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Driving Miss Daisy Movie Analysis Compared to Various Concepts of Aging

Abstract

Age is a hard concept and part of life that many people struggle with. Theories are designed to help identify and ease the process for the elderly and also their loved ones. Three theories described by Touhy & Jett (2011) are compared to the four time Academy Award winning film, *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989). The concept of ageism and Susan North’s theory are also related to the film. Each theory is evaluated and examples are provided. The goal of the movie and the theories is to provide the best quality of life possible for the elderly and for the main character, Miss Daisy.

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Ageism, defined by Touhy and Jett (2012) is, “the systematic stereotyping of, and discrimination against, people because they are old” (pg. 82). Ageism is predominantly present in the United States due to the assimilation of aging with “depression, fear, and anxiety,” (Touhy and Jett, 2012, pg. 82). There are many theories that have been developed that help health care providers, family members and the aging person understand and cope with this change. These psychosocial theories identify ways to help the person adjust with their later years. Many of these theories can be identified in a classic late 1980’s film, *Driving Miss Daisy*.

There are three theories in Touhy & Jett (2012) that can be compared to Miss Daisy in the film, Role Theory, Activity Theory and Modernization Theory. Another theory, Health-Related Quality of Life, described by Susan North (2012) focuses on the importance of palliative care and the emphasis and promotion of quality of life in the elderly. All of these theories focus on the process of aging and how it is incorporated into the person’s life and daily activities. Although all of Touhy & Jett’s (2012) theories examine the process in different ways, they can be correlated to Miss Daisy in the motion picture. North’s theory can also be emphasized in the different relationships Miss Daisy has with her son and his employee.

In the movie, *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989), the main character Miss Daisy, is entering this difficult time in her life, in which she is aging. The first part of the movie consists of Miss Daisy having a minor motor vehicle accident, thus causing her son to revoke her driving privileges. This concept could be considered ageism due to Miss Daisy believes her son thinks she is too old to drive. This ideation leads to her believing he is discriminating against her due to her age.

According to Role Theory, “Age norms are socially and culturally constructed expectations of what is deemed as acceptable behavior” (Touhy & Jett, 2012, pg. 37). This, like ageism, is also depicted when Boolie, Miss Daisy’s son believes it is not acceptable for his mother to continue driving after her accident. Therefore, he hires Hope, a man to chauffer his mother around.

Although, it takes Miss Daisy some time to adjust to not driving and having her son employee someone to chauffer her, she needs to continue with her daily activities. With this part in the movie, the Activity Theory is depicted. The focus of this theory is that, “The individual’s need to maintain a productive life for it to be a happy one,” (Touhy & Jett, 2012, pg. 38). Miss Daisy must continue her activities of going to Temple regularly and also hosting and participating in afternoon games with her lady friends in which she fulfills this theory. Another activity that was accomplished, with the use of Hope, was going to the market and also traveling to see her brother for his birthday party (*Driving Miss Daisy*, 1989).

The Modernization Theory described by Touhy and Jett (2012) was observed with the taking over of the family business from Miss Daisy to her son Boolie. “According to the modernization theory, the status and value of elders are lost when their labors are no longer considered useful” (Touhy & Jett, 2012, pg. 38). Although, Miss Daisy did not play an active role in the family business, she did show her support of Boolie when he received an award (*Driving Miss Daisy*, 1989).

According to North (2012) one of the main concepts of aging is trying to provide age appropriate care in which the main priority is ensuring their quality of life is guaranteed. This was definitely depicted by Boolie. He makes all attempts possible to ensure his mother leads a productive life. With the help of the house keeper, Idella, and Hope, Miss Daisy stays in her home. It wasn’t until her 90’s when her dementia got so bad that she had to enter a nursing home to ensure her safety. Up until then she was able to do her shopping, meet with her friends, attend Temple, and also be present at societal events (*Driving Miss Daisy*, 1989).

*Driving Miss Daisy* (1989) had many great examples of the frustrations and drawbacks that come with age. Miss Daisy was at first unenthused with the changes that were made for her by her son, but eventually she became accustomed to them. Although these changes were made by Boolie, with no consideration from Miss Daisy, they were made in her best interest. These changes allowed to her to remain active in her life and stay at home, thus promoting the best quality of life for her. As people age, they could only be so lucky to have a son or daughter like Boolie looking out for him or her.

References

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