

Family Rituals Interview Assignment
Due: Thursday, November 3rd, 11:59pm
Noah James

A family ritual is an activity or a behavior that is predictably enacted by family members and that takes on symbolic meaning. I knew when I read the description of this assignment that I was going to pick the ritual of my Grandpa taking pictures of our family. I spend a lot of time with my Grandparents along with my cousins and my siblings when I am home from college because we live so close to each other. When my cousins and I were little, we were with our Grandparents almost every day, so it was a daily occurrence for my Grandpa to pull out his camera and capture our family memories. As we grew older and started to not be around as much, the ritual went from every day to only a couple times a month. Even though our daily visits became less frequent, my Grandparents still took the time to capture my family's memories so I could look back on them in the future.

Growing up around my Grandparents and seeing my Grandpa continually take pictures of our family inspired me to choose this family ritual for this assignment. My perspective has changed throughout my life in a better way. When I was younger I always thought that it was annoying that my Grandpa constantly stopped us and pulled his camera out for a picture. As I got a little bit older, I started to understand a little more about why he took the pictures as my picture books grew in size over the years. Nowadays, I fully realize that my Grandparents won't be around forever and that my Grandpa is taking these pictures to save all of our memories for me to look back on. My Grandpa's perspective is not far off from my current perspective on the ritual. He has been taking these pictures since my Dad and Uncle were growing up. His perspective is that the more pictures he can get, the more memories will be remembered. Our picture books that he uses hold up to 500 pictures in each book. Right now, I am at twelve and a

half books and counting. My Grandpa takes these pictures so we can always have them around and someday show our children and grandchildren all the memories we made.

My Grandpa takes the pictures of our family with a camera that is small enough to fit into his pocket. He carries this camera with him wherever he goes, especially when he knows that he is going to be around the family. Even though he sometimes can't use it, he is always ready with it to take a picture when he is able. Although sometimes he forgets his camera, my Grandma will take a picture on her phone. Once they are home, my Grandpa will take a picture of them.

Besides taking pictures of the family, my Grandpa also takes photos of the different job sites that he looks over. He worked in construction so he enjoys taking pictures from start to finish when a family member is building a new house. For this assignment, I interviewed my Grandpa over the phone. I chose to interview him because he is the one that has always taken these pictures. He created this ritual so he knows everything about it and I knew that I would be able to understand the details by interviewing him. I learned a lot about the ritual and the history of it by interviewing him and I was also interested in learning his perspective and thoughts during his process.

Even though I have my own perspective on it, I have only been around for 20 years to experience this ritual. My Grandpa started taking these pictures over 50 years ago when my Dad and my uncle were babies. He didn't really have a reason to start doing it, he just started doing it because he thought it would be fun and he wanted to capture memories. He would always take pictures of my dad and my uncle during their sporting events or activities that they participated in. He also created books full of pictures for them as well. My Grandpa had taken pictures of himself and my Grandma for their own book of pictures but he didn't take it as seriously until my Dad and Uncle were born. All of my cousins and siblings on my Dad's side all have photo

albums as well. My Grandpa has shown me the photo album of him and my Grandma but I have never seen my Dad's book. He told me that once my cousins and I have our own houses, my Grandpa will give us our books to keep.

My family and I all have a shared meaning on what the ritual of photo taking means to us. My Grandpa says that the meaning he believes the rituals hold is to be able to keep memories. We have had a lot of fun memories that have happened in our family, but my Grandpa believes that the photos are for the small memories that we would otherwise forget if they weren't documented in photos. My Grandpa also looks forward to when our family comes over and looks at the books full of memories so he can look at them as well. When my cousins and I go to their house, we go straight to the books and look through them. I enjoy bringing friends to my Grandparents house to show them the memories that my family has within the books. My family and I could sit down for hours at a time just looking at all of our photo books. My Grandparents would always take my cousins and I on family trips since we were little and helped us to remember all of them by photographing them. I think that this ritual brings a great meaning to our family.

This ritual of photo taking is a great representation of what we value in our family. One of our values in our family is spending time together. We often spend holidays and birthdays together. This value can be seen in most of the photos that my Grandpa has taken and put into our photo albums since the photos capture our time together. Another value that we have in our family is caring for each other. In my family, my parents have always taught me to care for my other family members the way that my Grandpa cares for us. My Grandparents have been some of the most influential people in my life since day one. The amount of love and care that they have for the rest of my family and I is unheard of. By looking back on these photos, this also

brings light to how much they care for us and how much they have done for us in our lives. One of the main beliefs that we have in my family is that we should all love each other, no matter the circumstances. The ritual of photo taking conveys this belief in our family because we can go back and look at past pictures and see how that belief is present in our family. The ritual of photo taking conveys that my family values quality time, making memories, and believing in loving each other.

If an outsider were to see this ritual, their thoughts about it could either go in a positive way or a negative way. They could see in a good way by seeing that we are documenting our memories or some could think it was different because my Grandpa still uses a tiny camera from the 2000s instead of his phone. When a new member comes into the family, we always warn them that my Grandpa could pull his camera out at any point and we would have to stop what we are doing. My family has never had a bad experience with socializing a new member to the ritual of photo taking because it is relatively normal, even though my Grandpa takes a lot of them. I don't know any difference from him always taking pictures but I would love to hear the perspective of an outsider. Most people that know me and my family are aware that my Grandpa is always taking pictures and has photo albums with thousands of photos.

Although I thought I knew mostly everything that went into this family ritual, I was wrong. One of the main insights that I gained from interviewing my Grandpa was that he had an album of my Grandma and him even before my Dad and Uncle were born. Something else that I learned was that there were pictures of my Father and Uncle when they were babies, I thought he started taking these pictures when they were teenagers. One last thing that I learned from this assignment was that my Grandpa used to take videos on a movie camera of my Dad and Uncle

when they were babies as well. Overall, I gained a lot of information from my Grandpa while conducting this interview.

To conclude, I have learned to cherish this ritual of my Grandpa taking these pictures rather than thinking badly about it. I also learned what meanings, beliefs, and values these pictures convey about my family. Also, hearing my Grandpa's perspective on the ritual taught me a lot about the kind of person that he is and how much he really cares for my family and I. My Grandpa has had a love for taking pictures and documenting our family memories even before my Dad was born. I am grateful to be able to be a part of this ritual of taking photos for my Grandpa. I can't wait to someday have these photo albums in my own home and to be able to show my kids and grandkids and continue my Grandpa's ritual.

- When did you decide that you wanted to start taking photos of the family?
- How and when did the photo taking start (history of the ritual)?
- Could you give me a description of the ritual of photo taking?
- What do you believe the ritual means to you and the family?
- What has been your favorite part of taking photos (has there been a favorite thing that you have taken a photo of)?
- Has there ever been a time when you wish you would have photographed something?
- Do you wish that you had more pictures?