

Psychology Case Study Sample

What made him abuse his newly wedded wife? Why did his son become an aggressive child? There is no way I would have expected this from such a considerate and loving person. Everything in their relationship seemed to be thriving. It may be possible that we never know someone until they are pushed to the point in which he or she are forced to act in response to a situation. I witnessed this happening and never could have predicted what transpired.

My Aunt Natalie (not her real name) has always been an independent iron-willed woman. Natalie encountered a man named Ricky (not his real name) who was selfless, candid, and courteous. During their courtship Ricky was a perfect gentleman. They went out to drink at bars, attended social gatherings, and celebrated holidays with each other's families. Within a year Natalie and Ricky fell in love and decided to get married. Shortly after the wedding Natalie became pregnant and gave birth to my cousin Justin (not his real name). Everything seemed blissful until Natalie was able to get back on her feet and involve herself in recreational activities once more.

Ricky did not have a formal education. He crossed the threshold of America only one year before he married Natalie, so it became very challenging for him to find a job. Ricky desired that Natalie stay home and tend to the responsibility of raising her son, but Natalie disagreed with Ricky's views. Natalie nurtured and cared for her child, but on occasion she would attend a local tavern or social gathering. Ricky eventually became fed up with what he felt was blatant neglect for his aspirations of having a similar household to those of his homeland, Peru. In Ricky's family wives cater to the needs of their immediate family without much personal fulfillment.

Unfortunately, one evening Ricky exploded into a mad rage because Natalie had plans to go out to a local tavern for a drink. Natalie said in response to Ricky's antics, "Ricky, when we met you knew I like to go out and enjoy myself, so I do not care what you think. I will do what I want when I want to do it." Ricky, a usually calm and composed man, felt he must demonstrate his assertiveness and proceeded to drag Natalie into the house by her hair while yelling in a vulgar fashion. Ricky, in an act of direct and instrumental aggression, then advanced into beating her with his bare hands as Justin and I watched (Kenrick, Neuberg, & Ciadini, 2002, p.337). Ricky physically abused Natalie in hopes that she would not continue to go out to clubs and bars that night or any other night in the future. After the horrific act concluded Ricky fled the scene in shame and slammed the door. I was in complete shock, but Justin was only three and half years old and seemed serene as if this was something he had come accustomed to seeing. The following year Natalie and Ricky were divorced, and Natalie retained custody of Justin. Justin became a constant nuisance in elementary school. He tended to be overly aggressive when involved in social, competitive, and confrontational situations.

Ricky was not a violent person or a psychopath. Ricky grew up in an environment where women are supposed to obey their husbands without any opposition to their opinion. Perhaps because he belonged to a culture that endorsed that principle Ricky felt his honor and manhood could be in jeopardy. The culture of honor states that people, particularly men, should be ready to defend their honor with violent retaliation if necessary (Kenrick, Neuberg, & Ciadini, 2002, p. 361). Basically, Ricky's goal in attacking Natalie was to defend his honor as the dominant male figure of the house, and in doing so applying the same principles he was raised with in Peru. Ricky was aggravated because he was unemployed and unable to provide for his family. Possibly Ricky's irritation with his employment situation caused him to displace his fury and transfer it towards Natalie. The excitation-transfer theory states that

anger is physiologically similar to other emotional states, and that any form of emotional arousal can enhance aggressive responses (Kenrick, Nueberg, & Ciadini, 2002,p. 342).

Natalie and Ricky's son Justin began to demonstrate aggressive tendencies at an early age. Justin was most likely frequently exposed to his father's constant abuse of his mother. Whenever Ricky did not approve of Natalie's behavior he most likely would become aggressive to achieve his objective. The social learning theory states that aggression is learned through direct reward or by watching others being rewarded for aggressiveness (Kenrick, Neuberg, & Ciadini, 2002, p. 350). In other words, Justin may have watched his father intentionally express his feelings through an aggressive act and be rewarded with his mother's compliance, and interpreted aggression as a means to achieve his own goals and objectives.

This incident educated me to the warning that a person is capable of doing something out of his or her character when driven to extreme levels of anger. Second, children are extremely susceptible to influence, so one should be additionally wary when exposing a child to aggressive or belligerent acts.

Reference

Kenrick, D.T., Neuberg, S.L., & Ciadini, R.B. (2002), *Social Psychology: Unraveling the Mystery*, 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.