
Traditional Greek Family and Their High Cultural Values in My Big Fat Greek Wedding, a Romantic Film by Joel Zwick

My Big Fat Greek Wedding is a romantic comedy that is set in the United States. It focuses on a traditional Greek family who holds their cultural values in high esteem. The main character is Toula Portokalos, who is constantly belittled and reminded that she still isn't married by her family. Her family consists of: Toula's father (Gus), Toula's mother (Maria), Toula's aunt (Voula), Toula's younger brother (Nick), Toula's cousin (Nikki), Toula's older sister (Athena) and Toula's grandmother (Gus' Greek mother). Ian Miller and Toula end up getting married, and Toula's family must join Ian's family which is only his father and mother (Rodney & Harriet Miller).

The movie starts at Dancing Zorba's – an authentic Greek restaurant owned by Toula's family. Toula is a middle-aged woman working at her family's restaurant and is thought of as a failure because she isn't married and has no children. Toula absentmindedly works at the restaurant and is heedless in her appearance. Ian Miller comes into the restaurant and Toula is captivated by him. After the contact with Ian, and built up pressure from her family Toula has an entire life make-over. She changes her appearance, her place of employment and starts going to classes. She ends up meeting the man of her dreams and conflict arises with cultural difference between the two families.

Using Mark Knapp's developmental model I will describe how Toula and Ian's relationship came about. The initiating stage in the coming together phase happened when Toula changed her place of employment. Toula tricked her dad and got him to allow her to work at the travel agency for her aunt Voula. One day while Toula was working Ian was in front of the agency and saw her, he was attracted. He tried to be silly and ended up getting beat by an old lady with her purse. It ended up being silly anyways. When Ian came in to say hello to Toula, Toula tried to go and greet Ian and ended up getting knocked down because her headset she forgot was connected. They ended up chatting on the floor for a little while, after the embarrassing first contact. The experimenting stage happens next, they go on several dates over the next several weeks. Intensifying happens as they get more intimate with each other. This whole time they have been keeping their relationship a secret because Toula knew her family would have issues because Ian is not Greek. During the Intensifying stage of development the relationship is found out, Nikki comes to the travel agency and tells Toula what happened and how everyone found out, and that's when the integrating state begins. Gus is mad at Toula's decision like Toula did something to him. Maria explains to Gus that it just happened, and eventually he comes around. Ian asks Toula to marry him and she says yes. The movie ends with them in the

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bonding stage and getting married.

Due to such large difference between the families, some conflicts arise in the movie. The conflict of nationality and religion arise with Ian not being Greek and more specific Greek Orthodox. Toula's family just has to suck it up and deal with him not having Greek blood, but they do make him get baptized into their Greek Orthodox religion in order have their blessing. I would say Toula's family was directly aggressive and used decision making with Ian in making him get baptized. It would have caused greater conflict if getting baptized into their religion was an issue.

Culture was another conflict within the two families. The opposites dealt with in the movie are American individualism and Greek collectivism. Individualism is the habit or principle of being independent and self-reliant. You see this with Ian's family, there a family unit of three. It's hard for them be comfortable with Toula's large, loud family. Collectivism is the practice or principle of give a group priority over each individual in the group. This is obvious with Toula's proud to be Greek family.

Toula and Ian's relationship seemed healthy to me. There was one issue that went against what the bible teaches. Sex outside of marriage is sin. , that was the only principle that went against the Bible. There were defiantly positive aspects of the relationship. Ian showed Toula a lot of love that strengthened her and broke down some of the lies she believed about herself. One for instance was that she thought she wasn't worth the effort Ian was going through to gain her family's approval .Toula's younger brother Nick even had to tell her she was worth it. There was acceptance for who each other was as a person and where they came from, looking past the differences. Toula and Ian bring each other joy and I think that is essential in a relationship.

My Big Fat Greek Wedding was a movie choice. It showed the struggle interracial couples have when they decide to bring their families together and tie the knot. In the closing seen Gus stands to say a word at the reception. "You know, the root of the word Miller is a Greek word. Miller come from the Greek word "milo," which is mean "apple," so there you go. As many of you know, our name, Portokalos, is come from the Greek word "portokali," which mean "orange." So, okay? Here tonight, we have, ah, apple and orange. We all different, but in the end, we all fruit." This is a beautiful ending to the story where two people in a relationship with such huge differences overcome through love, and acceptance.

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