

Attitudes Toward the Continuation of Family Rituals Among Emerging Adults

Stacey R. Friedman^{1,2} and Carol S. Weissbrod¹

In this study we examined college students' assessment of the personal meaningfulness of their families' rituals and their desire to initiate family rituals in the future. Participants were 46 male and 49 female never-married, primarily European American undergraduates at a private east coast university. It was found that women were more likely than men to see themselves initiating future family rituals. The amount of ritual initiation undertaken by participants' same-sex parents and participants' communality were significant predictors of reported likelihood of future ritual initiation. A "caring" parenting style was the only significant predictor of the meaningfulness of rituals. The relationships of respondents' religious and ethnic background and their parents' marital status to their attitudes toward rituals were also examined.

KEY WORDS: family rituals; cross-generational; emerging adult.

Rituals have been defined as "a pattern of prescribed formal behavior, pertaining to some specific event, occasion, or situation, which tends to be repeated over again" (Rosenthal & Marshall, 1988, p. 670) and "symbolic acts that include not only ceremonial aspects of the actual presentation of rituals but the process of preparing for it as well" (Roberts, 1988, p. 8). Family rituals have been noted to involve emotion and the cross-generational continuity of meaning (Bennett, Wolin, & McAvity, 1988; Bossard & Boll, 1950; Fiese, 1992; Fiese et al., 2002; Imber-Black, 1988; Laird, 1988; Moore & Myerhoff, 1977; Richlin-Klonsky & Bengston, 1996; Roberts, 1988; Rosenthal & Marshall, 1988; Troll, 1988; Van der Hart, 1983). Types of rituals include celebrations (e.g., religious celebrations and holidays), family traditions (e.g., family reunions and birthdays), and patterned family interactions (e.g., dinnertime rituals; Wolin & Bennett, 1984).

Few studies have addressed the significance of rituals to individual family members, as opposed to the family as a unit (Eaker & Walters, 2002). Fiese et al. (2002) noted a paucity of research on transition periods during which adolescents may find rituals less meaningful than do their parents (Fiese, 1992; Meredith, Abbott, Lamanna, & Sanders, 1989). Thus, in the present study, we focused on the significance of family rituals to men and women in late adolescence and young adulthood, a time of transitions described as "emerging adulthood" (Arnett, 2000), when young men and women begin to think about commitments to work and family.

This study was designed to examine participants' assessment of the personal meaningfulness of rituals and attitudes toward their future initiation of rituals. We predicted that there would be a gender difference in the latter but not the former. The prediction that more women than men would desire to initiate rituals was based on previous findings that women are more likely than men to ensure the continuation of family rituals (Leach & Braithwaite, 1996; Pett, Lang, & Gander, 1992; Rosenthal, 1985). However, we hypothesized that variables associated with gender would be stronger predictors than gender per se

¹Department of Psychology, American University, Washington, DC.

²To whom correspondence should be addressed at The Consultation Center, Yale University School of Medicine, 389 Whitney Avenue, New Haven, Connecticut 06511; e-mail: stacey.friedman@yale.edu.

of respondents' reported likelihood of future ritual initiation. Thus, these gender-related variables were expected to account better than gender per se for the predicted gender difference in the desire to initiate rituals.

The gender-related variables examined in this study were communion/agency and the amount of ritual initiation undertaken by the same-sex parent. Communion is a trait characterized by a sense of openness and union with others (Stewart & Malley, 1987), and individuals with high levels of this trait report engaging in more communal behaviors (Saragovi, Koestner, Dio, & Aube, 1997). Women have historically scored higher than men on measures of communion (Moskowitz, Suh, & Desaulniers, 1994; Saragovi et al., 1997). Family rituals have been found to be a source of family closeness, and the performance of family rituals has been described as communal behavior (Bennett et al., 1988; Fiese, 1992; Imber-Black, 1988; Richlin-Klonsky & Bengston, 1996; Wolin & Bennett, 1984). We hypothesized that both men and women high in trait communion would be more likely to see themselves as initiating family rituals in the future and more likely to view their families' rituals as meaningful.

Agency is characterized by self-assertion, self-protection, and self-expansion (Stewart & Malley, 1987). We examined, on an exploratory basis, whether there is any relationship between agency and the desire to initiate rituals. Although researchers have linked rituals to fostering unity and nurturance, the initiation of rituals, given the planning and leadership skills involved, also may draw upon agentic traits.

It was also hypothesized that the frequency of ritual initiation by respondents' same-sex parents would predict individuals' reported likelihood of future initiation. This prediction was based on the cross-generational nature of family rituals and findings that children model their parents' behavior, particularly the same-sex parent's behavior (Bandura, 1977).

In this study we examined participants' perceptions of not only the quantity (i.e., frequency) of their parents' ritual initiation, but also the quality of their parents' initiation of family rituals. "Rigid ritualization," in which individual autonomy is stifled and parental directiveness is highly salient, has been linked to resentment of family rituals by family members and finding rituals less personally meaningful (Bossard & Boll, 1950; Roberts, 1988; Rosenthal & Marshall, 1988; Rubin, 1989; Van der Hart, 1983; Wolin & Bennett, 1984; Wolin, Bennett, & Jacobs, 1988). It was therefore expected that male and female respondents who viewed their parents as "over-

protective" (i.e., discouraging of autonomy) would be less likely to see themselves as initiating rituals in the future and less likely to find their families' rituals personally meaningful. On the other hand, male and female respondents who viewed their parents as "caring" (i.e., conveying warmth and responsiveness) were expected to perceive their families' rituals as more personally meaningful. Supporting this hypothesis are findings from a study of female college students that "family boundary appropriateness" (defined as low intrusiveness and high cohesiveness among family members) was positively related to participants' satisfaction with family rituals (Eaker & Walters, 2002).

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 46 male and 49 female unmarried undergraduates at a private east coast university, ages 18–28 years (for the total sample, $M = 19.59$, $SD = 1.50$; for men, $M = 19.78$, $SD = 1.87$; for women, $M = 19.41$, $SD = 1.04$) who were recruited through psychology courses and received course credit for participation. Although 103 students initially participated, eight (five women and three men) were eliminated because of an absent father or incomplete or inaccurate questionnaires. About 60% of the sample were freshmen or sophomores; the majority were European Americans who came from families with married parents; about 69% had a Judeo-Christian religious affiliation (see Table I). Eighty-five respondents (89%) had parents of the same ethnic background, and 10 (11%) had parents of different ethnicities. Sixty-nine respondents (73%) had parents who shared the same religious affiliation, and 26 (27%) had parents of different religions.

Materials and Procedure

Questionnaire packets were presented by a female graduate student experimenter to groups of up to 15 participants.

Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ)

The PAQ (Spence & Helmreich, 1978) is a widely used measure of agency and communion. The PAQ asks participants to rate themselves on a 5-point scale for 24 bipolar items. The PAQ consists of three 8-item scales: an M scale made up of items judged to be stereotypically more characteristic of men (i.e.,

Table I. Demographic Data as Percentage of Total Respondents

	Percentage of total		
	Men (<i>n</i> = 46)	Women (<i>n</i> = 49)	Total (<i>N</i> = 95)
Year in school			
Freshman	21.74	18.37	20.00
Sophomore	43.48	38.78	41.05
Junior	15.22	28.57	22.11
Senior	19.57	14.29	16.84
Parental marital status			
Married	73.91	69.39	71.58
Separated	4.35	4.08	4.21
Divorced	13.04	22.45	17.89
Widowed	8.70	4.08	6.32
Ethnic origin			
African American	0.00	0.00	0.00
Asian or Pacific Islander	10.87	2.04	6.32
European American	73.91	85.71	80.00
Hispanic	2.17	6.12	4.21
Native American	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other	13.04	6.12	9.47
Religious affiliation			
Buddhist	4.34	2.04	3.16
Catholic	23.91	38.78	31.58
Hindu	2.17	0.00	1.05
Jewish	21.74	20.41	21.05
Muslim	2.17	2.04	2.10
Protestant	17.39	14.29	15.79
Other	26.09	22.45	24.41
Missing	2.74	0.00	1.05

agentic/instrumental traits), an *F* scale made up of items judged to be stereotypically more characteristic of women (i.e., communal/expressive traits), and an *M-F* scale of mixed content, including two instrumental traits and six items related to emotional vulnerability. The PAQ has a two-factor structure that corresponds to the *M* and *F* scales (Helmreich, Spence, & Wilhelm, 1981). Discriminant analyses have shown significant differences between men and women on the PAQ (Helmreich et al., 1981). Alphas of .76, .76, and .61 for men and .73, .73, and .65 for women have been reported for the *M*, *F*, and *M-F* scales, respectively, among a sample of college students (Helmreich et al., 1981). In this study we found alphas of .73, .82, and .64 for the *M*, *F*, and *M-F* scales, respectively.

Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI)

The PBI (Parker, Tuplin, & Brown, 1979) consists of 25 items that ask children to recall impressions of their mothers that they formed during the first 16 years of their lives and 25 identical items that ask children to recall impressions of their fathers. Within each set of 25 items, 12 items compose the Care

scale, which measures care/involvement versus indifference/rejection, and 13 items compose the Overprotection scale, which measures control/overprotection versus encouragement of independence.

The maternal and paternal care scales were summed, as were the maternal and paternal overprotection scales, to create scores for parental care and parental overprotection. Because we conceptualized the care and overprotection measures as possibly related to rigid ritualization, it was thought that a summed parental score would be preferential to separate maternal and paternal scores in order to reflect the overall rigidity present in family activities. Alphas have been found to range from .81 to .89 for parental care and from .83 to .88 for parental overprotection (Parker, 1989). In this study we found alphas of .94 for parental care and .90 for parental overprotection. Retest reliabilities of .76 for the parental care scale and .63 for the parental overprotection scale over a 3-week interval have been found (Parker, 1989). One validity study of the PBI reported correlations of .77 for the Care scale and .47 for the Overprotection scale with semistructured interviews regarding parental care and overprotection (Parker, 1989).

Family Ritual Questionnaire (FRQ)

The FRQ (Fiese & Kline, 1993) is a 56-item forced-choice questionnaire that asks about eight dimensions of family rituals (i.e., occurrence, attendance, affect, symbolic significance, continuation, deliberateness, roles, and routine) measured across seven settings (i.e., dinnertime, weekends, vacations, annual celebrations, special celebrations, religious holidays, and cultural and ethnic traditions). Respondents are asked to consider how their families typically interact during the course of a particular setting (e.g., during dinner). Respondents are then presented with eight pairs of statements that measure the eight dimensions of rituals, and they must decide, for each item, which statement of the pair is true of their own families and whether the statement is "really true" or "sort of true."

A factor analysis of the FRQ found two factors, both measured across all seven settings: routine, which consists of roles and routines, and meaning, which consists of occurrence, affect, symbolic significance, and deliberateness (Fiese & Kline, 1993). The meaning factor accounted for over 40% of the variance and the routine factor accounted for approximately 25% of the variance. Internal consistency for the FRQ scales has been found to range from an alpha of .52 to .90 (Fiese & Kline, 1993). In this study we

found alphas that ranged from .58 to .92. Retest reliability over a 4-week interval has been found to be .88 (Fiese & Kline, 1993). In a study of the FRQ's construct validity, its scales were found to be positively related to the cohesion and organization subscales of the Family Environment Scale (Fiese & Kline, 1993). In this study, the FRQ's meaning factor was used to measure ritual meaningfulness.

Ritual Questions

An additional questionnaire about family rituals was designed by the authors for this study. For each of the FRQ ritual settings, participants were asked to rate on a 5-point scale how responsible their mother has generally been for "planning, implementing, or getting others involved in" that particular ritual type. These questions were summed to create a measure of the perceived level of maternal responsibility for family rituals ($\alpha = .86$). The same questions were asked about the participants' fathers ($\alpha = .89$). For each of the FRQ ritual settings, participants were asked to rate on a 5-point scale, in thinking about themselves in the future with their own families, how likely they thought it was that they would take primary responsibility for planning, implementing, or getting others involved in that particular ritual type. These questions were summed to create a measure of the reported likelihood of future ritual initiation ($\alpha = .87$).

RESULTS

Two sets of linear regressions were performed: with reported likelihood of future initiation and the meaningfulness of family rituals, respectively, as

the dependent variables. Correlations between the predictors and dependent variables are found in Tables II–IV.

Analyses also compared men and women on each of the predictors and dependent variables in the regression analyses. Finally, relationships between demographic variables and attitudes toward rituals were examined.

Gender Differences for Predictors and Dependent Variables

We compared men and women, using *t* tests, on the regression variables and found that, as predicted, men were less likely than women to see themselves as initiating future rituals, $p = .001$ (see Table V). As predicted, men and women did not differ on their FRQ ratings of family ritual meaningfulness, $p = .18$. Men were less communal than women, $p = .02$. Men and women did not differ on agency, $p = .64$.

Linear Regression Analyses

A linear regression with same-sex parent's level of initiation, parental "overprotection," communion, participant's gender, participant's level of agency, and cross-sex parent's level of initiation as the predictors of the reported likelihood of future initiation (see Table VI) was performed. Most of the variance was accounted for by same-sex parent's level of initiation, $F(1, 88) = 29.87$, $p = .01$, and participant's level of communion, $F(1, 88) = 7.05$, $p = .01$.

Linear regressions with reported likelihood of future initiation as the dependent variable were also performed with men alone and women alone

Table II. Correlation Coefficients for Linear Regression Predictors and Dependent Variables

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
A) Cross-sex parent responsibility ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
B) Same-sex parent responsibility ^a	.53*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
C) Parental overprotection	-.05	-.24	—	—	—	—	—	—
D) Parental care	.38*	.49*	-.34*	—	—	—	—	—
E) Agency	.17	.23	-.26	.27	—	—	—	—
F) Communion	.09	.20	-.03	.32	-.10	—	—	—
G) Respondent's gender	-.20	.38*	-.04	.10	-.05	.24	—	—
H) Ritual meaningfulness	.73*	.73*	-.06	.44*	.11	.20	.14	—
I) Likelihood of future initiation	.21	.65*	-.18	.21	.21	.33	.40*	.49*

Note. Based on 49 women and 46 men, a total of 95 participants.

^aResponsibility here means the parent's level of the ritual initiation (i.e., respondent's score on the Occurrence scale of the Family Ritual Questionnaire multiplied by the respondent's rating of the parent's level of responsibility for family rituals).

* $p \leq .05$.

Table III. Correlation Coefficients for Linear Regression Predictors and Dependent Variables, Women ($N = 49$)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
A) Cross-sex parent responsibility ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
B) Same-sex parent responsibility ^a	.66*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
C) Parental overprotection	-.18	-.30	—	—	—	—	—	—
D) Parental care	.41	.39	-.33	—	—	—	—	—
E) Agency	.18	.19	-.37	.33	—	—	—	—
F) Communion	.06	.03	-.14	.39	-.11	—	—	—
G) Ritual meaningfulness	.64*	.75*	-.19	.38	.13	-.01	—	—
H) Likelihood of future initiation	.35	.59*	-.26	.12	.07	.11	.58*	—

^aResponsibility here means the parent’s level of the ritual initiation (i.e., respondent’s score on the Occurrence scale of the Family Ritual Questionnaire multiplied by the respondent’s rating of the parent’s level of responsibility for family rituals).

* $p \leq .05$.

(see Table VI). Same-sex parent’s level of initiation was the only significant predictor for women, $F(1, 43) = 13.33, p = .001$; communion was not a significant predictor for women, $F(1, 43) = 0.38, p = .54$. Same-sex parent’s level of initiation was a significant predictor for men, $F(1, 40) = 11.86, p = .001$, as were communion, $F(1, 40) = 8.04, p = .007$, and agency, $F(1, 40) = 4.32, p = .04$. This suggests that communion’s significance as a predictor for all participants is due to its significance in predicting men’s attitudes toward future ritual initiation.

Another linear regression (see Table VII) was performed with parental “overprotection,” parental “care,” communion, agency, and respondent’s gender as predictors of the participant’s evaluation of ritual meaningfulness. Parental care was the only significant predictor, $F(1, 89) = 16.39, p = .01$. Parental overprotection, $F(1, 89) = 1.07, p = .35$, and communion, $F(1, 89) = 0.19, p = .67$, were not significant predictors.

Separate linear regressions for men and women indicated that parental care was the only significant

predictor of the meaningfulness of rituals: $F(1, 44) = 7.65, p = .008$ for women; $F(1, 41) = 13.46, p = .001$ for men. As shown in Table VII, the hypothesized predictors accounted better for the meaningfulness of rituals to men than to women.

Individual Differences

Parental marital status, ethnic origin, and religious affiliation are highlighted in this individual differences section because these demographic variables may have particular significance for attitudes toward rituals that may have familial, ethnic, and religious elements.

Parental Marital Status

Respondents with married parents saw their cross-sex parent as having a higher level of responsibility for family ritual initiation, $p = .05$, and saw

Table IV. Correlation Coefficients for Linear Regression Predictors and Dependent Variables, Men ($N = 46$)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
A) Cross-sex parent responsibility ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
B) Same-sex parent responsibility ^a	.69*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
C) Parental overprotection	.08	-.18	—	—	—	—	—	—
D) Parental care	.41	.62*	-.35	—	—	—	—	—
E) Agency	.14	.34	-.16	.22	—	—	—	—
F) Communion	.22	.23	.10	.21	-.07	—	—	—
G) Ritual meaningfulness	.89*	.74*	.06	.49*	.12	.32	—	—
H) Likelihood of future initiation	.30	.59*	-.10	.26	.39	.40	.42	—

^aResponsibility here means the parent’s level of the ritual initiation (i.e., respondent’s score on the Occurrence scale of the Family Ritual Questionnaire multiplied by the respondent’s rating of the parent’s level of responsibility for family rituals).

* $p \leq .05$.

Table V. Gender Differences on Predictors and Dependent Variables

Variable	Men (<i>n</i> = 46)		Women (<i>n</i> = 49)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Same-sex parent responsibility ^a	375.96	188.92	529.57	186.88	-3.98*
Cross-sex parent responsibility ^a	498.22	197.03	421.45	183.80	1.96*
Parental care	49.80	13.70	52.59	15.47	-0.93
Parental overprotection	22.91	12.36	21.94	13.25	.37
Communion	22.48	4.63	24.63	4.35	-2.34*
Agency	20.72	4.66	20.31	4.01	0.46
Ritual meaningfulness	72.74	16.87	76.90	13.12	-1.35
Likelihood of future initiation	23.37	5.99	28.16	5.04	-4.23*

Note. The degrees of freedom for the *t* tests were 93.

^aResponsibility here means the parent's level of the ritual initiation (i.e., respondent's score on the Occurrence scale of the Family Ritual Questionnaire multiplied by the respondent's rating of the parent's level of responsibility for family rituals).

**p* ≤ .05.

their parents as more "caring," *p* = .01, than did respondents whose parents were not married (see Table VIII). Respondents with married and non-married parents did not differ significantly on ritual meaningfulness or reported likelihood of future ritual initiation.

Ethnic Origin

Respondents' own self-reported ethnicity was not significantly related to how meaningful their families' rituals were to them, $F(3, 91) = 0.47$, *p* = .70, or to their reported likelihood of initiating rituals in the future, $F(3, 91) = 0.67$, *p* = .57. However, respondents with parents of the same ethnicity saw their families' rituals as more meaningful ($M = 76.37$, $SD = 13.74$) than did respondents with parents of different ethnic origins ($M = 62.30$, $SD = 20.69$), $t(93) = -2.89$, *p* = .005. In terms of their reported likelihood of initiating rituals in the future, respondents with parents of the same ethnicity ($M = 26.04$, $SD = 5.63$) did not differ significantly from respondents with parents of different ethnic origins ($M = 24.20$, $SD = 8.74$), $t(93) = -0.92$, *p* = 0.36. The small number of participants from mixed-ethnicity marriages (*n* = 10), however, limits the reliability of these findings.

Table VI. Regression Analyses for the Prediction of the Reported Likelihood of Future Ritual Initiation

Predictors	β	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Total sample (<i>N</i> = 95)			.71	.51
Agency	.12	2.14		
Communion	.21	7.05*		
Parental overprotection	.01	0.02		
Respondent's gender	-.09	0.79		
Cross-sex parent responsibility ^a	-.15	2.08		
Same-sex parent responsibility ^a	.63	29.87*		
Men (<i>n</i> = 46)			.72	.51
Agency	.25	4.32*		
Communion	.33	8.04*		
Parental overprotection	.04	0.10		
Cross-sex parent responsibility ^a	-.22	1.95		
Same-sex parent responsibility ^a	.59	11.86*		
Women (<i>n</i> = 49)			.61	.37
Agency	-.07	0.24		
Communion	.08	0.38		
Parental overprotection	-.10	0.54		
Cross-sex parent responsibility ^a	-.06	0.15		
Same-sex parent responsibility ^a	.61	13.33*		

Note. Degrees of freedom for *F* values were 1, 88 for the total sample; 1, 43 for women; and 1, 40 for men.

^aResponsibility here means the parent's level of the ritual initiation (i.e., respondent's score on the Occurrence scale of the Family Ritual Questionnaire multiplied by the respondent's rating of the parent's level of responsibility for family rituals).

**p* ≤ .05.

Religious Affiliation

Respondents whose parents had the same religious affiliation ($M = 75.62$, $SD = 15.61$) did

Table VII. Regression Analyses for the Prediction of Meaningfulness of Family Rituals

Predictors	β	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Total sample (<i>N</i> = 95)			.46	.21
Agency	.03	0.10		
Communion	.04	0.19		
Parental overprotection	.11	1.07		
Respondent's gender	-.09	0.88		
Parental care	.44	16.39*		
Men (<i>n</i> = 46)			.58	.34
Agency	.05	0.17		
Communion	.19	2.08		
Parental overprotection	.23	2.87		
Parental care	.53	13.46*		
Women (<i>n</i> = 49)			.43	.18
Agency	-.08	0.25		
Communion	-.21	1.87		
Parental overprotection	-.09	0.37		
Parental care	.46	7.65*		

Note. Degrees of freedom for *F* values were 1, 89 for the total sample; 1, 44 for women; and 1, 41 for men.

**p* ≤ .05.

Table VIII. Comparisons of Respondents With Married Parents to Respondents With Nonmarried^a Parents

Variable	Married (<i>n</i> = 68)		Nonmarried (<i>n</i> = 27)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Same-sex parent responsibility ^b	457.69	189.56	448.89	234.80	-0.19
Cross-sex parent responsibility ^b	482.77	175.87	397.82	223.31	-1.96*
Parental care	53.57	13.02	45.37	16.96	-2.54*
Parental overprotection	23.62	12.60	19.37	12.93	-1.47
Communion	23.47	4.77	23.89	4.18	0.40
Agency	20.37	3.95	20.85	5.19	0.49
Ritual meaningfulness	76.38	14.11	71.11	17.09	-1.54
Likelihood of future initiation	25.22	5.93	27.41	5.99	1.62

Note. The degrees of freedom for the *t* tests were 93.

^aNonmarried parents refers to parents who the respondent reports as divorced, separated, widowed, or never married.

^bResponsibility here means the parent's level of the ritual initiation (i.e., respondent's score on the Occurrence scale of the Family Ritual Questionnaire multiplied by the respondent's rating of the parent's level of responsibility for family rituals).

**p* ≤ .05.

not differ significantly from respondents with parents of different religious affiliations (*M* = 72.92, *SD* = 13.83) on the self-reported meaningfulness of their families' rituals, $t(93) = -0.78$, *p* = .44, nor did they differ in their reported likelihood of future ritual initiation (for same-religion, *M* = 26.00, *SD* = 6.17; for different-religion, *M* = 25.42, *SD* = 5.59), $t(93) = -0.42$, *p* = .68.

Respondents' own religious affiliation was significantly related to how meaningful their families' rituals were to them, $F(6, 87) = 3.82$, *p* = .002, but not to reported likelihood of future ritual initiation, $F(6, 87) = 1.32$, *p* = .26. A post hoc Scheffé test revealed that respondents who identified their religious affiliation as "other" saw their families' rituals as less meaningful than did respondents who identified themselves as Catholic (*p* = .008) or Jewish (*p* = .04). See Table IX.

DISCUSSION

In this study we found that, as hypothesized, although women were more likely than men to see themselves as taking primary responsibility for future family rituals, men and women reported similar levels of ritual meaningfulness. As hypothesized, gender

Table IX. Means and Standard Deviations for Dependent Variables by Respondent's Religion^a

Respondent's religious affiliation	Meaningfulness of family rituals		Likelihood of future ritual initiation	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Buddhist (<i>n</i> = 3)	77.33	14.30	28.67	0.58
Catholic (<i>n</i> = 30)	80.20	14.08	26.80	5.37
Hindu (<i>n</i> = 1)	66.00	—	27.00	—
Jewish (<i>n</i> = 20)	79.55	13.03	27.40	4.66
Muslim (<i>n</i> = 2)	81.00	14.14	28.50	6.36
Protestant (<i>n</i> = 15)	75.20	12.95	25.20	5.65
Other (<i>n</i> = 23)	63.44	15.14	23.22	7.80

^aOne respondent did not indicate religious affiliation.

per se was not the strongest predictor of respondents' reported likelihood of future ritual initiation. Reported likelihood of initiation was largely predicted by participants' judgments of how much responsibility their same-sex parents had taken for ritual initiation. Fathers were found to take less responsibility than mothers, and this seems to translate, perhaps through modeling, into sons seeing themselves as less likely than daughters to take responsibility for future family rituals. This supports Rosenthal's (1985) finding that mothers frequently pass the kinkeeper position to their daughters.

The apparent importance of same-sex parents' levels of initiation as a predictor raises the question of how respondents defined "taking primary responsibility for ritual initiation." One possibility is that judgments were based upon direct observation of a parent performing the physical work of ritual preparation (e.g., cooking meals, inviting relatives, decorating the home, purchasing gifts). Another possibility is that judgments were based upon a sense of "who's in charge" when it comes to rituals. In this case, observing a mother delegate responsibilities to relatives might be sufficient to judge the mother as taking primary responsibility. Knowing upon what respondents' judgments were based could clarify the cues surrounding ritual initiation that children have internalized.

The hypotheses that parental overprotection would be a strong predictor of reported likelihood of future initiation and of meaningfulness were not supported. Ratings of parents' "overprotective" behavior, at least as measured by the Parental Bonding Instrument, may not be strong indicators of rigidity, overprotection, or intrusiveness. It could also be that "rigid ritualization" is better characterized by the absence of parent care and warmth than by the presence of overprotective parents, as illustrated by the

fact that in this study parental care was a strong predictor of ritual meaningfulness. Caring parents may avoid rigid ritualization by attending to individual preferences and adapting rituals to the family's changing needs.

The fact that agency and communion were significant predictors of the reported likelihood of future family ritual initiation for men but not for women suggests that level of engagement in rituals, via both agentic and communal traits, may be linked to variation in men's, but not women's, attitudes toward family ritual initiation. Clarification of this finding is a potentially important area for future research.

One limitation of this study is its lack of generalizability given that the sample was drawn from a private east coast university and most participants were European Americans who identified themselves as Catholic or Jewish. There is also the possibility of reporting bias due to self-report; however, because we measured college students' perceptions, rather than their objective realities, the possibility of bias is of lesser concern.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article is based upon a Master's thesis by Stacey R. Friedman under the supervision of Carol S. Weissbrod at American University. The authors thank James Gray and Brian Yates, members of the thesis committee.

REFERENCES

- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, *55*, 469–480.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bennett, L. A., Wolin, S. J., & McAvity, K. J. (1988). Family identity, ritual, and myth: A cultural perspective on life cycle transitions. In C. J. Falicov (Ed.), *Family transitions: Continuity and change over the life cycle* (pp. 211–234). New York: Guilford.
- Bossard, J., & Boll, E. S. (1950). *Ritual in family living: A contemporary study*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Eaker, D. G., & Walters, L. H. (2002). Adolescent satisfaction in family rituals and psychosocial development: A developmental systems theory perspective. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *16*, 406–414.
- Fiese, B. H. (1992). Dimensions of family rituals across two generations: Relation to adolescent identity. *Family Process*, *31*, 151–162.
- Fiese, B. H., & Kline, C. A. (1993). Development of the Family Ritual Questionnaire: Initial reliability and validation studies. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *6*, 290–299.
- Fiese, B. H., Tomcho, T. J., Douglas, M., Josephs, K., Poltrock, S., & Baker, T. (2002). A review of 50 years of research on naturally occurring family routines and rituals: Cause for celebration? *Journal of Family Psychology*, *16*, 381–390.
- Helmreich, R. L., Spence, J. T., & Wilhelm, J. A. (1981). A psychometric analysis of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire. *Sex Roles*, *7*, 1097–1108.
- Imber-Black, E. (1988). Ritual themes in families and family therapy. In E. Imber-Black, J. Roberts, & R. A. Whiting (Eds.), *Rituals in families and family therapy* (pp. 50–83). New York: Norton.
- Laird, J. (1988). Women and ritual in family therapy. In E. Imber-Black, J. Roberts, & R. A. Whiting (Eds.), *Rituals in families and family therapy* (pp. 331–362). New York: Norton.
- Leach, M. S., & Braithwaite, D. O. (1996). A binding tie: Supportive communication of family kinkeepers. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *24*, 200–216.
- Meredith, W. H., Abbott, D. A., Lamanna, M. A., & Saunders, G. (1989). Rituals and family strengths: A three-generation study. *Family Perspective*, *23*, 75–83.
- Moore, S. F., & Myerhoff, B. G. (1977). [Introduction] Secular ritual: Forms and meanings. In S. F. Moore & B. G. Myerhoff (Eds.), *Secular ritual* (pp. 3–24). Amsterdam: Van Gorcum.
- Moskowitz, D. S., Suh, E. J., & Desaulniers, J. (1994). Situational influences on gender differences in agency and communion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *66*, 753–761.
- Parker, G. (1989). The Parental Bonding Instrument: Psychometric properties reviewed. *Psychiatric Development*, *4*, 317–335.
- Parker, G., Tupling, H., & Brown, L. B. (1979). A parental bonding instrument. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, *52*, 1–10.
- Pett, M. A., Lang, N., & Gander, A. (1992). Late-life divorce: Its impact on family rituals. *Journal of Family Issues*, *13*, 526–532.
- Richlin-Klonsky, J., & Bengston, V. L. (1996). Pulling together, drifting apart: A longitudinal case study of a four-generation family. *Journal of Aging Studies*, *10*, 255–279.
- Roberts, J. (1988). Setting the frame: Definition, functions, and typology of rituals. In E. Imber-Black, J. Roberts, & R. A. Whiting (Eds.), *Rituals in families and family therapy* (pp. 3–46). New York: Norton.
- Rosenthal, C. J. (1985). Kinkeeping in the familial division of labor. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *47*, 965–974.
- Rosenthal, C. J., & Marshall, V. M. (1988). Generational transmission of family ritual. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *31*, 669–684.
- Rubin, N. (1989). Family rituals. *Parents*, *64*, 105–108.
- Saragovi, C., Koestner, R., Dio, L. D., & Aube, J. (1997). Agency, communion, and well-being: Extending Helgeson's (1994) Model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *73*, 593–609.
- Spence, J. T., & Helmreich, R. L. (1978). *Masculinity and femininity: Their psychological dimensions, correlates, and antecedents*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Stewart, A. J., & Malley, J. E. (1987). Role combination in women: Mitigating agency and communion. In F. J. Crosby (Ed.), *Spouse, parent, worker: On gender and multiple roles* (pp. 44–62). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Troll, L. E. (1988). Rituals and reunions. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *31*, 621–631.
- Van der Hart, O. (1983). *Rituals in psychotherapy: Transition and continuity*. New York: Irvington.
- Wolin, S. J., & Bennett, L. A. (1984). Family rituals. *Family Process*, *23*, 401–420.
- Wolin, S. J., Bennett, L. A., & Jacobs, J. S. (1988). Assessing family rituals in alcoholic families. In E. Imber-Black, J. Roberts, & R. A. Whiting (Eds.), *Rituals in families and family therapy* (pp. 230–256). New York: Norton.

Copyright of Sex Roles is the property of Springer Science & Business Media B.V.. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.