

Human Ecosystems Case Study Analysis

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Jason is 16 years old. His family recently moved from a small rural Kansas town to Chicago when his dad was promoted and transferred to a new location for his job. Jason, an only child, was looking forward to living in the city, but his parents bought a large home in the suburbs. Although the family is enjoying sightseeing on weekends and the opportunities a large city provides, Jason is struggling in his very large new high school and is having difficulty making friends. In the afternoon when he comes home from school, he goes directly to his room and spends the rest of the day and most of the evening on the computer or watching television. He continues to text his friends in Kansas and does not yet have friends in Chicago. Jason's parents (Bob and Susan) are also challenged with the change in their lives. Jason's mother was able to find a new job, and is adjusting to her new home and work settings. His dad is enjoying the challenges and rewards of his new position, and is spending more time at work than he did in Kansas. In several recent conversations, Bob and Susan have discussed their concerns about their family. They are increasingly worried about their son. This is leading to frequent arguments, an uncommon experience when they lived in Kansas.

1. Using Human Ecological Theory, describe the new environment from Jason's viewpoint. State the assumptions you are making about Jason and his family. Be sure to include all levels of the Theory, Microsystems (intrapersonal and interpersonal), Mesosystems, Exosystem, Macrosystem, and Chronosystem.

When we consider Human Ecological Theory, which provides an understanding of people and the many environments that influence them, we can make some assumptions about how Jason's new environment is likely to be affecting him.

The microsystems in which Jason is living include his relationship and interactions with each of his parents, his teachers and classmates/friends at his new school, his friends at his former school, and his neighbors. At this level, Jason is having to adjust to less interaction with each of his parents individually and collectively as their new job responsibilities take more time away from the family than before the move. While he is maintaining his interpersonal relationships with his friends back in Kansas (through texting), he has yet to make any new friends at his new school in Chicago, nor does it appear he has developed any interactions with neighbors in his new community.

The mesosystems in which Jason is now living include the interlinking microsystems in which he directly participates. These would include his family and his new school (lacking strength) and his relationship between his family and his old school since he is maintaining friendships in Kansas. This system could have more overlay if Jason were to become involved in after-school activities, take a part-time job or become involved in a community organization.

The exosystems in which Jason is now living might include social media, his school system, community center, state and city laws that might govern drivers ed, work permits, housing administration regulations, etc. The only apparent interactions Jason has at this level are taking advantage of a free public education and the use of technology for social media interactions.

We don't have much information about **the macrosystems** that might have previously or be presently contributing to the influence in Jason's life except that he had been living in a smaller mid-western American town and now he is living in a much larger suburban town outside a large American city. Jason's macrosystems would include his spiritual belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyle choices, opportunity structures, life course options and patterns of social interchange (Kellest, C. 2015, Ch.3 pg. 4).

The Chronosystem is the expression of time as both a continuum and the combination of both normative (first day of school, getting a driver's license, graduation, first job, etc.) and non-normative (natural disaster, severe illness, divorce, winning the lottery, etc.) events in time and how this influences the development of an individual. We have limited information on Jason's chronosystem except that he is likely influenced by the current American mid-western style of dress and music. I am wondering here if there is a converse relationship in terms of what Jason has NOT been exposed to, i.e. his family unit is still intact, as far as we know he has not experienced close personal disease/illness or death, a natural disaster, a reversal of financial circumstances or poverty. Do the absence of these things factor into the chronosystem?

2. Next, propose and defend a strategy (using Human Ecological Theory) that will help Jason and his family adjust to the changes resulting from their relocation. What strategy do you recommend to enhance the quality of life for Jason and his parents? Describe what components of human ecological theory the strategy addresses.

I will use the **Social Ecological Model** as I take a look at strategies that would help Jason and his family adjust to the resulting changes from their relocation. On an **interpersonal level**, the first strategy I would suggest is for the family to sit down together over dinner and each take a turn expressing how they are currently feeling about their situation. I think if Jason hears **both** of his parents expressing both their negative as well as positive feelings about this transition Jason will be more likely to open up about his own feelings. From here, discussions can evolve regarding activities that each would like to pursue. A benefit would certainly be if Bob and Susan's new work places utilized a "welcome aboard" policy that might include not only introductions to the resources of their respective workplaces (including the humans), but also community resources. This might also be something offered by the realtor or HOA). The new high school Jason is attending should have a similar program (usually an orientation), but then there should be follow-up, ideally from both faculty/advisors and student body members. Jason's parents should also be included or educate themselves on the available activities Jason might be interested in. This is tricky as the parents of a sixteen-year-old, but I believe gentle nudges at both the family and school level can help prevent isolation. All of these endeavors could work to positively impact the **intrapersonal level** in terms of increasing knowledge, improving attitudes (particularly Jason's) and extracurricular skills. Interventions at the intrapersonal level might be community education programs, support groups and/or peer counseling groups. **Institutional/Organizational factors** would include policies to reduce the rates of both employee turn-over (positive assimilation into the company that includes family culture) and high school drop-out and suicide (positive assimilation into the school system). **Community factors** would include the positive relationships and interactions between the various organizations that provide services, i.e. the local community center, extension offices, town hall, library, health & wellness clinics, etc. Finally, **public policy** intervention would include laws on truancy, selling alcohol and cigarettes to minors, and ensuring the access and availability of healthy food and exercise opportunities (built community).