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Christmas Pajamas

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Christmas Pajamas  
Calendar Custom

Informant
Jaiden Kendell was born in Oregon, raised in Lubbock, Texas, and now attends Utah State University in Logan, Utah. Her family lives in Alpine, Utah. She is 21 years old and is a junior studying Public Relations with a minor in Biology. She is the 3rd of 5 children in her family and has 2 brothers and 2 sisters. She loves to play tennis. She is my co-worker; we work for Utah State’s Campus Recreation program.

Context
I interviewed Jaiden at the front desk of Utah State’s HPER Building (Health, Physical Education, and Recreation) during a shift. The building was almost completely empty because it was a Saturday afternoon and no students were on campus. We were the only 2 people at the desk and we were both on our computers and chatting to kill time. She was playing around with her swivel chair and had to speak up a little to be heard over the noise of a load of towels in our industrial washing machine. We were sitting only a few feet away from each other. Jaiden described the context of the custom as taking place at the house of any of her mom’s siblings on the evening of Christmas Eve. All her mom’s siblings live in Utah County, so the location of this Christmas Eve custom rotates every year. It has happened every year around 6 PM on Christmas Eve since she can remember. Every family member present (usually her entire extended family on her mom’s side) participates in the custom - either as a giver or receiver. Her parents and aunts/uncles buy for all the kids (newborns to adult children), but neither the adults nor grandparents receive pajamas. Everybody unwraps the pajamas at the same time and immediately changes into them. She mentioned that every family member stays in those pajamas for the whole night and for the entirety of Christmas Day as well. This custom happens around the Christmas tree in the biggest room in the house, and each family member changes in any open room in the house. It is very loud and chaotic as everybody unwraps their gift and change at the same time. She said one year her family didn’t travel from Texas to Utah for Christmas, but she still received pajamas that year; they performed the custom the same way except the only participants were her immediate family members. Nobody but members of her mom’s side of the family are present for this custom, either (spouses excepted).

Text
For Christmas we get new pajamas every year, like as a family. We do that, like, on Christmas Eve, and that’s my favorite part about Christmas. I don’t know why I like getting new pajamas! My parents, every year, give them to us. We don’t know- we can tell them sometimes, like what
we kinda like, but they don’t really listen to us and they just get us whatever they want. And then they just wrap them and we all open them at the same time and it’s really fun.

**Texture**

Jaiden told me about this with a very excited and animated tone. She repeated multiple times how it happens every year and that she always looks forward to it. She laughed when she realized how happy getting new pajamas made her, but admitted that even though it seems silly, she plans to continue this tradition with her own family someday. She rolled her eyes when remembering one year when her mom got her and her sisters really ugly matching pajamas, but smiled when she told me they wore them anyways, in spirit of the tradition. Her attitude of nostalgia and delight was constant throughout our conversation. The atmosphere on Christmas Eve is one of excitement and is very loud. It is a time of bonding and familial love to be present and expressed. There is always a lot of humor and jokes involved as well; kids tease their parents about the appearance of the pajamas they receive and parents joke with their children about the presents they bought them. It is a very festive and happy mood.