

Applied Theory Paper

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Introduction

I have always looked at my family history and have been intrigued by all of the specific relationships that make up myself and the relatives in my family tree. Specifically, I have been intrigued in the makeup of my paternal side of the family as many issues have arisen over the years. Trauma, cutoffs, abuse, substance abuse, and many more aspects have been a part of my father's life and have influenced how he has maintained relationships with his family as well as decided how he has raised his children. When reflecting on the genogram these are all aspects that stick out to me. Each make-up of my father's side of the family has impacted him today. This goes for many families. The main focus of the relationships on my father's side of the family is cutoffs, cutoffs from parents, siblings, and relationships as my father decided he did not want to live the life of his fathers or brothers.

Literature Review

Not all family relationships are positive, sometimes others choose not to partake in their family relationships and decide to cut off from their family. Like my father cut off from his brother and father before they parted, he felt the need to distance himself from the negative influences he was experiencing to maintain relationships with his other family members and foster new relationships.

The first influence for the cutoff that occurred when my dad stopped talking to my grandfather after my grandmother and grandfather divorced was the fact that he grew up with an abusive father. In the article Cognitive and emotional differences between abusive and non-abusive fathers it discusses that those who grow up with an abusive father, it states that those

who experience abuse have heightened, “expression of anger, mental health, parenting stress, and their empathy and perceptions of children's socio-emotional signals” (Francis 2008). Although these were the exact reasons my father decided to cut off from his father he still had to encounter the consequences of the abuse. Because of this, my dad reacts differently. He struggles with anxiety, struggles to let people in emotionally, cares deeply for his children, tries to refrain from alcohol, and tries to ease anger. This trend of abusive fathers as talked about in this article is true to how it has affected my own family genogram.

Before my grandfather passed my grandmother made the decision to leave him and divorce him. Divorce was a large part of my family's genogram. Divorce has occurred though many different generations on my fathers side of the family. From aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents it is something that my father has been around and has influenced him significantly. In the article Parental Divorce and Child Mental Health Trajectories, it discusses the impacts that divorce can have on children of divorced children, many impacts that my father has related to us that he also had had. The article states, “Even before marital breakup, children whose parents later divorce exhibit higher levels of anxiety/depression and antisocial behavior than children whose parents remain married. There is a further increase in child anxiety/depression but not antisocial behavior associated with the event of parental divorce itself” (Strohschein 2005). For example, my grandmother decided to stay with my grandfather, a man who was abusive and abused substances. This effect of the abuse on his mother and brothers led him to develop anxiety, behavior issues, attachment, but ultimately led him to decipher what he wanted in life. Because of the divorce around him, my dad always knew he wanted to maintain healthy relationships in his life. He didn't want to follow his family's stereotype and was still in a healthy

marriage with two children. He preaches us daily that relationships should be healthy, he has guided his children to avoid the behaviors that have led to the divorces of his family members as they all tend to be related to alcohol abuse.

Substance abuse in families can have a lot of effects on family theories. In my own genogram the root of the divorce and broken relationships on my father's side of the family is rooted with substance abuse. The article Children Impacted by Parental Substance Abuse: An Evaluation of the Supporting Kids and Their Environment Program discussed how children who have parents that are abusing substances are at a higher risk of developing emotional and behavior issues in life. They are also statistically proven to partake in the same activity unless indicated otherwise. The article also states that there is an impact on child development when a child is exposed to this at a young age (Lewis 2014). I really liked this article and how it related to my family's genogram as it states the statistics of growing up in a family like this. My dad was the youngest and had lots of guidance from his brothers on how to live a meaningful life. Since there was over a 10 year age difference between him and his closest brother to age he had guidance and mentors to help lead him. With the support of others and growing a positive relationship he was able to defy these statistics and make a meaningful life for himself and others.

Family Analysis

Dr. Bowen family systems theory where families are analyzed by a family unit rather than just an individual can help suggest the issues that were present in my family's genogram. The family systems theory according to GenoPro states, “a family is a system in which each member has a role to play and rules to respect. Members of the system are expected to respond to

each other in a certain way according to their role, which is determined by relationship agreements” (GenoPro 2022). This definition of the family systems theory is related to my family's genogram as it shows the roles in the family. My grandfather deemed respect even when abusing alcohol. He would get frustrated when things would go wrong because of his altered state and be abusive. When my grandmother divorced my grandfather she took on the role of both parents as he was completely cut out of their lives. My father was raised on this. Now today my dad wants to be the role of the father figure in our lives, he makes sure to not follow in the footsteps of his father and embrace the role of a caring father who has rules to respect. My father makes sure to not consume alcohol, tells us stories of his childhood, tries not to anger, and provides us with positive influences in our lives to also live a meaningful life.

The ecological family systems theory can also be analyzed in regards to my family's genogram. The environment in which my father was raised aided to the things he encountered. In the article Family and Ecological Systems Theory it discussed how behavior of an individual is influenced by the changes in the environment (Total Help 2022). In my family's genogram the environment in which my father was raised helps to explain how he has raised his own family. My father grew up in a rural town in North Dakota where he was the youngest of many siblings, he did not have access to many extracurricular activities, vacations, post secondary education, as well as opportunities to better himself. The cards he was dealt he had to play with them. He took the poor environment he was raised in with unforeseen circumstances and made a life for himself. He began working with mentors to find hobbies and ultimately made a business for himself. He took bad experiences and found the good in them. He was able to turn his life and unforeseen circumstances around. He took what was lacking in his childhood and made a new

life for himself and his family. He now raises them in an environment that differs from his childhood.

Conclusion

Overall my family's genogram and issues that present it can all be connected to the family systems theory as well as the ecological theory. The roles in my fathers family were roles that had to be followed and respected. Even with substance abuse, physical and emotional abuse, and divorce my father made a life for himself and counties to raise his family with the best intentions. The environment in which he was raised does not define him. He has defied the statistics in place for him and has lived a meaningful life raising his family with strong values. He teaches valuable lessons that help his children follow in his footsteps to help avoid the things he had to encounter. Unlike many families who were raised in similar situations and are not able to fall out of the cycle my dad with the help of others was able to.

In conclusion to the analysis of the journals and theories I have been able to identify the importance of t family and the roles that are a part of a family. There are specific roles and rules that family members that help identify the human functioning that occurs around the basis of a family. There are many different roles that make a family and every family makeup is different and unique. My family is unique in its own ways and complications and through the genogram I was able to see the makeup of myself and my own immediate family.

References

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