

# Compare and contrast of:

Family, Mother



Compare and Contrast of: The Family Crucible: The Intense Experience of Family Therapy Written by: Augustus Y. Napier, Ph. D. with Carl Whitaker, M. D. By: Queenesha Herbert Argosy University Dr. Kaplan December 18, 2012

The Family Crucible is a book depicting the scenario and drama of the Brice family's experience in family therapy with co-therapist Dr. Carl Whitaker and Dr. Augustus Napier. Presenting Issue The Brice family was referred to family therapy by a noted child psychiatrist. The psychiatrist was working with the teenage daughter, Claudia, for about 6 months. He felt that she was getting worse alternatively he referred the entire family to therapy. The family was hesitant to participate in family therapy. At the first meeting, the 11 year old son, Don, was not in attendance. Since it seemed like Don decided not to show to the session, Carolyn, the mother felt that it would be no problem to start the session. Dr. Napier expressed to the family that he felt it would be a mistake to begin and continue without Don. In family therapy the goal is for change within the entire family and it would be unfair to the family to not have him be a part of that process. Carolyn continued her argument that they were referred to family therapy because of their problems with Claudia, which Don had nothing to do with. Dr. Napier informed her and the rest of the family, that their assumption that Claudia was the problem was just the surface of their problems. The whole family attended the following session and the therapists could begin the therapy. David, the father, began to talk about their family issues he focused on Claudia, it seemed that she was the source of all their problems. David stated that she had been in, what he called psychological trouble and usually the conflict was between Claudia and Carolyn about any and everything. When David was asked to talk about

his involvement in the arguments he didn't know how to explain. He stated that he sometimes felt his wife was too hard on their daughter and found himself defending her. Then in recent times, he got angry with Claudia and joined in with his wife chastising her. Dr. Whitaker then asked the father, to step away from the negative talk about Claudia and talk about how the whole family was. David suggested that things seemed to have gone smoothly until Claudia caused some sort of trouble. The therapists then encouraged Don and Laura, to express how they felt about their family arguments. Don complained about the fights, how they just went in circles and no one would be speaking to each other (Napier and Whitaker, 1978). The son sarcastically stated that this dynamic made for wonderful night at the family dinner table. Laura shared that she was worried her older sister would leave for good leading to her mother and father continuing to fight and then divorce. At this point, the therapists cleverly shifted the attention from the scapegoat, Claudia, to the relationship between David and Carolyn. The Brice family have cooperated with one another to prevent the inside story of the couple's marriage from being exposed, and Claudia became the scapegoat responsible for causing conflicts (Napier and Whitaker, 1978). Through practice in later sessions, Carolyn and Claudia established a better communication mode with each other, and the therapists suggested that the Brice family temporarily not attend therapy. After the temporary termination of the therapy, the Brice family returned and Don had become the new scapegoat. David and Carolyn could not agree on a seemingly trivial issue, so they used Don to fight against each other. Don did not accept his role as his parents' son and he looked down on his peers. Later, Dr. Whitaker said

that Don's overconfidence might come from David's refusal to be a real parent and Carolyn's dependence upon Don (Napier and Whitaker, 1978), so Don did not play his proper role and became gradually arrogant. Although the family did make some degree of progress, the creation of a scapegoat was still the Brice family's way to keep the parental relationship from being out in the open. The underlying problem was not presented or solved.

**Underlying Issue** Many couples associate with their family of origin and bring this into their own marriage, therefore problems occur afterwards. According to Carolyn, her mother had a bad temper and was highly picky, and nobody in the family dared to offend her (Napier and Whitaker, 1978). Due to this Carolyn took such an attitude toward Claudia in addition to make her daughter act as a communication medium between her and David. The therapists in time made Carolyn realize that she saw her angry husband as her mother when she was young, and they repeated over and over again the scenario of one person being extremely angry and the other weeping (Napier and Whitaker, 1978). Carolyn was angry because she felt David did not care about her, and David was equally irritated because he thought she depended on him too much. This couple relieved their individual happiness and freedom on each other. Carolyn began to discover herself by doing things that she has never done before. She even visited her parents with a whole new perspective. Just as Carolyn was getting better and gradually formulating her own identity, David did not seem to be happy. He supported his wife on the surface, but he actually felt threatened by her, and he got a job offer from a city across the country. The therapists suggested bringing the couple's families of origin into therapy in order to solve the problem

more thoroughly (Napier and Whitaker, 1978). David's parents and sister were invited to the therapy, the elder couple soon discovered that they needed to work on their own relationship. The therapists suggested that if David's entire family of origin bravely took actions to have a closer relationship with one another, this could become a model for David and Carolyn to improve their own relationship, because David's parents had long preset the mechanism that controlled the way he responded to his own family relationship (Napier and Whitaker, 1978).

**Summary** The Brice family was described as a family of five with a father who was a very important lawyer, an angry mother, and a teen daughter in distress, and another younger son and daughter. They came to therapy originally for their teenage daughter, as their therapy went on, the therapists helped them realize that the core of all the outwardly individual problems were actually the results of the relationship and interaction between both parents.

**References** The Family Crucible: The Intense Experience of Family Therapy (1978). Augustus Y. Napier and Carl A. Whitaker. Harper Collins Publisher, New York.