



2016

Family Dinner Across Generations: My How Times Have Changed?

Dayna E. Parrett

University of Kentucky, dayna.parrett@uky.edu

Digital Object Identifier: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13023/ETD.2016.096>

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Dayna E. Parrett, Student

Dr. Kenneth Culp III, Major Professor

Dr. Hyungsoo Kim, Director of Graduate Studies

FAMILY DINNERS ACROSS GENERATIONS:
MY HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED?

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Sciences in the
College of Agriculture, Food and Environment
at the University of Kentucky

By

Dayna E. Parrett

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Kenneth Culp III, Professor of Family Sciences

Lexington, Kentucky

2016

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

FAMILY DINNER ACROSS GENERATIONS: MY HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED?

In an effort to determine differences between family dinners across generations, this study examined typical family dinners of participants and how they have changed across the four generations addressed. Previous qualitative research has been conducted to determine communication frames that occur during family dinners and the effect of parenting styles on family dinners, but little research connecting generational differences to family dinners has been published. Data were collected from a homogeneous sample of twenty-four women living in three counties across the Commonwealth of Kentucky. By asking open ended questions during interviews, similarities and differences between family dinners across generations were identified, and target approaches to increase the frequency of future family dinners were discussed.

KEYWORDS: Family, Family Dinner, Generations, Parenting Styles, Communication

Dayna E. Parrett

May 2016

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By

Dayna E. Parrett

Dr. Kenneth Culp III

Director of Thesis

Dr. Hyungsoo Kim

Director of Graduate Studies

May 2016

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Chapter 1

Family Dinner across Generations: My How Times Have Changed?

The number of families who sit down to share dinner together every night is decreasing (National Survey of Children's Health, 2007). Between the increase in the number of working mothers (Phillips-Erb, 2013) and the dramatic decrease in the value of family time (Family Values, 2009), combined with the ever increasing convenience of meals on the go, fewer and fewer families consider a sit down dinner to be a necessary part of their nightly routine (Seaman, 2011).

Dinners today are eaten on the run, in the car between soccer games and ballet practices (Seaman, 2011). Some families eat one meal while their picky eater eats another. Televisions are turned on, phones are ringing and answered, and some meals are eaten in the living room on laps or TV trays.

When did this change in family dinners take place? When did the traditional family dinner with all members of a household eating one meal at the dinner table lose value? When did "grab and go" meals become the nightly go to?

While there are many ways to define a family dinner and what nutritional requirements should be included, few studies explore the communication styles accompanying family dinners. With competition from short order menus and blaring televisions, has communication among family during dinner time decreased? Traditional family mealtimes allowed families to talk about their day, ask questions, find out what the kids learned at school, and served as a means for parents to learn what their children

were doing and with whom they were spending time. When are parents learning that information now, if not at the dinner table?

One could assume that either the amount of time families spend communicating is declining along with the frequency of family dinners, or families are finding different ways in which to communicate. However, there are still those families who have frequent family dinners. Is their communication the same as it was in previous generations? What did family dinner communication sound like 60 years ago compared to how it sounds today?

To answer these questions, this qualitative study dug deeper and explored what occurs during a family dinner. By using a small but homogeneous sample of mother/daughter dyads from three Kentucky counties, the researcher identified similarities and differences between family dinners and family communication styles from each generation.

The purpose of the study was to identify and examine differences in family dinners across generations. Through open-ended interview questions, the study determined similarities and differences in the time of day, location, common food choices, and communication topics and styles of family dinners across generations.

To frame this more clearly, it is important to bring to light current research on the frequency of family dinners. Quantitative research has been conducted to determine the details of family dinners such as how long a typical family dinner lasts and how often dinners are eaten together by families today.

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (2009) at Columbia University has released a report annually since 2003 on the importance of family dinners. The 2009 report found that the percentage of teens who report having family dinner at least five times per week has remained relatively consistent since 1996. It increased from 47% in 1998 to 61% in 2002, but has neither increased nor decreased significantly since. In 2009, 59% of teens reported having dinners this frequently with their families.

Contrary to popular belief, 65% of teens report that they would be willing to give up a weeknight if it meant spending time with their family around a dinner table. In addition, 75% of parents wish they had more time with their family as well (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 2009).

Fulkerson et al. (2006) examined the difference between family dinners and high risk behaviors. This study used a much larger sample than most, sending questionnaires to 99,462 sixth to twelfth grade students in the United States. Their results found that middle school students reported having a meal together more often than high school students. Those families in which both parents were present were also more likely to have dinner together five to seven nights per week. Students raised on a farm were more likely to have frequent family dinners than those raised in the city. More than half of the students raised on a farm had dinner together more than five times a week (Fulkerson et al., 2006).

Almost 50% of Hispanic students reported having dinner five to seven nights per week, whereas 35% of Blacks reported never having dinner together (Fulkerson et al., 2006). This study identified significant benefits and advantages to families who share frequent mealtimes. Family support and boundaries/expectations had positive correlations

to frequent family dinners and all high risk behaviors had inverse relations. Students who had dinner five to seven nights per week were more committed to learning, had more positive values, reported higher planning and decision making skills, and felt they had higher positive identities and more of a sense of purpose.

Some families eat dinner at the same table but do not engage in much conversation, or they spend their dinnertime watching a television show. While this may describe “family dinner” to some adolescents, it does not have the same positive impact on a child as does a meal where there are no distractions from televisions, cell phones or computer games, and conversation is ongoing between parents and children (Gibbs, 2006).

Children who eat family dinners with the television on, or those who do not have conversations with their family members while eating, are two times more likely to report tension within the family and are less likely to believe that their parents are proud of them (Gibbs, 2006). Sen (2006) used a national data set that followed and interviewed 6,748 diverse youth for three years and found that families who ate dinner together seven nights per week spent, on average, almost four days together doing fun activities during the week. Those who never ate family dinners only spent a little over one day together engaging in fun activities.

Males were more likely to eat dinner with their families seven days per week. Girls were much more likely to report only eating dinner four or fewer times per week (Sen, 2006). Teens tend to blame work busyness and family members not being home for their lack of time spent eating dinner with their families, while parents blame work,

busyness and involvement in sports (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 2009).

A review of the literature reveals little evidence of a family's reason for not eating family dinners together. Research is needed to determine the barriers families identify when faced with the task of planning and serving family dinners. Identifying these barriers is a logical first step in developing interventions and initiatives in a target-specific way that may be effective in addressing the issue.

For this study, the limited amount of research on family communication during mealtimes was reviewed, along with a discussion of how generational differences may impact family dinner. Definitions of family dinner and generations helped to specify the target audience. A discussion of the major differences between generations is followed by a report and discussion of the findings of the study to determine the differences between family dinners across generations. A review of the limitations of the study was conducted. The study looked beyond quantitative calculations to determine differences and similarities of family meals across generations by addressing the following four research questions: (1) What differences emerge when looking at family dinners across generations? (2) What similarities emerge when examining family dinners across generations? (3) How has the "typical" family dinner changed across generations? (4) How has communication during family dinner changed across generations?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Children learn the basic skills of life from those people with whom they spend the most time. Often times, this means they will inherit their vocabulary, mannerisms, communication skills, arguing style and other traits from their parents or guardians initially, and later then from their siblings and peers.

When parents spend time modeling a desired behavior to a child, he or she is more likely to adopt that behavior. Therefore, if a parent wants a child to eat better, they should also eat better. If they want their child to speak kindly, they too should speak kindly. One place these behaviors can be modeled is at the dinner table.

Family Dinner and Life Skills

Children who eat dinner with their families can pick up proper etiquette, politeness and manners, vocabulary and communication skills, and more. Ochs and Shobet (2006) used the term "commensality" to refer to the practice of sharing food together in a social group such as the family. Their study examined family meals as a cultural practice which causes family members to forge relationships that reinforce and reshape social order.

Ochs and Shobet (2006) believe that mealtimes facilitate the social construction of knowledge. Through the practice of communication at the dinner table, moral perspectives are learned. In addition, many children are taught to wait to eat until everyone is ready to eat, and to remain seated at the table until everyone is finished eating. Mealtimes teach children how to act in society (Ochs & Shobet, 2006). Family

mealtimes may foster the development of both social and cultural skills. Their study classifies family mealtimes in the United States as being a reuniting of family members at the end of the day to recount the incidents of their day, or of the recent past (Ochs & Shobet, 2006). Children in the United States are expected to partake in family mealtime discussion, which is not always the norm for other cultures.

O'Hara, Helmes, Sellen and Harper (2012) collected photos of shared family meals and concluded that family dinners were a place of introduction to family members and their thoughts and beliefs. They also found that memories were reminisced and shared at the dinner table and family ties were reinforced through displays of affection. They believe that family dinners are a social event and an important site for learning family organization. They suggested that family dinners play an important role in developing one's social life, as children tend to learn the rhythms, norms, rights and responsibilities that occur within their family (O'Hara, Hughes, Sellen & Harper, 2012).

Pontecorvo and Arcidiacono (2010) studied two parent families with at least two children to determine whether or not rational thinking is taught at the dinner table. Their families consisted of at least one child between the ages of three and five. They found that most family dinner conversations contain narratives and storytelling and that children who ate dinner with their families were taught how to share their own narratives. Children are taught to reason by listening to family dinner conversations and modeling that behavior (Pontecorvo & Arcidiacono, 2010).

Communication during Family Dinner

Fulkerson et al. (2010) studied 4,750 racially diverse, low income adolescents in an urban area to determine whether or not family dinners and the way that adolescents perceive them had an effect on parent-child communication. Self-reported parent-child communication was measured over a three and a half year period. Results from the study showed that more frequent family dinners were positively associated with adolescent perceptions of communication with their parents. This suggests that parent-child communication may be enhanced even further with more frequent family meals. For parents and children who are struggling with positive communication, frequent family meals may be one way to improve this skill.

Blum-Kulka (as cited in Bova, 2011) studied how parents and children communicated with one another at the dinner table. She found that typical dinner conversation fell into three "frames." She referred to these as the "dinner as business" frame, the "family focused on news telling" frame, and the "world focused" frame.

Blum-Kulka believed that these frames were beneficial in determining how families communicate with one another. In the "dinner as business" frame, conversation often surrounded the preparation of food and the service. Topics other than the meal were rarely discussed (as cited in Bova, 2011).

In the "family focused on news telling" frame, members shared their most recent news with the other members of the family. Children and parents would take turns updating the others on their day or something happening in their lives (as cited in Bova, 2011).

In "a world focused" frame, non-immediate concerns were most often discussed. Topics ranged from both recent and non-recent past events to upcoming future events such as travel arrangements or complaints about the workday (as cited in Bova, 2011).

Through the three frames of conversation at the family dinner table, Blum-Kulka (as cited in Bova, 2011) was also able to identify three primary functions of talk at dinner. The first was coined, "instrumental talk" in which the discussion focused on the business of having dinner.

Some conversations were talk as an end in itself, which she referred to as "sociable talk." The last revolved around injunctions to behave and speak in appropriate ways and she called this "socializing talk." Through these three functions of talking at the dinner table, Bova (2011) believed children learned how to communicate with their families and other members of society.

The Effect of Parenting Styles on Family Dinner

Two studies focused on the parenting styles that best supported family dinners and family dinner conversation. Hughes et al. (2011) studied 177 HeadStart families to determine how the emotional climate of the family dinner affected feeding practices. Of their sample, 39% of parents were working full time and 22% were working part time. The parents in the study were ethnically diverse and low income. Parents' feeding styles were measured by the Caregiver's Feeding Styles Questionnaire (as cited in Hughes et al., 2011) and then classified into four different feeding styles: authoritarian, authoritative, indulgent and uninvolved.

Authoritarian parents are demanding, but not responsive. They lack engagement with their children and have strict, adult-centered control. Authoritative parents are highly demanding and highly responsive. They show affection and acceptance while also showing control and supervision. Indulgent parents are responsive, but not demanding and typically show a lack of parental control. Uninvolved parents are neither demanding nor responsive (Hughes et al., 2011).

Staff members then observed family meals and coded parent domains (positive affect, negative affect, sensitivity, intrusiveness and detachment) in relation to the four feeding styles. Results indicated that indulgent parents showed lower levels of negative affect and intrusiveness and higher levels of emotional detachment with their children during dinner (Hughes et al., 2011). Considering indulgent parents' struggle to set appropriate boundaries with their children, this is not surprising. However, the authors were surprised because indulgent parents are typically responsive to their child's emotional state.

During the family meal, indulgent parents made fewer demands on their children's eating practices, which could help explain the lower levels of intrusiveness and higher levels of emotional detachment (Hughes et al., 2011). Sometimes, demands are seen as a level of attachment and involvement and are small reminders that parents care about their children. If no demands are given at the dinner table, it could be viewed by the child as a lack of caring.

Berge, Wall, Neumark-Sztainer, Larson and Story (2010) sampled 4,746 adolescents from the Project Eating Among Teens study. Participants completed a baseline questionnaire in 1999 and another in 2004. Results indicated that adolescent

girls reported a positive association between parental authoritative parenting style and the frequency of family meals. For boys, maternal authoritative parenting style was associated with more frequent family meals, but the association was not present for paternal authoritative parenting style (Berge et al., 2010). Authoritative parenting style is high response and high demand and tends to provide the most structure for a family dinner. This parenting style also predicted higher frequency of family dinners five years later between opposite sex parent/child dyads (Berge et al., 2010).

Communication and relationships with their children are two areas many parents find difficult to maintain (Swerdlow-Freed, 2012), and the studies mentioned suggest that having more frequent family dinners could be a first step in helping parents to do so.

Generational Differences

Many researchers have studied the vast differences between generations (Culp, 2011; Howe, 2014; O'Bannon, 2001). Shaped by age, circumstance and shared experiences, members of a generation can often be distinguished according to social values, economic beliefs, and worldviews.

The Silent Generation. The Silent Generation is home to about 20 million individuals who are now in their seventies and eighties. This generation was born between 1929 and 1945 and are sometimes referred to as the “Lucky Few” (Howe, 2014). This generation raised children who were cautious, withdrawn and unadventurous. Children were to be seen and not heard (Moore, 2015).

This generation saw the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, WWII and the Korean War. TIME magazine coined them as the “Silent Generation” in 1951 because of their lack of freedom to speak about their beliefs during the McCarthy era (Howe, 2014).

As adults, these individuals had a great desire for financial security. They had no desire to “change the system,” but rather, preferred to follow the rules and go along with the system. This is the only generation in American history not to occupy the White House (Howe, 2014).

This generation also spearheaded the divorce revolution and made popular the term “mid-life crisis” (Howe, 2014). These adults did well in the workforce because of their small size, and they are currently the healthiest, wealthiest and most educated elder generation in history. Because of this, many are subsidizing their Baby Boomer and Gen-X children, and a large number have formal custody of their grandchildren, for whom they set up college trust funds with their extra wealth (Howe, 2014).

This generation also married and had babies younger than any other generation in American history (Howe, 2014). They typically stayed at home with their children until they were out of school (Culp, personal communication, March 13, 2016).

Baby Boomers. These individuals were born between the years of 1946 and 1964. Many are just becoming grandparents while others have been for years. Individuals born in this generation are most known for their sense of entitlement and their desire to have the best in life (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Together they experienced the Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, the Kennedy and King assassinations, Watergate and

Woodstock. They are known for their lack of loyalty to authority and social institutions (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

This generation was typically raised by stay at home mothers. When mothers did work, they generally waited until their children were out of school to find a job outside the home (Culp, 2016). As a result, this generation grew to desire and value traditional ideals and material success (O'Bannon, 2001). Contrary to their desires, however, this generation has the highest divorce rates, and the mothers went to work while their children were still in school (Culp, personal communication, March 13, 2016).

Generation X. Generation X encompasses those individuals born between 1965 and 1980. Those in this age group are becoming grandparents, while some are still becoming parents. They are the most diverse generation in American history (O'Bannon, 2001).

“Gen X-ers,” as they are commonly referred to, were the first generation to have both working and divorced parents. Many lived with only one parent at home (Kupperschmidt, 2000). They are known to be cynical and untrusting, but accepting of diversity, and good with change and multi-tasking (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Because of their familial insecurity, they value family stability in their adult lives (O'Bannon, 2001).

Millennials. The Millennials were born between 1981 and 2001. These adults are still getting married and becoming first time parents. They are the first generation to be considered “connected” because they were born into a “wired world” (Ryan, 2000).

Millennials tend to voice their opinions and distrust institutions (Ryan, 2000). They saw their parents downsize and are expected to be the first generation to be socially

active since the 1960s (Ryan, 2000). With their lack of secure funds, Millennials are more likely to give their time and talents to causes they support rather than write them a check.

Family Communication among Generations

The body of literature reviewing family communication at mealtimes throughout generations is very limited. Knowing what we know about generations and the decline in the frequency of family mealtimes, we must instead use what we know to make assumptions about how the two relate.

The Silent Generation had consistent, frequent family mealtimes. With moms at home and financial insecurity through most of their childhoods (Culp, 2011), families most likely ate two meals a day together, seven days a week as they shared breakfast and dinner. Many potentially shared lunch together as well, all 21 of which were prepared by the mother.

Communication at family mealtimes was spearheaded by the father, and the children kept quiet until spoken to. With the theme of “children should be seen and not heard,” conversation was not a priority at family meals.

The Baby Boomer generation saw a major change in family meals. With working mothers, the entire day was not spent preparing meals. Breakfast was possibly not shared together any longer, as mom had to get herself ready for work. Mealtimes were shortened and rushed, as all members of the family were tired and had to prepare for the coming day. Family mealtime communication changed dramatically as well. Mothers now had their own stories of work to tell, although there was less time to tell it (Moore, 2015).

Generation X saw the biggest decline in the frequency of family meals. With working mothers and divorcing parents, mealtimes were no longer prepared by mom and shared with the entire family. Fathers prepared meals when children were with him, mothers were working so meals were no longer slaved over all day; eating out became more common (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 2009).

With the increased number of meals eaten at a restaurant, communication curtailed. Dinner conversations out of the home are frequently interrupted, and are likely not to continue after the meal is finished. There are no dishes to do and families typically do not sit and talk for too long at a restaurant. Therefore, conversations were not as deep and were shortened.

Families with a Millennial have the hardest time scheduling family dinners. This generation is the first to house three or more workers, as the children began to get after school jobs (Culp, personal communication, September 14, 2015). Parents' schedules are not the only ones to consider. Children often miss family meals for worktime, or have to pack it up to head to work. In addition, children are increasing their involvement in sports and after school activities, forcing families to eat on the go more frequently than ever before.

Mealtime conversation is occurring less frequently for Millennials. Cell phones and televisions frequently interrupt meals, on the rare occasion that they get to be shared by all members of the family together. Fast foods are more convenient than ever, and drive thru meals eaten in the car have likely become a weekly ritual.

Chapter 3

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to describe a typical family dinner in the homogeneous sample of participants, and then to examine any differences in family dinners across generations. Twenty-two questions were asked of all participants about two separate experiences they had: family dinners with their family of origin, and family dinners with their current families (See Appendix A).

For the purpose of the study, family dinner, generations, family of origin, and current family needed to be clearly defined so as to make a fair comparison of these experiences.

First, it was important to define family dinners. While there are many arguments of what could constitute one, for the purpose of the study a family dinner was classified as *the evening meal shared in the home by those family members living in a household*. There was no further definition of family dinner by specific location or characteristic because the study aimed to determine what a typical family dinner looked like for participants across generations.

It was also necessary to define generations. Based on Kupperschmidt's (2000) definition, a generation was defined for the study as *an identifiable group that shares birth years and significant life events at critical developmental stages*.

This definition was used for the purpose of the study as it encompasses all areas that may affect family dinners. It was hypothesized that meals would look different based

on year of birth, age of parents and factors that may have been molded by generational characteristics.

The study addressed four generations: Silent, Baby Boomers, Generation X and the Millennials, as these are the four generations represented in the sample.

Generational Categories

There are many factors that shape a generation. It is not just the years in which they are born, but the experiences they shared, the hardships through which they survived, and the political climate through which they lived.

There is much debate about the specifics of each generation, so for this portion, only two theorists, Moore (2015) and Culp (2011), are cited in an effort to summarize the details. In chapter two, a more comprehensive review of the literature on generational differences was given. Table B1 (Appendix B) summarizes the differences between each generation.

The Silent Generation. The Silent Generation are those born between 1929 and 1945. They are sometimes referred to as “The Matures,” or “The Lucky Few” (Moore, 2015). Adults born in this generation are now 71-87 years old. These individuals were shaped by the Great Depression and World War II, and were raised by parents who struggled financially. Because of this, Matures learned to share, make do, or do without (Culp, 2011). Eighty percent of males in this generation served in the armed forces, and they are well known for being a generation of people who love face-to-face communication (Moore, 2015).

Baby Boomers. Baby Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964. The name comes from the “boom” of the 80 million babies born following World War II. Adults in this generation are between 52 and 70 years old today. Boomers were raised during the Civil Rights Movement, Woodstock, and *Roe vs. Wade* (Culp, 2011). These individuals are extremely competitive and are sometimes deemed as “workaholics.” Many female Baby Boomers were the first mothers in their families to have jobs outside the home. These individuals still prefer face-to-face communication, but time is very valuable to them and they need to understand specific projected outcomes as a result of their invested time (Moore, 2015).

Generation X. Those adults who are currently aged 36 to 51 years old are part of Generation X. This generation began in 1965 and ended in 1980 and is much smaller due to the FDA’s approval of birth control in 1964. These individuals, coined “latch-key kids” because of their hours spent home alone after school, are considered a cynical, unhappy and unfriendly generation. They dislike face-to-face communication and do not enjoy small talk or “fluff” in conversations (Moore, 2015). Xers work to live, rather than live to work like the generation before them. They want tasks that can be completed individually, and prefer short term time investments that are accompanied by personal gain (Culp, 2011).

Millennials. Millennials are the youngest generation of parents right now. They were born between 1981 and 2001 and are currently aged 15 to 35. This generation ended with September 11, 2001. Ironically, there are currently more Millennials than Baby Boomers with 85 million. This generation is getting married and having children later than any generation before them. They are active online and see technology as a positive

tool for society. It is estimated that a Millennial at age 29 is equal to a Baby Boomer at age 21, as they are marrying, starting a family, and purchasing their first homes later in life. They are taking their time, taking their finances seriously, and they prefer to text rather than talk on the phone (Moore, 2015).

Millennials are said to be most comparable to the Civic Generation, the generation previous to the Silent Generation, than any other. They are open minded, well educated, optimistic and collaborative. Their ambitious, multi-tasking, civic minds motivate them to want to improve the world. Their parents were protective and went to battle for what they felt were wrongs against their Millennial children, which in turn created family focused, parental advocates of this generation. Due to their high connectivity and high education, they insist upon having options and multiple opportunities (Culp, 2011).

County Statistics

Three different counties in Kentucky were purposefully selected for the study, in an effort to include a mix of geography and socio-economic status. Breckinridge County is in west central Kentucky and is a mixture of farmland and lake front property. Residents of Breckinridge County range in income and demographics, but have fairly stable family structure. Elliott County lies in eastern Kentucky and has the highest poverty rate of the three counties chosen. Income in this county is significantly lower than the state average and under 8,000 people call this county home. Hardin County is the largest and highest grossing county of the sample. This county has the least traditional family structure of the three counties and is projected to grow significantly in the coming years.

The three varying counties in the study were selected due to their socio-economical and geographical differences. With little differences between the participants' demographics due to the criteria to participate, the differences in the three counties demographics allowed the study a different means of comparison. Table B2 (Appendix B) lists demographic differences between the counties.

Breckinridge County. Breckinridge County, Kentucky is home to almost 20,000 people, and is projected to grow 14.4% by 2050 (Zimmerman, 2012a), making it the 57th ranked county in Kentucky by population (Kentucky population by county – total residents, n.d.). In 2012, the median income of Breckinridge County residents was \$40,530, slightly below the state average (Zimmerman, 2014d). The poverty rate is above the state average, at 19.7% (Zimmerman, 2014a). There are 22,224 acres of farmland in Breckinridge County, and 71.4% of family households consisted of a husband and wife with their own children (Zimmerman, 2014g; Zimmerman, 2011a).

Elliott County. Elliott County is the smallest of the three, with just over 7,500 residents. This gives them the ranking of 110th in the state (Kentucky population by county - total residents, n.d.). They are projected to lose .8% of their population by 2050 (Zimmerman, 2012b). Elliott County is home to 56,332 acres of farmland and the median income is \$28,893. Their poverty rate sits at 33.1%, and 39% of their children fall below the line. Similar to Breckinridge County, 71.1% of their family households were a husband and wife with their own children (Zimmerman, 2014h; Zimmerman, 2014e; Zimmerman, 2014b; Zimmerman, 2011b).

Hardin County. Hardin County is significantly larger than our other two counties, even combined. It holds the sixth spot in the rankings for population in

Kentucky with just under 110,000 people (Kentucky population by county – total residents, n.d.). The median household income is above the state average, at \$48,852. Only 15.1% of their population is below the poverty line (Zimmerman, 2014f; Zimmerman, 2014c).

By 2050, Hardin County is projected to grow by 30.4%, which will most likely decrease their current farmland amount of 202,970 acres (Zimmerman, 2012c; Zimmerman, 2014i). While the population is higher and the poverty rate is lower, fewer family households have the traditional structure of husband and wife with their children, at 68.5% (Zimmerman, 2011c).

Chapter 4

Methodology

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research employs an inductive data analysis strategy which works to establish emerging themes from the bottom up. Qualitative research begins with an assumption and worldview of a social problem and ends with a study of the research problem that is interpreted to find meaning of the data (Creswell, 2007). Data is typically collected by the researcher in the participant's setting, typically in the form of face to face interviews. Data is collected from multiple sources and then is transcribed and coded so that general themes can be identified. Participants' responses are the main focus rather than the researcher's ideas prior to the study.

Qualitative Research Strategy

The study was a phenomenological approach to looking at family dinners and the changes that have occurred in these dinners across generations. Phenomenology seeks to understand participants' experiences about a particular phenomenon (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). The study investigated 24 participants' experiences of one phenomenon; in this case, family dinner. These responses were then generalized to understand a broad description of the experiences (Creswell, 2007). In the study, the phenomenon of family dinner was reviewed so as to understand the differences and similarities between families and generations.

To examine the research questions and reach the aim of the study, the researcher interviewed twelve mother/daughter dyads from three counties of varying socioeconomic

status in Kentucky. The families selected all consisted of married, heterosexual parents with children who were school aged or older. This was in an effort to determine what a typical family dinner looked like across generations so as to provide a baseline for any potential future research. In addition, this helped the researcher to create targeted approaches aimed at generations in an effort to increase the number of family dinners being served.

Role of Researcher as Instrument

The researcher of qualitative data is meant to serve as the data collection instrument themselves (Creswell, 2007). This researcher does not use outside instruments, but rather, collects data based on the assumptions they made about the phenomenon. This typically occurs as a face-to-face interview. It is important to address any bias or emotion that the researcher may have through their interest in the particular topic. This can be done through bracketing: a revelation of the researcher's personal past that reveals any influences that the researcher could have on the study (Creswell, 2007).

Bracketing must be done deliberately. One's beliefs about the phenomenon being studied must be put aside so as to not limit, influence, or bias a study's results (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). Bracketing is used to mitigate any potential effects that a researcher's emotions or past experiences may impose on a study. There is much debate about the process of bracketing, and when and how during a study it should be done, but it is suggested that qualitative researchers consider which type of bracketing will be appropriate for their study (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

When I was a little girl, I sat down to dinner almost every night with my family. My dad would go around the table asking my sisters and I how our day had been. He would then tell us about his day, and then my mother would tell us about hers. At every meal, we would play “The ABC Game.” It was a game my dad made up where we would take turns picking a category and then we would each say something in the category starting with the letter we were assigned, going around the table in order of the alphabet. We would use every type of category, ranging from Disney characters or cereal to NASCAR drivers or farm products.

No matter how my day had started, I knew that it would end by sitting at the table with my family, discussing our lives and playing the ABC game. As a middle school aged adolescent, I thought it was uncool that my parents made me eat dinner with them. My friends got to eat McDonalds for dinner in their rooms where they could shut their door and watch TV. As a teenager, I tried to use my busy schedule to get out of eating with my family. I would purposefully invite friends over around dinnertime to avoid sitting around the table playing games. My mother would not allow it. No matter what plans I had made for the night, they would not be acted upon until I had eaten dinner at the table with my family.

After moving out of my parent’s home, I realized the impact that those family dinners had on my childhood. I began to understand that not all children had those same experiences, and that I had a much better relationship with my parents than did many of my friends. My interest in the impact of family dinners began when I started college, and would attempt to create those family dinner experiences with my two roommates.

Through my coursework and career as a County Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences, I became interested in generational differences. A portion of my job is to advise a group of individuals who are all in varying generations older than my own. I began to research how we differed in an effort to understand how best to communicate with them. Through this, I became interested in the potential these generational influences may have on family dinners. I also seek to increase family dinners in my community as a part of my job, and feel that understanding how best to target these generations would allow my approach to be much more effective.

Due to my own experiences and interests, I believe families should strive to sit down together at the end of each day to have dinner. I believe dinners together foster communication, love and respect between family members, and that these dinners establish boundaries and rules that can be applied to many other aspects of life. I believe frequent family dinners have a positive effect on children, and that this could be an easy way to improve some of the social issues younger generations are facing today. I also believe current generations should seek to learn from former generations on how to conduct effective family dinners. I believe understanding generations, and what changes occur in family dinners across generations, could help encourage other people to schedule and share family dinners.

I understand that, due to my past experiences, my interests, and my beliefs, bias could be presented. In an effort to reduce any bias that could occur, broad interview questions were developed so as not to sway the participants in any way. Research was also conducted beforehand in an effort to be completely informed on all aspects of family dinners, rather than just my own. Through self-awareness of my own bias potential, I

hope to remove any potential bias from the study and remain open-minded to the responses and experiences of the participants.

Data Collection Procedures

Sampling. Mother/daughter dyads were recruited in Hardin, Breckinridge and Elliott counties in Kentucky. Criterion sampling was used in the study as participants were required to be in heterosexual marriages while raising their families. The daughters' oldest child had to be at least school aged. Having a school aged child meant that routines such as family dinners were most likely established, when sometimes these routines have not yet been established before children are in school.

Through flyers distributed by a Cooperative Extension Agent from each of the three counties, who worked outside the county, 24 participants were recruited. Four sets of mother/daughter dyads were recruited from each county, equaling eight participants per county. Participants communicated with the researcher through email or phone calls in order to schedule interviews.

Participants all fell into the four generations being studied. Four mothers were part of the Silent Generation, being born between 1929 and 1945. Ten participants were Baby Boomers, appropriate for the largest generation in history. Generation X and the Millennials were both represented as well, with five participants each.

Sixteen participants worked while their children were in school. Five did not go to work until after their children were older or worked only part time, and three did not work at any point during their children's time at home.

Informed consent procedures. The informed consent (See Appendix D) was first reviewed by the researcher's graduate committee chairperson, and then by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). In an order to protect participants and ensure ethical treatment, participants were guaranteed anonymity and signed a form declaring that they understood the study in which they were participating. In addition, participants were aware that the interviews were being recorded. Participants were informed that they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time.

The following procedures were included in the informed consent form: the central purpose of the study, procedures to be used in data collection, confidentiality, known risks and benefits of participation, signatures of participants and researchers, and the right of participants to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Interview procedures. Interview participants were asked a series of 22 questions, which were audio recorded and lasted an average of 20 minutes. During interviews, the researcher took notes for future reference. Field notes included summarized responses to each of the questions, as well as emerging themes or words commonly used by participants.

Questions sought to understand what a typical family dinner was like with the participants' family of origin and with their current family. Twelve of the questions were open ended (See Appendix A) and allowed for follow up questions to be asked if necessary in order to get a better understanding of the response.

Mothers were interviewed first, in an effort to determine how family dinners were conducted for the daughter before interviewing her. Mothers were asked 20 questions

about family dinners with their family of origin and with their current family, both of which will be more clearly defined in the next paragraph. Daughters were then interviewed and asked the same 20 questions. Two questions asked about the work status of the participant and her mother.

In an effort to learn about the four different generations, both women were asked to recall information about two different families: their family of origin and their current family. For the study, family of origin referred to *the family one grew up with: mother, father and any siblings*. Current family referred to *the family with one's spouse and children*. It was understood that some participants may no longer have family meals with their current family because their children have grown and moved out, but they were asked to recall how family meals were when their children were living at home.

Before the interview, mothers and daughters were asked their year of birth in order to determine to which generation they belonged. Mothers and daughters were both briefed on the study's definition of family dinner, family of origin, and current family. Nothing more was added in an effort to prevent any potential bias.

Data Analysis Procedures

The audio recorded data were transcribed by the primary researcher into a Microsoft Word document. The responses were reviewed both during and after transcription multiple times in an effort to find similarities or differences across generations. Significant statements were highlighted, common responses recorded and tallied, and themes were formed from these common responses. Participants' responses

were separated and tallied by county and by generation in an effort to find as many similarities or differences as possible.

Strategies for Validation

Validity ensures that a study is factually sound and can be generalized to the real world. Qualitative research validity often comes into question. Creswell (2007) suggests employing at least two strategies to ensure validity. Three approaches were used for the study: peer review and debriefing, bracketing and an external audit.

Peer review and debriefing ensure honesty of the researcher by allowing outsiders to ask difficult questions about the research methods (Creswell, 2007). Multiple sources, including the researcher's coworkers, former classmates, and major professor, reviewed the questions and information before the interviews were conducted and any issues were addressed prior to seeking IRB approval. *Bracketing* requires a researcher to deliberately set aside their own belief about the phenomenon being studied (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). This was discussed earlier in this chapter. An *external audit* was also conducted by a member of academia, the researcher's major professor, specifically during the transcription and theme identification process.

Anticipated Ethical Concerns

Ethical issues can potentially arise in studies, especially in regards to participants' rights. Maintaining confidentiality, avoiding deceit, and fair warning of research procedures are typically the main areas of concern. A review of ethics encourages researchers to question political and ethical implications, diversity, and moral assumptions (Creswell, 2007).

The purpose of the study, confidentiality, procedures, and rights were outlined in the informed consent process and were explained to participants prior to the interview. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any point if they chose to, and were warned about any instances in which confidentiality could be compromised. Names were not used on any notes written of the experiences. Participants were identified by a combination of letters and numbers to identify the county, birth year, and whether or not they were the mother or daughter in an effort to be able to make comparisons for research purposes later during the coding process. However, it was not a possibility to be able to determine which response went with which informed consent form based on name or identification label.

Chapter 5

Results

Even though only a small sample of participants were interviewed, the data could be analyzed many ways. First, in an effort to describe what a typical family meal looked like amongst the participants, all answers were compared, regardless of location, age or family.

After identifying the baseline family dinner, responses were coded by geographical location, and generation. These factors were believed to all have some sort of impact on one's family dinner. The participants were all mother/daughter dyads who lived in three different counties in Kentucky, and whose ages spanned four generations. All came from two parent, mother/father homes.

In the discussion, similarities and differences between family dinners will be addressed. Specifically, what was eaten, what traditions and rituals surrounded mealtime, what topics were discussed and avoided, who initiated conversation, and whether or not mealtime conversations continued after dinner.

After determining what factors seemed to negatively affect the occurrence of family dinners, a discussion of what targeted approaches should be taken to begin a campaign to increase the number of family dinners being scheduled by current and future generations occurs.

Typical Family Dinners for Families of Origin

For this section, all 24 interviews were coded and compared to one another. It was determined that a typical family dinner for a family of origin occurred around 6:30 p.m.

at the table. Most family dinners consisted of a meal that included a meat with a side of one or two green vegetables and a starch. Many mentioned raising their own meat, and/or growing their own vegetables in their garden. Families ate together at the same table, waiting on dad to get home if needed. They enjoyed one meal, most often cooked by mom. Family dinners occurred every night for the large majority of families.

“Around 6:00 or 7:00 when my dad got home from work. We would sit in the dining room. Our kitchen was small and just for cooking and cleaning up after meals, so we always ate in the dining room. We always had a meat and a vegetable.”

“Our dinners were usually around 6:00 – 6:30, after dad got home from work and finished milking. We sat down together at our larger table so we would all fit. Mom always cooked... We’d have meat, potatoes, vegetables from the garden and bread.”

“They were usually around 6:00 or 6:30 when everybody got in. We sat down at the table and ate whatever mom cooked. We had chicken, ham, or steak with veggies usually.”

“Usually late, after 7. We had to wait until dad got done on the farm. We always sat at the kitchen table together. We couldn’t answer the phone during dinner and we turned the TV off. Mom didn’t cook from scratch a lot, we had a lot of freezer meals or casseroles. Mom did make homemade lasagna, which was our favorite. We had crockpot meals quite a bit.”

Rituals and Traditions during Family Dinner for Families of Origin

Dinner routines were established, with before dinner rules of washing up and taking turns setting the table. Food was served family style in bowls on the dinner table, and grace was said before every meal in almost all of the families interviewed.

“We always ate as a family. We each had our spot and chair around the table and there was always a blessing. [No topics] I can think of [were avoided] other than anything gross. I don’t like to discuss snakes or insects at dinner.”

“[We talked about] what we did that day. We prayed before we ate. Usually we all took turns doing dishes. Seems like [my brother] never did the dishes as much as I did....We’re trying to teach the kids now to go put their plates in the sink instead of just leaving them laying. They’re big enough to do that now.”

Conversation during Family Dinner for Families of Origin

Discussion was started by anyone, or initiated by one of the parents, and many families discussed their day. Specifically, what occurred at school, or on the farm. Families had open discussions, only mentioning the topics of sex, money, gossip or vulgarity as being off limits.

“Nothing that would hurt someone’s feelings. Nothing unpleasant or vulgar, no talking bad about anybody either. We were just allowed to talk about pleasant and nice things. We always had to wash our face and hands before we sat at the table. Dad said grace and then mom and dad took food first and then we’d pass the food around.”

“Oh, well, you never talked about sex. Or money. I think religion and politics were ok. And that’s the way it is at...my home. We always said a prayer before dinner. We still do. We had to make sure our hands were washed before we sat down at the table, I try to still do that.”

After the meal, conversation typically continued while families cleaned up.

Feelings towards Family Dinner for Families of Origin

More than half of the mothers worked either full or part time, during their children’s school aged years. Participants had very fond memories of family dinners with their family of origin, with the majority of them disliking having to clean up the most. As children, they did not enjoy having to eat all of the food on their plates, or having to try new foods their mother made, but 21 of 24 responded that “being together” was their favorite part of family dinner. They enjoyed talking to everyone, and the chance to all be at the same place at the same time, as it was often the only time each day that this occurred.

“My mom, sister and I would continue to talk while cleaning up after dinner. Dad and the boys would watch TV. The boys would do homework if they had any. Sometimes we would remain at the table for a while and talk before doing other things such as going to church or ballgames at school. Discussion was never stressful, it was just a good time with family.”

“Daddy was always home. I just liked being with everyone and talking. It was a time of day when we all slowed down and talked to each other. Saying grace [was a ritual], staying at the table until everyone was done, and we all

cleaned up together...I usually had to wash the dishes...I think [family dinner is] very important.”

“We almost always ate together as a family. And we always started with a blessing. I loved that...Mom wouldn't make you anything separate. We had to eat [the food] anyway, or at least try it...[We talked about] school, farm life, work or any other activities we had going on...If we [continued talking after dinner], it was during dishes.”

“We all got to help with dinner. Mom let us help in the kitchen. I liked being able to say I made it. I hated being made to at least try what was on my plate. Mom or dad [initiated conversation]... My sister and I always set the table.”

Typical Family Dinners for Current Families

It is reasonable to assume that due to the fond memories of childhood family dinner, one would attempt to recreate those experiences for their own family. Seventy five percent reported having similar family dinner styles as their mother, with twenty nine percent reporting that they intentionally recreated the same scenarios. Many used their mother's recipes or still served food the way food was served during their childhood. Twenty one percent said they “tried” to recreate their family dinner experiences but that looming schedules and fewer cooking skills than their mothers, it was difficult to do.

Family dinners do change from one generation to the next though, as determined by the next set of responses. Current family dinners when the participant was the mother look similar, but with a few modifications. Dinner is served later, around 7:00 p.m. and is more frequently served at locations other than the table. While the majority still strive to

eat at the table together, they more frequently responded with “sometimes” rather than “always.” Dinners are sometimes in front of the TV, or in the living room.

Varying from the traditional meat and vegetable meals, participants were more likely to serve “quick” meals, or something from a restaurant. They were also less likely to wait on dad, or other members of the family to eat if they were not home when dinner was served.

“Usually around 7:00 after the milking got done. In the summer it was even later...Everyone ate together, except in extreme cases when we had to eat without [my husband] or something. We had a lot of meatloaf. Mashed potatoes, peas, pickles. Sometimes salad. Bread of some kind, usually hot, and some kind of dessert, cake, pie, or sometimes just cookies and ice cream.”

“They were pretty similar to my childhood dinners...around 6:00. Sometimes we ate at the table, other times in front of the TV. We had pizza, meat, vegetables and soup a lot.”

“Time varies due to my work schedule and the kid’s schedules but I try to make it no later than 8:00. We often eat in the living room, especially if we are not eating together or if it is something I’ve brought home. If I cook a full meal then we usually sit at the table...We...eat out or I bring something home probably two to three times throughout a seven day week.”

“It’s chaotic...I try to cook supper sometimes but I never know when I’m gonna be home. We eat a lot of stuff that’s pretty quick to make. We eat a lot of frozen pizza or pizza quite a bit. I will try to cook stuff in the crockpot...A lot of times

we eat at the kitchen table...but we also sit in the living room, watching TV...We usually eat about 7.”

Since almost all of our participants had family dinners every night as a child, it was not surprising that 58% of them considered family dinner to be a high priority. Thirteen percent said that even though they could not make them happen every night, they still value them as high and view their benefits as being very important. More than half of the participants admitted that they only serve dinner to their family three to four nights per week. Two responded with “rarely.”

Rituals and Traditions during Family Dinner for Current Families

When dinner is served by the participants as mothers, the traditions and rituals are less likely to be shared together, with grace only being said by half of the current families. Rituals of how dinner is served on the table were carried through for some families, but many now serve their food from the stove, in contrast to bowls on the table like their families of origin. For the most part, families who had traditions with their family of origin did still have at least some of the traditions with their current families.

“Grace. We always said grace. You also had to eat all the food on your plate and you ate what was served or you didn’t eat. I put the food in serving bowls on the table like my mom did too...We always ate together, like my mom made us do. And we took turns doing the dishes.”

“We always prayed. I set the table. In the beginning I would set the food in bowls on the table like we did as kids, but later we just filled our plates up at the stove. That gave us more room at the table...I tried making some of mom’s recipes but

like I said, I'm not as good of a cook as her...I tried to talk to my kids at dinner like mom talked to us though, to have conversations.”

“If everyone is home and I am cooking a full meal, I will ask the kids to set the table like mom did with my sister and me. Birthday dinners are often fried chicken, mashed potatoes, biscuits and gravy like it was for me when I was a kid. Holiday meals are often the same menu that mom would have. I have also started fixing some of the dishes that my grandmother used to [fix] when we have family gatherings.”

Conversation during Family Dinner for Current Families

Discussion has shifted as well. Instead of discussing the day's events, there seems to be a drift to the future. A majority of the current families discuss their upcoming schedules and look ahead at what needs to be done, rather than what has been done. School events are discussed less often, and reflections on everyone's day do not seem to be the dominant topic anymore. In addition, there seems to be a shift in who initiates conversation, as the majority of current family discussions are started by the children, rather than the parents. Topics are less likely to be avoided, promoting conversation of whatever is on the child's mind. Conversation is also slightly less likely to continue after the meal, but still occurring during clean-up for those that do. More families were likely to watch TV or do homework after dinner with their current families.

“I like to think we allowed our daughters to talk freely at the table. We asked them about school and their activities and hoped that they would feel free to discuss things with us. We lived on a farm, so farm work and my husband's job

were also discussed. [Conversation continued] much the same way as when we were growing up, during clean up time since we ate in the same room that we cooked and cleaned in.”

“I just liked sitting down at the end of the day and talking. I liked when we played the ABC game. It was fun to listen to the girls laugh. Sometimes [conversation continued], it just depended. Usually while we were cleaning up the kitchen.”

“Anybody could say what they wanted...I hope the kids know that. They can talk to us whenever, wherever, about whatever... [We usually talk about] what we will do the next day, what time we need to be awake...We don't eat together often and when we do, when it's over people go where they need to go, whether that be to a game or a friend's house or to their room to do homework because we'd just gotten home.”

“Our three year old [initiates conversation]...Just a recap of our day. Yes [conversation continues], but not around the table. Mostly just between my husband and I. We talk about the things our kids shared during dinner while we clean up.”

Feelings towards Family Dinner for Current Families

Only two mothers did not work at any point during their children's school aged years. Busy schedules and time constraints do seem to have a negative impact on the quantity and quality of family dinners, but the participant's positive feelings about them did not change. Participants overwhelmingly responded with how much they enjoyed

getting to spend time together at dinner, talking and “catching up” with one another. As these dinners are occurring less frequently, it seems as if the time together is more valued, as many mentioned that family dinners were a luxury or treat because they did not get to happen very often.

“Just having my children and my husband all eating at the same time, sharing the day’s events. I liked hearing their comments about my food too, and listening to them tell me what they wanted me to make next. I didn’t like making my kids try something. I did it, but I usually felt bad.”

“My husband worked a lot of nights and so it was sometimes just my two children and me. [My favorite part was] the time spent together. Sometimes it was our only time together. Now, we probably sit and visit more than we did when I was young. [Family dinners] are very important.”

“Just being together. We don’t get to do it often because of mine and my husband’s work schedules, so it’s like a reward when we do. It’s special. I don’t like that we never know when it will be. I would like to do it more, but we just don’t have that luxury. It would be [a high priority], but we just can’t.”

Regardless of the positive feelings, participants still do not enjoy cleaning up, doing the dishes or figuring out what to cook for each meal. One third of participants reported trying to find the time to get everyone together due to busy schedules was their least favorite part of current family dinners, while only one participant mentioned being burdened by the financial aspect of family dinner, stating that there were nights she didn’t

know what she would feed her family so they didn't have a sit down dinner in hopes that her children wouldn't notice how small their portions were.

Comparisons between Counties

Breckinridge County. A typical family dinner in Breckinridge County looked very similar to the traditional dinner described above. Families of origin ate a meat and a vegetable that had been prepared by mom at the table around 6:00 every night.

Discussions were started by anyone and they talked about what went on that day in school or on the farm. They were not allowed to discuss anything mean or rude about another person, and nothing controversial. Specific topics to be avoided included money, sex, race, ethnicity, or foul language.

They washed up before dinner and took turns setting the table. They would all sit together and say grace, and after dinner they would continue their discussions while they cleaned up. Seventy five percent of Breckinridge County mothers worked full or part time at some point during their children's school aged years.

When the participants became mothers of their own, most did not intentionally recreate any of their family of origin dinner experiences. They were split on how they prioritized family dinners, with many mentioning that they were hard to schedule because they were just too busy. All but one were working mothers. When they did have them with their current families two to three nights a week, they had a meat and a vegetable, or a quick meal from a box or from a restaurant. Not everyone was present, and dinners were served later, around 7:00, at the table.

Their current family dinner discussions were initiated by anyone, and they were most likely discussing their upcoming schedule or what needed to be done. After dinner, more were likely to watch TV or work on homework, but others did report carrying on their conversations from dinner. They did carry through on some of their traditions including grace and the way food was served, but others were discontinued.

For all participants, their favorite part of both meals, with their family of origin and with their current family, was being able to all be together. As children, they did not enjoy cleaning up or having to eat everything on their plate, and as mothers, they were stressed by their busy schedules and inability to have dinners together as frequently as they would like.

Elliott County. Families in Elliott County enjoyed meals consisting of a meat and a vegetable, many times home-grown. Most families waited to eat until everyone was home, around 6:00, and they ate at the table. Participants enjoyed that everyone was together and talking when they had family dinner every night. They did not enjoy having to clean up as children, or having to try new foods.

They discussed what went on that day, specifically at school or on the farm, with both their parents and their siblings. Typically their mother or father started the conversation, and they were allowed to discuss anything on their mind besides sex or money. After dinner, families typically continued conversation while cleaning up or while continuing their nightly routine.

Traditions and rituals didn't seem to be a large piece of family dinners in Elliott County. A few reported that their families said grace before meals, but most could not

think of any that their family shared. Six of the eight participants had mothers who worked outside the home.

Elliott County seemed to have the most dramatic change in family dinners between families of origin and current families. As mothers, participants were more likely to take their families out to eat than to cook them a meal at home. When meals were at home, only two to three nights per week on average, they were not always at the table and they were not always eaten with the whole family.

Communication with these families saw a shift in discussions of past events and recapping of their day, to their upcoming schedules and what needed to be done. Their children were allowed to discuss anything, and they are the ones who typically started the conversations. More were likely to answer no to whether or not discussion continued after meal times, and only two families continued saying grace, while the other six had no traditions or rituals.

All participants worked a job while their children were in school, and half of them considered family dinners to be low on their priority list. One mom mentioned the desire for it to be high, but saying she, “just did not have that luxury with [her and her husband’s] work schedules.”

Those mothers also mentioned that not getting to have everyone together was their least favorite part of family dinners with their current families, and that their favorite part was getting to be together and talk with everyone when they could.

Hardin County. Every person interviewed was adamant that their family of origin had dinner together at the table, and nowhere else. Typically served between 6:00

and 6:30 p.m., mom would cook a meal consisting of meat, potatoes and bread, and everyone would sit down to eat after dad got in and washed up from work.

As children, participants enjoyed being together and talking with their parents and their siblings each night. They did not enjoy arguing or tension at the table, having to try new foods or clean their plate, and they did not enjoy doing the dishes. Dinners were held every night, and rituals were very common. Families served dinner in specific ways, and most were required to wash their hands and/or face before sitting at the table. Grace was said before the meal was enjoyed.

Hardin County families discussed school, the farm, or work and what happened that day. Mom or dad started the conversation and for the majority, any topic could be discussed. For others, children were not allowed to gossip or talk badly about others, and they could not discuss “nasty” topics, religion or politics. When dinner was over, conversation sometimes continued during clean up.

When these participants became mothers feeding their own families, all of them considered family dinners to be of high importance. They continued the tradition of eating at the table together four to five nights per week, and their families said grace before meals. They did, however, do things slightly differently than their parents did. Many of them served quick meals, from a box or from the freezer, occasionally still serving the traditional meat and vegetables. Dinners were later for their families, around 7:00 p.m., and dad did not always make it home in time.

As mothers, their least favorite part of serving family dinners was still doing the dishes. For some, they found the job of choosing what to make each night stressful. They

did not mind cooking the meal, they just did not like deciding what to cook, which could explain why many of them tried to recreate their mother's recipes. Their favorite aspect of family dinner was being together and catching up.

Communication seemed to remain the same between families of origin and current families, except current families were more likely to discuss their upcoming schedules, in addition to what had happened that day. More current families were likely to continue conversation during clean up than families of origin. The children were the ones who initiated conversation and for most families, any topic could be discussed.

Comparisons. Not surprisingly, there were few differences between typical family dinners in each of the three counties, however there were a few important constants. These comparisons are summarized in Table C1 (See Appendix C).

All counties mentioned having a meat and a vegetable for dinner, but Elliott County was most likely to mention that those components were home grown or harvested after hunting. Elliott County also had the fewest traditions and rituals surrounding family dinner, and they ranked family dinners as a low priority more often than did the other two counties.

Conversation at the dinner tables in Breckinridge County was more likely to be started by anyone, instead of just mom or dad as in the other two counties. Ironically, they also had the most restrictions on family dinner conversation topics.

Hardin County had the most rituals or traditions regarding family dinner, and they were more likely to mention the name "dad" in regards to either waiting for dad to get home, dad starting conversation, or dad playing games with them.

Hardin County was also most likely to mention disliking arguments or tension during dinner, and their family of origin dinners and current family dinners changed the least. All participants in Hardin County ranked family dinner as high, and current families eat together more often than current families in both other counties.

While counties had a large number of similarities, their differences can say a lot about them. It can be assumed that Elliott County has the fewest current family dinners and fewest rituals and traditions, because they were most likely to rank family dinners low on their priority list.

Breckinridge County children had the least freedom on what topics they could discuss, but they were the ones who started the conversation more often. Hardin County ranked family dinners the highest, had the highest number of rituals and traditions, and they had family dinners more frequently, which again confirms that idea that where family dinners fall on one's priority list may have a large effect on how often they actually serve family meals.

Comparisons across Generations

Comparisons across generations are the main focus of this research, in an attempt to find out whether or not dinners are affected not only by the families themselves, but also by the generation in which they were raised. Table C2 (See Appendix C) shows these differences and similarities.

The Silent Generation. Those born in the Silent Generation enjoyed family dinners as a child every night. These meals were cooked by mom, and typically consisted of a meat with one vegetable. Dessert was occasionally served. Dinner started between

6:00 and 6:30, after dad got home from work. Families said grace, washed their hands before being seated, and set the table in a specific way.

Families discussed what happened during their day at school or work, but were not allowed to use foul language or bad mouth anyone in the process. Anyone was allowed to start the conversation and that typically continued during clean up.

Children of this generation loved having everyone together at the table, but they disliked trying new foods, cleaning up, and when their siblings acted up at the table causing them to get in trouble.

When these women became mothers, they considered family dinners to be a “very high” priority and they continued many of the same traditions including having your family wash up before meals and saying grace. Dinner for their families happened between 6:00 and 7:00 p.m. mostly every night in the kitchen, and they cooked meat, vegetables, and a dessert. They intentionally did things the way their mothers did them because they enjoyed family dinners so much as a child.

The only things they did not enjoy were busy schedules that made coordinating dinners more difficult, deciding what to cook, and the guilt associated with making their children try foods they knew they did not like.

Conversation could be initiated by anyone, but they would start talking if no one else would. They talked to their spouse and children about what went on that day, and they did not allow their children to talk badly of people. These conversations would typically be continued during clean up.

Of these women, half of them had mothers who did not work outside the home, while one had a mother who got a job during her childhood, and another whose mother worked her entire childhood. Only one worked during her own children's school age years, actually working less often than their mothers.

Baby Boomers. The Baby Boomer's family dinners changed slightly from the generation before them. As daughters, these women enjoyed dinner at the table every night, many of them in the same seat each time. They ate around 5:30 – 6:00 p.m. at the table with everyone in their family. They enjoyed a meal prepared by their mothers, half of whom had jobs, which typically consisted of meat, vegetables, bread, and good conversation. They did not enjoy having to try new foods, doing the dishes, or the tension that sometimes aroused at the table during dinner.

Any one of the people in their family initiated conversation and they were allowed to discuss most topics except sex, money, or saying curse words or bad things about other people. Their families were less likely to continue conversation after dinner at the table, instead opting to watch TV together.

Baby Boomers saw family dinners of such high importance that they tried to recreate some of their childhood experiences for their children, especially the recipes. However, they did so on a less frequent basis. Baby Boomers went from having family dinners every night as children to "most" nights, an average of four to five, as mothers. Those born between 1946 and 1964 were less likely to serve their family around a table and they served their dinners later. Current families ate a typical meal of a meat and a vegetable around 7:00 p.m. and grace was always said before the meal.

Anyone in the family was likely to start conversation, and they discussed school, their day, and their upcoming schedules. They did not allow their children to discuss anything vulgar, but felt that no topics were truly off limits. Discussions sometimes continued after dinner, while some families went and watched TV together. Baby Boomer mothers enjoyed spending time together and talking with their kids, as it was sometimes their only chance, since all but one of them worked during their children's school aged years. Like their childhood dinners, they still did not enjoy cleaning up, or getting everyone together around their busy schedules. They also disliked making their children eat all the food on their plates, cooking, when their children argued at dinner, and the stress associated with having enough money to feed everyone every night.

Generation X. Once again, family dinners began to shift as another generation became mothers. As daughters, Gen Xers ate family meals most nights each week with most members of their family. They ate around 6:30 -7:00 p.m. and enjoyed meat and vegetables, in addition to pizza more frequently than the previous generations. They ate with their families of origin at the kitchen table and spent their time discussing the farm, school, and what went on that day. Their mothers typically started the conversations, and they were allowed to discuss any topic except those things that were crude or nasty. Half of their mothers worked outside the home, while the other half of their mothers did not. They did not enjoy eating foods they did not like or cleaning up. They did enjoy being together, and talking with their family members. They typically said grace, and only sometimes continued conversation after mealtime.

As mothers, Generation Xers may have made the most changes to the family mealtime routine. Only half of them considered meals to be of high importance, which

may be why almost all of them reported only serving family meals to their current family two or three nights each week. They eat with their family in front of the TV or at the table, whenever they can fit it in around everyone's schedules. They cook quick meals or eat out most often.

Children were most likely to start conversation at dinner, and nothing was off limits for Gen Xer's current families. All of them worked during their children's school aged years, and finding time to have them was their biggest complaint about family dinners. They also did not enjoy cooking, even though they do enjoy being together as a family. They talked with their children about school, sports, and what they were all doing next during dinner. Conversations did not normally continue after meal time.

Millennials. As children, Millennials enjoyed dinner at the table with their families a majority of nights per week. They enjoyed helping their mother cook dinner and having their father home for the first time all day. They disliked trying different or new foods. Their fathers typically started conversations and would ask about their day. Conversation sometimes continued after dinner, and all of their mothers worked during their school aged years. They said grace each night before dinner.

Since the Millennials were most likely to respond that family dinners "would be" high on their priority list if not for busy schedules, it was not surprising that Millennial mothers did not have a "typical" family dinner. They tried to get everyone together, but that did not always happen. They made quick meals, and disliked that they never knew when they would be served. Typically, they only had family dinners two to three nights per week.

When they did get to eat together, the children started the conversation, talking about their day and what they were doing the rest of the week. They worked full time jobs while their children were in school, and found it difficult to find a time to have dinner together. Their husbands were not always with them at dinner, and they said grace less often than they did as children. They enjoyed being together and hearing about everyone's day, and they had no topics that were off limits for their children to discuss.

Millennials were most likely to comment on how much they truly enjoyed family dinners when they got to have them, calling them "special" or "a reward" because it was so difficult to do. There was a strong desire amongst Millennials to have more family dinners, they just found the logistics of getting everyone together and preparing a meal too daunting to do more often.

Comparisons. There were clear differences between family dinners across generations. From the interviews, it could be determined that as generations pass, family dinners have lowered in importance, are being held less frequently, and quicker convenience foods are being served. Conversation has shifted from being initiated by the parents to being initiated by the child, and topics became more open, and more future focused. Parents talked with their children less about what had happened, and more about what needed to be done.

Fewer rituals and traditions were occurring at the dinner table, and it was more likely for dinners to happen at locations other than the table. Televisions were being turned on, phones being answered, and family members were missing during dinner time. Schedules were busier, mothers were more likely to be working, and the frequency of family dinners seem to be declining significantly.

However, while all of these differences occur, there was one clear similarity – 92% of participants responded that their favorite part of both dinners was being together with their family. This could imply that families today have a craving for more frequent family dinners, but are unable to do so because of busy schedules.

Chapter 6

Discussion

Bova (2011) discussed three “frames” that family dinner conversation fell into: dinner as business, family focused on news telling, and world focused. Results of the study indicated that, across generations, while all frames were covered, the prominent frame of conversation has evolved from family focused on news telling (Silent), to world focused (Millenials).

Blum-Kulka (as cited in Bova, 2011) addressed the types of talk that families engaged in at the dinner table: instrumental, sociable, and socializing. While particular types of talk were not addressed, from responses it seems that all three types of talk were expressed in the family dinner conversations in which participants engaged. It was evidenced that instrumental talk, the discussion which focuses on the business of having dinner itself, is the least popular of these three types for younger generations because family dinners were more likely to consist of quick meals and convenience foods, so the time spent together preparing the meal is not present.

The four research questions that initiated this project were answered based on the responses collected during the interviews.

(1) What differences emerge when examining family dinners across generations?

While looking at the four different generations, it was not hard to identify differences.

The Silent Generation had the most frequent family dinners, as was initially assumed.

Silents’ prioritized family dinners very highly, and observed several rituals and traditions.

It was mentioned by half of the participants that their mothers cooked a large lunch or breakfast, before cooking a large dinner, as was assumed earlier.

The Baby Boomers saw an increase in working mothers from the Silent Generation, but not as many as Generation X and Millennials. Baby Boomers started the trend of eating at locations other than the table, and they saw a decline in the number of meals they were serving. As daughters, Baby Boomers had the most restrictions on topics they were allowed to discuss.

Generation Xer's ranked family dinners the lowest of the four generations on their priority list, and that was obvious with their drastic decline in the number of dinners they served. They had the fewest traditions and they were the least likely to continue conversation after dinner, as was previously assumed. This generation ate out the most, and saw a shift in conversation from what happened during the day to what was going to happen, or what needed to be done.

Millennials have a strong desire to have more frequent family dinners, but find them difficult to schedule. For them, family dinners do not necessarily mean everyone together at the table, as dad or mom are not always able to be there. They serve convenience foods when they do have dinners. In contrast to the other generations, conversations are started primarily by the children.

(2) What similarities emerge when looking at family dinners across generations?

While there are several differences, there are also very promising similarities between generations. Among all four generations, the majority of participants ranked family dinners high on their priority list. The typical meal involved a meat and vegetables.

Conversation typically continued after meal time in some form, and anyone was able to initiate conversation.

The most obvious similarity across every generation was the participant's favorite part of meal time. Every person enjoyed just being together with their family and talking together. It is possible that any activity together, not necessarily only family dinner, would be beneficial for families.

(3) How has the "typical" family dinner changed across generations? Family dinners are occurring less frequently. From eating together every night, to an average of three nights per week, families are spending less time together at the dinner table. Conversations are more open than ever before, and rituals and traditions are not as important as they were with previous generations. Family dinners sometimes occur at restaurants or involve food picked up from a restaurant by mom on her way home from work. If she does cook at home, it is typically a quick meal or from the slow cooker. More moms are working mothers than ever before, and fathers do not always eat dinner with their family.

(4) How has communication during family dinner changed across generations? Ironically, there was not a drastic change in communication at the dinner table. This does not mean that there has not been a change in communication between generations in general, but it does imply that at dinner, that time is valued and spent together, even if it is happening less frequently. The biggest change in communication is that the conversation topics shifted from what happened during that day, on the farm, or at work, to what needed to be done. This suggests that younger generations are more apt to be thinking about what is next, rather than taking the time to reflect on the past.

Barriers to Family Dinner

While barriers to family dinner were not specifically sought out during the study, obvious obstacles emerged when compiling the responses. In an effort to increase the frequency of family dinners for current and future generations, it is important to note these barriers and offer suggestions for how to overcome them.

There are likely a large variety of barriers that families face when scheduling family dinners. These may be actual or perceived, but they are obstacles nonetheless and are contributing to the decline in the frequency of family dinners. Three clear barriers emerged from the participants' responses in this study.

The most obvious obstacle for frequent family dinners was scheduling conflicts. Family dinners today have more competition than ever before. Sports, school activities, work and technology all call family members' attention away during the typical family dinner time. Meals are being replaced by grab-and-go dinners or drive thru meals. Respondents mentioned multiple times that they were "just too busy" to get everyone together.

A decline in cooking skills also seemed to play a part in why younger generations were serving fewer dinners. Gen X and Millennial respondents opted for frozen meals or take out from restaurants more often than preparing meals at home. A mother's insecurity in her own ability to prepare a meal may be debilitating to family dinners. Respondents in the study often mentioned disliking making the decision of what to cook and proclaimed that they were "not as good of a cook as [their] mother."

The most difficult barrier to address is the lack of priority given to family dinners by families today. If families do not understand the benefits of family dinners, they are not likely to see the need for them. The study identified that mothers who ranked family dinners as a low priority were less likely to serve them to their families.

Targeting Generations Effectively

It is possible that families would benefit just as much from any activity together as they would from sharing family dinner. However, for the purpose of the study, suggested target approaches are aimed directly at increasing family dinners due to their added nutritional benefit for families (Taveras et al., 2005). In order to increase the frequency of family dinners that current and future generations serve their families, it is important to target each generation effectively. Based on age, it is likely that the majority of current families are spearheaded by Gen Xer's and Millennials, so those are the two generations that should be targeted with any initiatives.

In an effort not to exclude anyone, however, it would be positive to reinforce the benefits of family dinners to the Silent Generation and Baby Boomers as well, in hopes that they would urge their Generation X and Millennial daughters and granddaughters to schedule more frequent family dinners.

For those in the Silent Generation who love face to face communication and prefer to read a paper rather than a screen, an article in the newspaper or a newsletter circulation clearly stating the benefits of family dinners could be effective. The article should focus on the positive nostalgia of childhood family dinners, and how important it is for future generations to have these same memories.

The approach should discuss how family dinners can affect some of the negative things occurring in society such as drug use and lack of education (White & Halliwell, 2010). Articles could also be accompanied by programs that encourage Silent Generation mothers and grandmothers to cook with and teach their daughters and granddaughters how to make some of their favorite recipes.

Baby Boomers need to hear how family dinners are going to benefit the entire family. As team players, time is very valuable to this generation, and they want to know how the time they are investing is going to benefit those involved. This generation needs to hear the potential benefits of family dinner for the children involved, for the family as a whole, for their wallets, and for their health (Klein, 2010). They also should be rewarded for the dinners they served their families, as they enjoy individual recognition for their contributions. Rewarding their efforts will cause them to be more vocal about the need for their daughters and granddaughters to do the same.

For the more difficult, targeted approach of Gen Xer's and Millennials, a one-time article or program will not work. In addition, a blanket approach most likely will not work. Two intentional initiatives should be started.

For Gen Xer's, approaches will need to highlight the benefits that the mother herself would be receiving. This generation is known for discontentment and they only want the facts (Moore, 2015). So programs focusing on the nostalgia of earlier childhood dinners may not be as effective. Instead, these approaches need to be direct with the ways in which family dinners can be made easier and can benefit them in order to be effective. These programs, which could also be emailed effectively, should highlight the financial benefits to making dinners at home, the nutritional benefits, and the benefits that they

would receive as parents as an indirect result of the benefits their children receive from family dinners (Klein, 2010). For example, it has been proven that children who eat family dinners frequently report having better relationships with their parents, and liking them more (Swerdlow-Freed, 2012). This is something that would pique the interest of a Gen Xer. In addition, children who have family dinners more often are less likely to use drugs (White & Halliwell, 2010). For parents, this would be a positive, as they would have a lower chance of having to endure the pain and struggle of having a child on drugs.

Generation Xer's may attend a program, but it would need to be short and to the point, and they would most likely want to be rewarded with something for their attendance. Therefore, programs should offer meals, recipes, and other take homes that they could use. Programs should focus on how Gen Xer's can have effective family dinners with little effort. Quick, but healthy, low cost meals, slow cooker meal ideas, and more would be an effective approach for Gen Xers.

Millennials are starting to show some of the cyclical rebirth of traditional family values, and would appreciate an approach that targets their feelings of nostalgia about their own childhood dinners (Moore, 2015). As many Millennials had to end up back in their parents' homes after college, they have a connection with them that generations before did not. They do not like the idea of forgetting their parents, even when they have families of their own (Moore, 2015).

Programs that involve their children, and even their mothers, would be effective. Programs should discuss getting the family involved in the meal preparation process, and all of the benefits that come with it. Millennials have fewer cooking skills than the generations before them, so having their mothers or grandmothers attend with them can

be an added bonus of learning family recipes. Programs for Millennials should also involve the health and financial benefits of family dinners, as these are two things this generation values (Moore, 2015).

Another layer to this targeted approach should be a social media campaign. Facebook posts, tweets, blog posts, videos and more should be made and released frequently in an effort to reinforce what the programs are teaching. Radio programs should discuss the benefits as well. In addition, Millennials enjoy giving of their time to help others, so tying in a charity case to program attendance would be an added incentive (Culp, 2011). A program could require a canned food drive for attendance, or the food prepared while you teach families how to make healthy, low cost, quick meals could be donated to families in need.

Social media approaches should also include apps that can help mothers find quick recipes from basic ingredients. Apps should also give family dinner tips, and remind mothers of family dinner benefits when they search for recipes.

As a whole, Millennials, even though they are sometimes mistakenly referred to as the cynical generation, actually prefer much more positive messages (Moore, 2015). For this reason, small victories, such as one additional family meal a week, should be celebrated. This will then encourage even more in the future.

While it is more work to target each generation separately, this approach will be the most effective way to increase the number of family dinners. It is hoped that an increase in family dinners served could slowly begin the process of benefitting our future

generations, positively addressing education, drug use, family togetherness, communication, relationships and more.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations for the study that could possibly affect the conclusions or implications were identified. Participants in this study were a very homogeneous sample of women who were part of two parent, male/female homes, who had only their own children living in their home. Families are much more diverse than this population, which decreases the generalizability of these findings. Participants were only recruited from Kentucky, and in only three of its 120 counties.

Only 24 participants were interviewed through the study, limiting the impact of the findings. The Silent Generation was represented by four individuals, the Baby Boomers by ten individuals, Gen Xers and Millennials by five participants each, giving a restricted view of the typical family dinner for these age groups. A larger study that included more participants from each generation could alter some of the findings from this small sample.

Participants seemingly all had positive family dinner experiences, which is not representative of all families. Families may encounter negative consequences due to time together at the table, or experience added stress from the act of having family meals.

Interviews in this study were also shorter in length than would be ideal for a larger qualitative research project. Twelve open ended questions were asked and interviews lasted on average only 20 minutes. More rich data would be beneficial in this area of research, and longer, more in depth interviews would be able to add to that.

Recommendations for Future Research

Findings from this study should catapult future research. Differences and similarities between family dinners across generations were identified in this study. Future research could aim to identify more specifics of these dinners, including communication with individual members of a participant's family, expansion of the topics discussed at family dinners, how issues during family dinner were addressed, and meal preparation.

Future research could also be conducted on a broader sample of participants. More participants could be interviewed. Ethnically diverse participants from single parent families, same sex partner families, grandparents raising grandchildren families, step-parent families, or blended families could offer new perspectives that would allow findings that would be much more representative of today's families.

Future research could also be conducted in more urban areas, since Fulkerson et al. (2006) determined that children raised on a farm were more likely to have family dinners, and each of the three counties represented in this study have a large agricultural presence.

Future research could help approaches to increase family dinners for future generations by determining the needs of more diverse families in different geographical areas. These approaches could be used in a wider variety of settings, which would allow for a much larger increase in the number of family dinners being served. This increase in frequency of family dinners could have a positive impact on the social issues that are affected by frequent family dinners.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

1. Describe a typical family dinner in your family of origin.
 - a. Time of day?
 - b. Location?
 - c. Meal?
2. Describe a typical family dinner in your current family.
 - a. Time of day?
 - b. Location?
 - c. Meal?
3. Did you intentionally “recreate” any of your family of origin experiences with family dinners for your current family?
4. What did you like most about family dinners with your family of origin?
5. What did you like least about family dinners with your family of origin?
6. What did/do you like most about family dinners with your current family?
7. What did/do you like least about family dinners with your current family?
8. How often did your family of origin eat dinner together?
9. How often did/does your current family eat dinner together?
10. Do you find family dinners to be high or low on your priority list?
11. What topics were generally discussed during mealtimes with your family of origin?
12. What topics were/are generally discussed during mealtimes with your current family?

13. Were any topics avoided or not allowed during mealtimes with your family of origin?
14. Were/Are any topics avoided or not allowed during mealtimes with your current family?
15. Who initiated conversation at family dinners with your family of origin?
16. Who initiated/s conversation at family dinners with your current family?
17. What rituals or traditions did your family of origin participate in regarding family dinner?
18. What rituals or traditions did/does your current family participate in regarding family dinner?
19. Did conversation continue after mealtime with your family of origin?
 - a. How so? (During dishes, sitting after finished with the meal, etc...)
20. Did/Does conversation continue after mealtime with your current family?
 - a. How so? (During dishes, sitting after finished with the meal, etc...)
21. Did your mother work while you were a school aged child?
22. Did you work while your children were in school?

Appendix B

Demographic Tables

Table B1. Generational Demographics

Generation	Number of Participants Representing Generation	Birth Years	Shaping Events	Characteristics	Communication Preferences
The Silent Generation	4	1929 – 1945	Great Depression WWII	Parents struggled financially 80% of males served in armed forces Learned to do without	Face-to-face
Baby Boomers	10	1946 – 1964	Civil Rights 3 great assassinations Roe vs. Wade	Workaholics Team oriented Mothers went to work outside the home for the first time	Face-to-face
Generation X	5	1965 – 1980	FDA’s approval of birth control	Latchkey kids Individualistic Prefer to work alone	Email Short term time investments
Millennials	5	1981 - 2001	Technological advances September 11, 2001	Open-minded Optimistic Civic Minded “Connected”	Electronic Text

Table B2. County Demographics

County	Number of Participants Representing County	Location	Population	Population Rank out of 120	Median Income	Poverty Rate	Percent of Households with Husband and Wife	Farm land Acres
Breckinridge	8	West Central	20,000	57	\$40,530	19.7%	71.4%	22,224
Elliott	8	Eastern	7,500	110	\$28,893	33.1%	71.1%	56,332
Hardin	8	Central	110,000	6	\$48,852	15.1%	68.5%	202,970

Appendix C

Comparison Tables

Table C1. Typical Family Dinners by County

County	Frequency & Location	Menu & Serving Time	Persons in Attendance	Rituals/ Traditions	Conversation Topics	Avoided Topics	Conversation Initiators
Breckinridge County: Family of Origin	Every night, at the table	Meat and vegetable, 6:00 p.m.	Everyone	Grace, washing up before dinner, who set the table	What went on that day	Sex, money, race, ethnicity, no foul language, nothing mean or rude	Anyone
Breckinridge County: Current Family	2-3 nights, various locations	Quick meals, 7:00 p.m.	Not everyone	Grace, the way food is served	Upcoming schedules, what needs to be done	Sex, money, family gossip	Anyone
Elliott County: Family of Origin	Every night, at the table	Home harvested meat, home canned vegetable, 6:00 p.m.	Everyone	Grace	What went on that day	Sex, money	Mom or Dad
Elliott County: Current Family	2-3 nights, rarely at the table	Eat out a lot, time varies	Not everyone	None	School day, upcoming schedules	Nothing	Children
Hardin County: Family of Origin	Every night, at the table	Meat, potatoes and bread, 6:00 –6:30 p.m.	Everyone	Grace, the way food is served, washing up before dinner	What went on that day	Politics, religion, nothing nasty, no bad mouthing or fussing	Mom or Dad
Hardin County: Current Family	4-5 nights, mostly at the table	Meat and vegetable, or quick meals, 7:00 p.m.	Not everyone	Grace	School, what went on that day, upcoming schedules	Nothing	Children

Table C2. Typical Family Dinners by Generation

Generation	Frequency & Location	Menu & Serving Time	Persons in Attendance	Rituals/ Traditions	Conversation Topics	Avoided Topics	Conversation Initiators
Silent Generation: Family of Origin	Every night, at the table	Meat, vegetable and dessert, 6:00–6:30 p.m.	Everyone	Grace, wash hands before dinner, who set the table	What went on that day	No foul language or bad mouthing others	Anyone
Silent Generation: Current Family	Every night, at the table	Meat, vegetable and dessert, 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.	Everyone	Grace, washing up before dinner	What went on that day	No bad mouthing others	Anyone
Baby Boomers: Family of Origin	Every night, at the table	Meat, vegetable and bread, 6:00 p.m.	Everyone	Grace, everyone sat in the same seat	What went on that day	Sex, money, no bad mouthing others	Anyone
Baby Boomers: Current Family	4-5 nights, mostly at the table	Meat and vegetable, 7:00 p.m.	Everyone	Grace	School day, upcoming schedules	Nothing vulgar	Anyone
Generation X: Family of Origin	4-5 nights, at the table	Meat and vegetable, or pizza, 6:30 – 7:00 p.m.	Everyone	Grace, the way food is served	What went on that day	Nothing crude	Mothers
Generation X: Current Family	2-3 nights, various locations	Quick meals, restaurants, time varies	Not everyone	Grace	School, sports, upcoming schedules	Nothing	Children
Millennials: Family of Origin	4-5 nights, mostly at the table	Meat and vegetable, or quick meals, 6:30 – 7:00 p.m.	Everyone	Grace	What went on that day	Nothing	Fathers
Millennials: Current Family	2-3 nights, various locations	Quick meals, 7:00 p.m.	Not everyone	None	Upcoming schedules	Nothing	Children

Appendix D

Institutional Review Board Documents



Office of Research Integrity
IRB, IACUC, RDRC
315 Kinkead Hall
Lexington, KY 40506-0057
859 257-9428
fax 859 257-8995
www.research.uky.edu/ori/

Initial Review

Approval Ends
April 7, 2016

IRB Number
15-0192-P4S

TO: Dayna Parrett
Family Studies
3265 Leitchfield Rd.
Cecilia, KY 42724
PI phone #: (270) 300-0071

FROM: Chairperson/Vice Chairperson
Non-medical Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol Number 15-0192-P4S

DATE: April 14, 2015

On April 9, 2015, the Non-medical Institutional Review Board approved your protocol entitled:

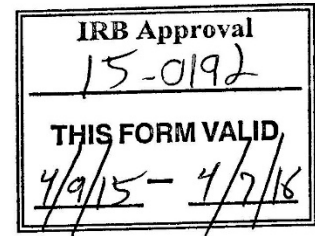
Family Dinner Across Generations: My How Times Have Changed?

Approval is effective from April 9, 2015 until April 7, 2016 and extends to any consent/assent form, cover letter, and/or phone script. If applicable, attached is the IRB approved consent/assent document(s) to be used when enrolling subjects. **[Note, subjects can only be enrolled using consent/assent forms which have a valid "IRB Approval" stamp unless special waiver has been obtained from the IRB.]** Prior to the end of this period, you will be sent a Continuation Review Report Form which must be completed and returned to the Office of Research Integrity so that the protocol can be reviewed and approved for the next period.

In implementing the research activities, you are responsible for complying with IRB decisions, conditions and requirements. The research procedures should be implemented as approved in the IRB protocol. It is the principal investigators responsibility to ensure any changes planned for the research are submitted for review and approval by the IRB prior to implementation. Protocol changes made without prior IRB approval to eliminate apparent hazards to the subject(s) should be reported in writing immediately to the IRB. Furthermore, discontinuing a study or completion of a study is considered a change in the protocol's status and therefore the IRB should be promptly notified in writing.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" from the Office of Research Integrity's IRB Survival Handbook web page [<http://www.research.uky.edu/ori/IRB-Survival-Handbook.html#PIresponsibilities>]. Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through ORI's web site [<http://www.research.uky.edu/ori/>]. If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at (859) 257-9428.


Chairperson/Vice Chairperson



Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Family Dinner Across Generations: My How Times Have Changed?

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to take part in a research study about the typical family dinner and how it has changed across generations. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you have been identified as meeting the criteria. Two generations will be taking part in this study. Mothers and daughters must meet the same basic criteria. Whether you are the mother or the daughter being asked to participate, you must have lived with your mother during your school aged years, and you must have been married during your child's school aged years. Daughters must currently have at least one child school age or older who lives with them. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of 24 people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is Dayna Parrett of University of Kentucky Department of Family Sciences. Dayna is currently a graduate student. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Ken Culp.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of the study is to identify any differences or similarities between family meals in different generations. By interviewing both mother and daughter, and asking questions about each individual's family dinners as a child and as an adult, we will be able to see how much tradition is involved in family meals, and how different generations describe the family meal. We may notice that there are similarities between the participants in each generation, and we may notice the similarities within one's own family. Both will prove valuable to helping us determine how time has or has not changed the family dinner.

By doing this study, we hope to learn how family dinners have or have not changed across generations.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no reason that you should not take part in this study if you meet the criteria. Participants should be at least 20 years old. As long as you lived with your mother during your school age years and you were married during your child's school age years and they live with you, then you are eligible to participate.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The research procedures will be conducted at your local University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Office. You will need to come to the Breckinridge/Hardin/Elliott County Extension Office only one time during the study. The visit will take about one hour. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is one hour over the next month.



WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

You will be asked to take part in a face to face interview that is expected to last one hour. During this interview you will be asked a series of questions. All participants will be asked the same questions. You may choose at any point not to answer a question if you do not want to. You may also decide to stop the interview at any point for any reason.

Once you arrive at the interview, you will be briefed once again on your participation in the survey and you will sign a form of consent to participate. You will be allowed at any point to ask questions or make comments. You will be asked questions, and will be asked to respond to them both about the family dinner from your childhood and again about the family dinners with your children. The last questions ask about your work status during your child's school aged years.

Your responses will be coded and compared to the other individuals responses. Your name will not be used, so no one will be able to identify your response from someone else's. Your responses may be quoted in the written thesis, but you will not be identified by name.

Once you have answered the questions you are free to leave. You will not be expected to return or participate in any further way.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

No potential risks have been identified. To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, help society as a whole better understand this research topic.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study. You may have to pay for the cost of getting to the study site.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will not receive any compensation or payment for taking part in the study.



WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

Only the interviewer and faculty advisor will be able to see the responses you give. You will not be identified by name, only by a number to relate your responses to that of your mother or daughter.

We will make every effort to keep confidential all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. Paper records of the interviews will be stored in a locked file cabinet at the interviewer's home until research is complete and the minimum amount of 6 years required to keep the documents has passed. At that point, all records will be shredded and discarded.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else. Also, we may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to withdraw you from the study. This may occur if you are not able to follow the directions they give you or if they find that your being in the study is more risk than benefit to you.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

There is a possibility that the data collected from you may be shared with other investigators in the future. If that is the case the data will not contain information that can identify you unless you give your consent or the UK Institutional Review Board (IRB) approves the research. The IRB is a committee that reviews ethical issues, according to federal, state and local regulations on research with human subjects, to make sure the study complies with these before approval of a research study is issued.

Contacting Research Subjects for Future Studies

Do you give your permission to be contacted in the future by Dayna Parrett regarding your willingness to participate in future research studies?

Yes No _____ Initials



WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Dayna Parrett at 270-300-0071 or dayna.parrett@uky.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky between the business hours of 8am and 5pm EST, Mon-Fri. at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of (authorized) person obtaining informed consent

Date

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VITA

Dayna E. Parrett was born in Elizabethtown, Kentucky

EDUCATION

University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY
B.S. in Family Science, 2010

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky
County Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences, 2011 – Present

Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky
Summer Intern for Family and Consumer Sciences, 2011

Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky
Summer Intern for 4-H Youth Development, 2010

SCHOLASTIC AND PROFESSIONAL HONORS

Kentucky Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
Communications Award, 2014, 2015

Kentucky Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
Marketing Awards, 2015