Family Rituals 1960S & 1990S

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FAMILY RITUALS 1960S & 1990S

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

BY

ANGELINE BECKER

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
MAY, 1997
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am lovingly grateful to my father, Andrew Sareny, for inspiring me to seek a college education. I am lovingly grateful to my mother, Angeline Sareny, for inspiring me to work hard in life. And to my mother and father I wish to thank them for their love, their caring, their hard work with me, and for my faith in God.

And to all my family and friends who have "heard" about this thesis through the months, I now say "It's done!" and thank you for your help.
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CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Much of what goes on in families can be considered patterned interaction. A family’s day is filled with action, but certain actions are chosen by the family to become family rituals. This happens when the family decides to give affective meaning to certain actions and bring symbols to these certain actions. This paper will delve into the various aspects of ritual and symbols and discuss how family rituals affect family members physiologically and emotionally, as well as perform varied important functions for the family.

This paper is based on the premise that human beings are spiritual/material beings as suggested by optimal theory (Myers, Speight, Highlen, Cox, Reynolds, Adams, & Hanley, 1991). Optimal theory presents a worldview that spirit and matter are one, a unity. Assagioli (1965) suggested that spiritual not only includes all experiences traditionally considered religious, but also includes all the states of awareness, all the human functions and activities which have in common the possession of values higher than average. Campbell and Moyers (1988) pose spiritual beliefs lead to the individual conceptualizing her connection with others, the world, and the Creator. It is the author’s contention that this spiritual entity which prods one to connect with others, and to rise to
higher values is present and affected when one engages in family rituals.

LaRossa and Reitzes (1993) in their discussion of Symbolic Interaction theory tells us that families are social groups and that individuals develop a self concept and their identities through social interaction,"enabling them to assess and assign value to their family activities" (Burgess, 1926; Handel, 1985). The early pragmatists insisted that "meanings emerge from the interaction between subject and object" and that people are socially created. Cooley (1902/1956) suggested that a child is born with feelings and impulses but no organized sense of self. The child’s desires to influence others and gain their approval, and so begins to form a social self. He goes on to say that the child develops a looking glass self which comes from an "individual's perception of other's imagination of her; her imagination of their assessment; and her reaction or self-feeling". Cooley states that the looking glass self emerges in small face-to-face associations which offer individuals the chance to connect in a permanent, intimate and a cooperative fashion. The family is an excellent group in which these connections can be made. The child becomes aware of others and interested in gaining their approval and "support for a positive self-conception". In the family an individual is able to identify with others and "expand her self-interest" from "I" to "We". And it is in the family that individuals "translate their feelings" toward family members "into more abstract symbols and ideals and also translate their concrete experiences into norms and values". It is also within the family that the individual is socialized. Socialization, according to the
symbolic interactionists, is the process of change that a person undergoes as a result of social influences (Gecas, 1986).

Symbolic interaction theory also developed certain assumptions about the importance of meanings for human behavior (Blumer, 1969). "Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Meaning arises in the process of interaction between people. Meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with things she encounters".

The Symbolic Interaction theory also developed certain assumptions concerning the development and importance of the self concept. "Individuals are not born with a sense of self but develop self concepts through social interaction. (Cooley, 1902/1956a). Self concepts once developed, provide an important motive for behavior. Self-values and self-beliefs, as well as self-feelings and positive self assessments, affect behavior." I behave according to who I think I am. Backett (1928) and Handel (1986) have noted that members of a family can have significant dramatic effect in how people feel and think about themselves.

Symbolic interactionist theory also assumes that "individuals and small groups are influenced by larger cultural and societal processes and that it is through social interaction that individuals work out the details of social structure." Thomas and Thomas (1928) suggested that people interacting in these social situations are influenced by their own attitudes and subjective
During the time period of 1960 and 1990 changes took place in the family. The following statistics have been gleamed from an article by Popenoe (1993). Popenoe suggested that an American family decline was in the making. In 1960, forty-two percent of families had sole breadwinners, as contrasted with fifteen percent in 1988. In 1960, nineteen percent of married women with children under six years of age were in the labor force full or part time or looking for work. By 1990, this similar group of women had risen to fifty-nine percent. A recent study by the Census Bureau (Chicago Tribune, 1996) noted that as of 1995 the number was sixty percent. Popenoe’s statistics also relate that in 1960, thirty-eight percent of married women with children six to seventeen years of age were in the workforce full or part-time, while in 1990, the numbers had risen to fifty-seven percent.

Popenoe (1993) also pointed out that at the same time that women were returning to the workforce, the basic structure of the family, two natural parents who stayed together for life was undergoing change. In 1960, eighty-eight percent of children lived with two parents, while by 1989, there had been a fifteen percent drop to seventy-three percent. According to the Census Bureau (1996) the number of married couples with children under eighteen in 1970 was forty percent of all households while in 1995 the number had been reduced to twenty-five percent. Although the statistical percentages vary, both portray a decrease in the number of households with children. According to Popenoe
(1993) in 1960, seventy-three percent of children lived with two parents both married only once, whereas by 1990, the numbers had dropped to fifty-six percent. Popenoe went on to suggest that women's return to the workforce imminently brought about the decline of the role of women in the nuclear family. He goes on to say that at the same time that there was a decline of the role of women in the nuclear family, there also was a weakening of familism as a cultural value and the substitution of familism with the values of self fulfillment and egalitarianism. Familism is defined by Popenoe as a belief in a strong sense of family identification and loyalty. The concept espouses mutual assistance among family members, concern for the perpetuation of the family unit and the subordination of interests and personality of the individual family members to the interests and welfare of the family group. (Popenoe 1993, 537-538)

It appears two phenomena have taken place since the 1960s, women have left the home and familism has declined as a value. Research suggests that women have been the predominant family members responsible for kinkeeping, keeping family members in touch with one another. Troll (1988) suggests that women act as family kinkeepers, keeping family members connected by "transmitting family news, mobilizing support for family members in crises, and arranging celebrations, reunions and other family traditions". Troll also suggests that when older women are absent in the family, younger females take over the role of keeping traditions alive. Laird (1988) found similar results. Parsons and Zelditch (1955) suggested that women are leaders in the expressive domain and are concerned with group maintenance and integration.
Bahr (1976) found that both men and women assign kinkeeping tasks to women. Bott (1957) suggested that women play a central part in orchestrating family gatherings and ritual occasions. Lueschen (1972) also suggests greater involvement of women in kinkeeping. Rosenthal's (1985) study on kinkeeping found that women were named as kinkeepers 74% of the time. The study also found that families having kinkeepers got together more often and were more likely to see extended family members on important celebrations of the year. Families with kinkeepers "were more likely to say there were special objects of sentimental value in the family. At the extended family level, having a kinkeeper was related to greater interaction and to the symbolic representation of family sentiment and solidarity in the form of sentimental objects". Having a kinkeeper in the family led to greater sibling interaction among the men in the family and greater likelihood of three generational lineage get-togethers for men. Families with kinkeepers "are more oriented to ritual occasions" and for both men and women, having a kinkeeper was related to getting together with adult children once a month or more to celebrate occasions such as holidays and birthdays. The study also found that the succession of kinkeeping from one generation to the next succeeded the female line.

Since Popenoe's research tells us that women have left the home in the last thirty years and research also suggests that women have been responsible for drawing the family together in ritual, the focus of my study is to assess whether there has been a decrease in family ritual activities in the last thirty
years. It is predicted that parents who were involved in child rearing in the 1960s engaged in family rituals to a greater extent than parents who are child rearing in the 1990s.

Definition of Family

A definition for the nuclear and the extended family will be provided for this paper. Popenoe (1993) defines family in a nuclear fashion, seeing family as a small domestic group of kin or people in a kin-like relationship living together in a household and functioning as a cooperative unit, particularly through the sharing of economic resources and in the pursuit of domestic activities. Popenoe sees the group consisting of at least one adult and one dependent person. The group is an intergenerational unit, including or at one time having included, children. Handicapped, the elderly and infirm adults and also other dependents are included in the definition. Popenoe's definition is meant to include single parent families, step families, nonmarried and homosexual couples and other family types in which dependent people are involved. Kazak, Segal, & Andrews (1992) definition is used for the extended family, a circle of persons who provide long term emotional and tangible support and structure to one's life.

Popenoe (1993) suggests that kingroups carry out certain functions of society, procreation, socialization of children, providing of care to its members, affection, companionship, economic cooperation (the sharing of economic resources, especially shelter, food and clothing) and sexual regulation. Donkey (1993) suggests that the human family is a "natural system", a set of
relationships that are mutually influencing and operate as a whole, rooted in
evolution and operating according to principles of nature. Berg (1985) suggests
that the family has long been seen as the locus of power which determines the
pattern of adult life that will mold the character of society. Berg goes on to
suggest that the family provides the total socializing environment involving the
giving of platitudes and precepts and culture’s wisdom. Parents furnish their
children with the essential components of experience of the world, the child’s
world view. He suggests that parental role responsibilities include teaching the
following: cognitive development, handling emotions, social skills, norms, values
and physical development as well as meeting a child’s emotional needs and
facilitating interactions within the family unit.

**Patterned Interactions vs. Ritual**

The question needs to be asked: What turns an ordinary everyday action
in a family into a ritual. Wolin, Bennett, and Jacobs (1988) suggest that it is the
family that decides to do this by accepting the continuation of the activity over
time, by giving meaning to the activity and by bringing to the activity meaningful
symbols. Fiese (1992) adds that affect is also a part of ritual making.

**Ritual**

Ritual needs to be defined for the purpose of this paper. Myerhoff’s
definition is as follows

Ritual is an act or actions intentionally conducted by a group of people
employing one or more symbols in a repetitive, formal, precise, highly
stylized fashion. Action is indicated because rituals persuade the body
first; behaviors precede emotions in the participants. Rituals are conspicuously physiological; witness their behavioral basis, the use of repetition and the involvement of the entire human sensorium through dramatic presentations employing costumes, masks, colors, textures, odors, foods, beverages, songs, dances, props, settings and so forth. (Myerhoff 1977, 199)

Van der Hart (1941) defines ritual as “prescribed symbolic acts that must be performed in a certain way and in a certain order and may or may not be accompanied by verbal formulas”. Van der Hart states that rituals need to be performed with much involvement or they are considered hollow.

Rappaport (1971) enumerates certain key aspects of collective rituals. Many family rituals can be considered collective rituals. Those characteristics are repetition of occasion, content or form or a combination of these; self-consciously acting out; special behavior or stylization where extra-ordinary actions or symbols are used, or ordinary ones are used in unusual ways; order present throughout the event; evocative presentational style present; a social meaning or message.

The question becomes, How do rituals affect the individuals involved in the ritual? d’Aquili, Laughlin, & McManuus (1979) have studied the neurobiological impact of participants in rituals. They speculate that the active parts of certain rituals produce positive limbic discharges, which lead to increased contact between people and social cohesion. d’Aquili hypothesized that the left and right parts of the brain spill over into one another. This spilling over may be experienced as the shiver down one’s back at certain parts of the
ritual. Rituals may also be understood to affect the brain as a result of the effect of story vs. technical material on the brain. Ornstein's and Thompson's (1984) study reported that when participants were reading stories the right hemisphere, which is the non-verbal intuitive side, was more activated. "It appears language in the form of stories can stimulate activity of the right hemisphere." People's stories are an important part of ritual-making.

That right side of the brain wherein lie our emotions can also be stimulated by the symbols in ritual. Turner says that symbols are the building blocks of rituals. He goes on to say that symbols are significant in their ability to carry multiple meanings, their ability to link disparate phenomena that could not be joined as completely through words, and their ability to work with both the sensory and cognitive poles of meaning. (Turner, 1967)

According to Sapir in the article "Symbols" in the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences XIV (as cited in Turner, 1969), there are two classes of symbols, referential symbols which include oral speech, writing, national flags, flag signaling and other organization of symbols which are economical devises for the purpose of reference and condensation symbols which are "highly condensed forms of substitutive behavior for direct expression, allowing for the ready release of emotional tension in conscious or unconscious form". The symbols within rituals fall within the condensation class and affect the unconscious. The referential symbol grows within the conscious part of the mind. The condensation symbol is "saturated with emotional quality" says Sapir and
“strikes deeper and deeper roots in the unconscious, and diffuses its emotional quality to types of behavior and situations apparently far removed from the original meaning of the symbol”. Langer in Philosophy in a New Key (as cited in Moore & Myerhoff, 1977) spoke of symbols doing their job so well that a transforming state of mind takes place. “...ritual symbols fire the imagination, and insight, belief and emotion are called into play” and the invisible referents of symbols are able to be conceived.

Symbols are important to rituals. Imber-Black (1992) suggests that “symbols and symbolic actions are powerful activators of sensory memory-smells, textures, and sounds. Scenes and stories are recalled of previous times when similar rituals were enacted or some of the same people were together. “ She goes on to say that, “ The protected time and space offers a chance to stop ordinary activity and reflect and remember the uniqueness of each of our lives. Because of their action and sensory elements, rituals appeal to all ages. They create special time out of ordinary time to make meaning out of where our lives have been and where they are going”.

Family Ritual

Family ritual is important to the well-being of a family. For the purpose of this paper Wolin & Bennett’s (1984) definition of family ritual will be used. Family ritual is “a symbolic form of communication that owing to the satisfaction that family members experience through its repetition, is acted out in a systematic fashion over time.” Fiese & Kline (1993) suggest that family rituals are different
than general family organization by the presence of a symbolic quality and affective meaning within the family rituals.

The Family Paradigm

Reiss (1982) put forth that each family has its own family paradigm or model which is composed of a set of core assumptions, convictions or beliefs each family holds about its environment, about its world. These assumptions, which are rarely consciously thought of or made explicit, guide the family to sample certain segments of its world and ignore others. This paradigm organizes the family and comes to be as the family develops. Reiss believes that highly routinized patterns that occur on a daily basis and deeply symbolic ceremonials in which the family is thoroughly involved and have special meaning for, helps the family conserve the family paradigm.

The Family Identity

Formation of the family identity as well as formation of family members individual identity happen when family members are involved in family rituals. The looking glass self becomes involved during family ritual. The individual finds out Who I am and Who we are by engaging in these rituals. Wolin & Bennett (1984) say that family rituals contribute to the establishment and preservation of a family’s collective sense of itself, its family identity. These family rituals stabilize the family identity throughout the family life by “clarifying expected roles, delineating boundaries within and without the family, and defining rules so that all members know that this is the way our family is”. Other researchers have
proposed similar benefits to the family members. Bennett, Wolin & McAvity (1988) suggested that family rituals provide a sense of identity or a sense of belonging to a larger family system to individual family members. Fiese (1992) suggested that the symbolic significance of family rituals provide a sense of belongingness across generations. Imber-Black (1988) says that family rituals directly influence personal and family identity. Turner (1967) and van der Hart (1983) proposed that family rituals may be related to feelings of belonging and security in the family as well as in the culture.

**Types of family rituals**

There are three groupings of family rituals proposed by Wolin & Bennett (1984). 1) Family celebrations are those holidays that are practiced within the culture and are considered special by the family. Examples are the rites of passage, weddings, funerals, baptisms, and bar mitzvahs; the annual religious celebrations, Christmas, Easter, the Passover Seder; and secular holiday observances, as Thanksgiving, or the Fourth of July. 2) Family traditions are more idiosyncratic to families. Examples would be summer vacations, birthday and anniversary customs, and family get-togethers. 3) Patterned family interactions are the most frequently enacted and least conspicuously planned. Examples would be regular dinnertime, children's bedtime routines, the customary treatment of guests in the home and leisure activities on weekends or evenings. Everyday greetings and goodbyes can also be considered rituals in
this category. Wolin and Bennett suggest that each type of family ritual enhances different aspects of family identity.

Family celebrations mark the passage of time and the progress of the family through its developmental stages. By assuming culturally established forms, the celebration ritual gives the family a group identity as a member of a larger culture. The family’s need for uniqueness, on the other hand is expressed in its traditions. These promote the internal continuity and cohesiveness of the family and thereby define the family identity. Finally, through rituals of patterned interaction, individuals in the family solidify that aspect of individual identity that grows out of the family identity. The boundaries between home and outside, between family and stranger, and between one member of the family and others are all drawn by these daily interaction rituals. (Wolin & Bennett 1984, 407)

Properties of Family Rituals

Wolin and Bennett (1984) believe that there are three properties that when set in motion by the action of family members during family rituals act synergistically to shape, affirm, and maintain the identity of the family.

Transformation are the preparatory events that allow the family members to pass from nonritual to ritual. The individual passes from one state of being to another. This transition happens most dramatically in rites of passage i.e. the “giving away of the bride”. Wolin and Bennett (1984) suggest that this state of transformation appears to motivate family members to return again to family rituals. Communication takes the form of the affective and the symbolic. The ritual allows for the release of affect. Family members become emotionally involved with one another, clarifying their roles and power relationships. The rules and structure of the ritual make it a safe environment where unusually
affectionate and aggressive behavior may be expressed. Coming together at
dinnertime provides an avenue for affective expression, being together as a family can feel good. Communication through symbols gives ritual great meaning. Items at the dinner table, gifts given, help the ritual communicate the message to the family of Who I am and Who we are. Symbolic communication can also take place through behavior. Who comes to the table, who is present or absent at the table. Stabilization is experienced in the family as the ritual is continually repeated through the generations.

### Functions of Family Rituals

Researchers have suggested many functions of family rituals. Imber-Black has said rituals are

> a lens through which we can see our emotional connection to our parents, siblings, spouse, children, and dear friends. Rituals give us places to be playful, to explore the meaning of our lives, and to rework and rebuild family relationships. They connect us with our past, define our present life, and show us a path to our future as we pass on ceremonies, traditions, objects, symbols, and ways of being with each other, handed down from previous generations. (Imber-Black 1993, 4)

Imber-Black goes on to say that rituals help family members maintain important relationships. People gather to help mark and make the transition for self and others. The “truly magical quality of rituals is their embedded capacity not only to announce a change but to actually create the change”. Rituals can help us heal, recover from relationship betrayal, trauma or loss. Rituals help us voice
our beliefs and make meaning of our existence. Ritual help us celebrate, express deep joy and honor life with festivity. Imber-Black (1984) suggests that life cycle rituals "...are often imbued with a sense of the sacred and with an element of the mysterious".

Bossard and Boll (1950) felt that much of the family culture is transmitted to the next generation through ritual and that much of the strain and stress of family members living together can be relieved through ritual. Younger members of the family can be taught appropriate behavior. The formation of personality traits which lead to social stability and adaptability can be molded. Bossard and Boll (1950) state "...family ritual is related to social habits of cooperation, regularity, punctuality, and recognition of the rights of others, which obviously are significant for intra-group relations in general, and for the family in particular". Bossard and Bell (1950) saw ritual as "transmitting the family's enduring values, attitudes, and goals. Troll (1988) also suggested that ritual incorporates the young into the family or social order. Ritual also enforces connections with each other and allows us to acknowledge each others existence. Researchers have also suggested that ritual promotes family solidarity, recognizes family position changes, and strengthens the structure of the family as an institution.

Comstock (1972) saw ritual as promoting intergroup stability by providing a controlled and safe place to solve personal and social problems and validate the ongoing social structure. Roberts (1988) believed that ritual maintains and
creates social structure for individuals and also maintains and creates world view. Doty (1986) suggests that rituals provide the societal glue that binds societies and enables them to adjust to the polarities of personal experience. They also create a communicative means through which persons find meaningful systems of symbols for identifying their experiences. Scheff (1979) felt that rituals can provide a way for people to find support and containment for strong emotion. Roberts (1988) found that rituals can incorporate both sides of a contradiction i.e. at a wedding, the loss of a daughter, but the gaining of a son. Social coordination among individuals, families, and communities and among past, present and future can be facilitated by ritual.

Power of Family Ritual

Research shows the power of family ritual. Wolin, Bennett, Noonan & Teitelbaum's (1980) study showed that when the family ritual was disrupted by a family members alcoholism, there was greater incidence of alcoholism in the next generation. Families which had kept their rituals distinct from the alcohol abuse behavior were less likely to have an increased incidence of alcohol in the next generation. Wolin, Bennett, Noonan, & Teitelbaum's (1987) second study found that couples who had high deliberateness in successfully executing their plans for their own family ritual heritage were 75% more likely to be "non transmitters" of alcoholism in their generation. Bennett, Wolin, & Reiss' (1987) study of school-aged children of alcoholic and non-alcoholic parents focused on level of deliberateness- the deliberate execution of plans for family rituals. The
study further examined the quality of relationships within the family, and specific roles among family members encompassing the entire history of the nuclear family. The results suggested that children from highly deliberate families, those families that were able to plan a family ritual and act upon that plan, were functioning better in the behavioral and emotional areas and to a lesser extent, but better, on the cognitive measures than those children from low deliberate families. The authors suggest that the family’s ability to plan and execute family ritual, roles, and relationships even though parental alcoholism is in their midst communicate to their children the possibility that they can take control of present and future life events. “It is possible that in the process of learning how to be deliberate in planning and carrying out ideal ways of behaving as a family, children learn they can successfully meet difficult challenges in life”. Fiese (1992) proposed that a family’s shared representation of the symbolic significance of its family’s rituals is related to how adolescent’s feel about themselves in the social world. Positive correlations were found between measures of adolescent identity and subscales reflecting the meaning component of family rituals. Positive correlations were also found between the family’s association of symbolic significance in family rituals to the adolescent’s self-esteem, identity integration, and feelings of belonging with others. Fiese (1993) found that adolescent children of alcoholics reported significantly lower family ritual meaning than non children of alcoholic adolescents. Also the relation between family rituals and adolescent anxiety-related health symptoms
was fairly consistent. Fiese (1993) suggested that "family ritual were a potent factor in preserving relationships during times of transition." The Fiese study reported that couples of preschool age children who practiced meaningful family rituals reported more marriage satisfaction than couples who reported hollow family rituals (rituals without meaning or involvement). Garmezy (1985) suggested that family rituals may prove to have the strongest effect on adults and children during times of stress or transitions. Pett, Lang, and Gander (1992) found that adult children in late life divorces overwhelmingly described "losses of important structural and functional components of their family lives" with the loss of family rituals due to the divorce. Loss of family unity and traditions, difficulty in arranging and restructuring family gatherings were losses reported.

To quote a young man from the study,

"Our family broke up more when my Grandmother died than when my parents divorced because she was the one that would hold the parties. On Christmas Eve, Grandma's was the real party, but it's all over now. We don't exchange presents. She died about two years before they divorced. You lose the family if you don't get them together. You lose the team spirit if the team doesn't play together." (Pett, Lang, & Gander 1992, 543)

My study will assess through the means of a family ritual inventory if the families of the 1990s (the team) are indeed playing together and if they are gathering together for family ritual making as did the families of the 1960s. My hypothesis is that the families of the 1990s are engaging in family ritual to a lesser extent than the families of the 1960s.
Procedure

The participants in the study were comprised of two groups of parents, one group having raised children in the 1960s, and one group raising children in the 1990s. Members of the 1960s group were invited to be participants at an American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) meeting, an AARP luncheon prior to their entering the dining room, a senior citizen center luncheon (after lunch) and 2 retirement homes (before dinner). Since voluntary unpaid participation was the order, those invited were encouraged to participate in order to help families in general. A simple explanation of the study was given. “I will be comparing the family routines/rituals of people raising children in the 1960s with those parent’s raising children in the 1990s. Twenty minutes time to fill out the questionnaire was emphasized. Names, addresses and phone numbers were given by 66 elders who agreed to participate in the 1960s group. When the survey was returned, the 1960s group had 28 participants, ranging in age from 63 to 96. The mean age of the 1960s group was 78.2. The participants were Caucasian, spoke English and had always been married while raising their children. All had finished high school and some had college. Based on their work
description and addresses, the social economic status was determined to be middle class. The study was not completed by 45 people. Reasons for this were not pursued. Several of the questionnaires were not used because of double checking and because the participants consent form was not signed.

The 1990s group members (those parents raising children in the 1990s) were invited to participate at a Junior Women’s club Meeting, and through a class project of a private grade school. Permission was obtained through a friend to attend a Junior Woman’s club meeting and invite parents of at least 4 year olds to join the study. The age 4 was chosen because according to Fiese (1993) family rituals are more likely present in families where children are of preschool age. A contact through a neighbor led to a fourth grade class that was studying family traditions. The parents of the fourth grade class were invited through a letter to join the study. Again potential participants were asked to participate in the study so that families in general could be helped. Names, addresses, and phone numbers were given by 73 people who agreed to participate in the 1990s group. The 1990s group had 28 participants, ranging in age from 32 to 44. The mean age of the 1990s group was 38. The participants were Caucasian, spoke English and had always been married while raising their children. All had completed high school and some had college degrees or graduate school. Again, based on the work description and the home address of the participants the social economic status was determined to be middle class. The experiment was not completed by 45 people. And as in the 1960s group, reasons were not
pursued.

With both groups confidentiality was stressed. Minimal information about
the questionnaire was given primarily emphasizing it would take about 20
minutes of time. Family routine was sometimes used to appear less academic
and psychological. A promise to return with study results was made to all invited
groups.

Instrumentation

Family rituals in the 1960s group and the 1990s group were assessed
through the use of the Family Ritual Questionnaire (FRQ) developed by Barbara
H. Fiese and Christian A. Kline. The FRQ was published in 1992. The measure
has been discussed in the Journal of Family Psychology, 1993, the
Marriage and the Family, 1993, and Family Relations, 1993. The FRQ is a fifty-
six item, forced choice questionnaire that assesses the degree of family rituals
along seven settings (those times or places when rituals occur) and eight
dimensions, (those behaviors that are involved in performing the rituals). The
settings as defined by Fiese and Kline (1993) are:

dinnertime-a shared family meal;
weekends- leisure or planned activities that occur on nonworking days;
vacations- events or activities surrounding a family vacation;
annual celebrations- yearly celebrations: birthdays, anniversaries, or first
day of school;
special celebrations—celebrations that occur regardless of religion or culture: weddings, graduations, or family reunions;

religious holidays—religious celebrations: Christmas, Chanukah, Easter, or Passover;

cultural and ethnic traditions—celebrations tied to culture and ethnic groups: naming ceremonies, wakes, funerals, or baking particular ethnic foods;

The dimensions are:

occurrence—how often activity occurs;

roles—assignment of roles and duties during activity

routine—regularity in how activity is conducted;

attendance—expectations about whether attendance is mandatory;

affect—emotional investment in activity;

symbolic significance—attachment of meaning to activity;

continuation—perseverance of activity across generations;

deliberateness—advance preparation and planning associated with activity;

The instructions for the 1960s group were rewritten asking participants to think back to the time when they were raising children. It was suggested they contact their children to help them remember if recalling what the family had done was a problem. The questionnaire asks the family member to consider which description most closely resembles his/her family during a particular
setting. The family member is given eight pairs of statements referring to the eight dimensions. One of two statements that best typifies the family is chosen and then the family member chooses if this is sort of true or really true of the family. Each item is scored from 1 to 4. A higher score reflects more ritualization and higher presence of the various dimensions.

The FRQ has evidenced good psychometric properties having adequate levels of internal consistency and test-retest reliability. The FRQ is most appropriate in assessing whether the families of the 1960s participated in more family rituals and whether the families of the 1960s also had greater amounts of the various dimensions present in their family ritual.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The study compared two groups of parents, one group raising children in the 1960s and another raising children in the 1990s. The return rate of the questionnaire for the 1960s group was 42% and 38% for the 1990s group. The groups except for age were very similar. The hypothesis predicted that parents who were involved in child rearing in the 1960s engaged in family rituals to a greater extent than parents who are child rearing in the 1990s. A t-test was used to compare the two groups. The following tables will help in understanding the results.
Table I

Setting Subscale Means of the Family Ritual Questionnaire by Child rearing Cohorts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960s</th>
<th></th>
<th>1990s</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinnertime</td>
<td>25.9643</td>
<td>4.290</td>
<td>22.8095</td>
<td>5.546</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekends</td>
<td>21.2143</td>
<td>4.957</td>
<td>22.2381</td>
<td>4.206</td>
<td>-.71</td>
<td>.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacations</td>
<td>22.1429</td>
<td>4.957</td>
<td>23.2381</td>
<td>4.024</td>
<td>-.85</td>
<td>.398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Celebrations</td>
<td>23.4286</td>
<td>5.508</td>
<td>25.7143</td>
<td>3.676</td>
<td>-1.83</td>
<td>.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Celebrations</td>
<td>21.6071</td>
<td>5.280</td>
<td>24.3810</td>
<td>4.421</td>
<td>-2.00</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Holidays</td>
<td>22.1786</td>
<td>7.211</td>
<td>26.8571</td>
<td>3.705</td>
<td>-2.95</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural &amp; Ethnic</td>
<td>20.9643</td>
<td>6.064</td>
<td>23.2381</td>
<td>4.460</td>
<td>-1.51</td>
<td>.137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table II  
Dimension Subscale Means of the Family Ritual Questionnaire by Child rearing Cohorts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960s</th>
<th>1990s</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occurrence</td>
<td>23.6429</td>
<td>3.623</td>
<td>24.6190</td>
<td>-1.10</td>
</tr>
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<td>Roles</td>
<td>16.3571</td>
<td>5.201</td>
<td>15.4286</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routines</td>
<td>18.1429</td>
<td>4.258</td>
<td>18.429</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>20.3571</td>
<td>4.908</td>
<td>22.8095</td>
<td>-1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>20.0000</td>
<td>4.497</td>
<td>23.5238</td>
<td>-3.20</td>
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<td>Symbolic Significance</td>
<td>21.0714</td>
<td>5.374</td>
<td>24.1429</td>
<td>-2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuation</td>
<td>18.000</td>
<td>5.055</td>
<td>17.5238</td>
<td>.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deliberateness</td>
<td>19.9286</td>
<td>4.413</td>
<td>22.2857</td>
<td>-2.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My results indicate my hypothesis as far as dinnertime, a shared family meal, was overall partially supported. Families of the 1960s scored higher than families of the 1990s. Although the means of the 1990s families are close to the
means of the 1960s, it seems that families of the 1960s spent more time having
dinner together and also had a higher emotional investment in dinnertime.

The 1990 families, however, scored higher in regard to the celebration of
religious holidays. Christmas, Chanukah, Easter or Passover are being
celebrated to a greater extent by 1990s families than families of the 1960s. It
also appears that annual celebrations and special celebrations were
approaching significance and must be noted. Annual celebrations are birthdays,
anniversaries and the first day of school. Special celebrations are celebrations
that occur regardless of religion or culture, as weddings, graduations or family
reunions.

Weekends (leisure or planned activities that occur on nonworking days),
vacations (events or activities surrounding a family vacation), cultural and ethnic
traditions (celebrations tied to culture and ethnic groups: naming ceremonies,
wakes, funerals, or baking particular ethnic foods) did not score significantly.
(See Table I)

The families of the 1990s scored higher in affect, symbolic significance,
and deliberateness than did the families of the 1960s. It appears that 1990s
families have a greater emotional investment in the ritual activity they are
engaged in than did the 1960s families (affect). The 1990s families also seem to
have more attachment of meaning to the ritual activities they engage in
(symbolic significance). And it also appears that the 1990s families are spending
more time in advance preparation and planning that is associated with the ritual
activity (deliberateness). Attendance (expectations about whether attendance is mandatory) was approaching significance, and needs to be noted. The means for affect, symbolic significance, deliberateness and attendance were also very close. And although routines was not significant, the means of the 1960s and the 1990s were almost the same. Occurrence (how often the activity occurs), roles (the assignment of roles and duties during the ritual activity), and continuation (the perseverance of the activity across generations) did not have significant scores. (See Table II)

The focus of my study was to assess whether there has been a decrease in family ritual activities in the last thirty years. My hypothesis was that parents who were involved in child rearing in the 1960s perceived themselves engaged in family rituals to a greater extent than parents who are child rearing in the 1990s.

From the results it is clear that families of the 1960s spent more time together at the dinner table than families of the 1990s, however, the closeness of the dinnertime means needs to be noted. My hypothesis was overall partially supported as far as dinnertime. There were areas in which my hypothesis was not supported. Families of the 1990s are spending more time celebrating religious holiday as well as scoring higher across the various dimensions as regards religious holidays than did families of the 1960s. Higher means for special celebrations and annual celebrations for the 1990s families were also approaching significance.
The areas that were not significant were weekends, vacations, and cultural and ethnic celebrations as far as settings. Occurrence, roles, routines, and continuation were dimensions that did not score significantly.
CHAPTER IV
DISCUSSION

When this project was first begun, I had to surmount the thought that family routines were so ordinary. How could dinnertime and birthday celebrations etc. be worthy of a thesis study. But I knew that family was in my heart and that would provide motivation. I also knew some day I wanted to share with families preventative strategies for family well being.

Family rituals are powerful mechanisms as the research has shown. Families of the 1990s are spending less time having dinner together than families of the 1960s. Families of the 1990s are still having dinnertime together, however, the frequency has lessened. From the data I have interpreted, family members of the 1990s have less role assignment and duties (Who’s setting the table and who’s clearing the dishes etc.) as far as how dinnertime is carried out. There is less regularity in how the dinnertime is conducted, and there are less expectations about whether members of the family are in attendance at the dinner table. Family members of the 1990s have less emotional investment in being together around the dinner table and 1990 family members attach less meaning to dinnertime. There is less perseverance to see that family members gather around the table at dinner than in the 1960s and there is less advance
preparation being done for dinner and less planning for dinner. What effect will this have on the 1990 families based on what research tells us about the function of ritual, the power of ritual, and the protective mechanisms of ritual making? Dinnertime is done on a daily basis. In lessening the time spent in the dinnertime ritual the families of the 1990s have lost a great deal of time for ritual making. Reiss (1982) believes that deeply symbolic ceremonials and rituals done on a daily basis conserve the family paradigm. The formation and conservation of the family paradigm, that core of assumptions, convictions or beliefs each family holds about its environment and its world, I believe happens at the dinnertime ritual.

Could it happen at other daily rituals? I believe not. At breakfast, mom and dad are scurrying to leave for work and children for school. Lunch finds family members away from home. Bedtime rituals would probably not include the whole family. Drawing the family together for a daily evening meal that the family finds meaningful will provide the daily ritual time to preserve the family paradigm. This family paradigm guides family members in trying out certain segments of its world. A family member says, “my family does this, we do not do that.” Will the family members of the 1990s be at risk for trying destructive segments of the world because their family paradigm has not been adequately developed? By engaging in this family dinnertime each family member finds out who he/she is and who we are as a family and what we value in this family, what are the rules of this family, and what are the attitudes and goals of this family. At
the dinner table I find out that I belong to a group greater than myself and that makes me feel secure. Will the family members of the 1990s form a healthy individual identity and a healthy family identity? Will they feel that they belong to a group greater than themselves? Beyond dinnertime helping to form individual and family identity, getting together for dinner serves many functions, from maintaining important relationships to healing from life's traumas. Appropriate behavior can be taught at the dinner table and personality traits molded. Socialization of children and development of the core values of a family takes place on a daily basis. It is a slow, patient, repetitive process.

What has brought about this lessening of dinnertime among families of the 1990s. My perception of families of the 1990s sees them engaged in many activities outside of the home. There has been a shift of values at the individual family level. Families of the 1990s are involved in lots of school activities and lots of extracurricular activities. Women, the former kinkeepers have left the home. Gathering around the dinner table takes thinking, planning, shopping, and preparation as well as clean-up. Are parents trying to determine who will be responsible for these tasks? The families of the 1960s were more centered on the home and family. Women were not working outside of the home as in the 1990s. The neighborhood was important. Families had a much smaller geographic space to deal with. The abundance of activities that is available in the 1990s was not available to the children of the 1960s. In the last thirty years have our families become human doings rather than human beings?
I have hope, however, for the families of the 1990s to increase their daily time around the dinner table. Creative thinking and sharing of the workload will bring the families of the 1990s back to the table on a daily basis. Men may have to pick up some of the work that women have let go of because of their return to the workforce, but I believe men can do this once they become aware of the importance of the family gathering around the dinner table on a daily basis. Families of the 1990s may also need to examine their lives and set different priorities. Economic needs in clear light may be economic wants leading to the detriment of the family.

Families of the 1990s did score higher than families of the 1960s on religious holidays and on affect, symbolic significance and deliberateness. Families of the 1990s also approached significant levels in annual celebrations and special celebrations and attendance. Families of the 1990s still are engaging in ritual, but on a more limited basis. They have not lost the meaningful components of ritual making, the emotional investment in the ritual (affect), the attachment of meaning to the ritual (symbolic significance), the advanced preparation and planning associated with the ritual (deliberateness). I find this hopeful.

Religious holidays may mean more to them because ritual making is not done as often. I believe families of the 1990s are still in touch with the important components, affect, symbolic significance and deliberateness, that give meaning to ritual, however, families of the 1990s have only to expand them to a daily
dinnertime and other rituals. Less frequent ritual but more intense affect, symbolic significance, and deliberateness does not equal more frequent ritual with less intensity of the former dimensions. “Quality time” is a phrase invented by parents who for various reasons do not spend the lengthy blocks of necessary time needed for socialization of their children and the formation and conservation of the family paradigm. Socialization of children and development of the core values of a family takes place on a daily basis. It is a slow, patient, repetitive process. Gathering around the table for dinner on a daily basis is important to the family. Food will draw the family to the table and while there the family has the opportunity to share each other’s lives with one another and to find out who I am, who you are and who we are as a family.

How can this study be applicable to family practitioners? Family practitioners need to be aware that the families they are counseling in the 1990s may not be sitting down to dinner together on a daily basis. Research tells us of the power of family ritual making. If that ritual making is not present in the families that we are counseling, that knowledge will help us hypothesize about where the problems of the family lie. Wolin, Bennett and Jacobs (1988) are developing The Family Ritual Interview which would be most helpful in assessing the level of ritual making within the family that one is counseling. Validity and reliability studies are currently in progress. The FRQ might also prove helpful in the ritual assessment process. Family practitioners need to know if the families they are counseling are engaging in ritual making and
thereby developing the "core of their family culture" as Bossard and Boll (1950) theorized.

The limitations of the study fall in two areas, size of sample and the instrument used. The size of the sample was small. Perhaps the study could be reproduced using a larger population. The Family Ritual Questionnaire (FRQ) could be improved. It might be more helpful to define family as far as meaning nuclear or extended family or both. Some participants experienced confusion because the first person (our family) which is more personal, was used in the top page directions, but the third person (some families, other families) which is less personal, was used in the survey questions. Also participants found no way to indicate that an item did not apply to one's own family. Also it is possible that the 1960s group could have romanticized the past, while the 1990s group is in the midst of child rearing.

I am hopeful that future research will continue to explore a comparison of the 1960s and the 1990s families. This study could be reproduced not only using the FRQ, but also the Family Ritual Interview. A further exploration of the ritual making of the families of the 1990s would also be helpful. Further interviews with families of the 1990s might prove fruitful in developing additional explanations as to why families of the 1990s have decreased their dinnertime together. This information would prove helpful in devising strategies to help them regain that important time together.

Family ritual making is so very important to the well-being of the family. I
am hopeful that this study will be a springboard for others in their thinking and in their reading. Families of the 1990s need some help. It was my belief as I read the research that if children in low ritual families do not find the ritual making they need to develop their identity and their family identity, if they do not find a place where they feel they belong and feel secure, they will seek other groups in which to fulfill this need. And I firmly believe that those groups will be destructive towards them. We have seen the rise of the gang element within our country. It is my personal belief that this is the result of the letting go of ritual making within our families of the 1990s. I was gratified as I did the research that Wolin, Bennett, & Jacobs (1988) agreed with my conclusion. “On the other hand, members of low ritual families who need more than such families offer will feel a marked emptiness and lack of values. We speculate that the children in such families will find order and meaning elsewhere, often in destructive behaviors outside the family.” And I am hopeful that familism as defined by Popenoe (1993) as a “belief in a strong sense of family identification and loyalty” will be returned to our society as a value. Today many family members are geographically spread out. Work and development of career takes precedence over proximity to family members. The benefits to the individual and the family would suggest another look at a return to familism as a cultural value.
REFERENCES


VITA

The author, Angeline Becker, is a former teacher, educator, and mother. Mrs. Becker received a Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary education from Roosevelt University in January, 1966. She also completed 30 hours of graduate studies towards a Masters of Arts degree in learning disabilities at DePaul University in 1973. Her forthcoming Masters of Arts degree in community counseling will be completed in May, 1997.

Mrs. Becker has been involved in professional volunteer activities through the years. She was the coordinator of liturgical ministries and liturgical education at St. Isaac Jogues Parish in Hinsdale, Illinois and was the chairperson of the Liaison Board and Steering Board member of the Special Parent Teacher Association of Hinsdale, Illinois. She now resides with her family in Hinsdale.
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The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Community Counseling.

4/1/97
Date

E.J. Quinnan
Director’s Signature