

Examination of the Film “My Father and My Son” according to the Basic Concepts of Multigenerational Family Therapy

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to evaluate the basic concepts of Multigenerational Family Therapy and to evaluate the scenes of the film “My Father and My Son” according to these concepts. For these purposes firstly basic concepts of Multigenerational Family Therapy such as differentiation of self, triangles/triangulation, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, emotional cut off, multigenerational transmission process, sibling position, societal regression and genogram technique of this therapy were explained. Then, in order to clarify family relations in the film, the family genogram of the family was drawn. Finally, sixteen scenes of the film which depict the basic concepts of Multigenerational Family Therapy were examined. Results of this examination showed that family members of the three generation usually had low levels of differentiation. Furthermore, some basic concepts of Multigenerational Family Therapy such as triangles, nuclear family emotional system, emotional cut off, family projection process, differentiation of self, multigenerational transmission process were evident in all three generations family. In short, the film My Father and My Son can be a rich source in Multigenerational Family Therapy training.

Key Words

Multigenerational Family Therapy, “My Dad and My Son”, Film, Family Therapy.

There are many approaches of family therapy each having different views on family and thus different approaches for helping families with their difficulties. One of these approaches is the Multigenera-

tional Family Therapy. Murray Bowen’s Multigenerational Family Therapy is one of the systems therapies that views the family as a whole. According to this approach when there is a low level of anxiety in the families the emotional system of the family does not develop symptomatic issues. On the other hand when there is a high level of anxiety some problems may arise in the family (Gladding, 2006). Multigenerational Family Therapy differs from the other approaches by its emphasis on the emotional system and history of the family (Corey, 2008; Sharf, 2008). The approach insists that interactional patterns among family members are transmitted from one generation to the other. Family is viewed as a dynamic unit. It contents that changes in one member can affect the system and changes in the system can affect individual members of the family. TV shows and other media of visual media sit have influences on the functioning of today’s families. The film “My Father and My Son” revolves around events, traumas and sufferings resulting from the

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September 12th Queue in Turkey (Wikipedia, 2010, 2011). Üstüner Wambach (2009) categorizes this film as a "trauma film". This film is depicted as a film which mentions the generation conflict (film.com.tr, 2010). Also, the film critiques accentuates that the film is successful in artistic perspective (Vardar, 2008). This film received many awards (film.com.tr, 2011). Films may be utilized for training of mental health professionals (Paddock, Terranova, & Giles, 2001; Shepard & Brew, 2005; Toman & Rak, 2000; Villalba & Redmond, 2008).

Basic Concepts of Multigenerational Family Therapy

Differentiation of the self, triangles/triangulation, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, emotional cut-off, multigenerational transmission process, sibling position, societal regression and genogram are basic concepts of the Multigenerational Family Therapy (Bitter, 2009; Fenell & Weinfeld, 2003; Gehart, 2010; Gladding, 2006; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008; Nazlı, 2003).

Main Characters of the Film "My Father and My Son"

Deniz (the main character- 5-6 year old boy), Hüseyin Bey (Mr. Hüseyin; grandfather/father), Nuran Hanım (Mrs. Nuran; grandmother/mother), Sadık (father/son), Salim (uncle/brother), Hanife (aunt), Gülbeyaz (grand aunt/aunt) and Özkan (Sadık's friend).

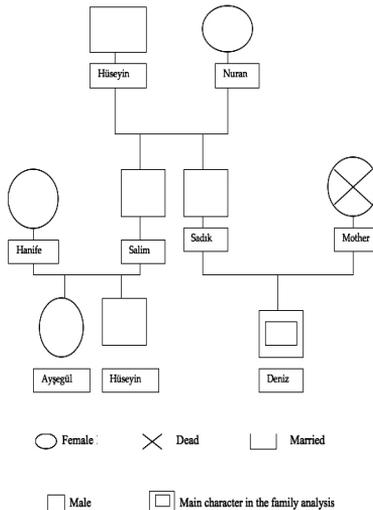


Figure 1
Family Genogram of the film "My Father and My Son"

Examination of Some Scenes of "My Father and My Son"

In this study, 16 scenes from the film, My Father and My Son, were sampled and examined. The below abstract presents several of these scenes with respect to basic concepts of Multigenerational Family Therapy.

Train Ride to the Village: The little boy, Deniz, fantasizes as he often does. He imagines himself as a highly strong and invincible person. In Sadık's reactions and expressions one can see the influences of his past political experiences on the nuclear family emotional process. Furthermore, Sadık's political views and acts appear to be central to the tension and conflict between him and his father, Hüseyin Bey. The conflict has significant negative impact on Deniz. According to Multigenerational Family Therapy, in order to understand the family, family should be evaluated in a holistic- systemic way. Therefore, it can be said that the burn out and disgust that Sadık experiences can be the result of his preferences. These effects the present relationship and interaction between Sadık and his son Deniz. On the other hand, Sadık is aware that he has a terminal illness and keeps distant to his son. In other words, looking at it from the concept of nuclear family emotional system, he deals with the anxiety within the family unit by distancing himself.

Deniz and Sadık while coming home by truck...

In this scene Sadık cannot explain to his son that he is going to die and he tries to keep his son away from himself. Sadık's pattern in distancing is quite similar to that of his father who also avoids expressing his feeling to his son. In the multigenerational transmission process strategies of coping methods are transmitted through generations. Here in reality Deniz does the same as his grandfather and father. Instead of talking about the hurt he prefers to sweep it under the rug. It can be said that there is similarity of expression of feelings between members of the respective generations.

First Encounter of Deniz with Hüseyin (grandfather)

First encounter of Deniz with the third generation, Deniz visualizes (imagines) that his grandfather is a hero.

In the proceeding parts, Deniz depicts his father as a witch, bad man, and pirate. This may be valued as

Deniz perceives his grandfather as strong, mighty. This viewpoint, is similar to Sadık's feelings toward Hüseyin, the father. Hüseyin Bey is a strong character in the eyes of his wife, his son and his grandson. On the other hand, Hüseyin, the father is viewed as an authoritarian figure by Sadık. Deniz, grandson thinks of Hüseyin, his grandfather, as strong too. Therefore, being parallel to multigenerational transmission process, it can be said that the emotional process of the previous generations is transmitted to the present family emotional process. In this scene Nuran, the wife, mother and grandmother, in order to reduce the anxiety between Hüseyin, husband and Sadık, the son intervenes in the event. Thus, the family experiences the tension by Sadık's coming back home years later. The relationship between Nuran, the mother and Hüseyin, the father deteriorates. This position can be given as an example of forming triangles. However, Sadık, the son, who re-joins the family causes a negative effect. On the other hand, Nuran, the mother, in order to maintain the balance, tries to reduce anxiety and tension. Hence, the new triangle is formed.

First dinner at home...

In this scene, in spite of the Sadık's efforts Hüseyin, the father, experiences the emotional cut off. The tension between Hüseyin, the father and Sadık, the son emerges thoroughly. At this point Hüseyin, the father, forms a triangle by calling Nuran, the mother to a dialogue. Nuran, by suggesting her son to be calm, tries to preserve the balance of the triangle.

While coming back from the field, Salim, the older son, and Sadık, the younger son encountering with the father..

Sadık's relationship with his brother, Salim is also remarkable. Salim is a family member who is slightly mentally retarded. Salim's level of differentiation of self is lower than Sadık. Their relationship is that of two loving brothers.

Sadık with Hüseyin while in the hospital...

In this scene, Hüseyin cannot express his feelings and love toward Sadık. In the previous scenes, Sadık complains about his not being expressive toward his son. Deniz, the grandson, cannot reflect his feelings, either. Thus, the difficulty of reflecting feelings passes through the nuclear family emotional system and multigenerational transmission processes are evident.

While coming back home after the funeral... Hüseyin stops the car and gets off...

Hüseyin feels guilty because of his son's death. Hüseyin did not permit his son for self-differentiation Hüseyin cannot distinguish his feelings from his thoughts. Sadık's death causes a great shock in the family and no one can be able to cope with this shock. In order to cope with this intensive anxiety Sadık's friend Özkan tries to help the family but cannot succeed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

When the film *My Father and My Son* is reviewed in terms of Multigenerational Family Therapy, Deniz's family on his father's side has members who have a lower level of differentiation. In the third generation family, the concepts of triangles nucleus family emotional system, emotional cut off, family projection system, differentiation of self, multigenerational transmission process are observed. The results of this study show that anxiety is evident in three generations of the family. Furthermore, in each generation members of the family do not deal with this anxiety in functional manners.

The film illustrates that the family patterns have a multi-generational quality to them. Therefore, the film can be used in family therapy training- particularly with respect to Multigenerational Family Therapy. Also, within the "cinema therapy" films can be used in therapy or counseling as creative tools. Future studies can examine the film *My Father and My Son* with respect to other theories of family therapy. Likewise, various other films can be used in exploring concepts of Multigenerational Family Therapy.

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