

Human Behavior in the Social Environment: Multidimensional Assessment

Janetta Stewart

Nyack College

6/7/2020

This assessment was based on a personal interaction with Lois my interviewee and continued through remote exchange. The exchange was due to the onset of COVID-19 which created remote dialogue. The interaction is based on the lifespan development as related to its Biological, Psychological Sociological and S(piritual dimensions. Lois is an 80-year-old widow for the past 4 years. She is an African American, born and raised in Brooklyn New York, grew up in the diverse community comprising African Americans including Southerners Italians Jews Irish Puerto Ricans. A descendant of freed slaves, her maternal grandfather and her paternal grand- mother an American Indian from Louisiana. Her grandfather was Irish and a mixed marriage emerged between Irish and Indian nationality. She recalled that the Southerners in her community along with the other ethnic groups gave rich support as they looked out for the children. Play time in the summer games like hopscotch jump rope bike riding in the summer under “adult supervision

### ***Infancy :Biological Dimension***

Born in a family to parents who were married in their 20s, Lois was a full term baby. Her 2 older brothers were 14 months and two and a half months older. Her mom developed labor pains at home. She was delivered in her father's hands. He caught her to prevent her from falling to the ground. The ambulance was called, and the mom and baby were taken to the hospital. She was” happy 7pound brown baby girl” She began crawling at 8months Her brothers picked her up to a standing position to help her make steps. By 9 months she began to walk.

At 18 months her mother detected a speech impediment and realized that she was tongue tied-, unable to stick out her tongue. That was due to a string of tissue under the tongue that stopped it from moving. She clipped her tongue by following a similar procedure that a doctor had performed on her younger son. That was done by cutting the tissue under the tongue (the frenum) (called frenectomy according to my research)

### ***Psychological Dimension***

The only girl in the family of three children. At her newborn stage she was introduced to her younger brother, He slapped her in display of sibling rivalry. When 2 weeks old the mother left her husband. This was due to abuse and alcoholism. My interviewee slept with her mom.in the one room she had moved to with 3 children This is because there was inadequate space. She developed separation anxiety when she woke and her mother had left for the grocery store. Her babysitter and daughter of her mom's best friend formulated basic trust and attachment. Although her mom was on Public Assistance she had to work to provide for her family while awaiting the monthly allowance.

According to Erikson's theory of psychological development, "*If the care the infant receives is consistent, predictable and reliable they will develop a sense of trust which will carry them to other relationships, and they will feel secure even when threatened. If these needs are not consistently met, mistrust, suspicion and anxiety may develop* Lois shared that she was shy and soft spoken Shyness while growing up was perhaps a result of the detachments in infancy due to breakup of family union and separation anxiety over her mom's departure for work Childhood illness was smallpox which was treated medically.

### ***Social dimension***

As the only girl in the family she was given special attention by her brothers and her grandfather who gave loving and financial support to her mother while she waited for the public assistance funds to arrive. At age 7 she was enrolled at the private Elementary School where her 2 brothers had already been attending. Her social interaction involved recess time activities like Dodgeball, races and Jumping Jack. Friendships were with older age groups, 3 years apart, but long standing relationship.

### **Early and Middle Childhood**

#### ***Biological***

Between ages 6 to 12 years Lois weighed 60 pounds at first grade and 66 pounds between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. Childhood illness related to mumps. She was medically tested and diagnosed with anemia. She was given B/12 to boost iron deficiency. At times there was a scarcity of food in the kitchen cabinet until the public funds arrived. Consequently those factors affected her physical development and growth patterns. Despite these realities, her cognitive function was intact and she never had to repeat a grade. At age 15 she reached puberty unlike her older friends who arrived age 11 for menarche.

## **Psychological Dimension**

Due to the nonexistence of Preschools during those years Lois was 7 years when she started school. Her brothers 8 and 9 years old were already attending. They began their education at a private Elementary Catholic School. It is commendable that her mom taught them to read while they waited to be admitted to that school.

Their enrollment in that private elementary school on free tuition was based on the premise that her mother was receiving Welfare. However, she was employed in a night job with hours from 4 pm to 12 midnight Lois stated “My first-grade teacher was fabulous. My second-grade teacher was mean”, She explained that the latter teacher treated herself and her other classmate with indifference. She sensed the reason was because the other students in the class were from privileged families and they were the only two on public assistance. That presented Erikson’s stage of industry vs. Inferiority. The feeling of inferiority did not affect her ability to learn and move to the next grade level.

She reflected that 3rd, 4th and 5<sup>th</sup> grades were ok. By 6<sup>th</sup> grade a transition became imminent. Her mom was soon notified that she could not be employed while receiving public assistance. Consequently, she had to pull all three out of the private school and relocate them to the Bronx. They were accommodated by their godfather and admitted to a public school. This disorientation was compounded by the fact that the godfather’s wife had zero tolerance for kids.

However, by a dint of the protective factor, his mother moved in with them and offered nurturing care to the children. Lois expressed that her new classmates were very receptive and welcoming.

By the end of the school year all three children were rerouted back to Brooklyn and to a new address. Their mom rented a more spacious place and she was given her own room They were enrolled in Junior High School Lois at 7<sup>th</sup> while her brothers entered 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>.grades

### **Social Dimension**

Her social circle was with friends her senior and the friendship was maintained for 6 years. Recess time involved dodge ball and jumping jacks. From the connection with older friends instead of a peer relationship it is apparently due to the fact that emotional attachment to her mom was stable. Lois' attachment to her mom extended to her late teen years as she slept with her. This may be conducive to her connection with older age groups at school. *Attachment deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space (Ainsworth,1973,Bowlbey),*

During middle childhood Lois reflected on two occasions on which she faced attempted rape At age 9, an intruder appeared in her room. The appearance of an older occupant of the building foiled the attempt. The intruder left Here was an example of a protective factor as she faced a risk factor The second attempt was during the summer while she was among peers engaged in outdoor play A Jewish and older member of the group was offering bike rides to each at a time when her turn came He kept towing her far away from the block. She suspected his motive and started crying. He retracted his journey back to the group. She internalized those

experiences and never shared with anyone. This emotional experience needed therapeutic intervention to avoid emotional trauma.

After starting Junior High School she lost her way several blocks from her home. A stranger helped her with direction, and she arrived home safely. That could be regarded as another case of a protective factor.

### Adolescence : ***Biological Dimension***

Lois described her physique as short and skinny and was named the “Skinny Twig” She increased in height to 5’7’ However she was

### ***Psychological Dimension***

Lois reflected that at this stage she was still shy and withdrawn with no social skills. At her adult stage she also had similar emotional premonitions and still has at her present age Psychologist James Marcia in the 1960s states that *generally speaking identity, diffusion takes place during adolescence.....it can continue into adulthood Research on identity diffusion indicates that these individuals may feel isolated and withdrawn from the world* Lois intimated that she also lacked voice projection. At that stage of her development the assessment by a social service would offer therapeutic intervention to build social skills, develop positive self -concept and offer speech training.

### ***Social Dimension***

Lois' reflected how at 13 years old her two brothers helped to pull her out of her shell of withdrawal. The elder named Gill introduced her to his friend Lawrence and added "He's a nice guy" That friendship culminated into marriage after 12 years, which involved academic and professional pursuits and long distance correspondence. Lawrence went to Germany for military training. Social engagements among peers involved dates to dance halls, participation with Caribbean National Celebration and North Carolina Celebration. Food and dance were the featured segments. Lois credits her brothers for the growth of friendship she experienced. She divulged that the girls who became her friends were attracted to her brothers who were "good looking". This exposure contributed to improve her self esteem and formulate her identity.

### **Middle Adulthood**

#### **Intimacy vs Isolation 20-25yrs Middle Adult**

### ***Biological Dimension***

Based on the vicissitudes of her life from infancy to middle adulthood, it is evident that Lois grew up faster. She developed economic independence while attending an alternative high school. She earned \$42 on alternate weeks after graduation. She gained full time employment at the telephone company. By her 6<sup>th</sup> year at of employment at age 21 her vitality sapped and she

succumbed to tuberculosis. She was hospitalized for five and a half months. The positive effect of this malady was that her weight increased from lbs103 to lbs140. She was placed on a special tonic for weight gain.

### ***Psychological Dimension***

During the five and one half months hospitalization Lois had a spiritual experience. The patient who was adjacent to her shared that, like Lois she was a member of the Roman Catholic faith. Lois only knew the hail Mary and the rituals with the Rosary. Her confidante prayed from her heart. Lois expressed that for the first time she understood prayer and perceived that God was hearing. She disclosed that the wound began closing.

As previously mentioned Lois Postpartum depression was triggered by two factors. The latter was due to the breakdown in the marital relationship resulted in a lack of communication with her husband that added to her emotional stress. After delivery she went home with her baby.

The depression created an emotional detachment from her baby. Researcher (by, Mazet, & Benony) *The way a mother expresses her emotion can influence the attachment pattern of the infant. Depressed mothers who express themselves as stressed and anxious tend to have infants who develop insecure -ambivalent attachment.* Lois recalled while being in a state of sadness, crying and feeling alone, detached from her newborn baby and from her husband due to her report concerning his alcoholic addiction. In retrospect, it was her dad's alcoholism along with abuse that sent her mother packing when she was a new born. Lois maintained a regimen of psychotherapy. She intimated that she was asked if she felt like committing suicide. While therapy was the clinical recourse she said it was the spiritual application that offered solace. She tuned

into a religious radio station and listened to “Songs in the Night” Her recovery was gradual and so was the attachment processes with her hew born

### **Late Adulthood:*Biological Dimension***

Lois was already poised in an intimate relationship which began at age 13. By age 24 she was married to her first love Lawrence. Within one year she gave birth to her first son Lawrence junior, By age 28 her daughter Lia was born. She had no delivery complications until her last son Roni was born. She was 38 years old. She had premature labor. After delivery she had excessive bleeding. The midwife, while cutting the umbilical cord made an incision in her flesh Lois succumbed to Postpartum Depression .She was asked what might have contributed to this break down she alluded to the physical pain compounded by emotional stress The latter will be referred to in the subsequent topic

#### Psychological Dimension

#### **Social Dimension**

At this stage of her life Lois had limited social connections She devoted her time to the +verify her husband’s hospital admission She did and her son was enrolled tuition free. Lois viewed that as a divine intervention and an answer to prayer.Sadly she lost that son when he was 16 years old .He collapsed with an heart attack on the playground

At the stage of her life, living for 80 years Loise has crystallized cognitive function of her spirituality. "I realize that I truly can not do anything;without the good Lord. I'm very grateful for his mercies towards me for both my present and past.. I did not always realize this at different points in my life. He has protected my family and myself from many dangers. I am healed all over. I desire to hear and read his word,praying for wisdom and strength, for each day that he gives me. My biggest life lesson that has served throughout each stage, is that that prayer shapes our daily lives. All of the trying experiences in my life has brought me to this present point where i'm gracious. I understand that each stage of my life,certain things had to occur to shape and refine me. Now when I have some aches and pain, I can say that i'm still alive rather than complain.

#### Final Thoughts

After the completion of the interview process I would like to share my final thoughts as far as next steps. In listening to her share parts of her story it is evident that she still suffers from grief, from the loss of her son and husband. Spirituality has allowed her to process. However; Lois, could perhaps benefit from christian -based therapy.