

The Effect of the Environment on a Child

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Introduction

The phrase “monkey see monkey do” is an idiom hinting at the belief that people often mimic what others do around them whether it be subconsciously or intentionally. This same belief is especially projected towards kids as they mimic the actions of their loved ones. Regardless of moral value, social expectation, or any feeling of necessity, any kid may mimic what they see their loved ones doing. This occurrence can be positive under the right circumstances and negative under the wrong ones. Role models around a kid can help set the precedent for how a kid’s character and behavior will be once they develop into an independent thinker. A positive role model may instill values like integrity, honest, punctuality, and respect into a kid while a negative role model may show a kid values like dishonesty, greed, cynicism, and arrogancy through the actions and words they perform and say around that child. Role models and a child’s family are known to have a strong impact on a child’s development, but the influence of a child’s external environment may be harder to track. When considering the artifacts that were chosen for this analysis, it can be seen that they deeply correspond with the belief that kids are influenced by the people and things that surround them, but they show this belief through very different rhetorical situations.

A source that directly pointed towards the idea that kids are influenced by their surroundings was the research paper “Influence of Watching Advertisements on Kids' Food Choices” by Dr. Hassan and his associates. Certain traits of the article, like its format and content, point heavily towards the use of logos to bring about the idea that kids are easily influenced. The article is organized in the format of a peer-reviewed scientific paper with sections like the intro, materials and methods, results, discussion, and conclusion. Each of these sections add to the logos of the article by using logic from results, background information, or

pure reasoning to help reach the conclusion that kids are influenced by TV to make food choices. The section that provides the most value in logically supporting the paper's claim is the results section which provides the results of a questionnaire done on 150 parents and kids from the ages of five to fifteen, who selected their preferred brand after they watched certain channels for a select amount of days. Most of the results hint towards the preference of brands seen when the kids watched channels that advertised them. The result went on to show the preference for less healthy food overall. As the focus of the paper, the questionnaire and its results heavily towards the claim of the article and add to the article's logical appeal.

The paper's ethos is upheld by a wide range of attributes linked to the paper. Scientific writing traits like the structure of the article, proper APA citation throughout the paper, and the use of select tenses that are usually used in academic settings provide a sense of formality commonly found in academia. The linkage of this paper to academia is further construed by the fact that the study was done at the University of Lahore, College of Dentistry by various professors and researchers in the University. The audience of the paper are most likely other researchers, professors, students, or individuals simply desiring to know more about things related to children's psychology or food preferences. The audience and their desires give the conventions immense value as the paper is seen as professional and reliable, which adds weight to the argument at hand.

The exigence provided by the author was that the fact that kids choose to eat less healthy food categories overall due to television, and that they would be more likely to choose a product shown to them on screen rather than a new product (Hassan, 2020). The unhealthy food consumption patterns of kids and the fact that no study has directly aimed at how advertisements influence kids' food choices created a need to write the article. The study and article have mostly

met this need and purpose, but some constraints are attached to the article which hold it back rhetorically. Like most scientific writings, the paper lacks direct bias and opinion, vast figurative language, and informalities. This lack of personal touch causes the article to have minimal pathos/feeling besides when the exigence in the introduction is discussed, as some may have a passion to help kids be healthier, leading to an emotional connection. Since this paper aims to inform researchers, professors, and other associated individuals of a current issue through a study, the lack of pathos has minimal effect on the article's rhetoric. The three-year age of the article since its publication date of November 30, 2020, and the article's relatively small test population size do negatively affect the article's appeal to logos as well.

The second artifact that supports the idea that kids are impacted by their environment is an advertisement by Volkswagen which is primarily advertising a Volkswagen sedan by showing a short story of a child dressed as the *Star Wars* character Darth Vader. By showing this child dressed as a movie character, the ad has a secondary effect of showing how a kid may be impacted by movies and TV that they watch. Since this artifact is in the form of a video advertisement, the conventions and overall rhetoric are exceedingly different from that of a research paper. The advertisement conventions focus more on the characters, the setting, the camera techniques, and sound. The lack of restriction of an ad allows for much to be expressed in a variety of ways, whether it be through text, sound, or picture. The ad places a restriction on itself by choosing to have no dialogue, leaving the story to be inferred and understood by common sense and the understanding of motions, gestures, and the *Star Wars* franchise.

In the Volkswagen ad, the conventions and the overarching story were used to establish an emotional connection with the viewers. The ad starts off with a theme song for the Darth Vader character which plays throughout the ad, and has a camera shot that starts at the child's

feet and pans up to show a kid with a Darth Vader outfit on. In the *Star Wars* franchise, the character Darth Vader is able to use his mind and hands to move things without touching them. The kid, who is influenced by the *Star Wars* movie he previously watched, goes on to attempt to move many things in the house. He tries to move a treadmill, laundry machine, doll, and more things but eventually gets frustrated halfway through as shown by him shrugging and putting his hand on his head. Once the kid's father arrives with his car, the kid runs up to the car and tries to use the force. In this instance the music changes to show suspense until the car turns on due to the dad using his key fob to activate the car. The kid (who didn't see the key fob, but just the car) is surprised and happy that he finally used "the force". The advertisement then pans in on the key fob and the car to highlight the product.

Pathos is used immensely throughout the advertisement to help promote the car, and as a reference that kids are impacted by their surroundings. The ad being *Star Wars* themed automatically establishes an emotional connection to the millions of fans of the franchise, and the main character being a young child dressed up in a Darth Vader suit catches the attention of others who may not be *Star Wars* fans. The audience become invested in the story and feel joy when the kid succeeds, and by association feels joy when they are shown the Volkswagen car. The fact that the kid is dressed up as a make-believe movie character and tries to do magical actions like use "the force" tells the audience that this kid, along with many others, are heavily prompted by their surroundings.

The rhetorical approach of the advertisement holds even more contrast to the research paper when the ethos and logos of the advertisement are examined. Since the advertisement is a story focused on promoting a car, credibility is minimal as no individual who helped design/manufacture the car is present, nor someone who can speak on the psychological

influence of the environment on children. Ethos can be viewed as present when considering the fact that the ad is from the manufacturer of the car, Volkswagen. No study, or scientific information is being shared or leaving little room for any appeal related to logos to be present. The ad mainly relies on the story, characters, and conventions of a video ad to promote the car and the idea of kids being impressionable.

The exigency of the ad is simply that a new Volkswagen car needed to be promoted and done while appealing to *Star Wars* fans and kids. This ad fulfills this need and may have aided in influencing people who may have not watched the ad to buy the car as the kids who watched the ad may push their parents into buying a Volkswagen car.

The different formats and goals of the artifacts cause a major contrast to occur between their rhetorical approaches. The scientific paper largely emphasizes logos and ethos through the format of the paper, the result and discussion sections, and the credibility of the authors. The advertisement took an entirely different approach by using a story, the feelings and experiences associated with that story, and pop culture references to establish pathos oriented rhetorical appeal rather than a logos or ethos related one. Despite these differences, both artifacts succeed in performing their desired purposes and indicating the influence of the environment on children.

References:

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