

Anne M. Case Study

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PSY 323: Psychology of Gender

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August 22, 2021

People's thoughts and behaviors may be influenced by their gender and can be examined through a social constructionist lens. A social constructionist lens is when "... we create categories and ideas about what people in those categories are like" (Sharp & Wade, 2008, 00:06:28-00:06:34). We can use the social constructionist lens to examine certain case studies and possibly determine why people behaved in the ways that they did. For instance, in the case of Anne, Anne and her family took a trip to Jamaica (where her and her husband were born). Her husband, Peter, got violent when he saw Anne's with her old friend. Peter physically assaulted his children, Megan and Thomas, Anne, and her old friend. Anne took her children from Jamaica to the U.S. in order to find safety. From there, child protective services (CPS) got involved. CPS created the case to help Anne, Peter, and their children cope with the incident that happened in Jamaica. In this case, Anne and her family's thoughts and behaviors may be effected by their culture, by the evolutionary theory, by the type of romantic relationship they have, by the way gender impacts children's coping mechanism when it comes to domestic violence, by the way gender-role attitudes relate to partner violence, and by the way males and females cope to maintain good mental health.

Culture influences gender-roles and may explain the behaviors of Anne, Peter, and their children. Anne was born in Jamaica and is a U.S. Resident. Peter was born in the urban part of Jamaica. Considering both are from Jamaica, gender-roles in Jamaican culture may contribute to Anne and Peter's behaviors and their family patterns. In order "To understand cultural differences in gender-role attitudes, one needs to understand what the expectations for men and women are in the particular culture" (Helgeson, 2020, p. 84). Each culture has their own set of expectations for men and women in that society. In Jamaica specifically, and other Countries located in the West Indies, the father has the primary economic responsibility, and the mother

has domestic tasks as her responsibility (Sargent & Harris, 1992, p. 526). Anne and Peter follow Jamaica's gender-roles closely, but not entirely. Peter works as an insurance agent whose annual wage is roughly \$70,000. While Anne is employed as a secretary with an annual wage of about \$30,000, she engages in more domestic tasks than Peter. Anne took responsibility of Thomas and Megan after her husband abused them. She took action in seeking medical care for herself and her children. She also found a safe place for them to live while the court case is in progress. In some ways, Peter does not meet Jamaica's gender-role expectations. For instance, Anne was supposed to cook a meal for everyone, but Peter did not provide her with money to buy the ingredients. Anne was also concerned that Peter would not pay for any legal expenses or childcare. This displays how Peter did not meet his primary economic responsibility. A study was also completed to determine how Jamaican's view men and women. The study found that men and women from rural Jamaica view men as "... violent, troublesome, unreliable, untrustworthy, sexually aggressive, deceitful, and exploitative' ... Women, in contrast, were seen as 'peaceful, benevolent, nurturing, caring, responsible, and trustworthy'" (Sargent & Harris, 1992, p. 525). Peter displayed violent, troublesome, unreliable, and untrustworthy characteristics. Peter spent one night in jail for physically assaulting Anne's friend who was driving her around, showing her around Jamaica. When he saw her friend's car again, he physically abused Anne and then went on to physically abuse Thomas and Megan. Peter cannot be trusted to provide a safe environment for Anne or their children. On the other hand, Anne displays nurturing, caring, responsible, and trustworthy characteristics. Anne has proven to be trustworthy when it comes to protecting her children. She made responsible choices by calling the police whenever it was necessary, shielding her children from Peter, taking the children from Jamaica to the United States to receive help (medical care, social workers, lawyers, therapy, etc.), and ensuring that she

was okay herself in order to keep custody of her children. In Jamaica, it is common for parents to be unable to effectively look after their children; "... child fostering-the transfer or "shifting" of childcare responsibilities from the natal parents to kin or friends-is prevalent in the West Indies" (Sargent & Harris, 1992, p. 528). Economic factors and lack of resources are the main reasons why children are placed in foster care. In the case of Anne, the social worker who treated Anne's injuries is worried about Anne's capability of caring for and protecting her children. If Anne stayed in Jamaica after the incident with her husband, most likely her children, Thomas and Megan, would have been placed with a friend or in foster care.

The evolutionary theory may be used to explain some of Peter's behavior when he was in Jamaica with his family. The evolutionary theory "... applies the principles of evolution to the study of cognition and behavior" (Helgeson, 2020, p. 176). Peter's aggressive behaviors may be explained by the evolutionary theory. Considering the evolutionary theory connects the thoughts and behaviors of humans today to humans hundreds of years ago, it is possible that the reason for Peter's aggressive behaviors is the same as the reason for someone to act aggressive hundreds of years ago. In this case, sexual jealousy; "Consistent with evolutionary theory, the primary motive men have for killing their spouses is sexual jealousy" (Helgeson, 2020, p. 176). Although Anne was not having an affair, Peter may have thought that she was having a sexual relationship with her old friend whenever she would leave the house. If that is true, then Peter would act out because he was jealous, he wanted Anne all to himself. Instead of asking Anne if she was having an affair or that he was unhappy with her spending time with her old friend, he would express his anger every time he saw Anne's friend. When Anne's friend drove her home after spending a few hours together, Peter physically assaulted Anne's friend by pulling him out of his car and then went on to physically abuse Anne and their children. This is similar to how a human would

act hundreds years ago if they saw another person come close to their mate. The evolutionary theory and possible sexual jealousy may be a possible explanation for Peter's violent and abusive behavior.

The type of love that Anne and Peter share may explain some of their behaviors. John Alan Lee researched love and found that "... there are three primary love styles: eros, or romantic love; storge, or friendship love; and ludus, or game-playing love" (Helgeson, 2020, p. 405). However, Anne and Peter's relationship is best described as manic love. Manic love is "... characterized by jealousy. Loss of the other is a principal concern in this style, which gives rise to feelings of exclusiveness and insecurity" (Tehrani, 2020, p. 604). Both jealousy and the principle of exclusiveness is involved in Anne and Peter's relationship. We see how jealousy causes Peter to act out violently. He believes that Anne had an affair with an old friend of hers, so he physically assaults Anne's friend, as well as Anne and their children, Thomas and Megan. We also see how exclusiveness is involved in Anne and Peter's relationship. Although Peter physically abused Anne and their children in Jamaica and has two prior domestic violence incidents on record, Anne did not mention divorce. It would seem that Anne has not given up on her family and wants Peter to obtain the help that he needs. CPS recommended that Peter should be involved in anger management and batterers' counseling. Anne hopes that she will engage in a preventive service program that can help her deal with the domestic violence and other various family needs. The reason why Peter behaved violently was because he was afraid that Anne was seeing someone. This was not the case, however, Peter wanted to have an exclusive relationship with Anne and if she did have an affair, he would have felt heartbroken. Anne and Peter's manic love style helps explain their thoughts and behaviors.

To understand Thomas's and Megan's thoughts and behaviors, we can consider how boys and girls handle domestic violence. Both Thomas (6 years old) and Megan (3 years old) witnesses Peter hitting Anne and experience Peter hitting them. During the incident in Jamaica, Thomas placed himself in-between his mother and father in order to protect his mother. He would tell his father "Don't talk to mommy like that". Thomas may have chosen this action due to boys having a desire to prove and protect (Wilson, 2017). When first asked about Peter, Megan would repeat the words "Don't talk". Whenever hearing something about Peter, Thomas would turn up the volume on the TV and say, "no more daddy". After a few weeks, Megan asks to see and talk to Peter, but covers her ears if anyone gets too loud. Thomas is okay with talking to Peter, but does not want to see him. Megan's and Thomas's behaviors are consistent with findings from studies that have examined how boys and girls cope with domestic violence. Studies have shown that "... females may deal with the consequences of abuse and neglect by internalizing, whereas boys are more likely to externalize" (Asscher, Van der Put, & Stams, 2015, para. 34). We see this when Megan repeats the words "Don't talk" and when Thomas turns up the volume on the TV in order to not hear someone talk about his father. Thomas may also be less likely to share his emotions with others than Megan. This is due to society creating the expectations that boys should be aggressive, strong, masculine, and competitive and girls should be gentle, submissive, feminine, and sensitive. A film was created to showcase how boys are not allowed to show their emotions like girls do. A boy, named LJ, and his sisters were interviewed about how they react when their dad leaves to travel for work. While the girls respond by saying they will miss him and admitting that they sometime cry when he is gone, LJ remains quiet. The reporter asks LJ if he cries, and he says no. When LJ is asked why he doesn't cry when he misses his father, he responds it's because he is a boy (Films Media Group, 1998, 00:14:50-00-

00:15:24). The various ways girls and boys cope with domestic violence and abuse may influence Thomas's and Megan's thoughts and behaviors.

Gender-role attitudes also influence the family violence that Anne and her family endured in Jamaica. Gender-role attitudes influence partner violence in families. For instance, Peter holds the gender-role attitude of power and status. Power and status is determined by education and income. Those that contribute more to the family income are less likely to help with household labor (Helgeson, 2020, p.534). In Anne's case, Peter has a more power/higher status than Anne. This is due to Peter having an annual income of \$70,000 and Anne having an annual income of \$30,000. Although both Anne and Peter work, Peter contributes more to the family income. This leads to Anne contributing more in taking care of their children. Peter's aggressiveness may not be due to his higher status, but instead, be considered situational couple violence. Situational couple violence is defined as "... occasional episodes of violent behavior precipitated by stressful events; it is not linked to the power imbalance between men and women or to efforts on the part of one person to control the other. It is provoked by situations and emotions" (Helgeson, 2020, p. 545). The instances where Peter behaved aggressive were caused by certain stressful situations. Peter's actions were triggered by him thinking his wife was having an affair with her old friend in Jamaica. This situation caused Peter to feel stressed and led him to be violent. His children screaming during his act of violence increased Peter's stress level and provoked him to turn on them. Gender-role attitudes and emotions due to certain situations contribute to family violence.

After the incident in Jamaica, Anne's family's behaviors are impacted by each individual's coping mechanism(s). Males and females cope with stress in different ways. Stress responses can be explained by "fight or flight". For instance, "... women seek the support of

others... It is less clear whether men engage in more avoidant coping or distraction compared to women, consistent with “flight,” but men are more physically aggressive than women, consistent with “fight” (Helgeson, 2020, p. 652). Similar to other women, Anne seeks the support of others. She copes with stress by remaining calm, praying, seeking out therapy, and taking care of her children. Even when Peter is hitting and threatening Anne, she puts the safety of her children first. She created space between her and Peter by taking her children to the United States. She says that she can also contact a friend if she ever needs help. Consistent with many other people, Anne also uses her religion as a coping mechanism. She is Episcopalian: “An Episcopalian is a person who belongs to the Protestant Episcopal Church, the branch of the worldwide Anglican Communion in the United States” (“What is an Episcopalian?”, 2019, para. 1). Episcopalians continue “... the work of the first apostles in the Church, guarding the faith, unity and discipline of the Church, and ordaining men and women to continue Christ’s ministry” (“What is an Episcopalian?”, 2019, para. 1). Anne copes by praying to God and asking him to guide her. On the other hand, Peter copes in similar ways that are consistent with other men. He copes using avoidant and aggressive mechanisms. When stress is high in the household, Peter will leave to go live with his mother in Brooklyn, New York. Other times, he turns to violence as a coping mechanism. He will physically assault the people who are causing his stress. He physically assaults Anne’s old friend because he thinks the friend is having a sexual relationship with Anne. He then physically assaults Anne because he thinks she is cheating on him with her old friend. While Peter is attacking Anne, his children were screaming. His children screaming added to his stress, this led him to turn his violent behavior towards his children. Anne and Peter’s son, Thomas, also uses an avoidance coping mechanism. When he hears his father’s name, he will run to raise the volume on the TV. Anne and Peter’s daughter, Megan, uses play as a coping

mechanism. She plays with her toys, sometimes she refers to her toys as daddy. Megan may use play as a way to help her understand the situation she is in. Both Thomas and Megan wanted space from their father and they both attend therapy in order to help them heal from the incident. Different coping mechanisms influence the thoughts and behaviors of Anne and her family.

Culture, evolutionary theory, type of romantic relationship, gender's influence on children's coping mechanisms, gender-role attitudes influence on family violence, and gender's influence on coping mechanisms may provide deeper insight into the thoughts and behaviors of Anne and her family members. Jamaican culture's gender-roles contribute to Peter being the main source of income and Anne being the main source of household duties. Jamaican's also view men as violent and women as responsible. Peter was involved in physical violence and Anne took actions to keep her children and herself safe. Evolutionary theory explains that Peter's aggressive behavior was caused by sexual jealousy. He acted in a way that humans thousands of years ago would have acted if they thought their mate was having an affair. Peter and Anne's manic love relationship tells us that Peter's violent behavior was due to the feeling of jealousy. Thomas' and Megan's behaviors of turning up the volume on the TV and not talking about Peter hitting them is their way of coping with their experience of domestic violence and their actions are similar to those of other boys and girls who experience abuse. Power, status, and situational couples violence may contribute to Peter's physical aggression. Lastly, gender influences how one copes with domestic violence. Anne prays and seeks out therapy, Megan uses toys to cope, Thomas avoids hearing about his father by turning up the volume on the TV, and Peter either leaves the house or turns physical. These are only a few of many explanation for the thoughts and behaviors of Anne, Peter, Megan, and Thomas after reviewing Anne's case study file.

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