

Eating together the culture of friday family dinner



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Once in a few hours we think of food and chances are that we at least eat once per day. In the family setting food is easily accessible and for others it may be scarce because of the economy or the geography (Fieldhouse, 2008). At least, a large portion of families can afford what they want whenever they want while others must carefully plan on what they purchase. Nonetheless, no one can escape the biological need of food. This is to say that, everyone must eat at regular intervals whether the food is more or less nutritious. It is true that eating is a necessity of life itself but food also forms a crucial part of the cultural rituals and social relationships. Most importantly this paper addresses the family meal tradition as a symbol and material means of bringing family members together (Fieldhouse, 2008). Across different cultures and time, the aspect of food sharing is a universal medium that expresses fellowship in regards to the values of duty, sacrifice, hospitality and compassion. Food sharing is a gesture of friendship also symbolizing trust and interdependency.

My family in particular views the Friday night dinner as a window into social bonding and relationship. As my father has always said, “ people you eat with define the members of your social group and the kind of food you share is a clear indication of the closeness of the relationships”. For instance, there are coffee-breaks with colleagues, casual lunch or dinner with acquaintances, and of course informal dinner around the family table for family and friends. Perhaps a common picture that comes in our mind when it comes to the aspect of family dinner is a happy nuclear family with a mom, dad, and kids sitting in a nicely laid table. This is an image that perpetually describes my family’s Friday night dinner. This is a tradition that my great

grandparents firmly inspired as a cultural idea to be emulated as ultimate symbol of family stability and unity. This paper will look at the different roles of family members in the sustainability of Friday night family dinner examining the tradition using the Freudian theory, the family theory, and ecological system theory. The paper also takes special considerations on the reflection of this tradition in regard to the influence on the future and its influence on the family.

Family Dinner And Family Members

The Purpose

As a tradition, the family meal symbolizes a shared family life. Family dinner on Friday's in our family organizes the family bringing us together. This heavily contributes to our social well-being while providing predictable structure to our Fridays which is often psychologically reassuring. The success of family dinners depends on a number of factors such as the skills for preparing the food and food-buying (Fieldhouse, 2008). The appearance of the family table requires a lot of time and skilled activities that calls for both physical and mental decision making. In our family, everyone is involved in this activity; that applies to the food buying, preparations, laying the table, and serving. With our participation, it not surprising that the provision of this family meal is a symbolic demonstration that we care for our family unity and stability. This veers more on love, obedience, respect, and gratitude. From the shopping to table clearing, each family member participates in a responsible exercise that promotes solidarity in the family. For the longest time we haven't experienced a family tension because we share a lot in our conversations at the dinner table.

To The Parents

During our family dinners my parents focuses on teaching us the way forward on behaviour and in particular civilized behaviour such as saying ‘thank you’ and ‘please’. Excusing yourself before you the table, placing your elbows on the table, and talking on mouth full is normally discouraged. At this time, my parents taught us developmental skills such as manipulating chopsticks, literacy skills through family conversations when exchanging stories. This may seem sheepish but these are the basic fundamentals toward life and social interactions. During conversations, my parents learn more on our interests and attitudes. From these meals, my mother in particular gauges our moods and needs in the end help us solve our problems. My parents monitor the family and ensure that everyone attends to maintain the stability and unity in the family.

To The children (Me)

For the children the dinner table is crucial place for socialization (Fieldhouse, 2008). This is a prime setting for socialization concerning the norms and rules on family values, accepted behaviour, and expectations. From a nutritional perspective, the children learn what is considered acceptable; basically the foods and non-food. From the family dinners my siblings and I have learned manners and restraints on behaviour that the wider world requires. Through family conversations we learned of our parents’ attitudes and interests in relations to the world. We always help our mother prepare for the family dinner. As the eldest, I helped my mother prepare the foods and especially the vegetables and desert while my younger siblings have always prepared the table.

Though a happy family, we have our setbacks. At the end of the day family members who are already tired after a busy day at work or school and probably maybe irritable meet for a family meal. Discord may arise perceived at the table maybe because of the unacceptable behaviour and injustices. Refusal to eat, complaint on bad cooking or lack of gratitude on what was served on the table are some of the things that can lead to these discord at the dining table. This can turn the peaceful mealtime into battlegrounds where verbal arguments are used as weapons which leads to a resentful silence. Therefore, family dinners have many positive virtues that are occasionally fought with difficulties and negative outcomes which greatly depend on the parenting styles.

The Examination

Freudian Theory Of Defense Mechanisms

In psychology, Freud's input cannot be discredited in the psychodynamic theory. Even though people are no longer believing and utilizing many theories and conclusions, the basis of psychodynamic theory still form a role in theories in psychology. Freud's 'ego defense' is one of the last remaining theories. This is also known as 'defense mechanism' said to actively operate without the consent of the person. These defenses are significantly important when dealing with individuals' inter threats. Typically, the ego defense pacts with the thoughts that are unconsciously threatening.

Denial. This is perhaps the best known defense mechanism that describes situations where individuals are unable to acknowledge the obvious or face reality. This is the outright refusal to recognize what had happened or what is currently occurring. There was a time my brother and I boycotted the <https://assignbuster.com/eating-together-the-culture-of-friday-family-dinner/>

Friday family night dinner and we were hit the movies instead. This started bothering us as we kept thinking of the freshly made lasagne and the family conversations. We were defending ourselves from the happening of our family tradition but the reality soon checked in and we were unable to hold it anymore.

Repression. On its basic form, this mechanism is self explanatory. The mechanism acts to keep the information away from the conscious awareness. Keep in mind that memories do not just disappear but they tend to continue influencing our behaviour in the future. For instance, my family and I have repressed memories of shared meals since my childhood which I intend to pass on to my kids.

Fixation. This is the stunted movement that individuals feel between psychosexual stages when they experience excessive anxiety and frustration in regards to the next stage of progression. The individual remains fixed on a particular stage. My family and I are fixed to our Friday night dinner and the values it carries. This is a legacy that has been there since the times of my great grandparents.

Displacement. This involves taking out the feelings, frustrations, and impulses on less threatening people and objects such as the spouse, pets, and children. A good example to this form of defense mechanism is displaced aggressive that would otherwise lead negative consequences such as arguing with the supervisor and instead expressing the anger to people who are less threatening. I remember there was a time that my father had a

bad day at work possibly from the pressures from the upper management passing this bitterness to us at the family table.

The Theories

Ecological Systems Theory (Human Ecology Theory)

This theory states that the development of the human beings is inclined to the various types of ecological systems. Urie Bronfenbrenner formulated this theory to explain why we normally behave differently comparatively to how we behave in the presence of our family, work or at school. The human ecology theory accounts that throughout our lifespan we encounter dissimilar environments therefore influencing the way we behave in degrees that vary. These environments are:

Micro system. This is the environment setting that we directly have in life such as the parents, friends, teachers, neighbours, and people who surrounds us. We directly have social interaction with these social agents in this setting. In this system, individuals are not passive recipients in regard to experiences, but interactive in the establishments of the social settings. In the course of the family dinner we interact with each other in the establishment of a harmonious family setting.

Mesosystem. This involves the interaction of Microsystems in an individual's life. In other words, a work-related experience can be connected to the family experience. For instance, from the family dinners, my parents have taught me civilized manners and respect for others which have helped me establish positive attitude toward by siblings, peers, and teachers. This has also made me feel wanted by people who are actively involved in my life.

The exosystem

In this system there exists a link where an individual does not have any actively involving role and the context where he or she can actively participate. I am attached to my father than my mother and a few ago my father got a promotion and here and then he was travelling to Africa for a few months for work for several months. We all missed our father and during our Friday night dinner my mother spearheaded and listened to mealtime conversations sometimes she was supportive and sometimes she was not. In the end this made my bond with my even tighter because she was always there when my father was away.

The macrosystem

This is the actual culture of a person that involves the socioeconomic status of the individual, race, ethnicity, and most importantly the family. Being born in middle class family makes us hard workers and thus the reason why we meet as a family once in a week for dinner- Friday nights.

The chronosystem

This environment entails the shifts and transitions throughout our lifetime. This engages the socio-historical context influencing an individual. For instance, my great grandparents emphasized on family meals and culture that been passed over in different generations which has positively affected our lives, relationships and how we view the world.

The family system's theory

This is a theory that considers family as an emotional unit integrating systems thinking when describing complex interaction. For instance if there is anxiety among family members, the anxiety may escalate infectiously affecting all of them. And if this anxiety goes up, the connectedness of the members become stressful than comforting eventually making them feel isolated, out of control, and overwhelmed.

Triangles

These are the basic units of stable relationships. These are a system that entails three-person relationships which is seen as the smallest building block of a larger emotional pool. There is no stability in a two-person system and therefore calls for a third party. This is because the tension keeps on shifting between two people is higher than the one involving a third person. When there is too much tension to be contained in one triangle it spreads to a series of interlocking triangles. This is what happens in our family dinner conversations.

Sibling position

In every family each sibling has a certain position which defines how the children will interact. This influences the child's behaviour and development which predictably have common characteristics. For instance, as the first born in my family i tend to gravitate the leadership position which makes my siblings the followers. During the family dinner meal, my siblings look at me to tell them what to do if i am the one preparing the meal.- who to prepare what or even shop.

Differencing

This is the capability of separating thinking and feelings. Undifferentiated individuals can separate the way of thinking and the feelings because their intellect is controlled by the way they feel. This makes them not to think rationally while at the same time they are unable to differentiate their feelings from others. Therefore, differentiation is the ability to free yourself from the family, the realization of your involvement in a conflict and not blaming others, and being able to relate with others emotionally. At times during our dinner times conflicts may arise but we have always solved it before it escalates. We admit to our faults and forgive each other which makes us differential.

The Reflection On The Tradition (1 page)

Is it positive or negative?

As a socially integrative function, a shared meal brings people together in a web of reciprocal obligations and shared social relationships. Well, we suppose can say that one important aspect that brings people together is a family meal and if people do not gather for this family meal then the crucial web of the family is sent to abyss (Fieldhouse, 2008). As a routine tradition, Friday family dinner has been most frequent planned ritual in our family which normally take place in our family house.

The understanding over time

The family meal and dinner in particular has come to represent the dynamics of the family and overtime generations are lamenting on its demise. As early as the 1920's, people were expressing worries on how the leisure activities

such as the invention of the car came undermine the value of the family meals (Fieldhouse, 2008). In the times of change, family meals represented stability and perhaps the lament of the lost family may actually be the reactions to feared change in the arrangements and structures of families.

The influence and the future

In the olden days, dinner was seldom as a ceremonial event (Nancy, Carolina, & Time, 2006).