

My Big Fat Greek Wedding

In order for counsellors to help their clients evaluate their values in either work or personal issues, they make them look towards both their values and interests. In a study conducted by Neville and Saber (1986), it was found that “values are the objectives sought in behaviour, whereas interests are the activities in which values are sought.” Therefore, values determine why an individual may undertake a certain activity, whereas interests dictate what a person chooses to do. It has also been suggested that values are more correlated with work satisfaction (Rounds, 1990) as opposed to interests, which are more connected to the choices one may make in their career. The film, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, broaches the subject of values in a very intricate manner. The protagonist, Toula Portokalos, is brought up on three essential values; ‘Marry a Greek boy, have Greek babies, and feed everyone.’ As a result, she begins to resent everything Greek, as she feels that being Greek has overtaken everything she wants for herself. To the extent, that when she meets a man who is a regular American, she is almost ashamed of disclosing the fact that she comes from a Greek family.

Dating a non-Greek and then eventually her decision to marry him evokes guilt within her. This is because her parents have always taught her that marrying a Greek man and inevitably bearing his children is one of the fundamental points to her existence, the reason her parents had worked so hard to give her the comfortable life she has had. Therefore, she is made to feel indebted to them. At this point, we see a classic incongruence between values and interests. On the one hand, we have her intrinsic values, what she wants for herself, personally, juxtaposed to the extrinsic values she needs to fulfil in order to maintain her prestige, status, etc. It is interesting to see how despite the fact that Toula resents the Greek values she has been brought up with, it is her values that Ian, her fiancé, adopts when they decide to get married. For example, he converts to her faith, the wedding and reception take place in the Greek manner, and even at the end of the film, when they have a daughter, she is sent to

Greek school. Ian is depicted as a 'WASP-ish' individual with a very middle-upper class upbringing. He comes from a family of lawyers and has rebelled against what is expected of him by becoming a teacher and then by marrying a Greek. However, Ian doesn't demonstrate the same guilt that is seen in Toula. In his academic study *A Critical Analysis of Values Clarification*, David Lipe argues that Moral education generally has been regarded as an integral part of institutions such as the family, the church and the school. This is very much evident in the film, as both Toula and Ian seem to be products of their environments. Therefore, if this couple was to receive counselling, the values that they have accumulated throughout their lives would be an integral part of the process. This is because values are a direct reflection of our attitudes and therefore our beliefs. For example, if we take Toula's love for Ian as an example, she is willing to work hard to sustain that love, and to even make sacrifices. She has clearly learnt this ability from her mother, as this is also conveyed within the film. This childhood value therefore becomes a pillar within her personality. If a counsellor was to overlook this whilst counselling her, he would miss a vital component to her personality and therefore risk prescribing the incorrect treatment for her.

Values can be assessed by either a values inventory or a values clarification, and counsellors generally utilise these processes to treat people who feel confused or uncomfortable with their values. Both treatments focus on the patient examining their internal blueprint and direction of their lives. These processes provide the means to both be retrospective and evaluating the values that have been instilled within us, which then in turn aids us to set goals and prioritise. Both exercises are carried out in the form of a questionnaire aimed specifically towards the individual's needs. This allows the patient to decide which goals are important and which may be left aside. The clarification of our values would inevitably help us to strengthen our core values and achieve a wholeness. Inevitably, for the couple depicted in the film, this process would be vital if they were to ever need counselling. As essentially, their values are what makes the essence of them.

...References

<http://www.apologeticspress.org/rr/reprints/Critical-Analysis-of-Values-Cla.pdf>

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Hood, A.B. and Johnson, R.W. 1997, *Assessment in Counselling: A Guide to the use of psychological assessment procedures*, American Counselling Association, 3 ed.