

Bio-Psycho-Social-History Theory Application Paper

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**Family Configuration**

Anna Benko is the first born in a family of two children. She has one younger sister who is 18 years old. Her father, Vlatko, is 48 years old. Her mother, Ruth, is 53 years old. Her mother, Ruth Benko, works as a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) at Timber Ridge Manor in Dowagiac, Michigan. Her father, Vlatko Benko, is a busy man, he works at the Andrews University Dairy as a co-manager and also takes care of his own business that he has. In his own business, he sells all sorts of things online and in person to many people all over the world. Lastly, at the farm, that the family owns, her father takes care of it most of the time, and he sells the animals to people as well. Her sister is not working right now, but she is attending a college named Kalamazoo Valley State College, where her major is Education. She also does not currently work, but she attends a University in Tennessee named Southern Adventist University, where she is studying Social Work. Her home is in Berrien Springs, Michigan. This is where both of her parents are residing now, while she and her sister are away at college for the school year. Her sister lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan during the school year and she lives in Collegedale, Tennessee during the school year. The only reason she and her sister left home was because of schooling or else they would still be living at home all the time.

She has quite a few extended family members that are important to her family and that live close by. Her grandpa, Apolinar, is quite important to her family. Apolinar is her mothers' father and lives close by them. They also have her uncle and moms brother, Samuel, and his wife, Mila, and children. They have four boys. The youngest boys are twins, Matthew and Jacob. Then, they have a 17 years old son named Joseph, and a 25 year old son named Jean-Pierre Ruiz. Other family that is important is her aunt and moms' sister, Maria, her husband, Diego, and their children. They reside in Chicago, Illinois. They have two daughters Keren and Cesia.

There is only one important non-family member that was mentioned and that was Talisa Gonzalez. She is like a daughter to Mr. and Mrs. Benko and a sister to Anna. Talisa has helped Anna through her worst times and been there since the beginning. Talisa has helped Anna grow a lot through her life time.

### **Individual Development**

There were a few developmental milestones that Anna recalls from childhood and some were also provided by the rest of her immediate family. One milestone was when Anna started to walk at 14 months old which is a lot sooner than what the book says. The book Zastrow (2007) states it takes on average about 18 months to walk. Another milestone was when she was potty trained at age 2. Another developmental milestone was when Anna rode her first bike for the first time. She was 5 years old and she fell a couple of times, but never gave up and kept that mentality through her life time. She was a very outgoing person, picked up a lot of things easily, and kept a determined mentality.

Erik Erikson introduced a theory of eight stages and it focused on how your personality is developed throughout your life time through different experiences (Zastrow, 2007). Anna told us about the stages that she has gone through her lifetime and told us about the present stage in her life as well.

Erickson's first stage talks about, basic trust versus basic mistrust, in this stage young infants are learning to trust older adults and other people. At this age, the most interaction they have is with their parents so this stage is important to gaining trust with their parents. Anna stated that she was not able to remember this part clearly, but her parents have told her about how she acted and her parents taught her to trust the right people. She said that she was always very trusting in others as long as she can remember.

The second stage is, autonomy versus shame and doubt. The book states that children from eighteen months to three years old strive for independence (Zastrow, 2007). As a young kid, Anna remembers her parents being very strict and telling her what to do a lot of the time. Her parents did it in the sense that they still let her develop self-worth.

The third stage is Initiative versus guilt. At this stage, it is described that preschoolers face crisis about taking their own initiative in doing things. During the preschool years, Anna never attended preschool, but she did sing a lot for church with sister every Sabbath and in afternoon concerts. She remembers being involved with the church a lot, because her whole family was. In this stage, Anna overcame it by being able to sing in church and choirs in front of all her peers.

The fourth stage is, industry versus inferiority. This stage is when you are in school and children become successful in their activities. Ever since Anna started attending school she always has been intelligent and on top of her things. She never got bad grades and was never allowed to. She was a really good student and if she was not, her parents would take away benefits that she had and they would yell at her for not doing better. She would get a lot of lectures and speeches not only in school, but also about life decisions even at a young age. Through all those experiences she found motivation and was able to do well. School and friends were her cushion for all bad experiences.

The fifth stage is identity versus role confusion, in this stage adolescents try to find and develop their self-identity. Through my high school years Anna said that she was never was confused of who she was, but as soon as she graduated high school in her last teenage year she changed in the way she looked and experimented with different types of culture to find out what

her purpose was. Anna faced very little confusion during most adolescent years, but she was able to find herself in the last year of her teenage years.

Erickson's sixth stage is intimacy versus isolation. Anna says that this is the stage that she is going through right now. This stage is the stage where young adults are looking for intimacy. Anna does not believe that she thinks the same way she used to think about relationships, back in high school. Everything has become a lot more serious and intimate when it comes to relationships. She believes that the idea of spending the rest of her life with someone is finally becoming reality. She also voiced that guys her age do not seem as serious as she does. Anna seems to be doing well with the ideas of intimacy and coping well with the transition.

Piaget has a theory that contains four stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete, and formal operations. Anna was asked about these stages.

Sensorimotor: While she was a toddler, Anna was always touching things, throwing things, and trying to play different instruments. This showed a behavior that was goal oriented and that is a very good thing to do at this first stage.

Preoperational: Anna says that she recalls being annoying and wanting everyone to listen to her when she was in this stage. This deals with the idea of being egocentric and not being able to see other people's viewpoints.

Concrete Operations: During this stage, Anna never really worried about being liked or fitting in. But she was very popular and well known in her school by being a leader and doing other things. At this stage, all different relationships were starting to be looked at differently.

Formal Operations: Anna felt like she was very responsible and mature at this age. Although there was more maturing to be done she felt capable of taking certain responsibility.

During this stage, she was able to accomplish a lot of goals she had set for herself. She kept a positive, straight, and motivated mindset.

Lawrence Kohlberg proposed a theory with three levels and six stages of development through moral standards (Zastrow, 2007). The three levels consist of: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional.

In the preconventional stage, Anna knew and was taught the difference between right and wrong. She was always a good student and a good kid towards her parents. She was just always loud to seek attention. At the conventional stage, Anna was very independent and never wanting help from anyone and wanting to do things on her own. In the current stage that she is in, she feels that she is pretty responsible and thinks logically about all situations.

### **Family Organization**

Anna has a very close relationship with both of her parents. But she is closer to her father in a different way than her mother. Anna feels like there is more of an emotional connection with her mother than her father. But she feels especially close to her father through academics and financial issues. The bond between Anna's sister and her parents are quite different. Her sister is less open and closed to their parents. Anna's sister is closer to their mother emotionally than to their father at all. Her sister is more introverted than Anna.

By looking at the Baurind's model, Anna concluded that her parents are authoritative. Her parents provide support to her life, but also provide a good amount of control. They were involved in a lot of her life with encouraging and helping her make decisions, but did not force her to make a certain decision. Anna thinks that her father is more controlling than her mother. Sometimes she feels like her dad uses an authoritarian type of parenting, but it is all mostly authoritative.

Growing up she stated that her dad punished her a lot, which is a form of operant conditioning. Anna recalls getting spankings for disobeying or misunderstandings that were not her fault, but her sisters. She said that the “spankings” were a form of punishment. The book describes this as a “...positive reinforce, which results in the decrease in frequency of a particular behavior...”

Anna stated that growing up her father had most of the power in the family and that her mother was more submissive, but was passionate about certain ideas and opinions. Her parents would share the power when making family decisions and those would be made together. Anna also stated that the power between her and her sister is pretty equal. But she feels like her sister has more power right now because she is living closer to home.

### **Marital Relationship**

According to Anna, her parents’ relationship was always very loving and caring although they both did not share love in the same way. Her father would show his love by actions and making sacrifices to her mother and her family. But her mother on the other hand showed love by touch and affection rather than other things. She also said that she believed that her parents’ relationship got increasingly better as her and her sister grew older. During her childhood, they would argue a lot about financial issues, but that was the major cause of conflict. Other than that, there were no other problems stated.

Anna was asked why they argued and how they got over it. She said that they argued because they often felt like there was not enough money to afford everything for the family. Anna claimed that her father is a very direct and blunt person, so sometimes he would not hold back and make the situation worse. In present day, she said that they have found ways to settle arguments by actually hearing each other out and yelling less.

Anna's father has respect for women and her mother also has respect for men. She stated that even though they came from different cultures, they still had the same level of respect taught in both cultures. Her father was in control and her mother was more submissive and that is how they were raised to be. However, being in the United States they made a few exceptions and would work together on certain topics.

Some of the lessons her parents learned about marriage were positive ones. While being in America, they had to learn a new culture and be able to be flexible with circumstances that they both had not been used to. They learned new ways to establish relationships and new ways of talking to people that they were not normally used to. Anna learned by watching and growing with them that it is important to treat the person you love just like you would want them to treat you. She learned that when hard times are faced, that is when you discover the realness of a person.

### **Family Communication Processes**

Anna agreed that she is the one that talks the most in the family although her whole family does a lot of communicating and talking. Her sister is more to herself, unless certain issues are addressed. She stated that her mother is also less opinionated, but her father talks a lot like Anna and has an opinion for everything. She feels like she has a good connection with her parents, but she also thinks her sister does not feel the same way about it at times.

Feelings are not very often discussed in the family, Anna states. Anna also states that her and her sister are the ones that mostly talk about feelings, but they do not discuss super personal feelings with their parents. She does not feel like there are not certain subjects not to bring up, because her parents have made it a safe environment to talk about. But she feels like it is not necessary to bring up.



Anna's family experienced deaths the past year with her grandma and grandpa and those were the most traumatic she could recall. She believes that her family is really well with dealing with certain situations like these, which make them come out stronger. She states that through those struggles it re-kindles their meaning of family especially when difficult times arise.

### **The Family Context**

Anna's family earn their income through a joint income. Both her parents work and provide education for both her and her sister. Her parents support the family to make it suitable to live and survive. Anna's father does not have a degree, but has his own upcoming business which is very successful. Her mother works as a Certified Nurse Assistant, which helps aid the income and make it possible to go to school, have a roof over her head, and be fed.

It was said that there are not really any conceptions of those outside the family, but more so, the church. Her family does not really like the idea of her or her sister being in a relationship with someone out of the church. Being friends with them is not a problem, as long as they were not to get influenced by them. Anna had a lot of friends from both public and Adventist schools and her parents accepted them no matter who or what race you were.

Anna's family had more stories from living back in Chicago, Illinois. That is where she grew up with her family. Both her parents were involved in the church as a deacon and Sabbath school teacher. They did not hold any positions in the community. Her mother did not hold a position in any business and her father only had his business.

Anna was asked about losses and the two most recent ones were her grandpa and grandma. It took a while to grieve, but the whole family grew from it and came out stronger.

When asked about myths or heroes, her parents could not recall any myths or heroes from their family stories.

Anna stated that there is no emotional cut-off from either side of parents. Both side of the families know each other pretty well and get along together. When there are family reunions, she says that usually both sides of the family come together and enjoy time together. She also stated that there are no serious unresolved intergenerational family issues.

Anna said that college and schooling for both her and her sister was an influence that drained her parents from financial resources as a whole family. Finances were a major issue growing up and once they both got to college it seemed like it would be a problem again. The family made use of their community resources by being super involved in the church during the week and on Sabbath. They were always doing something, whether it be preaching, teaching, singing, or directing. The church was an important and the only community resource that they had for a while.

### **Family Strengths**

Anna's family has been able to be successful by their history and mentality. Both parents were poor when they were younger, but her parents' parents made sacrifices for their children to be successful and still have food and an education. She stated that her parents had that same mindset with her and her sister. She says that her parents love her to death and would do anything for them. They just want what is best and want them to be successful in anything they do. They bond together in raising a family and an advantage is that they have stayed together through it all. Anna's mother was a strength to the family with leaning on God and the church and staying psychologically strong for the family. Her father was smart and intelligent and always was open to help the children. Overall the family has many strengths as they work together. They are successful as long as they stick together.

## Conclusions

The book Zastrow (2007) refers to a system as a “set of elements that are orderly and interrelated to make a functional whole” (p.12) Anna described her family to be functioning and able to work as a system. The whole family works together to maintain an equal state or a level of homeostasis. This has been seen by the parents disciplining Anna and her sister and that they have worked together to listen more to each other in arguments. The family has a good amount of rules they live by. Anna and her sister are supposed to follow these rules or else face the consequence of being punished. Both her mother and father receive input and give output from each other when they argue and discuss about decisions to be made about the family. Although her parents make the decisions about the family, they often refer back to Anna and her sister for opinions and expect them to give them feedback. Anna also stated how her parents use to argue a lot about financial issues which was a low point in their lives, and this would be considered negative entropy. This time period helped them grow and develop as a family when overcoming this. Overall, there was progress shown through the marriage. It shows how her parents use to argue a lot and now can listen to each other and try to understand each others side of the spectrum. Anna did not mention an equifinality or any subsystems involved. She stated that everyone in the family loves each other and help each other grow.

### References

Zastrow, C. & Kirst-Ashman, K.K. (2007). *Understanding human behavior and the social environment* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Australia: Thompson.