust the most and from whom we expect the most, let us down or disappoint us or simply turn out to be people different than we assumed, one’s psyche can be damaged, particularly if the psyche belongs to one who is young and impressionable and still trying to learn how the world works: like children. The result is a damaged psychology of environment that can only be repaired through the creation of an entirely different, independently constructed environment.

Let us begin.