

Introduction

The Life Course Perspective is a highly relevant course to study to understand life and transitions. The application of the several underlying concepts learned in the course can be witnessed in the case study of Nelia. The story reflects micro, mezzo and macro environmental factors affecting the decisions she took in her life and the events that happened in her life. The case analysis sheds light on several concepts learned in Life Course Perspective in the form of life events, cohort influences, transitions, turning points and human agency together with factors that threaten well-being and promote resilience. Each of these are discussed thoroughly and critically in the paper.

Interplay between Micro, Mezzo and Macro Environments

Neila lived a life of challenges. Despite of having simple wishes, her life was a combination of several struggles and persistent hard work and this was because of the several underlying uncontrollable forces she was living with that shaped her life against her wishes. Though, some factors which were in her control allowed her to steer her life, despite of the underlying uncontrollable challenges, towards her targets and based on what she wanted for herself. The factors that were in interplay in her life can be classified under: micro, mezzo and macro levels.

MICRO ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Micro environmental factors relate with the individual level aspects of a person, an organisation, an entity or any object that influence the

underlying decisions, outcomes and events that occur in the surrounding environment. A lot of these factors are in the control of the individual such as the personality, goals and objectives. However, there can be factors beyond the control of the individual such as heritage, innate qualities, biological diseases, physical disabilities or strength, etc. for Neila, the following micro environmental factors were in interplay in her life:

Gender

Being a female, Neila had to face life differently belonging to a society where females were downtrodden and were bestowed upon the duties of taking care of the household. Independence was not an option for females and Neila, having learned that as she progressed through her life, took attempts to assert her independence. Her gender got in the way of her prospective success on two occasions. Once, while living with her aunt, her cousin because of her gender, made sexual advancements towards her and as a result she was forced to retreat to her family so as to safeguard herself. The second occasion was much under her control but her innate needs compelled her to step into a conventional life of a woman. She fell in love and bore a child which got in the way of her education and prospective success she longed to have.

Health

Being sick as a child, Nalia benefited from the opportunity to live in the city with her aunt and acquire a much more profound foundation of education. This allowed her to expand her learning and knowledge and develop life goals. Health was later on never an issue for Nelia until she became old and entered her 70s. She loved her independence but as she grew older, she developed physical illness and she then longed for companionship. At this time, it was not her gender that pushed her to seek protection and/or love of man but her health that forced her to realise that she cannot go on alone in the remainder of her life. At this age, she found a loving man to accompany her and give her the comforting feeling that may enable her to bear her illness.

Heritage

Nelia was a Porto Rican and her heritage affected her way of thinking to a great extent. While she strongly opposed the imposed duties her family put on her that were aligned with the society's expectations, she had embedded a lot about her heritage into her personality and dreams. It was her heritage that provoked her to look after her parents and family when she had started to earn good money. She could not ignore the fact her family was living in poverty. She had respect for her parents and her neighbors and she chose to live by the teachings her parents had given her about life and respect of elders and she tried to place the same in her children. Despite of how independent she wanted to be, she was never opposed to marriage and having a lot of children. She did all of what her family expected her to do but in her own way and in her own time.

Goals and Objectives

Her goals and objectives in life which she developed at an early age were strongly held close by her and were always in her head when progressing in life. Her biggest goal was to become education and she somehow accomplished that. But to her dismay, she was not able to study past the undergraduate level but still, she was far more educated than a lot of people in her society. Sometimes, her goals and objectives brought her into conflict with herself, where she found herself often struggling to juggle between her priorities. She wanted to study and follow a career but she ended up being married at a young age and having children immediately. She chose that path out of her haste to have freedom in her life but she ended up taking the long haul in accomplishing her goals in life. In her attempt to take short cuts to success, she ended up with prolonging her journey. And while her basic goal was simple, she, progressing through life developed several important objectives and goals that forced her to struggle to manage everything. She had a lot to take care of: children, husband, household chores, bills, parents, education, work and relationships with colleagues. But despite of being off the track because of her family duties, she never lost sight of what was important

for her and somehow managed to, if not completely, then partly accomplish her lifelong goal to be educated and have a respectable white color career path. She gave her children a better life which she did not have.

Personality

Her personality was one of the dominant micro environmental factors that shaped her life. She was independent, aggressive and brave. These characteristics shaped her personality and made her a strong woman. It was because of her personality that she was able to do so much in her life and never back down when faced with challenges. Her personality was the result of early childhood experiences that pushed her to think high in life. She had a strong sense of what her right and how she can make others or make herself fulfill that right. Her confident and boldness never let anyone take advantage of her. On several occasions in her life she asserted her independent thinking on others. She spoke back to her father regarding her wishes to study and not work like her sisters.

Mezzo Environmental Factors

In contrast with the micro level factors, Nelia was predominantly challenged in her life because of the mezzo environmental factors in the form of her parents, husband, children, education and work.

Parents

Her parents who were poor made it difficult for Nelia to study in a normal fashion. They had backward thinking and had strong power and influence over her. On the other hand, they were partly responsible for her persistent personality, wherein, she shared respect for elders and cared for the community. These characteristics, as learned from parents, were practiced by her in her life in the US.

Husband

Her husband had influenced her into marriage and had diverted her from

education when she was young. He classifies as a distraction who with his charms had taken her away from her focused path in life. She perceived him to be a short cut to success and happiness in life but the outcome was the opposite of what she had hoped.

Children

When she learned that she was pregnant, it gave her an excuse to get married and start a new chapter in her life. Thus, what was perceived to be an escape route, became a prolonged challenge for Nelia. Thus, having children posed challenges for Nelia in accomplishing her goals and objectives. Having children, in fact, created new objectives for Nelia, wherein, she hoped to provide a better living to her children.

Education

The education that Nelia acquired in her school living with her aunt allowed her to expand on her independent thinking about life. She learned the value of being educated and how it yields positive outcomes in the form of an improved standard of living.

Work

Her work was always a contributor towards her education. She used her salary to pay for her education even as a child as well as an adult.

MACRO ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Looking at her life from a much broader spectrum, two fundamental macro environmental factors can be witnessed in interplay in her life: cultural and economic factors.

Culture

Her culture affected her life as a kid, her life as an adult, her personality, and her experiences in the US. Despite of being independent, she was conservative and family oriented and this was because of the strong

cultural force affecting her personality, attitudes and values. However, given the level of independence she sought as a young girl she was looked down upon as a rebellion and a social outcast. Because of her strong ties with her cultural background, she faced challenges in adapting to the life and environment in the US which had a strictly opposite culture. The culture in the US was individualistic and looked down upon her. She recalls her experiences as harsh in her early years where the US citizens failed to accept her in her own culturally rich lifestyle. While she was closely tied to her culture, she failed to see the same in her children who neither spoke the same language as her nor had any hope to visit her homeland. They had married Americans and had weaker ties with their original culture.

Economy

The economy in Porto Rico was in turmoil which had kept the country in poverty over the years forcing people to live below the poverty line. Nelia's family worked very hard to earn a living and had to keep all children working on farms to make ends meet. Nelia and her husband had come to the US primarily because of the hope to earn more money and have a better life than they did in their own country, indicating an economic push factor that brought them to the US.

Relevance of the Life Course Perspective

The case presents a story of a strong and independent Porto Rican woman named Nelia who in her lifelong searched for independence and finally attained it in her 70s. The life course perspective offers insights to how in transitions her life progressed with underlying relationships and critical incidents shaping her life.

She had aims, took decisions to assert her independence and underwent transitions to accomplish her goals while facing a hand full of challenges.

Born in a poor family of Porto Rica, Neila with more than five siblings, she lived her early childhood with utmost poverty. The common occupation of the family was farming and all of the children were encouraged to leave school in their early childhood and resume the common occupation of the family. Being an independent thinker, even in her childhood, Neila developed her life ambition to become educated and lead a life above the poverty line and in turn make life better for her family. She was strongly opposed to the idea of dropping out of school. She struggled her way through schooling by working part time and whist supporting her family. Despite of her independent approach towards life, she somehow got mixed up pressures of life imposed by others. This so happened when she became a wife and a mother. A man came into her life and altered her life plan. She in an attempt to take a short cut to success and happiness in life, ended up marrying him. This later turned out to be a mistake when she saw how she had stepped out from one prison to another. Coupled with the family pressures, being in a foreign country also posed several challenges for Neila which she had to encounter as she juggled her responsibilities and made way for her personal goals to be accomplished. It took her a long time to be the independent lady she longed to be but once she got it she felt peace with herself.

Risk Factors, Protective Factors and Promotive Factors seen Micro, Mezzo and Macro Environments

RISK FACTORS

Nelia faced risk factors that threatened her well being existed in the form of her childhood illness, her cousin who developed fear in Nelia for her safety, her father who forced her to work as a child, her husband who changed her life for the worse and her illness as an old woman which

forced to think about her loneliness.

PROTECTIVE AND PROMOTIVE FACTORS

For Nelia, the protective factors that promoted resilience and future well-being were in the form of her visit to her aunts as a child, her education, her work and her first and second marriages. It was her early education that allowed her to shape her thinking about life and develop ideals and goals for her life. When she acquired higher education, she was able to progress in her career and developed more advanced understanding of her work and how farther she can go. The entry of the first husband had changed her life and entered her into an alternative path which she had not expected nor wanted for herself. His inability to support her and their children had pushed her to find work. However, given the fact that she was forced to work, she had become independent again thinking that if she pays for the bills, she is to keep secrecy for the amount she earns. This allowed her to spend money on her education while taking care of the family. So, indirectly, the weak figure of the husband where redirected her in life also allowed her to practice independence, which was one of the objectives of Nelia. The second husband, thereof, promotes her future wellbeing, wherein, she is able to rely on him to support her in her old age.