

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURAL CHANGES OF FAMILY CREATION, SIZE
AND UNITY THROUGH THE ANALYSIS OF THE CHANGING BEHAVIORS AND
MEANINGS OF THEIR SYMBOLS

by

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Mary Cameron, Department of Anthropology, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

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This study seeks to explore longitudinally the changing behaviors and meanings of the symbols bound to family creation, size and unity in order to understand why and how they changed. The research method fuses historical facts collected from historical literature, the data from the participant's interviews, and the ethnology of the American family made by David Schneider (1980), using symbolic anthropology as the guiding theoretical framework. The imposed gender differentiation, religious precepts, the shifting economic models, economic recessions, World War I and World War II, intellectual and technological developments, and the ideologies accompanying these events caused changes of human behavior and the redefinition of main cultural meanings of the symbols bound to family creation, size and unity. These resulted over time in a systematic shrinking of family creation and size and caused the re-conceptualizing of family unit. Yet, numbers of American family creation and size did not reach negative extremes, as they did in other developed nations. The resisting behavior emerges from the

rich ethnic diversity in the nation that offers behavioral alternatives, the people's trust their government and the American identity rooted on the founding ideals of the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the American people. From within the struggles, fears, and hopes of the American family, and in the quest to overcome chaos and find a better life there emerges true humanity in the form of life and family bonding.

To the Guajiro people who taught me that only the truth heals the broken spirit.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

Culture, in its function of organizing and guiding perception and behavior, influences many aspects of the human existence. Yet, I share my personal experience and perception with most participants in this study who expressed a sense of powerlessness toward their understanding and interrelating with their own culture. Hence, seeking to gain an integral understanding of how and why culture changes, this study proposes to explore longitudinally the changing cultural behaviors simultaneously with the changing meanings of the symbols that relate to family creation, size and family unity. With the findings and the study design this study seeks to understand how and why the changes of the behaviors and meanings bound to these cultural forms changed throughout the different eras in the specific way they did.

Following David Schneider's theoretical framework (1980, 1995 and 2010) and with the help of the data collected from the participants and historical literature, this study answers to these questions: What elements and mechanisms caused the cultural changes that influenced behaviors related to family creation, the size of families and family unity? Why did these changes take place? How did these changes develop through time? How did the occurring changes affect the individual and the collective within family system and structure? Moreover, this study seeks to understand

each cultural change as explained by the participants and to interpret the discourse carried by meaningful behavior. In this way it seeks to find over time, what was accomplished by the behavioral change, what humans needs were met or neglected, and what emotions motivated the action.

Symbols are the basic units of research and the changing meanings and human behavior that are represented by the symbols are the independent variables. This research focuses on exploring the changes to the meanings of both, cultural constructions and behavior. Meaningful behavior responds to motive (one's own rational monologue, justification or belief) that gives understanding to a symbol. The cultural constructions are statements that emerge to give form to a symbol and become the personal or collective understanding of a cultural unit or cultural form (Men don't cry, for instance). Meanings of the symbols expressed thru behaviors and cultural constructs changed throughout the eras and under determinate circumstances, and these changes summed up to create every time a new level of collective cultural understanding and behavior.

Family creation, size and unity are the cultural forms chosen as the central research subjects in this study because they represent actions responsible for human reproduction, the choice of the size of the family group, and the special form of close attachment understood as the family unity (Schneider, 1980: 30, 50). Also, these cultural forms carry behaviors that define and organize some basic biological and affective aspects of the human existence, determining in this way the existence of the family. Additionally, these cultural forms were part of most of the narratives of the participants when they spoke about their feelings, behaviors or experiences relating to family.

These cultural forms are bodies of behaviors that produce a larger cultural system. Family creation defines the emergence of a new system of emotional and biological or non-biological bonds, the emergence of the biological or non-biological nuclear group, more often it includes the choice to reproduce, the perpetuation of a species, family genealogy, etc.

Thus, the existence of the cultural unity that we understand as *family* depends on the behaviors bound to the cultural forms known as family creation, size and unity. These cultural forms are bodies of determinate behaviors and are part of the basic components of the *system of units* of the culture. David Schneider explains, “Units (or parts)... define the world or the universe, the way the things in it relate to each other, and what these things should be and do” (Schneider, 1980: 1).

Family is a unit subject to the changing meanings of the symbols that form its cultural constructions. The findings in this study revealed that these meanings in contemporaneous American culture allows the choice to choose the family member with whom create and maintain family closeness and to the display and share the caring, intimacy and family roles. For the proper understanding of this cultural change that allows choosing a family relation and neglecting family prescribed roles and status this study reached to David Schneider. He explains, “Each element which is culturally defined as natural, is at the same time augmented and elaborated, built upon and informed by the rule of human reason, embodied in law and in morality” (1980: 40). Thus, the order of nature takes part in the creation of family, through behavior: sexual intercourse, pregnancy and birth. Yet, as David Schneider explains, these natural acts are elaborated, built and informed by the rule of human reason (1980: 130). In this sense, the human

reasoning shapes the meanings of the symbols with rules and a determinate moral stance. This body of cultural knowledge augments, elaborates, builds and informs every cultural unit and form of the human universe, including the cultural forms of family creation, size and unity.

The similarities and differences between the cultural concepts exposed by David Schneider's (1980) and the participants' understanding of family, family creation, size and unity resulted in a body of meanings that exposes the contradictions between the reality and the cultural ideals that have survived time and form the contemporaneous understanding of these cultural forms. However, while the cultural constructs of the 1960s, as found by Schneider (1980) appear to be very similar to the contemporaneous ones, the contemporaneous behaviors producing family creation, size and unity do not correspond to the ideals as expressed in the narratives of the participants. The meanings expressed in cultural constructs and behaviors exerted since the 1960s era created a new cultural platform (norms, status, categories and behaviors) carrying important transformations of the moral value of these meanings that can be even opposite to the participants' ideals as narrated in their cultural constructions.

These differences in the cultural constructs and behaviors bound to family creation, size and unity show that the changes of the meanings created through time a more casual approach toward the family relations. Contemporaneous families seem to use softer forms of the patriarchal rules and to avoid the strict scripts of the family roles and status including male superiority. This change allows the genders a more balance power relationship and allows the family members a more open and integral communication.

Family creation takes place under a more consenting society that does not condemn harshly single parenting, divorce and alternative families.

Meanwhile family size has been subject to the economic situation of every era showing higher birth numbers after the World War I, and especially after World War II (Kain, 1990: 5), and the declining birth numbers since 1975, which showed lower numbers than the ones shown during the Great Depression (Lindsey, 2007, 206). The 1975 lower birth numbers appear to have been caused by the introduction of the oral contraceptive for the masses consumption (Lindsey, 2007: 206). Meanwhile, the contemporaneous cultural constructs showing the understanding of family unity reveal the presence of the orthodox ideal of family unity but in reality the meaning of family unity changed dramatically as families lost their autonomy and self-sustaining ability that they enjoyed during the agrarian era making it impossible for them to support the extended family households. The newer family exercises choice in the creation of bonds, closeness and unity. They tend to choose closeness to a family member (from the nuclear or extended group) under the condition of a balance and healthy exchange of benefits.

Cultural change can emerge from the interaction between the human group and the established social, cultural, economic, technological and intellectual systems and structures present in the society. Individuals, the collective and the power structures of mainly the social, political and economic systems act as forces of change. The analysis exposes the fact that most structures of power sought to mold and direct the behavior of the collective and the individuals. They created, throughout the different eras, material, structural and ideological conditions that affected the human behaviors producing family creation, size, stability, and the physical and emotional unity of the American family. Yet

the analysis finds meaningful resisting human behavior causing cultural changes and acting as mechanisms of cultural and social balance by protecting the well-being of family's basic cultural forms. For example, single parenthood that appeared even against social and cultural rules and norms is found aiding the presence of positive birth numbers of the American nation.

The Problem and Its Significance

This study seeks to understand the how and why of cultural changes. While there are different mechanisms in the culture that seek to maintain the status quo (traditions, for instance), there exists a relationship or dialectic communication between the human group that communicates through behavior and the social, economic, political, technological and informational environments. Humans respond to the social, economic, political and natural environment by accepting or rejecting the change(s) imposed or proposed. The rejecting behavior carries a discourse of opposition to the imposed cultural change. By transforming the cultural forms and units as needed, the opposite behavior protects the human need that is threatened by the imposed cultural change.

Cultural changes take place leaving some people perplexed. Several participants substantiated this perception through their narratives that carry the discourse of the problematic relation existing between the culture and its people. As a student of anthropology, I found that despite the fact that there exists a vast amount of research of the contemporary American culture, there is a need for more anthropological studies that disclose and analyze the forces behind cultural changes, the nature of the causative elements, the structure and process that take place in the changing behaviors and perceptions of the human group and the reason why they change.

The apparent solution for this problem is making studies that identify and articulate the origin of the cultural change by articulating the elements and process involved in the making of cultural changes and how they went about creating the change. Anthropological theory provides the needed framework for this type of study through David Schneider. Through his writings, Schneider shows his concern about the studies of anthropology that require the use of historical data. He argues for the need to work with theory and facts, focusing on process and history (Handler and Schneider, 1995: 6).

His concern can be interpreted as a suggestion for the more efficient design of anthropological studies that have to use historical data. Under Schneider's guidance the analysis seeks to work with facts and articulate the elements accompanying and allowing the emergence of each cultural change. These include the cultural meanings of the symbols of family creation, size and unity found through the historical data in ideologies, advertising, media and expert advice and as found in the narratives of the participants in each different era. Using the narratives of the participants whenever possible allowed verifying the historical events that show the emergence and effects of the forces of change. Through the historical account the analysis finds the relation between the different historical events and the emergence of each specific force of change, and it articulates the events that caused similar changes to the same cultural forms in different eras. For example, the government programs that were introduced after World War I and World War II that promoted higher birth numbers (family creation) (Kain, 1990: 5).

With the help of this guidance this study seeks to eliminate some uncertainties about understanding the phenomena producing cultural changes to the cultural forms of family creation, size and unity.

The Research Method

The Institutional Review Board approved the proposed research in August 2009 (Appendix A). Appendix B contains a copy of the questionnaire that this study used as a guide for the interviews of forty-four volunteer participants. This questionnaire sought to explore the individual perception and meanings given to several basic symbols of the American family including the meaning of family, family creation, the size of the family and family unity. The questionnaire included cultural forms that are seen as equivalent to either family creation or unit, or closely related to these concepts including: enduring family relations, family solidarity, closeness, family identity, bonding, and the relations between the nuclear and extended family group. The research also explored issues regarding authority, control and autonomy, which show the effects of the cultural norms of gender stereotypes and male supremacy governing the direction of changes of behaviors.

The chosen narratives exposed in this study are archetypes representing a greater number of people with very similar or identical perceptions and arguments. The narratives from the participants give validity to the analysis because they provided details of their individual perceptions accompanying their choices and their struggles in their interrelation with the culture and social expectations. Additionally, their narratives provided the needed perspective that completed the data from the historical literature.

There was no statistical work performed for this study. Instead, the method consisted of extracting from the narratives of the participants the repetitions and similarities found in the meanings of the symbols and behaviors bound to the cultural units explored in the interviews. In this way, the study found the most common meanings

of the symbols that were contained in the cultural constructs, perceptions and behaviors studied.

For the interviews I sought to have a heterogeneous sample. The data was collected from forty-four American volunteer participants of various ethnicities, social status, religions, ages, and genders, and were born into different types of family organization including traditional families and alternative families. Traditional families are generally understood as being composed of the biological father, the biological mother and their children. Alternative families include divorced families, adoptive families, and relatives or close friends of the parents raising the children.

Forty of the participants were born and raised in different states of United States; the remaining four participants are naturalized American citizens born in foreign countries that migrated to the United States in their youth. Their special experiences and insights from their encountering and adapting to the American culture are valuable information for the making of this study because at their arrival in the United States they experienced the contrast between their original culture and the American culture and were able to explain what they thought were extreme differences in behaviors that produced family creation, size and unity. This information from a newcomer provides a better understanding of the cultural perceptions and behaviors of those early eras (1920s and 1930s).

The demographic data of participants in Appendix C includes the key for the abbreviations.

Participants were recruited from family, relatives, neighbors, and students from the Boca Raton campus of FAU. Several senior citizen participants were recruited from

the Van Vollen Senior Center of Boca Raton, Florida. Their narratives were especially valuable for this study because they were able to narrate their personal experiences taking place in early historical times, as far back as the 1920s and helped to find the links to the contemporaneous state of affairs. Additionally, several of them facilitated the interviews of their spouses, children and grandchildren, which allowed exploring the changing perceptions and behaviors of different generations in the same family.

Interviews were taken mainly in a person-to-person fashion. The interviews were designed to last twenty minutes and most interviews lasted less than an hour. I recorded and transcribed twenty-eight interviews, while the data from sixteen interviews was only recorded in written notes; eleven of these interviews took place with the help of social media. All written data are in files that are safely stored at my home's study room.

The method for the interviews includes a questionnaire containing a list of subjects related to behaviors and perceptions of the different family forms including traditional families, divorced, adopted, single-headed families and other alternative family forms. The time for the interviews was limited to an hour per person but most participants did not have time to answer most questions from the questionnaire, thus, it was necessary to interview more participants in order to gather enough data about every subject in the list for the interviews. The questions were posed in a qualitative question-and-answer fashion where some of the answers given by the participants provided the context for the next question. This technique allowed collecting more complete information of every subject and the separate exploration of every element or unit while finding their direct relations with the other elements involved.

The narratives from the participants describing family rituals (family meetings, holidays, bedtime rituals, etc) became a crucial part of the interviews because rituals revealed the background symbols in the family values contained within their process. “Ritual is a form of social interaction, as well as a vehicle for the transference of culture, conveying emotional experience, as well as non-verbal social values” (Bossard and Boll, 1950: 22). This study had participants that disclosed the meaning given to the symbol of “unity” in their narratives about their ritual family visits. For example, Beth, a thirty-six years old bookkeeper from Massachusetts believes that “families must be together.” Since infancy, Beth’s family had the habit to get together even if only for dinner or movies once or twice a week. She grew up and moved away but she keeps the same visiting habits with siblings that live nearby.

Among the first findings in this study was that generally, participants protected and kept their family relationships and notion of family as a special part of their existence and at times, they were reluctant to disclose some of their personal family experiences. In occasion participants as for example, Helen, an eighty-nine-year-old former teacher, rejected to answer or to give detailed answers to every question asked.

Direct observation of the cultural forms and related behaviors as well as my personal experience understanding the American culture became important tools in the making of this study.

The Study Design

The design of this thesis includes the collection of historical data and the structuring of the data as well as the analysis of the findings under the historical and symbolic anthropology frame of David Schneider (1980, 1995, 2010). In this way it

understands the phenomena that created the changes of the meanings of the symbols of family creation size and unity, finding the origin of the cultural changes of family creation, size and unity and discovering the material state of affairs and ideological background that cradled these cultural changes. It follows by articulating the elements that by acting as forces of change obligated or influenced the creation of the cultural changes. Lastly, it develops into accounting the process that uncovers the relationships between the elements engaged in the series of events that created the changes of the meanings of the symbols bound to behaviors and cultural constructs. Going into more details, the work required identifying the different roles of the elements involved in the cultural change (as cause or effect), as well as their interrelations and their function. This included also exploring the nature of the forces of change and the resources they used in the creation of the cultural changes and to understand how the changes affected the life of the people.

In addition to the historical literature the historical data includes the narratives from voluntary participants in this study and the ethnology of the American family made by David Schneider (1980). The meanings of every era were compared showing where the meaning was changed. There is a focus on the changes starting from the 1960s to the present because these years contained very fast and extreme cultural changes of the cultural forms under research. The narratives from younger participants about what is family creation size and unity were compared to the state of affairs of the American family in the 1960s, including the cultural meanings, constructions and behaviors relating directly to the symbols of family creation, size and unity as described by Schneider (1980) in order to better understand these cultural changes that took place in the last fifty

years. The sources of data complement each other, filling up as necessary the gaps that appeared through the research. The literature for the historical account depends few historical literatures because the research units are specifically family creation, size and unity and there are not many historians providing data that explored and described details relating to family creation, size and unity.

The evidence collected focused in the most relevant historical events that relate to this study including shifts of economic paradigms, describing components of the agrarian (1500s – mid 1700s), the introduction of industrialism in America (mid- 1700s) to the formal industrial era (early 1800s) and capitalistic era (late 1800s) in addition to the power of the ideals of the Victorian era (1837-1901), the material extremes forced by the Great Depression (1929-34), World War I (1914-18) and the ideological and material changes after the World War II (1939-45). Simultaneously, it studies the most prominent structures of power acting as forces of change, including the cultural, social and legal rules, norms and laws, religious precepts (the biblical scriptures showing women subordination to men, for instance), ideological currents, as for example, the ideology of abundance driving the culture to mass consumption accompanying the introduction of capitalism since the New Deal (Lindsey, 2007: 34). There is a focus on the events taking place through the shifts of economic paradigms and the effects of medical advancements, especially the introduction of the pill as the oral contraceptive for massive consumption. The massive use of this contraceptive method in company of its accompanying ideology caused an important demographic effect by lowering drastically the numbers of birth (Lindsey, 2007: 206). Additionally, there is an exploration of the influence on behavior that relate to family creation, size and unity by the contemporaneous styles and the

meanings in the curriculum carried by the institutions that provide sexual education and information.

Technological developments, especially the introduction of oral contraceptives (the pill), for instance (Lindsey, 2007: 206) were determinant in the causing of extreme cultural behaviors and changes; Also, there were different dominating intellectual stances that sought to guide perception and direct behavior related to parenting styles, family interrelations, family distance and communication. For example, the articles and books published by psychologists Watson and Watson advised creating an emotional distance between parents and children (1928: 81-82). The analysis of the meanings, style and curriculum carried by the contemporaneous sexual information and education (Burt and Meeks, 1975: 352-56; Ferndale Elementary School District, 1978: 69) that were established in the 1970s to indoctrinate the children for the control of their sexuality and family creation behaviors appear to have influenced important cultural changes in the behavior producing family creation size and unity that resulted in behaviors producing the steady lowering of birth numbers since the 1970s to the present in United States.

Two different human groups appeared taking part in the dialogical process for the creation and changing of the culture and that represent the different types of forces of change. They often are at opposite sides in the structure of the society pursuing different agendas and carrying a different discourse. They include: 1) several public and private power structures, acting through human groups holding concentrations of power and representing different sectors of the social system, including the political, social, institutional, economic, religious, technological, informational, and scientific structures that have been responsible for many of the cultural changes explored in this study. 2) The

other group taking part of the dialectical process is the collective human group represented by the human masses living under the established social and cultural model, subject in different ways to the manipulation and governing from the groups that operate through the power structures.

The power dynamic between the large concentration of power and the human group (the masses) conceded domination to power structures leaving the human group under their control and the needs of their agendas. The quality of communication and interrelation of these different forces of change are conditional to their differential levels of power. Although the human group culturally exerts its power through its behavior, the human group exists under the governing and management power and ideological influences of the different power structures and in many ways under their dominance. Thus, the findings show that in many occasions the power structures acting as forces of change caused different kinds of changes in the human behaviors bound to family creation, size and unity. For example, the extreme events that accompanied the introduction of industrialism forced the human group to lose their agricultural and piece work economic mode of production and lifestyle that had allowed them autonomy and self-sufficiency. In consequence their birth numbers lowered and they moved to the industrial areas to work for wages losing the company, support and protection of their nuclear and extended families (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: xvi).

Generally family is conceived as the basic unit of the society produced mainly by the cultural forms of family creation, size and family unity. For this reason I chose these cultural forms as the research units. These cultural forms are the product of basic biological, emotional and social culturally molded human behaviors. These biological

behavioral forms include sexual intercourse and birth, while the social emotional behavioral forms include the rearing of the child, and the creation and maintenance of the enduring family bond.

As this study suggests, family is often at the center of most important cultural changes, receiving directly the impact from changes occurring in the culture and social system. For example, as described in historical data and from the narratives of some of the participants, the presence and aftermath of World War I, World War II and the Great Depression affected the numbers of births, marriages and family size in the United States and those corresponding eras (Lindsey, 1997: 57).

Schneider explains family as the human group composed of the parents and children sharing the special bond of love, unity, and diffuse enduring solidarity (Schneider, 1980: 30-33, 47-51). Participants in this study extended this conception. Samantha, twenty-four years old artist from New York understood the presence of the child as the needed element for the existence of the human family. This means the conceptualizing of family requires basically a group of individuals that share the parent-child relationship. Family, thus, entails the dynamics of creating intense affectionate bonds, involves choosing a partner and mainly having and raising the child, whether biological or adopted, within the family group. It implies the display of behaviors of unity and solidarity that families are expected to create and maintain through their lives, determining in this way the existence of their family.

Kristen, a thirty-one-year old medical student believed creating a family is determined by the presence of children (biological, fostered or adopted) because the status of a person without children changes radically by having children. For instance, the

dyad of a man and a woman defines them as a couple, but the couple with a child is a family. They explained that it is possible to make a family without marriage, without the family dwelling, without the biological mother, father, or both because there are single headed families, families that resulted from in vitro fertilization procedures using sperm or egg donor, families that are homeless, families headed by relatives, foster families, adoptive families and families that do not share the bond of blood. Thus, any group of people that display the roles of family and behave the meanings of family is considered a family.

Women often appeared at the core of cultural changes in the historical literature and the narratives from some participants, throughout the different historical stages. They appeared as the target of forced cultural changes or influential ideologies that caused them to behave in ways that created positive or negative changes in their perception and behavior toward sex, pregnancy and family. In consequence, several parts of the historical account and analysis in this study focused on women because they take an important role in the creation of the family and the conception of the child and they are indispensable for the pregnancy and the delivery the child. Women are, in every one of these steps, the naturally appointed biological recipients of these events of pregnancy and delivery. The cultural position of women in the creation of the family is the consequence of the unavoidable natural facts. Thus, throughout the history of the American culture, culturally and socially women have been the appointed main caregivers of the child.

Meanwhile, the historical data and narratives from the participants often failed to provide information about the effects of the forces of change in males. Moreover, both, the historical data and the participants made little effort in their descriptions of the

influences and forced changes directed to males. Nevertheless, this study finds that the same mechanisms and forces of change in the form of power structures that affected women's sexual and family behaviors also affected males and their ability to create families, and form and maintain their bonds with their parents, wives and children.

The historical account starts with the Colonial period supported by data from historical literature because the set of cultural circumstances in that era and the meanings expressed through the human behavior and cultural constructs explain many of the cultural changes that took place throughout the other historical eras. The data starting from the 1900s combines historical literature and the narratives from several participants that were born in the early 1900s. They spoke about their family experience from as early as 1920s. They include: Fred an eighty-three year old African-American; Helen, eighty-nine years old, Caucasian from working class; Sandy, eighty-four years old from working class; Dora, eighty-one years old from working class; Patricia, seventy-eight years old from working class; Bob, seventy-one years old from working class; Paul, eighty-three years old from working class; Bertha, eighty-six years old Caucasian from upper class; Anna, ninety-three years old, Caucasian from working class; Laura, eighty-two years old from middle class and Sandy, an eighty-four-year-old retired nurse who was born in a working class family from Puerto Rico.

The narratives from these participants revealed detailed information that did not exist in the historical literature, especially information about the cultural changes and their effect in the human group. The historical data of these late 1800s and early 1900s and the narratives of the eldest participants that witnessed the American culture of early 1900s show rapid and significant cultural changes that relate directly with the status quo

of the American family in the present time. As an example, since the early 1900s, families experienced extreme changes in their size (Lindsey, 2007: 206) forced by shifting economic models, ideologies and other events that took production from the family houses and small farms into plantations and industrial centers. Throughout the times, the family size shrunk considerably, and at the present time there still are influential bodies of ideologies and material mechanisms influencing behaviors through the ideal of smaller family size. This research found the meanings in concepts of autonomy, individuation and family unity that started to appear with the introduction of industrialism and capitalism (Polanyi, 1957: 68-69) still present in more sophisticated forms in the contemporaneous ideological frame. These meanings continue causing family distancing and promoting the lack of family unity.

The analysis suggests that these early cultural changes later resulted in the loss of the large family household (and their supportive forms of company, communion, cooperation and resourcefulness) and the creation of smaller families. These smaller families emerged in the form of the nuclear family that exists without the closeness, communication and different types of support from the extended family group. David Schneider (1980) findings of the state of affairs of these family forms (family creation, size and unity) in the 1960s are evidence of these cultural changes. Schneider explains, “The word family is singular, not plural” (1980: 30), and “the family” is a cultural unit which contains a husband and wife who are the mother and father of their child and children” (1980: 32). The nuclear family is expected always to cohabit, (1968: 33) and “to live together, “on their own” (Schneider, 1968: 36).

This study follows the conceptual scheme used by David Schneider his the ethnography of the American family (1980), including: culture, units, rules, cultural meanings, cultural unit, construct, family, consanguine family, family love, unity and enduring diffuse solidarity. This information became part of the historical data that together with historical literature and the narratives from voluntary participants interviewed for this study gave form to the historical account.

As its method, this study fuses symbolic anthropology with the framework suggested by David Schneider (1995: 6) for the proper accounting of historical data and analysis. In this way the historical outline seeks to expose facts, including the ideologies accompanying the material changes through the historical events, the economic changes that forced people to lose their large preindustrial households and the size of their nuclear families, for example. The historical outline also exposes the different methods and resources that the forces of change used for creating cultural changes (promotional government programs, expert advice, for example). The findings from the historical account meet the theory that through under the symbolic framework it describes and interprets every meaning bound to the symbol that gave form to the specific behavior or cultural constructs producing the cultural form of family creation, size and unity.

Focusing on the symbols and their changing meanings allowed exploring each historical event and articulating every element involved in the phenomena that produced the cultural change. From the basic units (meanings of the symbols) the analysis was extended to the most complex units (behaviors producing the cultural forms). On the other hand, Schneider understands culture “mainly as a system of symbols and meanings” (1980:132), linking symbols and their meanings to cultural constructions including

cultural norms (1980: 8, 132, 133). In this way Schneider guides the study to identify and articulate the different units of cultural knowledge (each unit carrying different a level of understanding) involved in the cultural change. This made possible to analyze the organization of the elements through the process of the cultural change, the origin and growth of changes of the parts with respect to the material and ideological whole.

Schneider says, “Culture is thus a shared system of symbols and meanings; a system of categories and units and the ways in which these are designated and conceptualized; a conceptual scheme” (Schneider, 1984: 196). Hence, Schneider guides the identifying of systems, categories, units, and brings the understanding of culture to a level that allows articulating and studying each part of the cultural body, from the elements by themselves to their conjugated form as a system, and from the smaller events that accumulated giving place to the resulting cultural change.

Applying the symbolic theoretical framework for the analysis of the cultural change of each meaning allowed understanding the significance of the changing moral principle of the meaning (expressed thru cultural constructs and behavior) that was transformed through the process of cultural change. This analytic method focuses on discerning the quality of the changed meaning or behavior (whether it was corresponding or contradicting), and its effect in the life of the human group (positive or negative). Simultaneously, analyzing the changes of behaviors and meanings of family creation, size, and unity shows that since the Colonial times to the present time the behaviors creating family creation and size caused this cultural forms to shrink in numbers. Meanwhile, the behaviors producing family unity changed its quality and moral stance. Consequently the analysis followed by identifying the series of events that caused these

changes throughout the historical eras in order to understand how and why these changes took place.

Although social rules, cultural norms and many other mechanisms emanating from power structures caused or forced changes in the culture, there are events where opposite or contradictive human behavior emerged in greater numbers becoming socially and statistically noticeable. It emerged for example, to resist forces of change that sought to prevent family creation by preventing pregnancies; for instance, the strict rules of abstinence and the higher number of teenage pregnancy (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 228-9) where these pregnancies can be seen as behavior of opposition and resistance. Also, some mechanisms of change sought to restrict the solidarity and closeness between the family members in most historical eras (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 247).

Franz Boas acknowledges the importance of individual behavior in the development of culture (1928: 245) and David Schneider argues about the importance of action that is symbolic and meaningful causing a cultural form (1980: 130). Behavior that is symbolic carries a discourse and it can be interpreted as effectively as interpreting a changing cultural construct. The findings reveal the presence of opposite or contradictory behavior, which emerged to oppose or challenge cultural norms, social rules, tradition and even institutionalized rules and the jurisdiction that threatened the wellbeing of the human group by forcing situations that would be an obstacle for the satisfaction of an important human need. These behaviors acted as a form of resistance causing cultural change and appear to have emerged to balance the damage imposed or to reject elements introduced by power structures that threatened the natural development of a determinate cultural form, family creation, for instance.

Schneider explains, “The family, in American kinship, is defined as the natural unit based on the facts of nature” (Schneider, 1980: 36). “It is the symbol of love which links conjugal and cognatic love together and relates them both to and through the symbol of sexual intercourse” (1980: 39). “As a symbol of unity, or oneness, love is the union of the flesh, of opposites, male and female” (1980: 39). Thus, the union of the both parents through copulation creates the unity of blood through a child, and “the unity of blood binds the child to his parents and to his siblings” (1980: 39).

Thus, the facts of human nature (love, affection, sexual intercourse, togetherness and the creation of the child of love) become expressed through behaviors producing the forms of family creation size and unity. In many occasions the responses of the participants carried emotion or revealed a yearning or an unsatisfied personal human need (emotional, spiritual, physical). The analysis adopted the framework of anthropologist David Schneider (1984) for the interpretation of these kinds of narratives because he emphasizes the relation between human needs and the existence of the family (1984: 171). Schneider explains, “The family, in American kinship, is defined as the natural unit based on the facts of nature” (1980: 36) and rooted in human needs (2010: 171). The narrative of Robert, a thirty-eight years old businessman demonstrate the connection between the facts of nature and the existence of family creation, size and unity. He understood creating his family and keeping his family togetherness as part of his biological and emotional natural needs and human rights. Robert explained that nine years ago he yearned to meet a special woman for an exclusive and stable relationship and to create a family. He said, “When I met Tamara I knew she was the one. I wanted to marry her and form a family. I love my family, is the family I always wanted to have.

“They complete me...I never thought it was possible to love someone so much as I love my children.”

Schneider’s framework makes possible understanding the human behavior that emerged to satisfy an emotional or physical human need contradicting tradition, social rules and cultural norms. These behaviors were meaningful and even caused cultural changes in different historical eras. For example, higher numbers of single parenting since 1945 to 1970s (Kain, 1990: 8) emerged in a time period of political and social instability that probably made it difficult for couples to create their families as prescribed by the culture. High numbers of divorce and single parenting emerged against tradition and the cultural norms and social rules of the ideal family. Yet, these behaviors caused a cultural and social change. Society was forced to adjust to the change and create the needed institutions for these cultural forms (Fitzsimons and Munhall, 2001: 258). Meanwhile the strict patriarchal roles have softened while the culture became more understanding to the cultural forms of divorce, alternative families and single parenting.

The symbolic anthropology theoretical framework of David Schneider that also allows understanding and finding the relationship between the family system and human needs (1984: 170), and of these in relation to their symbols and their meanings (1980: 8). Drawing from this statement the structuring and analytical work consist of exploring how these basic human needs that find expression through these behaviors are subject to the influence or forced changes imposed by different power structures. Additionally, the work seeks to illustrate and analyze how throughout the different historical events and the forces of change were able to govern in different ways the behaviors and meanings of symbols that relate to family creation, size and unity.

The analysis follows by understanding the singular American behavior that protects the “healthy” (as defined by Billari, Kohler, and Hans, 2004) numbers of the American population. Several participants, including Sunny, sixty-one years old cook and single mother of four children explained that she chose to have her children because she trusted the fact that she can always make a living. She became a single mother against all the social ideals and cultural norms because “nobody tells me what to do,” she explained. She said, she decides her life “because she is free to do so. She is an American.” Thus, Sunny’s narrative shows her perception of trust in the political-economic structure and systems of the American nation and her belief in her right to happiness and to freedom. Her narrative suggests that the ideologies contained in the Preamble of the Constitution of the United States of America act as cultural frames for behavior that in the context applied by these participants like Sunny it promoted their positive behaviors for the production of family creation, size and unity.

The findings show the accumulation of extreme negative effects from different power structures that throughout different historical eras have caused cultural changes of behaviors that produce family creation, size and unity. These include, the introduction of the industrial economic model, the devastation resulting from the World’s Wars, the ideologies of industrialism and capitalism and the extremes of the Great Depression and the many economic recessions. The accumulation of these negative effects caused by the different historical events forced the steady and continuous lowering of birth rates in America from 1914 to 1933 (Haines and Steckel, 2001: 38-9). Adding to the lowering number of births, the same structures of power and forced changes caused families to suffer drastic separations (Polanyi, 1957: 68-69).

This historical account goes hand-in-hand with a symbolic analysis of the events surrounding each cultural change. The analysis of the events from era to era reveals the presence of historical process and structure, which shows the links between the different events causing a specific cultural change from era to era. It recognizes the impact of opposing or contradictory behavior appearing in different circumstances, especially when it appeared to prevent the American nation from suffering the effects of low fertility numbers during the late 1800s (influenced by Victorian ideals), and early 1900s and 1960s and '70s. From the World War II and up until the end of the 1970s the American people had to endure the stress and damages produced by the Vietnam War, the Cold War and serious economic instability that might have made it difficult for the American people to marry and create families as ideally conceived by the culture and society.

Although American circumstances were detrimental and the healthy presence of marriage and birth numbers were challenged by different power structures and throughout different historical eras, the American nation never suffered extreme low numbers of births. This fact can be better appreciated by contrasting the American birth numbers to occurrences of several European nations that stopped producing positive numbers of birth. Demographers Billari, Kohler, and Ortega, coined the term: “lowest-low fertility” referring to the tendency for accelerated decreasing numbers in the European population for the last fifty years (2002). They found that regardless of all government promoting strategies to bring back the birth numbers to a desired amount, European people continued a tendency to procreate less and less (Billari and Kohler, 2004). Meanwhile, during the same eras the American nation continued showing positive behaviors toward family creation and size (Billari, Kohler, and Hans, 2004).

In Chapter Three, exposes the data from literature hand in hand with the narratives provided by the voluntary participants in this study. These narratives complement and validate whenever possible the data from David Schneider's ethnology of the American family and the historical literature. The historical account with defined time periods focuses on the most important historical events containing changes affecting family creation, size and unity. In this way it identifies each force of change, its nature and motive and the accompanying ideology of the time that forced or influenced the cultural change. It articulates the elements, mechanisms, process and resources in place for the creation of the cultural change, describing simultaneously the effect of every cultural change on the quality of the family relations, and in general the life of the people.

Chapter Four contains an analysis that interprets the changing behaviors and meanings of the symbols bound to family creation, size and unity under David Schneider's anthropological symbolic theoretical framework. It reveals the process and transformation of the moral value of the meanings changed and how they affected the development of these cultural forms throughout the eras and their state in present the time.

The Conclusion in Chapter Five consists of a summary of the findings and analysis of this study that answers the research questions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THEORETICAL LITERATURE

Schneider and the Use of Historical Data in Anthropological Studies

David Schneider showed his concern about the proper understanding of a culture and the need to approach conscientiously the making of cultural studies. Schneider made his contribution to the field suggesting his precise idea for how to conduct anthropological studies that require historical data. He explains:

I have always felt that a judicious balance between theory and fact is what has made anthropology one of the leading disciplines of the social sciences. We can't get away from facts. But facts don't speak for themselves. What is needed now is serious, systematic attention to process and history. Without history, we are bound to repeat history. But history has a structure (Handler and Schneider, 1995: 6)

The style of historical account and analysis proposed by Schneider requires disclosing facts. Interpreting this guiding principle provided by David Schneider brought this study interview participants in order to find the facts that historical literature does not reveal. Disclosing facts can be interpreted as articulating the details of the events including the surrounding background accompanying the main elements involved in cultural change, including the social, political, technological and economic changes the ideologies, trends, rules, norms, traditions, emerging cultural constructions and laws.

For example, during the introduction of the industrial economic model, individuals needed to move to the industrial areas and leave behind their families and

support of their large family households. Drastic material changes as for example the loss of value of their houses and land and the overpowering presence of crop and plantation food production were forcing large numbers of people to leave their land and homes in rural areas in order to move to the industrial cities and work for wages (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 86). These elements that forced family separations produced by the introduction of industrialism is one of the consequences of the material and economic changes imposed to the human group by the structure of economic power.

Simultaneously, the spirit of the times of late 1800s and early 1900s was permeated by the ideology of individual freedom and autonomy, as conceptualized in the Romantic era. Individual freedom and autonomy were framed as one's exercise to act on behalf of oneself, to follow one's own passions and depart from the oppressive weight of authority, even family authority (Garland, 1952: 8). These newer meanings contained in the ideals eased the perception of the masses that under the seduction of these newer meanings of individuality and autonomy accepted quietly the hardships of the industrial production and economic modes. In this way, these newer meanings assigned to individual and autonomy within the elevated meanings of the symbols of freedom functioned as one more of the resources for the creation of the cultural changes needed for the establishment and permanence of industrialism.

Schneider follows his frame by suggesting,

To study culture by charting "The relationship between the actual state of affairs and the actual constructs so that we can discover how the actual cultural constructs are generated, the laws governing their change and in just what way they are systematically related to the actual state of affairs of life (1980: 7).

The analysis of the historical process of the cultural changes occurring to family creation, size and unity revealed the facts by exposing the nature and function of the elements (power structures and meaningful behavior) and mechanisms set in place and resources involved in the creation of cultural change. This made possible to find the links between the political, economic and social elements causing the change, which expose the laws governing the cultural change. In many circumstances it was the needs of the shifting economic models to change culture to adapt human behavior to the new patterns of production and consumption.

There were a series of forces of change that affected the human group in different eras, producing the same form of cultural change and carrying the same discourse. Process of the cultural changes, though, reveals itself in their creation of a greater, homogeneous and permanent behaviors that produce a cultural form that we see in the present time and that resulted from the systematic accumulation of effects from several smaller events creating smaller changes of the same kind that affected the same cultural forms throughout the former historical eras.

For instance, the systematic changes that underwent the meanings and behaviors of family unity and cohesiveness through the eras of American history started with the tight family closeness and interdependence of the agrarian family and resulted in contemporaneous time, in a re-conceptualization of family unity on the grounds of the contemporaneous meanings given to individuality, autonomy and freedom. The narratives from several participants revealed that they choose the family members with whom to create and maintain closeness and family unity (solidarity). Their meaning of family unity is conditional to choice and this choice is subject to the mutual

understanding of the symbiotic objective investment of time, company, emotional support and material means.

Understanding Opposite and Contradictory Behavior

The findings in this study reveal the different types of human behavior. Patterned behavior protects the status quo, but resistant behavior calls attention due to its power to produce cultural change, and to challenge the oppressive influence and forced mechanisms of the greater power structures and systematic forces of change. Franz Boas' theoretical frame (1920, 1928 and 1940) allowed the understanding and objective analysis of these type of behaviors.

Boas conceptualized culture as “a context for meaningful action” and stressed the importance “to notice the individual variation within society” (1920: 311). He sought to understand the behavior that is meaningful and contains the reaction of the individual to his culture, because in this behavior “lies the sources of a true interpretation of human behavior” (1940: 258). Thus, Boas contributed to the anthropological theory by going farther from the interpretation of culturally patterned and structured human behavior. He acknowledged the human behavior that emerges in the form of a reaction to show opposition or resistance.

In the same line of thought, Boas proposed to give more importance to the role of the individual in cultural development (1928: 245) while stressing “The need to document the way in which the individual reacts to his whole social environment, and to the difference of opinion, and mode of action... that causes far reaching changes.” He became concerned with “the forces producing change in relation to agency” (Boas, 1920: 321). Hence, in this way Boas articulated these basic elements of anthropological cultural

studies: perceptions (meanings of the symbols giving form to cultural constructs) and action (either patterned or opposing behavior).

The importance of Franz Boas's work goes further because he acknowledges the power of the individual to modify culture and to maintain a relationship with the different power structures that act as forces of change, through a dialogue, inter-relations, actions, reactions, and counter-actions. Boas says, "The activities of individuals are determined to a great extent by his social environment, but in turn his own activities influence the society in which he lives, and may bring about modifications in form" (Boas, 1920: 318).

David Schneider's Theoretical Framework of Symbolic Anthropology

In order to properly understand the phenomenon of cultural change it is necessary to articulate the elements that become involved in the process. This implies understanding their nature, their function and the mechanisms that they use to create change. Symbols as basic units of thought, perception and communication become the primary element occurring in the structure where cultural changes take place.

Additionally, in general terms, there are symbols present at the core of every cultural norm and construct, cultural behaviors, traditions, rituals, ideologies, and cultural scripts because every concept depends on the meaning attached to its core symbol. Thus, symbols, as elementary units of thought and communication are practical elements to explore cultural change because its elemental nature allows the finding of the phenomenon at an emerging state and to follow it to its most complex form as it changes.

Symbolic anthropology introduces the study of the role of symbols as the reflection of its meaning. Meanwhile meanings drive the status of a culture as they govern perception, communication and behavior because they are assigned to units,

cultural constructs, norms, rules, categories, status, and everything that is human. David Schneider's theoretical content elevated the trend of the methods used for the studies of culture by conceptualizing culture as "mainly a system of symbols and meanings" (1980:132) and a "shared system of symbols and meanings" (1980: 196). The importance of Schneider's framework lies in the fact that he acknowledges the relationship between the meanings of the symbols and communication, relations, and behaviors expressed by the actors, as they are who share these symbols and meanings. Culture is expressed through meanings of the symbols contained by cultural constructs and behavior. These meanings function as cultural knowledge that guide behavior.

In the main part of his definition of culture, Schneider points to the importance of the basic position of the symbols, as they are the first element that he mentions, and it is from the symbols that all other cognitive elements develop. Following through the symbolic aspect of culture, Schneider connects perception with behavior. He argues for the significance of symbol and meaning in the total pattern of action (Schneider, 1980: 130). Because culture is "a conceptual scheme" (Schneider, 1984: 196) where units and categories carry assigned understanding or meanings that make possible the collective understanding (Schneider, 1984: 196). This understanding finds articulation in human behavior.

Schneider goes further by linking symbols and their meanings to cultural constructions including cultural norms (1980: 8, 132, 133). In this way, Schneider added to the knowledge of anthropology by articulating the discursive structure of culture. Thus, the meanings (concepts, cultural knowledge) of the symbols relate directly to cultural

behavior because the meaning assigned to the specific symbol that gives form to a cultural norm or construct acts as a guide for molded or patterned behavior.

Schneider's reflection allows one to understand that unmolded behavior that takes place when the actor conceives her own meanings of the symbol involved in the cultural form (creating a family for her own satisfaction even against family expectations and the cultural rules, for instance), and the individual acts according to her or his own reasoning. This unmolded action is a reaction that can be interpreted as opposition or resistance. However, human reasoning that shapes behaviors producing cultural units and cultural forms appear to choose the needed pattern available in the culture for its expression. This study found in the narratives of several participants explaining their opposing or resisting behavior that they opposed their contemporaneous cultural norms and social rules but chose to support their behavior that favored family creation in their national identity that has the support of the constitutional ideals that prioritizes freedom and the right to happiness (Preamble of the American Constitution).

Schneider explains that cultural units, constructs and rules emerge from the circumstances existing between the human group and their natural and social environment (1980: 7). With this statement, Schneider provides the guide to explore the process of cultural change of the cultural constructs in relation to the "actual state of affairs" (Schneider, 1980: 7), which I interpret as the totality of the specific circumstances of a society in a determinate time in history, including the situation of its cultural, social, political, economic, cultural, technological, and informational systems.

Schneider made an important contribution with this part of his framework that became useful in the understanding of archaic orthodox cultural traditions that re-

emerged in more recent times and were imposed and enforced by certain groups of the society. These traditions protect archaic social forms and organization of society, for instance, the patriarchal authority and ascribed superiority attached to males since the Colonial period. This tradition seemed outmoded for the culture of the early 1900s because the changing economic realities demanded women to become more active in the work force. Yet, the Victorian middle class maintained and enforced this tradition because they found safety in the strict ideals of the patriarchal model.

From cultural units and constructs Schneider extended his explanation to cultural norms that are the more developed form of cultural constructs because they seek to govern behavior by structuring and enforcing it. Schneider explains,

“Cultural norms...specify the roles which should be played under designated circumstances by actors occupying designated statuses or categories. Norms are not in themselves simply patterns of and for action; they consist of cultural elements as well” ... “Norms are actor- oriented and action oriented” (Schneider, 1980: 133).

The shared system of symbols and units is also communicated and manifested through behavior that is meaningful and symbolic. This behavior can be interpreted in the same manner a foreign language is interpreted. Yet, actions can be even more spontaneous and demonstrative than words, thus meaningful behavior provides a more integral understanding of the facts. Schneider asserts "if cultural forms find their articulation in action, and action is symbolic and meaningful in the first place, then clearly we can recover those symbols and those meanings by analyzing the action " (1980: 130). This symbolic framework guides the part of the analysis that consists of identifying the meaningful behavior and interpreting it by directing the analysis to

recognize the meaning attach to the symbol that gives form to the action and interpret the discourse unfolding through the action.

Lastly, Schneider acknowledges the changing nature of culture and understands that the process of cultural change results from the changes of its parts, thus, every cultural unit and cultural form involved in the process of change becomes transformed in direct relationship with the transformed meaning assigned to the cultural change. David Schneider says, “Cultural units, constructs, rules...arise, they grow, they change” (1980: 7).

By deduction, the fact that these cultural units, constructs, norms, rules, categories, status, and behavior exist in the same eras and in direct inter-relation with the each other explains the fact that they can undergo changes simultaneously. They create in this way a homogeneous body of cultural knowledge that represent the same or similar meaning that is driven by the force creating their change. This direct relationship that makes them to inter-relate and inter-depend creates a domino effect within the system of representations and meanings that result in their individual and collective development.

CHAPTER III
HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF CHANGING BEHAVIORS
AND MEANINGS BOUND TO THE SYMBOLS OF
FAMILY CREATION, SIZE, AND UNITY

Colonial Times (1500s to mid-1700s) to the Victorian Era (1837-1901)

The agricultural economy of Colonial families allowed them to be self-sustained, autonomous and to have control of their resources. Three centuries ago these American families were largely self-sufficient agricultural units (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: xvi) where the agricultural work promoted union between the family members and it made possible the ordered production and consumption of goods.

The cultural ideal of large families was tied to the higher status granted to these households because, as Janet Carsten explains, they maintained the family's status and class (2004: 35). Consequently, Colonial families, both agricultural and non-agricultural, showed high numbers of birthrates and family size. "Women in Colonial times sought to "bear children every two years from the time of their marriage until menopause or death" (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: xx). Thus, the needs for agricultural labor caused families to have many children and Colonial women had several children acting upon the cultural ideal of large families and the need to have more helping hands for their the agricultural and hand craft labor that dominated the eras of agricultural based economy.

Colonial families brought and maintained the precepts of the Western culture of their birthplace. These families had lost their original kin units probably before they

settled in the New World, thus, even in the Colonial times there were signs of family decline. According to Polyani (1957):

The United States was ground for the destruction of the extended kin: Late middle ages saw many kin systems disappearing...many if not all European social systems no longer contained unilateral descent groups (68-69).

In Colonial times there were negative mechanisms forcing behaviors that were deleterious to the family dynamics and relationships. Family unity during the Colonial era was challenged by a set of their own cultural norms that demanded strict disciplinarian childrearing practices, which caused emotional distancing between parents and their children. Thus, the seed of family separations appear to have arrived with these same colonizers. The coercive regimes of authority used shame and humiliation as means for such oppression. For example, in early America, “Breaking the child was a rule... pride, self and will needed to be beating down, broken” (Demos, 1986:124). Hence, the separation of spheres between the genders and the age groups dictated by the patriarchal social model, reinforced by religious meanings and maintained by the rigid tradition affected the unity of the families because gender stereotypes and ascribed statuses obligated a code of conduct that forced personal and emotional distancing between the family members.

Some of these cultural norms formed part of the legislation. For example, the law defended and protected the right of domination of the male over the female, and established the rights of the husband over the wife and his children, who were his property or chattel (Liddell, 2009: 36). By treating wife and children as property, symbolically, the father objectified them, making them victims of his ascribed power.

Moreover, in Colonial times, at birth children automatically acquired the father's name; women were forbidden to reject or contradict the decisions of the father, brothers, or husband; the wages of children and wives were often collected and controlled by the father (Salmon, 1986: 5-15, 21-78). These social rules and laws empowered males leaving women at the expense of their fathers or husbands. This power inequality between the genders in the genders interfered with the communication and relations between men and women, which affected negatively the organization, unity and cohesiveness of the family members.

However, contrasting the family distances created by the strict childrearing practices, some historians found early American families having close emotional bonds to their children; "Puritans cared deeply for their children, parents invested enormous amounts of time and energy on them" (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: 3). This behavior was very likely the reaction to the high child mortality rate present in those eras that brought deep despair to families (Demos, 1986: 76). In New England, for example, "twenty to thirty percent of children died in infancy or before reaching adulthood" (Demos, 1986: 76).

The contradiction between Colonial cultural norms of strict authority that distance the family members and the observed compassionate family behaviors shows how Colonial families struggled with the conflicting ideological elements in their culture and their realities. In their struggle, Colonial parents basically had to choose between following their deep yearnings and show their fatherly or motherly love and their need to protect and demonstrate that intense affection to their children, or follow the cultural

norms and maintain the strict, authoritarian character as prescribed by the patriarchal social model.

This historical account includes some sections that show the development of women's social, economic and legal status because the development of their status often relate directly to changes in the behaviors that produce family creation, size and unity.

While there was less inequality in the labor relationships between the genders, at the legal and social realm, Colonial women were in great disadvantage. However, women had been working in their positive development in society, and by 1910, ten percent of the homesteaders were women, “Many states, eager for settlement and stability, encouraged their presence” (Luchetti and Olwell, 1982: 36). By the end of the 1800s, the presence of women in the national labor force started to become more noticeable causing beneficial changes in their social, economic and legal status, including the suffrage laws and the amended laws that allowed women to manage their business without the custody of a man (Luchetti and Olwell, 1982: 35), in addition to laws that gave women the control of their wages and of their children (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 241).

Victorian Era (1837- 1901)

Victorian ideals started to emerge in United States in the 1840s, and continued throughout the 1920s (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 230), yet, many meanings of the Victorian ideologies are found surviving as strict forms of tradition in the posterior eras and are still carried in the contemporaneous times by the most orthodox groups of the American nation. However, for the American cultural mainstream, the cultural, social and legal changes that occurred to family creation, size and unity since the Victorian times departed slowly from many of the extremes of the Victorian values of strict patriarchal

social rules and later acquired more flexible behavioral forms that tolerate single parenthood, divorce, and more equal relations between the genders.

Historically, there is an overlap of the Victorian period in United States (1840s-1920s) and the period of the introduction of industrialism that in United States started slowly through the 1700s and became more formerly established in the mid-1800s as industrial factories dominated over the economy of many states. The methods and ideologies of the Victorian social model and the industrial social and economic model were different, but not always contradictory. The material methods and mechanisms used by the introduction of industrialism were opposite to the Victorian family values, especially the cultural norms applying to family creation and closeness. Simultaneously while the Victorian ideologies of family closeness and unity opposed the forced behaviors of the introduction of industrialism and its needs that forced family separations. However, Victorians idealized smaller families and socially and culturally sought to enforce marriage for the proper creation of the family. These ideals of family creation and small family size corresponded in different ways to the material effects of the introduction of industrialism in America, as the hardships imposed to families made them to shrink their birth rate and size numbers.

Early Victorian era was a time of industry and abundance, both materially and ideological. It is precisely this creation of a newer type of wealth from transportation, communication, imports and exports, plantation and cash crops food production, and mining industries that made possible the growing Victorian middle-class. Kate Summerscale (2009) explains that the Victorian culture emerged from Great Britain and “brought to America newer refinements” ... “Their emerging middle-class sought to

impose stricter values” (109-110). The most exalting characteristic of these stricter values was the heightened moral stance given to women; yet despite this seen superiority, Victorian women left the authority in the hands of the husband (Hawes and Kybakken, 1991: 233). Cultural values that emerged from Great Britain in the 1830s were rapidly adopted in the United States, especially by the growing middle-class that found protection in the social patriarchal rules of male supremacy that ascribes to males a higher authority.

By the end of the 1800s, many of the women’s former social and legal achievements were largely lost under the weight of the coercive Victorian ideals, norms and laws. Victorians caused cultural changes that focused on the family structure, conception, pregnancy, birth and family size. These changes started with strong restrictions and controlling mechanisms targeting women’s sexuality and fertility behaviors. For instance, family historians Hawes and Nybakken explain that in the 1860s, in response to expert “established knowledge,” many states enacted laws prohibiting abortion throughout the 1880s, using the First Amendment to make abortion illegal. In several states including New York; “Abortion became a felony offense” (1991: 239).

The cultural changes forced by this emerging Victorian ideology impacted the relations between the genders and also impacted behaviors producing family creation and family size. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the new moral image ascribed to women demanded abstinence (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 237). Consequently, this cultural norm caused changes in the nuclear unit where “women started having fewer children” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 237).

Thus, making abortion illegal and imposing the strict social rule of sexual abstinence was targeted to control women's sexual behavior and produce lower birth numbers. Simultaneously, Victorian society enforced the model for the ideal family, which needed the husband (male) representing the family group and the wife as a homemaker. "Once it was clear that a woman did not belong to a father, husband or other male relative, she was automatically considered promiscuous and society lost interest in her activities" (Luchetti and Olwell, 1982:33). These strict Victorian cultural norms made it impossible for many people to create a family as ideally conceived.

Nevertheless, in the Victorian era, pre-marital pregnancies were not uncommon (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 228-9). This behavioral phenomenon reveals the fact that some unmarried young women rebelled against the coercive Victorian norms and became pregnant despite the strict cultural rules, and in all likelihood without the moral support of their families.

The Victorian heightened moral stance attached to women and the ideal of "social purity" (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 230) created even greater separation in the gender spheres. The Victorian expectation of women's moral superiority and domesticity obligated them to accept the extreme family structure of male supremacy and women's domesticity. "Motherhood was sacred...middle-class white women were excluded from paid occupations and careers...and husbands were the head of the household" (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 230-2).

For middle-class women it became unacceptable to work in public and careers were not permitted as a matter of social custom (Hawes and Kybakken, 1991: 232). These cultural and social norms sought to control mainly middle-class women because

having the means at their disposal, women of middle-class faced opposition from different power structures that sought to keep them from competing for authority with the males and to become autonomous by participating in the professional labor force. However, there was a cultural double standard of the ideal behavior for the different social classes. In contrast to the middle class, “Among the white working class the cultural rules were more flexible about their daughter’s sexuality, as long as it did not interfere with the family wages economy” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 238).

Sandy, an eighty-four-year-old participant born in a working class family in 1925, explains that her parents never asked the boys about their sexual life. “It was taboo” and the same behavior occurred with the girls after they reached a “certain age,” which was after puberty or after having the first child. Both sons and daughter started to work for wages in their early teen years to provide for their own needs. Sandy’s family never expected her or her sisters to be full-time mothers or wives.

Thus, the double standard functioned to keep a behavioral balance in the culture that in the presence of coercive and unnatural social and cultural expectations it allowed the birth numbers to remain positive. Meanwhile the behavior on the middle class functioned to slowly influence the behaviors of the collective. This can be explained by the fact that the middle class carries the dominating values as cultural ideals that often become social rules, cultural norms and even traditions. They guide what is generally conceived as proper conduct. Supporting this argument, history is witness of the development of the sexual behavior that produces family creation. This sexual behavior of the working class, as explained by the participants named Sandy (eighty-four-year-old) slowly developed to become closer to the middle-class behavior. As a matter of fact, the

contemporary American family's size of the working class tends to be similar to that of the middle class (Haines and Steckel, 2001:2)

Several of these cultural ideals survived many generations after the end of the Victorian era and embedded the cultural norms of all social-economic classes. For example, Patricia, seventy-eight-year-old interior designer explained that not only was her mother seen as morally superior to everyone else in the household, but "My sisters and I felt entitled to pass judgment on my dad's and my brother's misdeeds."

Gender status became more differentiated under the new Victorian meanings given to the ideal of individual privacy. Consequently, this differentiation affected negatively the unity of the family. In the early stage, Victorians enjoyed economic stability and wealth production that created a growing middle class. They imposed stricter values and made privacy their "hallmark" (Summerscale, 2009: 110). Privacy emerged as an ideal that protected this closed circle of emerging middle class, and especially its nuclear families (Summerscale, 2009: 109-110). This privacy in the family realm functioned to distance the husband from his wife and the parents to their children. This cultural ideal of individual and group privacy developed through the time becoming more extreme through the next succeeding decades.

There were other mechanisms creating distances between the family members, targeting especially the children. The Victorian families highly valued the emotional and moral dependence (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991:101). However, Victorian families were under pressure from many segments of society demanding the psychological and emotional separation of the child from the nuclear group, especially from the mother;

“the emotional and psychological dependence was kept in check” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991:101).

Historians report that Victorian daughters struggled emotionally when departing from their mothers after marriage (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991:101). “An important element in Victorian times was the social closeness between the mother and the children” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991:101). However, contemporary experts saw this psychological closeness “having a strong impact on the development of gender roles.” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991:101). Some other scholars believed that such child-rearing practices “could interfere with the son’s and daughter’s ability to function as mature adults” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991:101). In consequence, family closeness started to diminish when in the late 1800s and early 1900s familial closeness became the focus for systematic attacks from the media and social establishments that used as resources institutional power in the form of expert advice.

The end of the Victorian era became the scenario for another mechanism promoting family separations that emerged in the form of a family form that marks the beginning of adulthood. As narrated by several participants, including Bob, a seventy-one year-old builder, and Dora, an eighty-one year-old seamstress. These two participants knew that their parents and other older relatives that were born in the late 1800s, had left their parental household in their youth under the pressure of the ideal of emancipation and autonomy. Emancipation for their parents, under the ideologies of that era meant the ability to create their destinies without parental protection and ideally far from them.

Pre-Industrial (mid 1700s) and Industrial Eras

The realities of the introduction of industrialism as an economic model in America are disclosed by historical literature with better details starting from mid-1800s. Industrialism developed slowly in America, and by the mid-1800s, only some states had few industrial centers of production. The cultural changes occurring from the agrarian era to the industrial and capitalist eras were fast and severe. “Before the end of the seventeenth century commercial capitalism resulted in more and more people being pulled into a cash or market economy of both local and international proportions” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 86).

Many people died young before the development of sewers in the new cities and the discovery of antibiotics (Kain, 1990: 5). During the pre-industrial era (early 1800s), natural forces in the forms of infectious diseases and epidemics caused deaths that left many children orphans and many parents single. The structure of the pre-industrial family households had the ability to absorb these damages. For example, “shared child-rearing,” responded to the need to protect the lives of these orphans and their kin (Kain, 1990: 5-6).

Additionally, death became a threat for the industrial workers and their families, as they found industrial cities to have extreme poor living and hygienic conditions, unreliable food supplies, work hazards, hardships, as well as an imposed systematic neglect of their dietary and medical needs (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991:322-30, 32). In the meantime, other people were dying as result of war (Kain, 1990: 5).

Anna, a ninety-three years old participant, catholic and from working class was born in 1916 and had to move with her mother and siblings to New York City in the 1930s. Her narrative shows the effects of the industrial social and economic model in the

culture. She says, “It was difficult to get food for many people, incomes were insufficient and life was harder having to spend four hours just going and coming back from work.” All the adults of the house left early to work and returned at night. “Children had to take care of themselves and each other because none of us could be there for them”. “By the time I returned from work they had done homework and started dinner, and were outside playing and waiting for me...Neighbors kept an eye on them. They were good kids! But those were different times; children were obedient and respected their parents, and families loved and cared more, and neighbors were the extended family.”

Developing further, for a clearer understanding, this analysis contrasts the Colonial cultural behaviors of family structure, closeness and unity to the behavior appearing with the introduction of the industrial mode of production.

By the mid-1800s, the pre-industrial family still lived with the values and organization of the agrarian social model, focusing on the needs of the group. “Group responsibility and coordination did not allow for the individual needs to be a considered over the needs of the group and imposed, ascribed status organized the families”... “Age was the highest status; respect and consideration to the eldest was a very important cultural and moral rule” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 320-1). However, the closeness and cooperation of the agricultural family was forced to extreme changes under the pressure of the mechanisms imposed by the introduction of industrialism. These forced physical distances are among the first cultural changes of family unity that in the posterior decades developed into various different of separations including ideological, economic, religious and moral.

Helen, an eighty-nine-year-old and former teacher, provided a narrative that reveals her family's meanings to the symbols of family, family organization, unity, cooperation, support, gender roles, and community, as they existed in early 1900s. Helen was born in an agrarian family in Wyoming where the family functioned as a system of support for the members of their group and the community. She explains that her household had aunts, uncles, cousins, her paternal grandparents, and some persons that were the in laws of her uncles, aunts or cousins. From time to time someone would move into her house temporarily, until they resolved a personal issue; other people (friends of family) visited, stopping at her house for a couple of days before continuing on a long trip. Thus her house was a place of refuge for family and non-family.

Her mother took family and friends in to help them recover from diseases or grief. In the same way, many kids (whether blood related or not), grew up at her house. Among other functions, the care of the children, the elderly, and the handicapped were in the hands of a group that she identifies as the "housekeepers and caregivers." Several family members composed this group, but also had some non-blood related members. They were of different genders and ages and were part of the group that lived in the household on a permanent basis. They also worked the farm, "hand-in-hand," with the rest of the household. Meanwhile, other members worked outside the household for wages, including Helen's father. This family structure allowed young parents to work outside the household and leave their children under the supervision and care of their family. Helen said that among the greatest conveniences of her family structure was the fact they were more efficient manipulating resources, "Nothing went to waste." They were able to save

money, while her aunts and cousins living in the city were spending more money than what they were earning.

Hence, the extended functions of the pre-industrial family were possible as a result of its structure and unity. “The family was not merely an emotional unit; it was also an interdependent unit of labor in which all the family members contributed to a collective family economy” (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: xvi). In the same manner, the group cohesiveness and cooperation between the agrarian family members resulted from the needs of the agricultural model of production and economy. Their familiar cohesiveness extended to their communities.

In contrast, the unity and organization of the agrarian family was an asset for early industrialists to cover the need for assembly work in that they sought stability in hiring these families (Polanyi, 1957: 68-9). The pre-industrial middle and lower economic classes trained their young early for hand labor and menial jobs, and every person in the family worked long hours every day, at least six days a week (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 322-30). Nevertheless, the detrimental labor structure and conditions, extreme schedules, demands on the individual, and extreme poor living conditions imposed by the industrial economic and labor model (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 322-30) caused in the following decades the decline of the structure and values of the family.

These events created the process that eventually saw the final stage of the households of extended kin groups that “included the extended family joined under the same roof, and even persons who were not blood related” (Fitzsimons and Munhall, 2001: 7-12). These families in Colonial times had had the autonomy and self-sustaining abilities allowed by the agrarian economic model of food production and piecework. The

loss of that type of economy took place simultaneously with the loss of the large family household as the historical stage of the introduction of the economic industrial model created changes that did not allow the continuation of these large family households with their system of cooperation and sharing of resources and more efficient use of goods. Industrialism openly started the change of the cultural meanings from the focus on the group to the focus on the individual.

These forced changes imposed by the introduction of industrialism affected the behaviors that produce family creation and size. For example, Helen, an eighty-nine-year-old participant explained that industrial patrons expected child labor and they saw it as a natural work condition because it was an extension of the former life style (agrarian family model). She explained that despite the fact that “the extra income from the work of the children” helped the family, it was difficult for families to plan having more children due to the extreme schedules and the difficult living conditions.

Moreover, the changes caused to the behaviors producing family creation and size also changed the age-related structure of the families. For instance, Helen had two children when she was in her late twenties, while most of her sisters, relatives and friends had two to three children, and the births of each of their children were six to ten years apart. Helen did not disclose the form of birth controls that she, her family and friends used. They chose to have children at an older age, compared to the age their parents had had their children. Helen’s mother had her first child at age eighteen and her father at twenty-two. Helen explained that it was the lack of resources that obligated her and her siblings and friends to separate the years between the birth of each child. This strategy allowed these parents their ability to better provide for the needs of the newborn.

The economic maneuvering of property value forced families out of their houses and into the industrial areas. Historians noted that in the beginning of the industrial era, land and real estate value declined (Polanyi, 1957: 68-69). Simultaneously, the physical distances imposed by the industrial economic system became the best mechanism to separate families. People began to concentrate in and around industrial areas, often moving far from their homes (Polanyi, 1957: 68-69). In the beginning, men were the main targets for family separations; they were obligated to abandon their homes in order to find industrial work, often under detrimental conditions with long shifts and small wages (Polanyi, 1957: 68). In the Northeast especially, land was declining as a source of wealth, and at the same time, opportunities for inheritance and employment were affecting generational bonds; “fathers and brothers went to earn individual wages, leaving behind the mutual obligations to produce and share their wealth in the household” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 86).

The growing trend of cash crops and plantation food production made competition impossible for small agricultural producers, which were mainly families. This in combination with the economic maneuverings that caused the property loss of value created the need for people to move to the industrial areas and caused the families to lose their land, their houses and farms, which was their patrimonial wealth. In this way, the industrial economic model forced family members to abandon their former agricultural work and join the industrial labor force. “Specialization, mass production and cash crops took the family away from its self-sufficiency and independence” (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: xvi).

Helen's narratives disclosed the fact that the society in the last eras of the agrarian family imposed the need for most people to start working for wages. Not only did farming work not provide sufficient income, but also working for wages became necessary as "the personal needs became more sophisticated," Helen explained. This was added to the fact that the cost of living increased rapidly, Helen said. Working for wages also released these families of the problems they had with the division of property and work, because many family members were willing to leave the security of their families' mutual support and obligations in exchange of their personal freedom and financial independence far from their family's household. Despite the fact that the agricultural model provided many conveniences to the families these families had a need to develop into a better state of being, especially to a state that would provide protections against abuses from the head of households and work managers. The change was taking place, although it brought with it other types of difficulties and abuses to the members of the family.

Helen, eighty-nine years old participant explained that the younger members of the family, including her parents, went to the industrial cities and often left their small children behind with relatives. The older children, eight years and older, went to the cities to work in the same factories with their parents. Once in the cities, these smaller families lacked the support from their extended family group that used to provide the home caring and company to the children and the emotional and moral support to the adults.

Thus, in this way, extreme family separations and the need to work for wages made the American family to lose their unity. As these changes developed linearly through the decades, the mechanisms causing separations between the family members

became more structured and systematic. For instance, by the end of the 1920s, the newer ideal of childrearing demanded “the avoidance of breast-feeding and introduction of bottle-feeding of the young child” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 247).

With the advent of industrialism in America (late 1980s-early 1900s) the special characteristics of the Colonial and agrarian family were reversed in the next three decades as the human masses embraced the cultural changes that contained practically the opposite meanings of the Colonial family values. Among the different facts that explain this collective response this study found deep discontents and frustrations of some family members against the rigid social-economic group membership and the patriarchal dictated leadership. The autocratic role, supported by financial ties was the main element governing the structure of families (Fitzsimons and Munhall, 2001: 7-12). Hence, is this structure that produced disagreements involving management and the division of property, products and labor between the members of the family. These problems caused serious family separations.

The greatest resource aiding the creation of the cultural changes during the era of the formal establishment of industrialism in the United States (1880s) emerged in the form of the Romantic ideology carried by the spirit of the times. These ideals appealed to individual freedom of choice and autonomy. This ideology eased the shift from agrarian to the industrial economic model because “In the introduction of the industrial model people had been promised freedom with paid wages, while the emerging ideology accompanying the cultural change promised a better life” (Polanyi, 1957: 68-69).

From the era of the late 1800s and early 1900s, the newer meanings attached to freedom, individuality and autonomy, together with the advent of scientific discoveries

and achievements and many conveniences and services for sale, made the human group to start perceiving the former family interdependence and large family households and cooperative modes as outmoded, archaic and impractical.

With the full establishment of industrialism, families lost more than their extended household and self-sufficiency while other structural changes took place. The emerging meanings of adulthood, individuality, autonomy, and freedom changed the behaviors that produced family creation, size and unity. Among the many shifting meanings of the family, adulthood meant to be autonomous, self-sufficient, private and free. Freedom was achieved by the separation from their extended families and their imposed authority, differences in status and duties, and ascribed roles. Meanwhile, people achieved autonomy and individuality by earning individual wages and making their own life's choices without the censoring of their families. This autonomy and freedom depended on the social apparatus providing the services that the nuclear and extended family and the cohesive community of the agrarian era had formerly provided.

Fred, an eighty-three-year-old participant born on a Georgian plantation, serves as an example of the state of affairs of the pre-industrial family and the origin of the changes that allowed the introduction of industrialism. Fred explained his resentment to the difficulties and limitations of his family organization and management. He says that while some food was abundant, his family income was too low and only his oldest uncle managed and distributed (unequally) the few goods available. "My mother used to say that she never touched money." His oldest uncle controlled even the development of skill as he determined who was to learn the different skills, and who was to perform the work. Most of his cousins and siblings moved out of that household as soon as they reached

adulthood, which was in their cultural understanding, twelve years old and older. When Fred was fourteen years old, he was sent to the city to work at a factory for wages. Fred never saw most of his family again because “traveling was expensive and communication was almost impossible,” he said. Eventually, he created his own family far and isolated from his own family because, he explained, “That is how it’s supposed to be.”

The importance of Fred’s narrative lies on his disclosing the facts that created the loss of unity of the families. Many family members resented the autocratic role in the hands of the older and more powerful male dominating the whole family group and managing their resources; the higher authority and power given to the family leaders allowed many rites of domination and submission, which gave way to abusive behaviors. In addition, the cultural norm of the separation between family members by gender and age created problems in their communication and their development of emotional attachment. Fred’s closer relationship was to his mother but after he had to move out of his family house to work at a factory he never saw his mother again. The material conditions obligated the cultural meanings of family to become interpreted as the need to create your own new family and accept the distance and even loss of the birth family.

Immigrants Influencing the Cultural Meanings and Behaviors

From its origin, the American nation created by the colonizers had the influx of immigrants from different ethnic origin. Yet as the nation grew, the need for labor forced America to open its doors to large groups of immigrants who tended to migrate as families. They became part of the working class in the industrial system where “the exploitative industrial society that used immigrant communities for service and

production found an immigrant community with very supportive family networks” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 321).

The presence of immigrants in America created variability in the American culture, which influenced in different ways the development of the nation and influenced the American perceptions and behaviors toward family creation, size and unity. At their arrival in the early 1900s, Americans and the large numbers of immigrants experiencing a cultural contrast. This can be better explained by the experiences lived by Paul, a eighty-three-year-old participant born in Lithuania, salesman that migrated to United States in 1939, when he was twelve years old. “It was a shock,” he said, adding that he was astonished of how Americans were indifferent to family reunions, to maintaining communication with older relatives and parents, and to bonding with their children. He narrated the hardship he experienced in his efforts to socialize with the new neighbors where he also found a high level of anonymity among the community members.

For Paul, “family is sacred,” and the permanence of bonds was maintained with closeness, sharing every moment possible, staying constantly in touch. Paul exalted the importance of the respect to parents because “they made the sacrifices to raise and educate the children,” he said. Equally, his notion of being a parent were tied to the strict patriarchal rule of the obligation to protect and educate the child with strict authority, enforcing the script roles and ascribed status with the added “tough love” that prescribed punishment “because it’s necessary for their (the children) own good,” Fred said.

Some historians consider this period to be a clash between two cultures in different stages of development. While family ties were loosening in American families, “The newly arriving immigrant families continued to have strong family ties for at least

two generations” (Thernstrom, 1980: 345-54). Moreover, historical literature shows that the culture of these immigrant family groups had rules that were stricter than the rules that governed the American culture at the time. For example, “Some of the immigrant cultures were often supportive of the ideal of close family bonds, most notably the Italians, Poles, and Russians (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 321). An example of one of the most important cultural elements existing in migrant families is found in Mexican immigrant families, giving priority to “male dominance, respect for elders, priority status for the conjugal unit and only a small less importance to the extended family” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 322).

Laura, an eighty-two-year-old participant from German ethnicity, was born in Milwaukee and moved to Chicago when she was a teenager. She witnessed first-hand these behaviors in Chicago where she found many different immigrant families of different ethnicities, especially African, Caribbean, Italian, Swedish, Polish, Russian and Latin American. She explained, “They tended to have larger families and were extremely thrifty.” Laura married a Polish construction worker and through him she met and cohabitated with his extended family. She learned the particular way his family kept in touch with each other because “for them, family is a priority” and their solidarity allowed them to overcome the many struggles they faced in their daily lives, especially the difficulties that they had resulting from their extreme schedules and heavy work.”

The Great Depression, the New Deal, and Capitalism

The Great Depression forced many extreme situations in the culture as social-economic classes in every segment of society were altered. Society in general suffered the negative impact at different levels; personal and group status dropped and the

complete social structure suffered different shifts (Lindsey, 2007: 5). However, the realities of the calamities brought women's status up to a level of more equality with men, as they had to join the labor force in order to provide for their families (Gambino, 1974: 10). The era of the Great Depression (1929-34) shows the lowest numbers of birth in American history that was only rivaled by the ones of 1975 (Lindsey, 2007: 206).

Yet, even greater cultural changes took place as the nation recovered from the Great Depression. The success of the programs of the New Deal, enacted by government to reform and recover the economy of the United States (1934-7) caused a change in the perception in the human masses. The American culture shifted from the imposed restraining, denials, savings and frugality during the Great Depression "to an expanding interest in the accumulation of wealth and properties, and conspicuous consumption" (Lindsey, 2007: 66). As people embraced the capitalism ideology of consumption, "the family had been transformed from the unit of production to the unit of consumption" (Lindsey, 2007: 66-67).

These cultural and social changes started to cause the structural disintegration of many of the family functions and with it the further disintegration of the family unity. The reforms of the New Deal, the famous government program introduced by President Franklin Roosevelt, contributed to the transfer of functions from the family to the state and the public sphere (Lasch, 1977: 13). "The family was transformed by the intervention of planners and policy makers ..." The functions of the family, "especially the parental functions including the socialization and reproduction were expropriated from the family by institutions or agencies outside the family such as schools, welfare agencies, hospitals, and social workers" (Lasch, 1977: 13).

Family group membership of former times where cooperation and alliance ruled the relations of the members of the family was quickly abandoned to embrace the newer ideals of individuality. Individuality under the set of circumstances of the time was conceptualized as the focus on the individual and the conspicuous consumption and accumulation of goods and wealth. Economic roles were changing as a result of the new ideal of utilization of goods and services, changing the controlled group consumption to the individual consumption (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 129).

The 1930s were the background of the Great Depression and the cultural reaction to its realities. From the achievements of the New Deal, the American culture saw the emergence of the ideology of abundance that influenced many elements of the culture creating important changes in the perceptions and behaviors of the masses. As the economy allowed, nuclear families became more able and willing to separate from their extended family group. This era witnessed more systematic family separations that were reflected even in the architectural design of the family dwelling. Large houses replaced the smaller architectural constructions, an indication of a priority given to the ideal of privacy and individuality where “individual family members have increased their privacy”...”family as a unit, spend much less time in common interior spaces” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 7).

Bertha, eighty-six-year-old participant, born in upper-middle class, narrated how she and her siblings constantly used to challenge the traditional values that her family carried, especially high morality, frugality and abstinence. When Bertha was seven years old, in 1930, she and her siblings were already rebelling against formalities, including name-calling to higher status relatives, obedience and the formalities imposed by ascribed

roles. For example, Bertha and her siblings called their uncles and aunts by their nick names, also she and her siblings used to leave the house to play far from their home and return in the evening hours, disregarding the advice from her older cousins uncles, aunts and grandparents. In addition, for Bertha, her life “was nobody’s business.” She emphasizes the fact that she and her friends grew up asserting their right to make their own choices and keep their families, as much as possible, from interfering. They spent their money as they wished disregarding the need to help relatives in need, they focused on buying their cars and clothing and indulge in an active social life. These behaviors show the ideological and moral distancing between children and parents and to their relatives as well; their discourse expressed their need to be autonomous from the parental authority and the family obligations, roles and status.

The eras that followed show these cultural changes developing rapidly as society was exposed to more extreme circumstances. The forced cultural changes targeted family creation, size and unity, and as capitalism grew in the American nation, these changes became more direct and used greater resources. For instance, Victorian families had been under pressure from many segments of society demanding the psychological and emotional separation of the child from the nuclear group, especially from the mother (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 101), and “In the middle 1900s, motherhood was under attack.” A newer ideology that emerged in the 1960s using experts, scientist, and media carried the discourse, “overprotection made inadequate adults” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 247). The attack on motherhood went hand in hand with a presumption that “closeness made weak and maladapted children and adults” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 101). The systematic attack of society to family unity caused a reversal of the meanings

of family and affected negatively the perception of family creation and unity. “The family once viewed as the deepest source of affection and emotional support increasingly came to be seen as an impediment to individual self-fulfillment” (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: xvi).

The social apparatus that pursued the emotional distancing of the family members used institutional and intellectual resources including scientific advice headed by influential figures of the time. They conceived the emotional closeness of the family as a threat to society. Behavioral psychologist John Watson (1928), for example, cemented these conceptions. He advised to create emotional distance, avoiding gestures of affection and physical closeness between parents and children, and maintaining structured patterns of reinforcement (Watson and Watson, 1928: 81-82).

Many of these dominating mechanisms were socially structured. Their power rested on their institutional sources and political position. For instance, the publication named, “*The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*,” better known as the Moynihan Report was written by sociologist and later US Senator Daniel Moynihan (1965). Moynihan worked as the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Policy Planning and Research in the United States Department of Labor. This report sought to show the development of the African-American family since its origin, however, it became an influential element to create family’s separation, with statements that accused working class white women and African-American women of inadequate dominating parenting. It recommended young people from these social groups to enlist in the armed forces, “a world away from women” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 247).

The forces of change focused their efforts in the separation of parents from their children, and as a resource they enforced the social rule of the heightened male authority. Thus, the historical data reveals that from the Victorian and industrial eras to the 1970s, cultural constructions of gender coerced males to stay away from the domestic affairs and to be emotionally distanced from the women, children and the family (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 101, 247). Consequently, the strongest family bond was generally between mother and child due to their time spent together and their less unequal status and power relation. In this way, the attack on the mother-child bond was the most practical mechanism used to cause separation between the family members, mechanism that was more efficient as it had cultural norms dictating the need to become emotionally distanced from the each other, and for their own wellbeing.

The drastic cultural changes imposed on the families caused structural damages because their physical separations soon developed into emotional and even moral separations. As an example, Fred, an eighty-three-year-old participant, narrated that when he was fourteen, he moved from Georgia to Pennsylvania to find work and provide for his own needs. In Pennsylvania, he found that the living conditions, dwelling arrangements in the cities and the lower incomes allowed food and space only for the most productive individuals. Fred explained that he was financially unable to travel back to Georgia to visit his family and the little communication they had was through letters. He said, "It was never again the same kind of relationship." He found no way to explain that his older relatives had accused him of negligence. Fred explained that most of his friends were facing similar circumstances. Those distanced families communicated only in extreme cases. Fred and his friends made their own families, and his children never

met Fred's mother and relatives. Eventually this physical separation and lack of communication between family members created an emotional separation, as family members had less of their lives in common. This separations created extreme perceptions, as family members never saw the each other and did not feel responsible to see over each other. Thus, these distances developed into the creation of emotional and moral distancing.

Validating this argument, this study has Laura, an eighty-two-year-old former seamstress from Milwaukee, describing the abandonment of family members to their own kin. When Laura was eleven years old she and her mother sent a telegraph to her older brothers who were living in Chicago to tell them that their father had suffered a stroke and that he was in urgent need for medicines. Laura's family were under the perception that her brothers were working construction and making a good income, but her brothers response to her request was evasive and they never provided any kind of help.

The presence of different mechanisms that prevented the emotional and psychological closeness slowly developed into deeper changes. Describing these changing behaviors, Owen, an eighty-five-year-old financial advisor from Chicago, explains that his married living arrangements and daily rituals were different than the ones from where he was raised. In this way, Owen showed the development of behaviors that caused deeper detachment. His newborn child went to sleep in a separate bedroom "because the couple needs privacy." His friends advised him to let the child cry himself to sleep because "spoiling the children made them problematic."

What is more, the creation of distances between the family members became a systematic element that affects some people in many ways throughout their lives'

choices. This study found that the ideals of autonomy and separation from the family might promote the creation of loneliness. For example, seventy-one-year-old builder Bob describes his life as a child and young teenager with tight family bonds. Throughout his childhood he and his nuclear family enjoyed daily or weekly family events and rituals in the company of the extended family group. Yet, although Bob complains of his lonely life, his narrative reveals that he has been preventing emotional closeness with these same relatives and with his own children for most of his adult life. He rationalizes his behavior explaining that preventing closeness with his children and relatives is his way “to prevent having to deal with their problems.” He says, “I am a lonely person; when I am not working is when it gets to me... the loneliness. My children are great kids but we have nothing in common and getting together feels odd... we don’t have much to talk about.”

Bob’s narrative exemplifies the struggle the individuals dealing with the contemporary meanings of the symbols of autonomy and freedom while trying to fill in their roles as parents, adults, and head of households. Bob had the ideal family and lived the American dream. He got married after finishing his service in the military, and twelve years later he left the stability of his job as a fireman, his house, his wife and two children, and moved from Ohio to Florida. In his new life in Florida, he made a living working as a builder and carpenter. This situation provided a higher income but it was stable only when the national economy allowed.

Since the separation Bob never saw his children again until they came to Florida as adults to connect with him. Thus, Bob had had the ideal family and job, but after a few years of marriage, he wanted to pursue other ideals: freedom, autonomy and the form of self-realization that he wanted, which he thought he could not accomplish in the company

of his family and with his full time job. Bob explained that he was young and he felt confined, “tied up” with obligations and bills and no time to pursue the things he liked. In Florida, Bob enjoyed his life as a single man with a good income. He dated many women, bought a large house and made friends. “I made it,” Bob explains. This expression means that culturally and socially, his achievements embodied the expected financial and material ideal situation for a grown man. Yet, in Bob’s pursuit of all the social and culturally dictated ideals, he caused material and emotional pain to the family he created and that created a division in the emotional relationship between him and his children.

Legislation supported these structural cultural changes, acting in this way as a resource that aided the creation of family distances. In solving the problems emanating from the modern family model, the legislation sacrificed the parental unity and closeness to the child. Steven Mintz explains: “Laws stressing and reinforcing relationships between the parents and the children, now days it emphasizes the separation and autonomy of the family members” (*in* Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 193).

World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945)

With the advent of World War I, large numbers of women joined the labor force. Yet, by the end of the war, society used the ideal of romantic love to lure women away from the labor force. “They had to abandon recent liberties obtained by job placement and go back into marriage and motherhood” (Fitzsimons and Munhall, 2001: 7-12).

History shows a repetition of events when in the late 1940s, during World War II, “The need for labor had more middle-class women join the national workforce” (Hawes and

Nybakken, 1991:129). The intervention of women in the labor force became conceived as a patriotic duty.

However, again by the end of World War II, many women lost their job positions to the thousands of men returning home from the war, seeking stable jobs. Society needed to give these returning veterans jobs and stability, and “Society resolved the issue by taking those jobs back from women” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 245). By the end of World War II, society encouraged “working mothers to return to a full-time housewife lifestyle using persuasion, guilt, and shame” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 245).

During World War II (1939-45), the government programs promoting growth and wealth went hand-in-hand with the social programs promoting marriage and the creation of family, and the newer conceptualization of the “ideal family.” However, after the war (1945-1970s), the increase in marriages and fertility suffered a dramatic lowering of numbers and a higher number of divorces (Kain, 1990: 5).

There are several reasons found to explain this phenomenon. Since the end of the agrarian era families had been developing from the extended family households of mutual support and cooperation to the smaller autonomous and independent smaller nuclear family group that under the ideals and material realities of industrialism and capitalism consumed and spent more. The family ideal was tied to the middle class ideal demanding a higher level of consumption. Under these circumstances this autonomous family model created chaos in the nuclear family group because it carries contradictions that in practice create discontent and frustrations in the family members.

For example, Joyce, a ninety-one-year-old Californian participant, narrated that marriage and creating a family was the life purpose of young people of the World War II

era. For women, marriage, maternity and becoming a full-time housewife became their primary ideal. Joyce married in the 1938 when she was twenty years old and became a full-time housewife. She and her husband had four kids because “everybody was having three to four kids... I had four,” “None of my girlfriends worked, we raised our children together and drove from coast to coast on vacations.” After twelve years Joyce got divorced. Her said that her husband was always irritable and had become abusive. They were frustrated because there was always needs that they could not financially afford to cover. She felt that she needed some time for herself and that she wanted more from her life. She wanted a career and a job but her husband did not agree.

The social formula applied at the end of war had a positive effect in the number of births and marriages. The number of marriages and births of the era from 1938 to 1955 are among the highest in American history (Haines and Steckel, 2001). However, the parental couple was expected to raise the children by themselves and it appears that the social institutions established for the purpose failed to properly provide the needed help that was formerly provided by the extended family group, to these nuclear family groups. Thus, many fathers and mothers were tired, overworked and frustrated and appealed to family separation and divorce as the solution of their marriage’s failure.

The “increased divorce numbers reached its highest peak in 1945, at the end of World War II; its high numbers stayed from the 1950s to the 1980s, where the 1945s peak was matched in the 1970s” (Kain 1990: 5). However, historical data revealed that the perception of increased divorce numbers is a delusion provided by the fact that the same decade (1950s) had the larger amount of marriages in history. Thus, proportionally the increased numbers of divorce was an effect of the previous largest numbers of

marriage. Additionally, the large numbers of divorce were followed by a single parenthood increased (Kain, 1990: 8).

However, these events were the product of economic and social circumstances and lack of proper social planning. The economic and social conditions of the American nation had not been productive enough and stable enough to maintain the beneficial circumstances that had allow the high numbers of marriage and birth of the 1939 thru 1946. The social expectations for the ideal family, as formulated, were tied to the middle class income, life style and consumption, which was financially impossible for many people. The changes imposed by the capitalist mode of production and consumption made necessary higher incomes. Thus, “Periodic economic hardships and the rise of mass consumer culture led women to work through necessity” (Hawes and Kybakken, 1991: 243-44).

“Single parenting became a social issue in the 1970s, and society faced it with the same delusion that they had used to face divorce. “If a longer historical view is taken, it becomes clear that the rates of singlehood today are still lower than they were a century ago” (Kain, 1990: 8). However, there are important differences between the causes for single parenting a century ago and the causes of single parenting of the 1900s. While a century ago single parenthood was mostly the product of death and disease, endemic wars, poor living conditions and poor nutrition, the findings show that the increasing single parenting numbers of the late 1940s-70s was the product of the failing of the economic and social and structure and unrealistic ideologies. These high numbers of single parenting were the product of failing institutional and government programs and

specially the result of the contradictions between the ideals for family and the decaying material realities that these families encountered.

Single parenting represents the cultural forms of family creation and unity. The higher numbers of single parent headed households of the 1960s-80s caused social changes in the way of creating cultural change. “Demographic data obligated the society to recognize single parenting as an important family and socio-economic issue” (Fitzsimons and Munhall, 2001: 258). The events that produced the high numbers of divorce carried the conditions that caused high numbers of single-headed families. As a result of the imposed cultural extremes from 1966 to 1990, the numbers of the traditional family dropped from 75 percent to 56 percent (Dawson, 1991: 573). Simultaneously, while the numbers of divorce were becoming higher through the 1960s, so were there emerging numbers of children born from single mothers (Dawson, 1991: 573).

Some literature (Fitzsimons and Munhall, 2001) finds the concept of “the ideal family” as being unreal and the generator of many of the ills existing in American culture today as they contained many contradictions and imposed chaos resulting from their lack of balance. The ideal family as a concept can be coercive and maladaptive because it does not acknowledge the extreme of its demands, the social, economic and structural limitations imposed to the working and middle classes and the needs of the individual members of the family. Often fathers, as they are supposed to be the main providers, find themselves overworking and away from home for many hours a day, in a structured daily routine that separates them from their families. Meanwhile, wives as full-time mothers find themselves tied to the endless home-making obligations and childrearing responsibilities mostly on their own, which keep them from developing careers or other

ideals. Additionally, there emerges an economic issue granted by the fact that one income alone might not be sufficient to cover the needs of the ideal family.

The cultural form of the autonomous family is also in the narratives of the participants. Brian, for example, a twenty-six-year-old cab driver explained that his family and the families of his relatives in law and the ones of his friends live apart and often away from other relatives and they do not visit the each other often. His descriptions revealed that the parents of these families that he referred to in his narrative raised their children alone and solved their problems without the help of the extended family, but rather with the help of institutions, including schoolteachers, counselors, paid babysitters and tutors, for example. He said, “Growing up I never saw my dad, he worked as a truck driver and mom got back from work late every night. We (Brian and his brother) cooked our own food and went to school and did homework on our own... I never met my mom’s parents and my dad’s father came to visit only for three Christmas when we were children. I don’t know most of my relatives and the few ones that I know call my mom only for important occasions.”

The circumstances that ninety-one-year-old Californian participant Joyce experienced through her marriage and divorce and the resolution that Joyce and her husband found to solve their chaotic situation point to the presence of separate ideologies influencing behavior. The cultural norms of female domesticity and the ideal of the housewife for the ideal family permeated the choices and behavior of this couple. In addition, there are elements linked to the patriarchal rule of male supremacy. Joyce husband forced her to abandon her plans for career and job because “middle class wives didn’t work,” Joyce explained. The middle class family shamed the man whose wife had

to work, thus, her husband's authoritarian rule forced by social rules and cultural ideals kept her from developing her individual interest in career and financial self-realization. The culture started to face contradictions as the ideals of the perfect housewife and the American family contrasted the emerging ideals of individuation, autonomy and self-realization through the achievement of career and individual income that strongly targeted young women.

Moreover, the ideals of autonomy and freedom as conceived in the 1900s made people to abandon their contemporaneous conceptual forms of authority and responsibility. These ideals carried meanings opposite to what Joyce described as the circumscribed lifestyle of a housewife. Married couples need to communicate and make choices, manage finances and other issues together and Joyce needed her husband's approval for her personal plans of career and job. Meanwhile her husband had two jobs and was the sole provider, a situation that would not have allowed him to exercise individuality and autonomy, as ideologically conceived.

The behavioral changes that brought up the higher amount of family separations of the 1960s-80s were also the product of the ideals accompanying the capitalism economic model. The effects of the restoration of the economy in America after the Great Depression became intensified with the restoration of the American nation achieved after World War II. These factual improvements of the economy empowered the nation and its people. Alternatively it brought great changes promoting a stronger and renewed ideology of abundance tied to the ideology of the American dream.

As Owen, eighty-five year old financial advisor, Mandy, thirty-three year old speech pathologists and Ron, thirty-six social worker explained, the ideology of

abundance is based on the generalized trust in the ability of the American nation to produce wealth and provide the structure that allows the existence for the means of income. In addition, the American dream is a framework of the perfect family, career and lifestyle and it is based on the belief that one has the right to earn a higher socio-economic class.

Historical data reveals how the emergence and ideal of abundance had an effect on behavior: “The sense of abundance took place, demanding expansion and an improved lifestyle, and as the masses embraced greater production and consumption; middle class numbers started to grow”... “Changes that were brought after World War II facilitated for the masses to enjoy many services that had been available only for the richest people, like commercial air travel” (Lindsey, 2007: 34). The ideology of abundance that emerged with the successful economic and social recovery of the American nation after the Great Depression (1930s) and the World War II (1939-45) aided the introduction and cemented the establishment of industrialism and capitalism. In this way, individuals became more willing to act and live independent and autonomous from their extended family, and even from their nuclear group.

The historical account reveals the development and aggregation of the ideological currents. The ideologies carried by the Romantic era extended far from the 1800s, still influencing people in the 1900s and 2000s. For instance, autonomy conceived with disregard to authority in pursuit of freedom and the right to choose one’s own destiny, is a meaning existing among the contemporaneous cultural constructions.

The Aquarian Revolution or the Counter Culture (1960-70s)

The 1960s and '70s were the background for great ideological changes. The Aquarian Cultural Revolution was a counter-culture movement that emerged in the United States lead mainly by young middle-class people. They pursued a more unified country and sought to gain social and legal changes in the society, including a better management of national economic and political issues, gender relations, sexual identity, race relations and environmental protections (Lindsey, 2007: 156-161).

Aquarians were concerned with the way families were developing, with the high numbers of divorce and the family distances. They proposed communal unity, which is a concept that contrasted to the ongoing ideologies of ideal family as the independent nuclear group. Their notion of communal unity contrasted the realities showing family separations to favor autonomy and self-realization. However, the influence of Aquarian ideologies caused a social change in views toward divorce, single parenting and the status of women, which started to shift rapidly. Even the church had to start adapting to the changes, and “in 1973 the Episcopal church recognized civil divorce” (Lindsey, 2007: 206).

During the Aquarian Revolution the American youth rebelled against the imposed means of materialism and capitalism. Nathan, a fifty-five-year-old participant, banker, from Chicago and whose father took part in the Vietnam War, said that the Aquarians repudiated the background of the war and the means used by the capitalist system, because capitalism functioned on the basis of massive individual and collective production and consumption where each person must achieve certain earning and productive status in order to become valued in the society and the culture.

Thus, the contemporary meanings given to individuation and autonomy conceived, as the individual-oriented earning and consuming shows that many of the values of capitalism can be seen opposite to cooperation and community. Meanwhile, the proposal of the revival of religious groups can be interpreted as the reaction from the traditional sector of the nation against the social changes proposed in the discourse of the Aquarian revolutionaries. It is possible that traditional American people feared the loss of the strict patriarchal family, societal rules and the decline of traditional values.

During the era of the Aquarian Revolution American culture experienced the formal introduction of contraceptives for mass consumption and the sex education program.

The Feminist Movement and Contraceptives

The feminist movement became the backdrop for the most important event that changed women's lives and with it the structure of the American family. In the 1970's, the introduction of the contraceptive pill changed the attitude toward women and of women toward their own being. The sudden drop of birth numbers reveals the ideological impact of the introduction of the pill in the American nation. The pill arrived to the markets with rhetoric of emancipation and freedom to women by granting them the ability to control their own fertility. This became a reality with the shrinking numbers of birth numbers, "By 1975, the birthrate for women between the ages of 15 to 44 fell below 67 x 1000 women, lower even than during the Great Depression" (Lindsey, 2007: 206).

Marianne, a sixty-nine-year-old retired flight attendant explained,

The pill was for women that sought to get a career and economic autonomy before getting married and most women wanted those goals... Ads in magazines pictured elegant and successful career women. Younger girls wanted to become women before marrying, and that meant having

pre-marital sex, take the time to get to know people and date different men before settling into married and make a family, like guys do.

Additionally, the ideal age of marriage changed. Marianne said that she and her friends started to create their families in their mid- or late twenties, much later compared to her mother and grandmother who had their first child when they were nineteen and sixteen years-old, respectively.

Thus, the introduction of contraceptives carried the discourse of emancipation and freedom to women that were influenced with the idea of career before family.

Simultaneously, the pill and the feminist movement made the aptitudes toward family, pregnancy, closeness and sexuality become more overt. For example, in 1982, the NORC survey revealed the cultural shift showing that sexuality grew more public and younger people showing openness to pre-marital sex (Lindsey, 2007: 195).

Behind these behaviors were the newer meanings given to the symbols of freedom that went in line to the desire of the young generation of the 1960s and '70s to emancipate from the –still present in that era- coercive authority of the patriarchal norms, and the sexual and emotional restraints dictated by the Victorian norms. Both, patriarchal and Victorian rules and norms carried unnatural expectations from the people, especially from young people. In this way the patriarchal gender roles and rules that govern sexual behaviors including the creation of family softened, giving women a renovated status in society.

Additionally, this era had orthodox groups and the Aquarian groups as opposing forces contesting to dominate over the direction of the cultural changes. Meanwhile, President Ronald Reagan supported conservative ideals. “He promoted prayer at school, outlawed abortion, and opposed the Equal Rights Amendment” (Lindsey, 2007: 255-6).

The 1960s and '70s saw the revival of the Catholic Church that regained power becoming openly “a powerful cultural force” that shaped the path of the country (Lindsey, 2007: 258). Thus, political and religious orthodox groups sought to maintain the status quo by reacting against the newer changes created by the introduction of contraceptives for the use of the masses, the feminist movement and the social achievements gained by the Aquarian Revolution.

This conservative segment of the social system exerted its influence with the use of the media and legislation that imposed and enforced their ideas. For example, in 1979, Senator Paul Laxalt introduced the Family Protection Act to the House of Representatives. This Act was conceived to enforce the permanence and stability of the patriarchal system, thus the status quo. “The goal of the legislation is to reinforce what is defined as the traditional family based upon a mythical vision of the peaceful family life under patriarchal rule, in which the husband is the breadwinner and the wife is in the home raising the children” (Kain, 1990: 9-10).

Rommer, a sixty-three-years-old, retired college sociology professor from Florida, narrated “The society had two different cultural systems and they did not mix: the religious group with the most orthodox version of the patriarchal model (traditional cultural norms of family structure), and the mainstream American family that had the newer, softer version of the patriarchal social rules. Romer’s family belonged to the religious American culture with strong traditional beliefs, status and roles. After Romer entered college he became a member of the mainstream American family. He laughed and said, “most of my friends also changed their ways of thinking. Some of them even

got divorce and remarried, something we would never thought of when we were younger.”

The Contemporaneous Meanings of the Sex Information and Education Era

During these eras of the 1940s –70s the meanings of the symbols representing family creation, size and unity started to experience a more systematic transformation under the hands of the emerging mechanisms for sex information and education. These meanings accompanied many discourses of the feminist movement and the introduction of the pill. The 1970s was also the background of the introduction of the sex education program, which became an efficient mechanism for the shaping of perceptions and behaviors of the young people toward family creation, size and unity. The sex education program was established in the same era that the oral contraceptives for mass consumption were being introduced in American society. These two elements of change complemented each other in different ways. While the pill is a tool for the prevention of pregnancies, the sex educational doctrine seeks to teach children the method to prevent unwanted pregnancies and to control and manage their sexuality and life choices.

The effectiveness of the sex education program is based on the fact that its teachings were institutionalized and made into a mandatory course for every child’s curriculum in American schools. This program introduced guidelines on “how to educate children about the dangers of over-population and their personal responsibility in the subject” (Burt and Meeks, 1975: 352-56).

In this way, the sex educators sought to indoctrinate the choice for smaller family groups, especially the ideal of one child per couple showing the children the contrasting scenario of availability of the resources of a large family versus the ones of a smaller

family (Ferndale Elementary School District, 1978: 69). The guide “asks children to decide whether they are parent material and offers a list of reasons for having children (Ferndale Elementary School District, 1978: 231-232, 290). It emphasizes the cost of caring for children and the responsibility and time that a child demands (Ferndale Elementary School District, 1978: 231-232, 290). In promoting a one child ideal the sex educators emphasize the issues about the rivalries between the siblings (Ferndale Elementary School District, 1978: 68-9). The sex education program encourage children to report their family problems, even asking children as young as six if the parents molest them or are alcoholic” (California State Department of Education, op. cit., pp.138-9). In this way they discredit the parental authority affecting the ideological and relational closeness between the parents and their children.

The contemporaneous sex education material started to develop in a secularized manner and away from traditional beliefs even before the 1960s. Through their style of information their material creates new social rules prioritizing scientific and technological knowledge for the adjustment of the children’s standards and values, asking them to disregard former traditional knowledge that they believe is based on ignorance (Calderon and Johnson, 1981: 213). In this way they also indoctrinate the child to prefer the expert advice and disregard the familial traditional forms that relate to family creation, size and unity.

In 1968, Mary Calderone, founder of the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States, and formal medical director of Planned Parenthood, started implementing sex education with the guidance of the manual prepared by John Burt and Linda Meeks (1975). Calderon endorsed the sex education movement seeking also to

promote an emotional and ideological distancing between parent and children and she was able to implement policies on Family Planning thru the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (DHEW). In their publications Johnson and Calderone declared, "We may be evolving into an age, in which the individual will more and more replace the family, as the basic unit of society" (1981:161).

The more extreme changes of behaviors bound to family unity started to take place in the 1950s. However, some of the older participants (including Mike, seventy-seven year old real estate agent, Sue, sixty-five year old housewife and Joyce, ninety-one year old and single mother) believe the 1970s was the decade that marked the most dramatic difference in the behavior of young people.

For instance, Mike, a seventy-seven year-old real estate agent from California, says that he saw a slow but strong course of change of behavior of his five children. Mike and his wife raised their five children between New York and Florida. The oldest two children were a boy and a girl, born in 1962 and 1964, respectively. The third son was born in 1965. The second girl was born in 1969, and the youngest boy was born in 1972. Mike says that the two girls were far easier to raise than the boys and they did not distance themselves from his wife and him as much as the boys did. The older kids were more responsible and mature, while the two younger kids "don't listen; they have their own mind and they know it all." They are rebellious and capricious, and "they can be negligent of other people's needs, and even rude." Mike observes, "Ever since the times of the Vietnam War, everything started to change with kids and young people." His children maintained a "distanced" relationship with their parents, and when entering

adulthood they made their own choices and often ignored parental advice. Only two of them got married and they had one and two children, respectively.

Mike's wife Sue, a sixty-five-year-old housewife, says that her children "were other people after they started elementary school." "My Tim was such a sweet and happy boy, but he changed so much that I even took him to the doctor." She adds that greater changes took place after high school; "Especially the boys started to change when they went to college; they did not speak about themselves anymore and when we asked, they were indifferent to answer, or they lied..." "They did not want to listen to advice and did not want to share vacations or special occasions with us anymore."

Beatrice, a twenty-five years old participant explained that she assisted to the classes of sex education for several years. The information in the classes had been exaggerated and at age twelve she was already very frightened of sex and disease. She said that these fears created problems in the development of her sexuality and emotional relations. "I am afraid to fall in love and get married and to have children. I will never be mature enough. I don't think I want to have children. People should not bring children to the world unless they can offer them a good home and can afford to provide everything they need."

As seen in the narratives of the participants in this study, the teachings provided by the sex educators changed the relations between parents and children. These teachings redefined the meanings of the symbols bound to behavior that produce family creation, size and unity, and the effects of its influence can be seen in the behaviors that create family, the age of marriage and family pregnancy chosen by younger women or couples, the planning of the family size and their issues maintaining family unity.

CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF THE CHANGING BEHAVIORS AND MEANINGS
OF FAMILY CREATION, SIZE AND UNITY UNDER
SCHNEIDER'S SYMBOLIC ANTHROPOLOGY FRAMEKWORK

The historical account shows how most of the behavioral scripts prescribed by the patriarchal paradigm underwent changes and have assumed softer forms progressively, during the later eras. For instance, the cultural norms prescribing male supremacy and gender stereotypes took different and more flexible forms throughout the last eighty years. However, the strong weight of tradition maintaining the social order, as prescribed by the patriarchal social model, was an obstacle for the faster and natural development of family creation, size and unity.

Before getting into the analysis of the meanings of every historical era is important to understand the state of affairs of the contemporaneous meanings and show how they have developed for the last fifty years by comparing them to the meanings describe in David Schneider's ethnography (1980).

The social economic environment in American society before the advent of industrialism promoted a family structure that organized several nuclear families in the same household, cooperating and sharing work, duties, rights, goods and means. Their ideals made couples marry young and have several children (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: xx). Large family households provided higher social status and class (Carsten, 2004: 35). Additionally, before the invention of agricultural tools and equipment, their form of

production needed a large group of people; thus, it was convenient to have several children and cooperate with other families for the production and management of their farms.

Society supported and continues supporting and enforcing the patriarchal rules because the social, political and economic systems, structures and organization depend on the patriarchal social rules of leadership and the stratified hierarchy and power. These family organizations and structures are duplicated into all other social, political and economic structures. In addition, in Colonial times, the imposed rules of the patriarchal social model were enforced and maintained by religious precepts, which dominate their societies and imposed the patriarchal social organization. Carol Delaney explains, religion empowers the patriarchal rules of kinship because biblical narratives explain that the patriarchal power is backed up by God (*in* Franklin and McKinnon, 2001: 460-461).

Thus, in Colonial times family's unity and solidarity were socially, economically and religiously structured and enforced. The supremacy of the political, economic and social structure added to the word of God governed over the Colonial human group. Hence, family creation, size and unity were cultural forms that could not have developed naturally in Colonial times because these cultural forms could not be balanced or provide equality as they were subject to the ultimate control of the higher powers: father, husband, the court and state.

These patriarchal rules caused inconsistency and contradictions in the meaning of family unity, which caused chaos in the families. Among these patriarchal established rules, the gender separate spheres and the supremacy and higher authority ascribed to males imposed an imbalance of power between women and men. In Colonial America,

the law defended and protected the right of domination of the male over the female and made males treat their family as property (Elster, 1987: 7-8).

The difference of power ascribed to males and females caused negative family dynamics. This fact can partially explain the extreme lower numbers of births appearing in the 1970s. Once women gained a more tangible level of personal power with work opportunities, the social acceptance of their self-representation, (autonomous of the patriarchal representation) and the ability to better control their pregnancy, women made a statement of freedom and autonomy (under the conceptions of the 1970s era), choosing behaviors that caused the lowest numbers of birth in American history.

The elements of unity in the relations between parents and children faced a similar scenario. The need to maintain authority in the form prescribed during Colonial times (Salmon, 1986:5-15, 21-78) made parents use extreme child rearing methods, which acted opposite to the signs of deep affection from parents to their children that was needed, as some many of them became sick and died of epidemics and infections (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: 3; Demos, 1986: 76). Parents had to choose between the compassion, closeness and family love for their children (as the most common victims of inevitable death of those eras before the discovery of antibiotics), or the parental authority norms that obligated distancing and the strict maintenance of stratified status and strict roles for the proper management of their household. In consequence, the exteriorization of behaviors of family unity for the Colonial people did not have to be necessarily linked to the emotional family need of closeness and family love.

The agrarian meanings of family unity, diffused, and enduring solidarity were determined by their need and interdependence for their work and control over their

resources given by the agrarian form of production that gave them autonomy and self-sufficiency. The membership of this communal family stressed family roles and ascribed status, while their cooperation and interdependence allowed the children to have several role models and caregivers under the same roof of the large Colonial household.

Additionally, the high morality and strict rules of decency of the Colonial family would not have imposed the norm of individual privacy, especially in their circumstances of close family membership. Simultaneously, personal autonomy in Colonial times might have been subject to the rigorous approval of the head of the household and limited by the group membership. Additionally, autonomy for the agrarian and pre-industrial people meant the development of individual talents and the exteriorization of individual passions.

The high birth numbers and family size numbers that the Victorian era inherited from the former era soon started to decline as the Victorian society enforced the ideals of male representation (Luchetti and Olwell, 1982: 33) and female higher morality (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 230), which gave even more strength to the cultural norm of sexual abstinence (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 237), which produced lower marriage and birth numbers. The Victorian era carried strict and extreme ideologies of decency, sexual prudence and gender roles. Family was sacred and the meanings of autonomy and freedom were framed under the strict form of patriarchal authority and high morality of mothers (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 230-2).

The symbol of individuality was also linked to the ideal of exclusiveness and “social purity” (Summerscale, 2009: 110). These were reasserted by the introduction of the ideal of personal and group privacy, including family privacy (Summerscale, 2009:

109-110). These newer sets of ideals, especially the ideal of individual privacy, created emotional and systematic divisions between members of the family, even between husband and wife.

On the other hand, symbolically, the extreme gender roles denaturalized the humanity of the self. Husbands carried the ascribed superior authority, and wives had the superior morality. By being in the extreme position of those conceptualized units they became morally separated, ideologically and structurally differentiated beings. This situation imposes an unnatural foundation for the human relationships. In reality, human beings have the capacity to display morality and authority and all the other units of what is to be human, balancing them within all his or her other human needs and forms of being and extreme imposed scripts for roles are un-natural and promote chaotic relationships.

The tight circumscription of the Victorian cultural model kept many people from getting married, having children or planning larger families. People that remained single were named spinsters, a term used for women, but in practice, it affected both males and females. In this way, Victorian norms to govern over sexual behaviors caused lower numbers of births (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 237). Obedient to the social and cultural norms, responsible adults followed abstinence and the strict social rules, and had fewer or no children. Meanwhile in the same time period, teenagers revealed and produced higher numbers of pregnancies (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 228-9).

The extreme and unexpected behavior of teenagers is often absorbed by the society that understands the rebellious nature of the individuals in the pre-adult stage of their lives. However, the symbolism of these teenage women's behavior of the Victorian

era can be interpreted as their manifestation of resistance through their conception of freedom as their needed to act against the rigorous and unreal Victorian social rules of marriage and family creation. These facts reveal that teenagers were not depending on or expecting the parental and social approval, the family and social rituals including marriage or the ideal house and spouse, in order to have their family. They became pregnant despite the strict cultural rules, and in all likelihood, without the moral support of their families. The discourse of these teenagers' behavior show their resistance against the strict cultural rules demanding ideal conditions for marriage and family creation and threatening them to remain single and childless for the rest of their lives.

Romantic ideals emerged in Europe and its ideologies influenced the American culture, especially during the Victorian era and the introduction of industrialism (mid 1800s). They contradicted in many ways the Victorian cultural norms of male representation and the forced assignment of women to domestic affairs because Romantic ideals appealed to freedom, which they understood as individual freedom of choice, individuality and autonomy.

The Romantic era emphasized the individual and its conceptions of freedom, individuality and autonomy revolutionized behavior because these newer meanings suggested the need to disregard strict authority, including social and family authority and to autonomy, individuality and self-realization to find their own path, make their own stories and create the best possible form of themselves. F. M Kling with his literary and theatrical work completed in 1776 *Sturm und Drang* (Garland, 1952), marked symbolically the Romantic era as it introduced the newer meanings to these symbols. In this way, during early 1900s the cultural group of the American culture that had faced the

extremes economic and social events imposed by the advent of industrialism, World War I and the Great Depression had grown into extreme perception of their reality changing the meaning of autonomy to become conceptualized as the right to earn and spend in one self, to come and go as desired, to marry who one desires, to choose the desired career. Individuality also meant the right to make choices without the approval of others. Meanwhile, individuality started to be conceptualized together with the ideal of individual privacy because individual and family privacy were becoming ideals that later became cemented into cultural norms. For Victorians, privacy meant the right for personal or group secrecy.

By the end of the Victorian era, other emerging mechanisms created family divisions that targeted directly the young and the mother-child bond because with the ideals that kept the fathers from bonding with their children it was the mother-child bond that until now it had been “sacred” that could be a problem for the needs of the nation. For example, since the late part of the Victorian era and throughout the 1960s and 70s several experts argued that parental protection and closeness made weak children (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 247, 101). These notions prevailed for several decades and became stronger during the eras of World War II, the Vietnam War, and the Cold War. The influence of propaganda and expert advice acting as mechanisms separating the family members became an important part of the forces of change that latter created even greater impact when they were added to the influential ideologies accompanying the rise of capitalism in the mid-1950s.

Industrialism entered the American society since the mid-1800s, but it was by the end of the 1800s and beginning of 1900s that the impact of its social and economic

extreme methods was becoming a generalized experience. In the same era, history witnessed the end of the Victorian era (1837-1901), World War I (1914-18), and the Great Depression (1929-34).

The social and economic changes created by World War I (1914-18) caused a social and economic depression (Gambino, 1974: 7). Women went to work for wages when the needs for labor of the nation lifted all social restraints that kept them from participating in the labor force. The economic depression negatively affected birth numbers and the creation of family. For this reason, after World War I, the government set in place several programs to recover the social-economic state of the nation, including campaigns to raise the marriage and birth numbers (Gambino, 1974: 7).

A few years later, the damages caused by the effects of World War I (1914-18) that summed to the ones of the Great Depression (1929-34) forced and influenced the steady and continuous lowering of birth rates in America (Haines and Steckel, 2001: 38-9). However, by 1935 the American government had successfully created the material emergence of abundance moving the nation forward from the Great Depression into the complete forms of industrialism and capitalism in the next eras. This process formally installed capitalism in America with the creation of newer meanings of the ideology of abundance, as it feeds capitalism ideas of large consumption and spending. Abundance, under the influence of the newer meanings of individuation and autonomy is abundance for one-self and it relates to self-indulge. This ideology permeated the culture of the late 1940s and 1950s, providing the financial and structural freedom to individuals and nuclear family groups allowing them to lose their closeness, company and support of the extended family group and to embrace the emerging meanings given to individuality, autonomy, freedom,

the American dream and the “ideal family,” which drove people to focus on their immediate needs and on accumulating all possible forms of wealth.

As revealed by the narratives of the participants (Fred, eighty-three year old from Georgia, Laura, an eighty-two-year-old former seamstress from Milwaukee and Bob, seventy-one year old builder), the meanings of freedom, autonomy and individuality developed in the 1950s echoed the Romantic meanings, but their notion had been intensified, possibly as a result of the traumatic realities of World War I and the Great Depression. Autonomy became conceived as one’s right to make one’s own choices, which ideally would ignore parental advice. Simultaneously, individuality change to become conceptualized as the right to focus on one’s needs, desires and self-achievement and it acquired the extreme notion of acting individualism even above the needs of other people, including family. Freedom, as the highest ideal it became conceptualized not only as the emancipation from family rules and protections, but also from archaic values that formerly kept people from moving forward into more materialistic notions.

In consequence, the family structure changed permanently, forcing large family groups to separate while the small nuclear groups went to live independently. In this way, many nuclear families departed from their extended family groups and eventually lost their cooperation, emotional bond and protections and in some cases even their genealogical identity. Once they were established in their industrial cities, these individuals and families started to visit each other less often and lost many of their former family rituals and mutual cooperation and solidarity. Thus, the effects of these cultural changes were affecting the human reality from the social and cultural core out. While the families were losing their closeness and cohesiveness, communities started to develop

anonymity. These events mark the loss of the former community that watched over each other and each other's children. In addition, these events marked the beginning of the cultural change that produced weakened or opposing meanings to the former values and meanings of family unity, including community, cooperation, solidarity and self-sacrifice.

The data shows a behavioral dynamic emanating from the separations (physical, emotional, and moral) between family members and the loss of the group notion of cooperation. Evans-Pritchard explains this relationship. He argues that the more contacts the family has with one another and the more these contacts are co-operative and necessary for the maintenance of the life of the group, there is cohesiveness between them (*in* Parkin and Stone, 2004: 70).

Fred, eighty-three years old and Helen, eighty-nine year old provided narratives about the events that they witnessed in the beginning of the industrial era (early 1900s). They revealed that the cohort undergoing the transition from the social and cultural agricultural model to the industrial one welcomed the autonomy given by earning wages and from being independent from the group membership. Fred wanted “to spend his own money, get to know people and date girls, drink with his friends and wear nice stuff.” The first year in the city he sent some money to his mom and sisters but “living was expensive” and he could no longer afford to send money to his family.

In this regard, the introduction of industrialism found the culture at ease adopting the industrial social model and coming up to practically the opposite of their former family values. The strict and extreme behavioral and meaning forms of the preindustrial culture made younger people reject many of its meanings.

Fred showed his deep discontent and frustration with the organization established in his family household, including the prescribed social-economic group membership and the patriarchal dictated leadership. He said that he wanted to move away from his family because he needed to support himself, and because he “would rather be under the orders of a stranger than under the orders of his uncle, because he was abusive and cruel and family is supposed to love and protect.” His choices revealed that he was affected by the contradiction between the cultural ideals and cultural behavior. He understood family as the place of refuge, the unselfish and solidarious support between the members joined by blood. However, his uncle did not act this conceptualization and the meanings of family solidarity and cooperation were vanishing, and families were not necessarily protecting their children and relatives as they were supposed to do. The importance given to income and property overly powered the cultural norm of giving priority to the familial bond and family cooperation. It contradicted the social rules of gender and family roles of protecting and cooperating. Hence family members including Fred’s uncle, were not assuming their socially and culturally prescribed moral obligation and family roles, neglecting to respect, protect, guide, accompany, provide and stay close to their family.

Moreover, the superior authority of heads of households could have allowed them abusive behaviors. Helen, eighty-nine years old participant explained how her parents were abusive and cruel to their children. She said that her parents had her and her siblings “working for food.” She meant that her brothers worked in exchange of the minimum benefit in return. Hence, while the family roles were losing their moral and emotional stance, the meanings of family love, unity and solidarity were changing permanently. These meanings lost their humanized content under the pressure to overcome the extreme

living circumstances imposed by the advent of the industrial economic model and the cultural ideal that dictated achieving and personifying the middle class status.

Thus, the social and economic realities of the early 1900s show that the introduction of the industrial economic model imposed heavy work, long work shifts and extreme schedules, and the industrial labor wages did were not equivalent to the increasing inflation and high cost of goods and services. Food and piecework production could not compete with mass production of goods and the declining value of properties and land kept the working or middle class from improving their material conditions. Under these circumstances it became morally accepted to focus on one's needs and disregard other's needs. Besides, these realities in the company of the ideals of capitalism resulted in ideologies that were made socially acceptable for family members to reject or neglect providing help to their own kin. Thus, individuality, autonomy and freedom became material and moral as per their newer conceptualized cultural meanings. Families of every economic class excluding the wealthiest ones suffered the consequences of the economic downturns. This generalized experience made these newer behaviors rejecting cooperation's to become rapidly socially accepted.

Katie, a forty-seven-year-old participant that owned a hair salon said, "Autonomy and individuality means making my own decisions and choices and living my life without having to explain myself, because my life its nobody's business" ... It also means, "to manage and spend my own money and to pursue and have what I want." This kind of freedom conceptualized in this manner and practiced by the great majority eliminated the duty and responsibility to others, and eliminated guilt. Katie though that "Everyone has abilities and can seek opportunities" and that she had to work hard for what she had and

she said, “I am not going to give it away to people that didn’t earn it or don’t deserve it, even if they are family.” Katie’s narrative shows the different manner people from different generations absorbed the cultural changes of family unity and solidarity. While Katie was young and worried about saving for her future, some of her relatives judged her harshly for her behavior. Katie said, her father and uncles never accepted the way she handled her family’s needs and that she did not offer her time or financial help. They thought she was selfish and cruel.

John, forty-eight years old working as a truck driver explains, “You are on your own” ... “Even when I was a kid, I counted on myself and on my hands.” “Whenever I tried to approach my family they thought I went to ask them for money and they gave me their back.” Hence, the contrasting scenario of these different narratives from different participants illustrates the different perceptions and understanding of the cultural meaning of diffuse, enduring solidarity. While Katie finds it acceptable to prioritize her own needs and disregard the needs of her family group, John finds harsh the cultural norms that allow his family members that neglect the needs of others. However, family unity in the sense of solidarity was the main unit of research and most participants tended to answer with narratives containing rationalizations similar to the ones of Katie.

Notwithstanding, behaviors that produce cohesiveness and cooperation between family members were also subject to the financial limitations imposed by the industrial and capitalist economic models. Additionally, this analysis finds a link between these newer meanings to the symbols of individuality and autonomy, the separations between the large and small family groups, the loss of the community bonds, and the emergence of the contemporaneous form of loneliness. As an example, in Chapter Three, this study

exposed the narratives provided by Joyce, ninety-one-years old Californian participant, and Bob, a seventy-one-year-old builder. Both narratives are archetypes of the cultural behaviors emanating from the meanings in the cultural and social contradictions occurring in the culture of the Baby Boomer generation and had extended to the present times.

Bob a seventy-one year old and Floridian that accomplished his ideal family and his version of the American dream. He got married in Ohio after he completed his service in the military and had a job as a fireman, bought a house and had two children. Yet, twelve years later he abandoned his job, house and his ideal family and moved to Florida where he pursued his dreamed income, freedom, autonomy and individuality. Eventually, in Florida Bob achieved a greater income, bought a large house and created a successful business as a builder. However, his quest to have the American dream, Bob neglected the closeness to his children. At the time of this interview, Bob was suffering from depression due to what he explained as “loneliness.”

Additionally, former conceptualized gender roles ignore the emotional human needs of males. These cultural norms assigned to maleness have been an obstacle for the proper development of their emotional bonds. This can explain the difficulty that the seventy-one years old participant Bob had trying to accept the emotional closeness with his children. Gender roles were maintained by the use of shame, social stigma and popular taboos that permeated everyday life. Although these gender roles appear to be softer in contemporaneous America, still in present time there American culture carries extreme gender roles that isolate males from the domestic events of their homes, keeping them from creating and maintain naturally their family bonds.

My experience with the American culture taught me some important cultural constructs that reveal the prescribed gender roles, including: “The kitchen is not a place for a man,” “men belong outside,” and “dad gets the bacon, mom cooks it.” These are among most of those popular cultural constructions that support the gender divisions and separation of men from the domestic affairs of their homes and that enforce gender divisions. Former orthodox cultural expectations of gender roles rejected the role of child-caring for males because it seemed opposite to the orthodox meaning of maleness. Some of these cultural constructions and cultural norms are rooted in strict patriarchal social rules of male supremacy and higher authority that only have softened with the slow development of newly emergent cultural meanings and even legal rules (Dawson, 1991:581, Simpson, 1998: 84) of family that expect males to be close to their families and active in the supporting and caring of their children.

Contemporaneous meanings of gender roles found in younger married or cohabitating couples support a family structure that allows balance of financial obligations, domestic work and shared child caring. For instance, Kristen, a thirty-one-year-old medical student and her husband Edward, a thirty-three-years-old computer technician got married two years ago have an eleven-months-old boy. They live in Kristen’s apartment that has no mortgage and she also has an income working as a bookkeeper of her family’s business. Kristen and Edward had planned for Kristen to stay off school until their child is two months old and return to school only part-time (three days a week) afterward. They share their general expenses and savings, both of them cook and maintain their household and take turns to care for their child.. Edward said that

he “takes over” caring for their son after he returns from work every evening and during the weekends.

After the Great Depression and with the introduction of industrialism, immigrants entered the United States in greater numbers. They brought with them their cultural meanings of family creation, size and unity and upon their arrival into the American nation they experienced a cultural shock. Both the narratives from the participants and the historical literature expose the fact that the culture of the United States in the early 1900s was very different from the one of these immigrants because they still held to stricter orthodox traditions and family rules, and ascribed status and severe understanding of family authority (Howel, 1976: 219 *in* Franklin and McKinnon, 2001: 207-211). In addition, they tended to live closer to the each other, be more united and communicate with their families more openly and more often. Immigrants also tended to have more children and be more united in the sense of solidarity between the family members. Later, statistics show that the higher birth numbers from the immigrant groups contrasted the lowering numbers of birth that started to appear in the United States (Billari, Hans, Kohler, and Ortega, 2006: 49) as result of different deleterious events in the history of the United States. These include among others, the effects of war, the economic resections, and the imposed material and cultural changes of industrialism.

Moreover, this study found that the presence of these immigrant groups with positive behaviors toward family creation, size and unity functioned as an influence to other people that even changed their own cultural meanings about creating families and having more than one child. In consequence, several participants narrated that they

created their families because they wanted to have a family like the ones of their (Cuban, South and Central American, Jamaican, Chinese, Irish, etc) neighbors.

The changes that took place in the family structure since after World War I and the New Deal were intensified by the events precipitating after World War II where the newer cultural constructs were part of the emerging ideology of the “American dream.” Generally, the participants in this study conceived the ideology of the American dream as the right and possibility to achieve a better social and economic position, and to create one’s own wealth. The meanings of this ideology are rooted in the ideology of abundance that originated with the economic and social recovery of the nation after the Great Depression and especially after World War II. These ideals went hand-in-hand with the notion of the “ideal family,” which was conceived by the participants and was described by Schneider (Schneider, 1980: 32, 33, 36) as the single nuclear group living alone, only the parents and children, autonomous from the extended family group.

Joyce, a ninety-one-years-old Californian participant created with her husband the *ideal family*. They got married and started their family in the 1950s autonomous from their extended family groups that also lived far from Joyce home. Yet, Joyce suffered the effects of her separation from her extended family group when at the time of her divorce she was left alone with four children with no means to support them and unable to get any help from her extended family group. She had sought to create the ideal family as culturally prescribed and she thought that the resources and circumstances would have allowed her to maintain permanently her family’s autonomy and independence from her relatives and in-laws without negative consequences. However, after her divorce her family neglected to help her mostly because they blamed her for the divorced. She said, “They distanced

themselves from me even more than before the divorce.” Joyce relatives rejected her divorce status because the cultural meanings existing in the 1960s to 80s rejected divorce and separation as they sought to impose the social rules and cultural norms of stable and permanent matrimony.

During World War II the economic and social restoration of the nation had programs and campaigns promoting marriage and family creation. The social, economic and cultural changes occurring after World War II allowed for abundance and a temporal national economic stability. This caused deeper changes in the family unity as families were better able to move away from their relatives and pursue better income and status. The economic improvement eased the separations between the extended family and the nuclear groups because the later were better able to be financially autonomous and hire the needed help for the education and caring of their children. Families were permanently re-structured, losing the permanent sharing, cooperation and support with their relatives and creating distances with less visiting. Yet the narratives from Joyce show that the meanings given to gender roles were still the ones of the Colonial and Victorian eras (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 230) with the ideals of male supremacy and the female domesticity that kept her from working for wages and outside of her home.

The higher than average numbers of marriages and births of the early 1940s represent (proportionally) the highest birth numbers in America, since the Colonial era. The generation that was named the Baby Boomers was followed by extreme lowering of birth numbers and high numbers of divorce from 1945-1970s (Kain 1990: 5). This social and cultural phenomenon caused the change of the meanings of the family where many family gender roles had to be re-conceptualized as the aftermath of divorce cause a higher

numbers of female headed households (Dawson, 1991: 573) and the absence and negligence of divorce fathers to their children caused the weakening of the ascribed rule of male supremacy and higher authority (Dawson, 1991:581, Simpson, 1998: 84).

The newer type of family that was created under the new cultural norm of the “ideal family” faced and continues to face in the present time extreme circumstances held by the contradictions in the culture and the extreme ideological frames for the family and the self. These contradictions are linked to the imposed cultural ideal of a lifestyle and status of the middle class, which, from era to era have been inaccessible for a great majority of people.

The higher numbers of divorce of the 1960s and '70s can be seen as the result of the failing of the ideal family structure and model. These newer nuclear families faced newer created challenges that produced high stress with demands that these families were not prepared to assume. The ideal family structure is opposite to the agrarian family structure of the extended family group that made better use of resources provided under the meanings of cooperation. Thus, divorce emerged, as this family model failed for many people that were unable to manage the imposed economic obligations, heavy work schedules, the need to resort to debt, the lack of assistance and support of their extended family group, and the presence of forced extreme gender roles. These gender roles appear more extreme than the agrarian gender roles because in the agrarian family both genders shared the farm or craft work, allowing women a more equal labor status.

Additionally, the institutions that were supposed to take over the functions of the extended family group were unable to provide appropriately the needed help. These divorces often left mothers raising their children single-handedly. In this case, with

divorce the family unity was severed as fathers tended to neglect their contact and obligations with their children (Dawson, 1991: 581). For instance, Joyce, ninety-one year old Californian participant explained that after her divorce, she raised her children without the help of her ex-husband or that of her relatives. She worked, study and cared for her children whom she did not get to see but for a few hours every day.

Marilyn Strathern says, “Divorce reorders kinship” (2005: 28-9) because the divorced couple and children have to negotiate their material supporting, communication and bonding. Bob Simpson (1998) explains the dynamics occurring through separation and divorce. Some parents remarried and had more children, and in their arrangements they had their own children, understanding the newer family relations and bonds (831). Thus, after the divorce boom of the 1960s, social and legal institutions started to promote family closeness and the need to take responsibility for the material and emotional needs of the children (Simpson, 1998: 832). Families slowly started to learn to manage their separation and divorce status without losing their family bonds and unity.

The separations experienced by these divorced families point to a structural problem in society that affected directly the family relations, preventing unity and solidarity between the family members. However, family formation continues taking place in lower but steady numbers, as shown by demographic studies and single parents head many of these newly created families (Haines and Steckel, 2001). Single parenting as a cultural form appears to have increased, even within Caucasian women since the Victorian era, showing its highest numbers from the 1960s through the '90s (Dawson, 1991:573-74). Single parenting was made a social problem for the culture of the Baby Boomer generation where society expected parents to solve the problems generated by

their divorces without government intervention. Yet, “Demographic data obligated the society to recognize single parenting as an important family and socio-economic issue” (Fitzsimons and Munhall, 2001: 258).

The extreme lowering of birth numbers and the high numbers of divorce from 1945 through the 1970s (Kain 1990: 5) were followed by higher numbers of single parenting families, which were most often mothers. The trend of increasing numbers of single parents, even for white middle-class women continued and never went back to the small numbers it was before the Civil War (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: xvii). The higher than normal numbers of single parents can be explained as a reaction to the adversities imposed by the difficult political and economic systems in the United States in the Vietnam War and the Cold War eras.

Additionally, although people divorced in larger numbers and marriage numbers had dropped, the number of single parents stayed higher until the 1990s (Dawson, 1991: 574). In the 1980s, historians Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg found, “Female headed families now account for 13 percent of white families and 44 percent of black families” (1989: xvii). These behaviors that create family can be also explained as a form of resistance to the different forces of change that started a systematic attack on the family, focusing on the children and targeting the mother-child bond. Since the Victorian era there were different mechanisms forcing family separations, and during the 1960s and 70s emerged newer and more sophisticated mechanisms emanating from governmental institutions causing separations between the mother and their children” (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991:101).

Moreover, pregnancy outside the ideal conceptualized cultural construction is

only a human behavioral dynamic that emerges in the form of resistance to overcome the contradictions and limitations existing in the establishment. Gertrude, a thirty-three-year-old participant from New Orleans and a single mother, said that no matter how hard she tried it was never possible to earn a better living or have a man in her life willing to stay around and father her children. Thus, Gertrude chose to act against the social and cultural rules and became a single mother. She had three children that are four and six years apart, with three different men. She said, “It was the only I could have my children.”

Meanwhile her latest lover and father of her younger child shares a small apartment with four roommates in a nearby town, working in construction sites and visiting her and his child as often as his income allows it.

Additionally, behaviors producing the cultural form of single parenting carry the discourse of the meanings of freedom and autonomy, as contemporarily understood in the meanings of family creation. These symbolic behaviors have the meaning of individual choice and understanding of the right to choose having a child and creating a family when and with whom one chooses. Moreover, the narrative of several participants revealed that these behaviors contain the symbols of freedom as understood by the American people. It emerges from a structural ideology in the form of national identity, linked to the human right to liberty and happiness, as conceived by the Preamble of the American Constitution that promotes these behaviors.

Sunny, a sixty-one-year-old single mother of four children explained her contradicting behavior more bluntly by saying, “it’s the only way a woman like me can ever make her own family.” Additionally, Sunny explains that it was very difficult to be a

single mother, but “her children are all the family she needs and “she provided and cared for them without the help on any of their fathers.”

Interviewer: “Why did you make such a choice of creating a family on your own?”

Sunny: “Because I am free, I decide my life...nobody tells me what to do. I am an American.”

Contradicting behavior is still molded because participants supported their actions as supported by their national identity informed by the founding symbols of the right to freedom and happiness (The Preamble of the Constitution). Thus, from the different levels of behavioral moldings in the culture these participants chose behaviors that contradicted the contemporaneous meanings of the symbols of family creation and size in the social rules, traditions and cultural norms but followed the founding symbols and national identity that dictate of what is an American and the right to freedom and happiness. Schneider explains, “Elements that are culturally defined as natural are elaborated, built, transformed and informed” (molded or patterned) “by the rule of human reason, embodied in law and in morality” (1980: 40). This finding exposes the fact that is up to the individual to choose the behavior needed to face the threatening circumstance. The individual chooses from the great array of available cultural perceptual and behavioral patterns of molding, whether from social, cultural, religious, scientific, ideological, philosophical or familiar cultural meanings.

The late 1960s and 1970s became the background for several important cultural changes, including the Aquarian Cultural Revolution, the feminist movement, and institutionalization of a newer and more refined the sex education information and

educational style, including the sex education program. Added to these forces of change, the American nation was the victim of several economic recessions during the last seven decades. These elements influenced cultural behavior and affected behaviors bound to family creation, size and unity.

Additionally, the ideas of the Aquarian Cultural Revolution defined the meanings of the symbols of individuation, independence and freedom in accordance with the importance that they gave to communal unity and peace (Lindsey, 2007: 157). “Self-realization” was conceptually linked to the development of a higher spiritual and intellectual self (Lindsey, 2007: 161). Their re-conceptualizing of the symbols of individuation, freedom and self-realization started to become part of the American mainstream. Yet, although the movement collapsed soon after it emerged, its influence on the American family values can be detected in the narratives of several participants and in the new conceptualization given to family unity. Family unity became redefined under a more practical stance, yet it was also more natural and spontaneous as it was rid of ascribed status and forced relationships between the family members.

For instance, Stephanie, a twenty-four-years-old graduate student is willing to share, support and provide for the family members “that deserve it,” and she expects her family members “not to take her efforts for granted” and “give in return.” She finds most ascribed family roles “unreal” and believes that family is more “made” than “acquired.” Contrasting to past generations, these younger American family members expressed their freedom by what they believe is their right to choose with what family member they want to create familiar closeness and to choose whom to support and help when in need. For Stephanie, “blood is not always thicker than water.”

During the 1970s, the introduction of the female oral contraceptive for mass consumption (the pill) took place parallel to the feminist movement. In the 1970s the influence of the pill as a resource in the management of women's fertility caused the lowest birth numbers in the nation since the Great Depression. This powerful resource for fertility control together with the meanings carried by the ideologies of the era (individuality, freedom and autonomy) changed permanently, in both genders, the perception and behaviors linked to family creation and size. The discourse accompanying the introduction of the pill links the use of the pill with the achievement of autonomy and freedom to women. This discourse was taking place in an era that had several important changes that were overturning many former values, status, roles and norms allowing women to finally achieve better legal and social protections.

The 1970s had another important element of change in the form of an institution. State and government, along with federal support, aided the introduction of the sex education program. The ideology and methods behind the sex education program appear to have influenced the greatest changes in the structure and process of the American family since its introduction. The influence of their meanings to the symbols of family creation, size and unity caused more permanent changes in the American culture. Yet, there are elements in this education portfolio linked to ideologies of former eras that also focused on the control of the meanings and behaviors producing family creation, size and unity.

The program was taught through the American schools to reach every possible child so as indoctrinate them at an early age. The educational program carried the discourse of freedom and autonomy to the children. Sex educators indoctrinate the

children in the various methods to prevent pregnancy and birth, and to create an early moral autonomy of the child from the parents (Ferndale Elementary School District, 1978: 68-9).

The sex educators' pedagogic method appeals to the manipulation of the meanings of important symbols. Their discourse seeks to form a conscience in young people about the possible impact of their reproduction power, it cautions young people about the calamities of over-population and the resulting chaos, famine, maladies and massive deaths (Burt and Meeks, 1975: 352-56). Meanwhile, prevention from having children or larger families would cause "abundance and in general, the better possibility for people to maintain a better standard of living (Burt and Meeks, 1975: 352-56).

The ideological influence of this program caused important changes in the behavior of the members of the nuclear group particularly. Simultaneously, it caused changes of behaviors bound to family creation, size, unity, family roles, autonomy, individuality, and personal freedom. These changes of behavior can be better explained by the family dynamics since the 1960s and '70s. While is not possible to point to one sole element in the culture influencing these changes, parents often complained that their children "changed enormously after they started school." Mike, a seventy-seven-years-old real estate agent from California, and his wife Sue, a sixty-five-years-old housewife, provided their narratives showing their concern about the elements in society affecting the behavior of their children. Mike and Sue's older daughter Emily is thirty-six-year old, married and works as a church clerk. When Sue was seventeen years old, she left her parents' house to go to college and she never returned to live under their roof. She stayed in contact more often than the rest of her siblings (with an average of one call a month),

but was unable to visit because she had moved very far from her parents. She says that in the beginning, she learned as a child that her family expected her to get married after finishing college. But in reality, once she completed college, she thought that she needed to take her time choosing the father of her children and to save money to get her own apartment before considering marriage. She married when she was twenty-one year old and had no biological children of her own, but she mothered and raised her husband's children from a previous marriage.

The effect and power of its influence over the culture by this sex education in United States is found at a different level in most participants in this study. For instance, Jenny, twenty-eight-years old PhD student, demonstrated through her narratives a strong conviction of the notions that over-population can bring starvation to the nations and that people without the adequate resources should not reproduce. She planned to complete her career and find a job in international relations, and wait until the appropriate time and circumstances to get married and have children.

Moreover, as found in the narratives from Mike and Sue, for example, children tend to distance themselves emotionally from their parents at earlier ages so as to create their own world, "away from the parental and family influence." Mike said, 'Kids don't listen to advice...the visit little and we talk, but they only pretend to listen...Kids tend to be rude and oblivious of other people's needs and negligent of their family obligations.'" On the other hand, my personal experience getting to know my daughter's friends allowed me to learn that these young people have their own complaints and fears. They explain, "they don't feel they belong anywhere...and that is very difficult to be them to make real friends."

The experience and perceptions of an eighteen-years old participant, Ashley shows the dilemma of young people in their need to move far from their family to reassert themselves. Ashley meant, “to emancipate,” as conceived in the present culture. When she was seventeen, she moved out of her parents' house and worked as a server in a restaurant, trying to properly create her ability “to make it” by herself and become autonomous ... “to be free.” Her conception of freedom relates to her personal ability to become financially autonomous from parental help. She explained her feelings of loneliness because she did not have the moral support and positive reinforcement from her social surroundings when she needed it. She said, “Everybody is wrapped up in their own world and they only really care about themselves.”

Daniel, twenty-one year-old participant said, “Everyone wants to take the best of you” and they can’t be real friends. Matthew, a twenty-eight-years-old kitchen assistant could give his sister the needed place to live but he does not offer because “her problems cannot be my problems.” He added that if he was able to get a job and support himself “his sister has to be able, too,” and helping her would only unable her more. Matthew had two jobs, owns a one-bedroom house and pays the mortgage and all the bills by himself, but he says the money is never sufficient. He does not consider the possibility to marry any time soon, as he does not feel ready for marriage because he has many goals to achieve before marriage; but “one day I’ll get married and have a kid, when I can afford it.”

Thus, the ideologies engendered by capitalism economic and social model that prescribe the need to become an individual capable to be self-sustained and autonomous became enhanced by the meanings given to individuality and autonomy of the sex

education manuals. The meanings given to individuality and autonomy make the individual to focus more on their own personal needs (material, physical, emotional, social, and intellectual or technical). Under this frame, community and group membership are only instruments for a means, not a permanent situation. Meanwhile, parental roles are limited to the contemporaneous prescription of the need of the child to be behaviorally autonomous at an early age. This limits the role of guidance and emotional support of the parents and the emotional closeness of the child to the parents.

Despite the numbers of divorce in society and the painful memories that many people carry as they were children of divorce, the ideals for marriage and family of young American people tend to follow the traditional form. These participants, including twenty-eight-years old Bill and twenty-eight-years old Jenny, expected to get married in their late twenties to mid-thirties, create a classic family (with the housewife and full time mother until the kids reach school age) and have one or two children. Both of them thought that marriage would take place after career. They expected to have careers, savings, a family house and a secure income before having children. Young participants, especially the female participants hoped to get engaged and get married in the classic ceremony.

Meanwhile other young participants that already went through the experience of marriage or family creation explain their perception differently. Ron, a thirty-three-year-old police officer and Glenda, a thirty-one-year-old dental assistant, are single parents and are raising their child with the help of daycare and the cooperation of friends that are in the same situation. Glenda leaves her kid home alone every afternoon until she returns from work at night. They had tried making the ideal family and had a different

perspective about marriage and the creation of a family compared to the single younger participants. Glenda said that everything in her married life went opposite to what she had expected. Ron explains, "Marriage life and making a family is not as easy as some people want to believe it is."

Thus, the notions of ideal marriage and family keep permeating the ideological universe of the individual, while the economic and social realities keep preventing many people from achieving this ideal.

The cultural construct of the family in American kinship derives from the two orders of the world: "the order of nature on the one hand, and the order of law, the rule of reason, the human as distinct from the animal, on the other hand" (Schneider, 1980: 36-7). Adding to this concept Schneider explains that family, "as a paradigm for how kinship relations are to be conducted, and to what end, specifies that relations between members of the family are those of love," and "Love can be translated freely as enduring, diffuse solidarity" (Schneider, 1980: 50). In this sense, for the American culture real love "means unity, not difference. It means who you are, not how well you perform" (Schneider, 1980: 50). "It means trust, faith, affection, support, loyalty, help, support when it is needed, and the kind of help that is needed... Love is freely and unselfishly given" (Schneider, 1980: 50).

Ron, thirty-six year-old social worker explained that beyond the biological bond between him and his family he seeks to create affinity bonds with his family members (referring to his parents and siblings). This affinity considers mutual interests and the sharing of life's events, and surprises. Thus, family unity, as understood by these younger participants is relative to the specific situation existing in the family, but for participants, in

general terms it is a practical approach that does not take into consideration the existence of ascribed roles and authority.

The narratives of the participants exposed the contemporaneous understanding of family creation, size and unity. These conceptualizations were compared to the ones found by Schneider in order to discover the differences between the present and former meanings of these cultural units and forms. For Kristen, a thirty-one-year old medical student, creating a family is determined by the presence of children (biological, fostered or adopted) “because the status of a person without children changes radically by having children,” she said. For instance, the dyad of a man and a woman defines them as a couple, but the couple with a child is a family.

Family, as conceived by the participants are biological and non-biological families. Daniel, a twenty-one-year-old participant, for example, argued that a family is any group that carries the roles of family, even if there are no bloodlines or no children involved. Yet, traditional values dominate the cultural constructs that contain the general understanding of family. Edward, a thirty-three-year old computer technician explained that he understood as the traditional family generally, a heterosexual couple and their children, where the children are biological, adopted or fostered and all the members of the family group share a special kind of identity and affective bond. Other participants including Kristen, a thirty-one-year old medical student, echoed Schneider’s (1980: 40) conceptualization of the functions of the family and the cultural expectations for families. Echoing the findings of David Schneider (1980: 40) Kristen said “family raise and support the children in their infancy and children are expected to grow, and then emancipate, make a living and move out of the parental home.”

Several participants showed more extreme conceptual forms in their understanding of family. They perceived their family as a reason to exist. For example Regina, a forty-one years old nurse and mother of five children said that her life is her family.” Hence, these findings suggest that family is the choice to create, display and maintain the roles expected of a family. Other participants showed different reasons for making a family. Brian, for instance, a twenty-six year old cab driver revealed that the cultural notion of family acts as a frame that gives structure to his lives because there are goals to accomplish before and after creating a family and because it is the conventional behavior, dictated by the cultural rule. Brian, said, “I will have my wife and kids like everybody else does.”

Family size defines the number of people in the family. The findings made by David Schneider in the 1960s (1980: 30, 33) and the narratives of Kristen concurred. Homologous to Schneider’s findings (Schneider, 1980: 30-33, 47-51), Kristen understood the nuclear group as the basic unit of the family and as the formal conceptualization of family in America. Thus, the nuclear family chooses the number of children to have, determining in this way the size of the family. Regina, forty-one years old nurse thought that family size could also be the result of an accidental pregnancy and in many cases separation, divorce and second marriages can change the family size. This nuclear group actively carries the family bonds, attaching themselves to gender and age categories, statuses, roles, expectations, norms, rules and laws. Meanwhile, due to the fact that most participants described different types of distances (physical, age, personal, economic and social status) in their relationship with their relatives, the extended family group (if it

exist in the lives of the participants) appears more passively taking part in the family dynamics.

Family unity defines the maintenance of the most basic form of love, family love, which, many participants, including seventy-one-year-old schoolteacher Bertha believed that is exercised by a unique kind of solidarity, and it should be unconditional. This understanding echoed Schneider's findings in the 1960s (Schneider, 1980: 54). Bertha described the special family bond and affection as "the intimate relationship" that has a personal and emotional attachment and the open expression of love (in the sense of caring, supporting, cooperating), which "ideally, should be permanent and unconditional."

Moreover, Robert, thirty-eight years old businessman conceived family unit as the choice to create and maintain togetherness (physical and emotional) and solidarity (material and affective) between the family members. However, the analysis of the narratives from the participants revealed that for contemporaneous Americans, family unity in the form of togetherness and solidarity greatly depends on the quality of the economic, social, religious and emotional conditions of every family.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The patriarchal social model dominating the structure of American society has also dominated the course of its development as it directly affected the conception and change of many meanings and behaviors relating to basic cultural forms. Yet, with the passing of time, the patriarchal rules have softened in a way that allowed the development of more diverse family behaviors and expectations.

The ascribed higher authority of males maintains the patriarchal rule of male supremacy (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 230) that gives males a higher status. These socially prescribed roles are at the root of the prescribed family status and categories that, throughout the different eras of the American culture, have obligated different types of distances between the genders and between individuals and groups. These statuses, roles and categories stand on the notion of natural and inalienable differences and inequalities between individuals. These notions heighten the value of the elements as the differences are moral, intellectual, physical, and ability, but they are made to appear supernatural. This assigned superiority to males also granted them higher power (social, political, authoritarian), which created chaos in the relationships between the genders, even within the family system. This unequal exercise of power could be used as a mechanism of domination that can even allow abuse.

On the other hand, while women have been perceived as the gender that suffered the most extreme negative effects of the patriarchal rules, these rules have created

deleterious effects on every member of the family. Under this social model, males are expected to be strong mentally, physically and emotionally. In practice, the ascribed superiority to males dictated by the patriarchal social model keeps them from developing natural and humanized relations even with their own family. Additionally, throughout the history of America, there have been different mechanisms distancing males from their families because nurturing and disclosing emotions are opposite behaviors to what is conceived as maleness.

The organization and structure of the family via the patriarchal social model carries the role of strict parental authority that was stricter in earlier eras and created divisions between parents and children. Ascribed status, together with roles and categories, also created emotional, social, and even intellectual distances between the family members. Separate spheres for the genders, age and status were a systematic obstacle for the proper development of relationships between individuals and groups. It delayed the positive intellectual, moral and dignified development of the culture.

However, changes taking place since earlier times have developed a different contemporaneous family compared to the Colonial family. The stricter forms of parental authority declined as childrearing modes became more relaxed and the economic changes taking place from era to era eventually caused the loss of the use of family property for most people (Polanyi, 1957: 68-69) as a tool to impose parental authority and control. Gender differentiations and roles also declined since Colonial times as result of the cultural changes that brought up the emergence of high levels of family separations and divorce. These changes started with the end of the family dominated agrarian economy and the introduction of industrialism economic model.

Gender stereotypes have also eased through the different eras of the American history; yet, they often had a negative effect in the development of both genders behaviors producing family creation, size and unity as the stereotypes separated them socially, culturally, ideologically and morally. The strict prescribed gender roles did not allowed a healthy and balanced relationship between men and women and the granted higher authority of males allowed them to exercise unapologetically, extreme modes of control and power; power and control that were protected by society and even the law. Historically, culture and society have been appointing to males the role of providers and to women the one of caretakers. Only with the advent of industrialization and capitalism these patterns started to break up under the need of women to support themselves and their children in the absence of the husband or other patriarchal figure, also under the needs of males to reject what they could perceive as extreme imposed obligations and roles. Additionally, the patriarchal social model's patterns started to break down under the need of the social and economic systems for growth and for higher consumption and spending, which demands from every person to become economically productive.

The extreme ideologies attached to gender stereotypes created more inequality between the genders. For example, the higher moral superiority of the Victorian era went hand in hand with the male's superior authority (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 230); yet, women moral status also subjected them to a domestic life and kept them from being capable from developing into areas outside their homes (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 230). The prescribed social rule of males' higher authority kept them distanced from their family's affairs and domestic intimacy. These extreme gender stereotypes caused different divisions between the genders that affected the family dynamic while the

number of births suffered a decline as higher morality also imposed sexual abstinence (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 237).

Meanwhile, there were heightened numbers of teenage pregnancies. These pregnancies occurring at the American historical era of highest censorship and moral stand can be interpreted as a behavior of resistance. These women acted against the cultural and social rules and ideologies, and exercised a behavior that prevented them from growing old as childless women.

Agrarian families were able to have several children (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: xx) because their economic structure allowed them to manipulate and have control on the production and management of their goods, food and raw materials (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: xvi). The unity and cooperative structure of these families was lost with the advent of the industrial paradigm and the imposed social and economic changes that made it impossible for most families to continue their former economic production and self-sufficiency. During the industrial era, the separations of large families and the high demand for labor caused the lowering of the numbers of family creation and size (Gambino, 1974: 7). Only the capable and productive members could afford to live in these areas while the low wages and greater expenses (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 322-30, 32) made the family lose their ability to support others than their smaller nuclear family groups. The narratives from participants revealed that these forced changes caused a cognitive and cultural change of social and moral quality, as it became socially acceptable to ignore the needs of relatives or strangers because, under the circumstances most people were not capable to help. Thus, families, groups and communities became unable and unwilling to cooperate with other people's needs.

Hence, the body of ideologies that appeared with industrialism was against the former ideologies and family structure of the agrarian era (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 320-1). Additionally, the ideologies dominating the background of the industrial era contained more contradictions than the former one. The Victorian culture and ideologies overlap the historical era of the introduction of industrialism. While Victorians protected the unity and closeness of the family, industrialism material modes forced drastic family separations (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991:101). In equal manner, Victorians had nuclear family groups joined in close communication and cooperation and the early stages of industrialism profited from the united structure of family groups for labor (Polanyi, 1957: 68-9). Yet, later this preference changed as industrial patrons started to reject united labor groups.

The family structure was being changed permanently and the effects of these changes accumulated from era to era, resulting at the end a model of family that in the present functions under the cultural norm of autonomy and the opposite of cooperation. The culture changes brought up to the human masses by the loss of the agrarian economic model shifted their focus on the group to the focus on the individual (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991: 320-1). Romantic ideals (Garland, 1952) re-conceptualized the meanings of individuation, autonomy and freedom, replacing them with newer meanings that influenced people to openly pursue their individual interests, disregarding parental authority and obligations toward others because this authority could keep them from achieving self-fulfillment that were leaving their large households of cooperative production and communal consumption to go into the industrial center and work for wages (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: xvi). Meanwhile, power structures were preparing the

American people to be exposed to more severe contradictions and extremes in the next decades.

By the 1930s, the trauma caused by the extreme calamities and scarcities imposed by the events of the Great Depression made people embrace ideologies opposite to their experience with the Great Depression. It caused in the human group a convulsive need to reject any social, economic or idealistic element carrying meanings of scarcity and poverty. In consequence, the succeeding recovery of the nation from the Great Depression in the 1930s and after World War II in the 1940s, had this human group embracing the ideology of abundance and welcoming capitalism.

The government programs established after World War I, the Great Depression and World War II brought up an economic recovery and temporary stability of the nation, along with their propaganda with a heightened ideology of family creation and unity. Consequently, birth numbers increased, especially in the era of the 1940s, producing the Baby Boomer generation. The success of these government programs allowed the creation of wealth, giving emergence to the ideal of abundance (Lindsey, 2007: 34), which embodied in the ideal of the American dream. The ideal of abundance gave people the perception of the possibility to create and accumulate wealth (Lindsey, 2007: 34). In this way this cultural re-conceptualization gave people the freedom to separate further from their extended families and to pursuit the ideals contained in the American dream, including the creation of the “ideal family.”

In its first historical stage, the needs and methods of industrialism forced the loss of large family households composed of several nuclear family groups living together in mutual cooperation. Families living in the industrial era were obligated to create a new

structure containing only the nuclear family group living alone and without the company and support of the extended family group (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: xvi). These changes had been eased by the dominating body of ideologies of the time that enhanced the needs for autonomy, freedom and self-fulfillment, creating the people's preference for individual wages and their separation from their extended families' needs and obligations that, as seen in the narratives from participants, eventually caused emotional and moral detachment.

Meanwhile, capitalism ideologies were only an extension of the former Romantic ideology. However, capitalism exacerbated the Romantic meanings of autonomy and freedom because it added to them the moral meanings carried by the ideals of abundance, consumerism and spending. In consequence, more people sought independence from family authority figures and structured systems of duties and started to prioritize their own interests and personal benefits. The capitalistic notions of autonomy, individuality, freedom and self-fulfillment promoted a higher meaning of "self" creating an extreme sense of selfhood.

The successful economic and social restoration of the nation achieved by the government programs after World War II (Kain, 1990: 5) cemented the notion of the ideal of abundance, as well as the notion of the ideal family, and of the American dream, because it became possible for many people to achieve these ideals. In consequence, the decade of the 1950s shows higher numbers of birth. By the 1950s, the family model had become the "ideal family." This family had one or two children with the parents as the main caretakers, living autonomous from their relatives. These families replaced the

company and help that were formerly provided by the extended family group with the help of institutions and experts.

However, by the end of 1950s, the circumstances had changed and there was an emergence of higher numbers of divorce and of single parenting (Mintz and Kellogg, 1989: xvii). Society had over-estimated the ability of parents to carry on with all the obligations and work of a family without the permanent support and cooperation from relatives, as it was the case in former eras. Especially from the 1940s, the symbols composing the cultural forms that related to family creation, size and unity started to have opposing meanings to those of freedom, autonomy and individuality, as conceived even by the contemporaneous culture. The contradiction between the bodies of cultural meanings (norms, rules and ideals) creates conflicts between the members of the family and the self as many individuals and families find impossible to accomplish the higher cultural ideals and also achieve self-realization, as contemporaneously conceived.

The newer type of family that was created under the new cultural norm of the “ideal family” faced, and continues to face in contemporaneous America, extreme circumstances because the culturally conceived ideal for family carries important symbolic contradictions. These contradictions are linked to the imposed cultural ideal of a lifestyle and status of the middle class, which, from era to era have become more inaccessible for a great majority of people. Economic issues that caused high levels of stress in the parents affected the whole family and most participants included this element between the reasons for their divorce or separation.

The prescribed meanings and organization of the “ideal family” exist in the culture only in the ideological realm and is possible only for a portion of the population.

Yet, statistically, it proved itself impossible for the majority. Historical data from the early 1900s to the present time shows a drop in the numbers of the idealized traditional family. From 1966 to 1990 the amount of children raised by their biological parents dropped from 75 percent to 56 percent. “The reason is not only divorce, but also the increase of children born from single mothers” (Dawson, 1991: 573).

In the 1970s the massive use of the oral female contraceptive caused some of the lowest numbers of births in American history. Alternatively, the same era had the establishment of the sex education program. The effect of these elements of change strengthened the cultural changes produced by the means and methods used by the introduction of industrialism and capitalism, wars, economic recessions and the extreme ideologies contained by the Victorian culture. The realistic analysis of the changes that they created suggest that although there were higher numbers of birth and family size during periods of their historical stages, in perspective, the end result of their forced cultural changes show that they all created the diminishing of birth numbers and family size, and in every single one of their historical stages there were several mechanisms attacking family closeness and unity.

The ideology created by this educational model caused more distancing from the child to the family by ascribing a moral autonomy to them, teaching them simultaneously to choose their sexuality, and favor independence, autonomy and career before the creation of family. In consequence, the younger families are smaller and younger parents start to have children at an older age compared to the former generation.

Younger generations often reject their cultural understanding of traditional ascribed family roles, although they are willing to create families. In the creation of their

own families and maintenance of their relations with their birth families they play the family roles under their own terms. These younger families have redefined the meanings of family unity under a perspective that allows them to enjoy the existence of their family without what they consider to be traditional and orthodox obligations and norms. Thus, as expressed by several participants, the family relations take place by mutual choice and agreement.

As seen in the historical account and analysis, the power of humanity cannot measure to the power of the concentration of (social, institutional, political, economic, technological, scientific, informational and religious) structures causing cultural, social, economic and ideological changes. The fast changes imposed to the American people by the different structures of power, since the creation of the nation took the family from its large, cohesive and cooperative kin groups with independence and autonomy to their complete dependence on the social and economic organization.

The effects of the changes forced by the structures of power in different eras were at times very deleterious to every member of the family. Most of these changes were systematically created, targeting the same purpose and creating the same changes in the behaviors producing family creation, size and unity. Thus, from one era to the next, the aggregation of the changes created a greater transformation of the structure and meanings of the family. These cultural changes continued almost in a straight line throughout the time, exposing in present times a family structure and meanings almost opposite to the one of the Colonial times. Families also created their new version of family unity framed mostly by the material limitations of the middle class and the re-conceptualization of the meanings of unity and family solidarity. Young participants expressed their need to

choose their behaviors toward their family members and create bonds, and exchange acts of solidarity with the family member that is willing to participate in a relationship of equality, mutual cooperation, emotional bonding and respect.

The American culture has been exposed to material and ideological extremes and challenges (wars, economic recessions, ideologies carrying deleterious meanings and contradictions, poor material conditions) that sought to diminish positive family values. They also sought to destabilize the family unity and decrease birth numbers. In consequence, the birth numbers of the American nation diminished steadily and in an almost linear fashion since the end of the agrarian era to the present time. Simultaneously, family size had started to shrink by the end of the agrarian era and continued lowering, especially after the introduction of the pill (oral contraceptive method for women) in the 1970s. Birth numbers and family size represent in present time a “healthy behavior” because, despite the fact that they are much lower than the birth numbers of the agrarian era, early Victorian era, and the 1940s, these numbers are just over the replacing statistical number of the population (Billari, Kohler, and Hans, 2004).

Both birth rates and family size suffered low numbers as result of material and ideological forces. The material deleterious effects of industrialism, the Great Depression, World War I and World War II caused important lowering of births. Yet, the ideological elements that include the ideal of female purity and higher morality of the Victorian era caused lower numbers of births, while the pill (1970s) can be conceived as a medico-technological element that serves as an ideological resource to influence behavior and strengthen choice. Yet, this choice is contingent to the presence of different layers of cultural meanings (in ideals, constructs, exemplary behavior) for behavior

molding. This choice is also contingent to the agent's own body of reason. The introduction of the pill caused in that era (1970s) the lowest numbers of births in American history (Lindsey, 2007: 206).

However, the findings show that throughout the different eras, Americans have favored behaviors that create families. Even against adversities there is a resilience of these behaviors demonstrated by the emergence of unmolded behavior. The findings suggest the presence of cultural elements promoting these behaviors. These include: the great ethnically diverse ideological and behavioral environment that carries behaviors opposite to the cultural norms and their birth numbers that impact the demographic numbers showing American population growth.

Meanwhile their behavior carries a discourse of resistance to adversity imposed by social, political and economic systems mainly, as narrated by several participants. Secondly, the economic stability of the American nation of the 1930s through the 1950s produced a structural generalized notion of trust of the human group on its government and in the government's ability to protect its people, and to overcome any difficult circumstance. This trust is embedded in the notions of the ideology of abundance, which continues producing behaviors of over-consumption and spending, and the trust in government even in the times of economic recession. More importantly, as narrated by several participants, the "healthy behavior," as demographers call it (Billari, Kohler, and Hans, 2004), of the American people toward family creation, size and unity results from their internalization of the American founding precepts or the right to life, liberty and happiness. This precepts act as a form of national identity that functions as a conceptual frame aiding the emergence of positive behaviors that protect life and family.

Although most of these responses resonate David Schneider's (1980:50), most participants explained that their understanding of family unity did not necessarily match their personal experiences with every members of their family or what they had witnessed in other families. Thus, this concept appears as an ideal that when it was put into practice it developed into a pragmatic behavioral form of choice of relations and the requirement of a healthy balance of actions of solidarity.

The constructs showing the understanding of family unity reveals the presence of the ideal of family unity but in reality this unity changed dramatically as families lost their autonomy and self-sustaining ability that they enjoyed during the agrarian era making it impossible for them to support the extended family households. As participants explained and Schneider described (Schneider, 1980: 30-33, 47-51). The contemporaneous families are smaller and composed by the nuclear group independent and often away from their relatives. The economic factors that created financial instability obligated the family members to concentrate their resources for the use and needs of their more immediate family (spouse and children), and avoid or neglect helping those relatives in need. This fact took guilt from their discourse causing the moral stance of the notion of family unity to lose or minimize the value of cooperation and enduring, diffuse solidarity.

The ideal of family separation that appeared especially since the Victorian era (Hawes and Nybakken, 1991:101) supported these behaviors. Thus, ideally, the distancing from the parents and their authority became the way to achieve autonomy and self-realization. Through the time these distances became more systematic developing from physical distance to emotional and even moral distances. In the contemporaneous

culture these distances are the norm starting with the young son and daughter moving from their parental roof to emancipate. Once the son or daughter emancipates the family members tend to limit their visits and communication. Additionally, they exercise choice in the creation of bonds, closeness and unity. They tend to choose closeness to a family member (from the nuclear or extended group) under the condition of a balance and healthy exchange of benefits.

More importantly, they reject to adhere to traditional formal, strict ascribed responsibilities, roles and status because they do not feel morally obligated to follow them. These changes took place consequence of the economic instability that in company of ideologies promoting family separations caused the deterioration of the family's ability to support larger groups. For instance, the ideology of autonomy, as contemporaneously understood demands from each individual the ability for self-support and autonomy. Under these circumstances it became morally accepted to avoid responsibilities toward the extended family group and neglect to provide different types of support. Participants explained that resources and even time for family can be very limited.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. FAU Institutional Review Board Approval




Division of Research
Institutional Review Board
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 11, 2009

TO: Mary Cameron,
Ida Everest,
Department of Anthropology

FROM: Nancy Aaron Jones, Chair 

RE: H09-122 "Symbols, Narratives and Meanings of the American Family"

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed the above protocol. Under the provisions for expedited review, the proposed research has been found acceptable as meeting the applicable ethical and legal standards for the protection of the rights and welfare of the human subjects involved.

This approval is valid for **one year from the above memo date**. This research must be approved on an annual basis. It is now your responsibility to renew your approval annually and to keep the IRB informed of any substantive change in your procedures or of any problems of a human subjects' nature.

It is important that you use the approved, stamped consent documents attached.

Please do not hesitate to contact either myself (6-8632) or Elisa Gaucher (7-2318) with any questions.

NAJ:reg
Final Expedited Review Category: B7

Appendix B. Interview Questions

Kin Inventory. Defining Categories

1. Make a List identifying your family members, relatives and kin.
2. What do you call your different relatives (What term do you use).

Family Structure

1. In your opinion, what makes a family member?
2. Would you consider a family a group different from the traditional married couple with their children? For instance, single parents, foster parents, grandparents or relatives raising the children? Homosexual couples with children?
3. How often do you see family members that do not live with you?
4. How close are they to you? (emotional closeness).
5. What is the most common circumstance that brings you together?

Symbols within the Concept of the American Family.

1. What do you think are the fundamental elements that should exist in a family to make it 'a family'? How strong does that element have to be? What gives the strength to that element?
2. Have you ever felt that you love a person who is not family in a similar way that you love a family member? Do you want to explain it?
3. What do you think about the cultural saying "family is forever"?
4. Do you think that solidarity between family members is or should be indestructible?
5. Is loyalty supposed to exist under any circumstance in a family?
6. What is family unity? How do you see this 'family unity' after families separate or divorce?

Emotional Closeness. Family as a place of Refuge.

1. Do you think families that live together can have a better sense of unity?
2. Do you think family members should tell everything to the each other?
3. Should families have secrets? Even if it huts someone in the family?
4. Do you think family should be a place of refuge? a safe harbor?
5. What kind of emotional stuff do you share with your family?
6. What kind of activities makes you feel closer to your family? Do you have family special rituals? How often?
7. Does these reunions allow for openness and profound conversation?
8. What do you think about family members cutting permanently their relationships?

Exploring the Ideals of Freedom, Democracy and Choice.

1. How do you feel about making choices on your own about your own life, like career, friends, partner, and religion?
2. Would you still choose your partner, friends, career, etc., even if your parents disagree?
3. Who has the last word when there are decisions to be taken in your family?

4. What do you think about the cases of domestic violence or sexual abuse occurring in the family unit?
5. What have been the most important things happening in your life impacting your perception of yourself?
6. Do you think people your age share this experience about these landmarks in their lives?

Gender Stereotypes in the Family Context.

1. When you were growing up, between your mother or father, or caretaker, who did you perceived was closer to you needs?
2. Who cooked, cleaned, and took you to school?
3. Who represent you when it was necessary, at school, in special events, to get your driving license? Who taught you to drive?
4. Who controlled the resources in your family?
5. Who 'carries the pants' in your house?

Family Narratives. Control and Authority.

1. How did you feel about discipline when you were growing up?
2. Who disciplined you? Who did the most discipline?
3. What kind of right do you think your parents have over you and your choices?
4. Who makes the most important choices in your house?
5. How does family negotiate with you the important decisions that affect you?
6. Do you have a say in those decisions?

Appendix C. Demographic Information

Demographic Data for Study Participants

Subject	Family Type	Economic Status	Religion	Ethnicity	Gender	Age Group
1	T	MC	Q	EC	F	MA
2	T	MC	P	EC	M	S
3	T	UC	B	UC	M	S
4	T	MC	B	Cb	M	Y
5	T	MC	H	ME	M	MA
6	T	MC	O	ME	F	Y
7	T	WC	JW	AA	F	S
8	T	WC	Ct	AA	F	MA
9	T	WC	J	EC	M	Y
10	T	MC	Ct	EC	M	MA
11	T	MC	J	L	F	Y
12	T	WC	Ct	L	M/G	Y
13	A	UC	P	EC	F	Y
14	A	MC	Ct	L	M	S
15	A	MC	J	EC	M	MA
16	O	MC	P	EC	M	S
17	O	MC	M	EA	F	MA
18	O	WC	Ct	Cb	F	S
19	O	MC	J	EC	F	S
20	O	WC	JW	AA	M	Y
21	O	WC	Ct	NA	F	MA
22	D	MC	E	AA	F	Y
23	D	MC	T	EA	M	MA
24	D	UC	Ct	L	F	MA
25	D	MC	Ct	NA	M	MA
26	D	UC	Ct	EC	M/G	S
27	D	MC	J	EC	F	MA
28	D	MC	J	EC	F	S
29	D	MC	J	EC	M	MA
30	D	MC	O	EA	M	MA
31	D	MC	Ct	L	M/G	MA
32	SP	MC	Ct	L	F	Y
33	SP	WC	Ct	EC	M	MA
34	SP	WC	O	AA	M	MA
35	SP	MC	J	L	F	Y
36	SP	WC	Cb	AA	F	MA
37	SP	WC	Ct	Cb	F	Y
38	SP	MC	O	EC	F/G	Y
39	T	UC	J	EU	M	S
40	D	MC	B	EA	F	S
41	T	UC	Ct	EU	F	S
42	D	UC	J	EU	M	S
43	A	MC	Ct	EU	F	S
44	T	UC	Ct	EU	F	S

Family type at birth: T: Traditional: Heterosexual couple as parents with their children; A: Adopted: participant was adopted; SP: Participant was a single parent; O: Other: Participant was raised by an alternative family, D: Participant was raised in divorced family. **Economic status:** WC: working Class; MC: middle class; UC: Upper class
Religion: Q: Quaker; P: Protestant; B: Baptist; H: Hindu; JW: Jehovah's Witness; Ct: Catholic; J: Jewish; M: Muslim; E: Evangelist; T: Taoist; O: Other, including spiritual, but not affiliated with an organized religion
Ethnicity: NA: Native American; EC: European Caucasian; L: Latino; Cb: Caribbean; AA: African American; EA: East Asia (China); ME: Middle Eastern. **Gender:** M: Male; F: Female; M/G: Male gay; F/G: female gay
Age: Y: Young, 18-34; MA: Middle age, 35-65; S: Senior, 66 and over

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