Family Rituals Improve the Holidays

OVUL SEZER, MICHAEL I. NORTON, FRANCESCA GINO, AND KATHLEEN D. VOHS

ABSTRACT Rituals are central to family life. Three studies ($N = 1,098$) tested the relationship between family rituals and holiday enjoyment and demonstrated that family rituals improve the holidays because they amplify family closeness and involvement in the experience. In study 1, participants who reported having family rituals on Christmas were more likely to spend the holiday with family and to enjoy the holiday more. Moreover, while simply spending the holiday with family was associated with greater enjoyment, enacting a ritual while with family added significantly to that enjoyment. Study 2 replicated these findings for family rituals pertaining to a secular holiday, New Year's Eve. Study 3 used an experimental design and had participants either describe their rituals and then report their holiday enjoyment (as in studies 1 and 2) or report their holiday enjoyment and then describe their rituals; in both conditions, being with family and enacting a ritual was associated with the greatest enjoyment, suggesting that it is having enacted rituals—and not merely reflecting on them—that enhances enjoyment. Participants were unlikely to engage in individual rituals (i.e., on their own without family involvement), and when they did, individual rituals were not associated with holiday enjoyment. In sum, three studies consistently demonstrate that family rituals on holidays are associated with feelings of closeness and greater intrinsic interest, leading to holiday enjoyment.

Holidays are frequently times of reunion, with friends, family members, and loved ones from far-flung corners of the world who come together to celebrate. While holidays have many positive emotional aspects, time with family can be stressful. All-too-familiar signs and sources of family stress including arguments over politics, staring at the television in awkward silence until the next football game starts, and rapt teens distracted by their smartphones. What might help to ensure an enjoyable holiday experience? We propose—and test in three studies—that families that enact family rituals on the holidays have more positive holiday experiences.

Rituals are central to family life in many domains. From rites of passages—such as weddings, graduations, and funerals (Bossard and Boll 1950; Wolin and Bennett 1984; Cheal 1988; Imber-Black, Roberts, and Whiting 1988; Troll 1988)—to annual events such as anniversaries and birthdays (Rosenthal and Marshall 1988; Meske et al. 1994; Fiese 2006; Rossano 2012; Santos et al. 2012), family rituals take countless forms and often vary by culture. In Indian weddings, marrying couples recite seven vows and are considered legally married only after taking seven steps around a holy fire, after which seven married women greet them. In Vietnamese weddings, families of the bride and groom strictly avoid the number seven because it represents bad luck. Spanish *quinceñeras* often involve fathers changing their daughters' shoes from flats to high heels, whereas during the traditional Japanese coming-of-age day, *Seijin no Hi*, parents present their daughters flat zori sandals to wear during the ceremony.

Despite variation in form, family rituals and practices—from birthdays (Rossano 2012) to weddings (Marshall 2005) to holidays (Rook 1985; Newton, Humphrey, and Humphrey 1989; Siskind 1992)—serve to create and reinforce family identity: the family's subjective sense of its own continuity and distinct character (Belk 1988; Bates and Gentry 1994; Curasi, Arnould, and Price 2004; Moisio, Arnould, and Price 2004; Arnould and Thompson 2005; Arnould and Price 2006; Epp and Price 2008; Barnhart, Huff, and Cotte 2014; Kerrane, Bettany, and Hogg 2014). Indeed, even otherwise mundane activities can become ritualistic, acquiring symbolic meaning through repetition over time and coming to signal family identity (Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993). For instance, families prepare, share, and eat food together, making food consumption a ritual with a symbolic meaning that promotes family closeness (Rook 1985; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991; Rozin 2005). Families also engage in other rituals that take a wide variety of forms such as outings, games, movie

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JACR, volume 1, number 4. Published online September 2, 2016. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/688495

nights, annual trips, or gift exchanges (Bossard and Boll 1950; Compañ et al. 2002; Fiese et al. 2002), with this shared consumption of time delineating boundaries and indicating membership (Rook 1985; Whiteside 1989; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991; Otnes and Pleck 2003).

Extending this body of work, in this article, we examine the influence of family rituals on people's experience of the simultaneously enjoyable and stressful family events of holidays. We assess both the frequency and content of family holiday rituals, measure whether families with rituals are more likely to gather for holidays, and most important, test whether enacting those rituals is associated with greater enjoyment of holiday experiences. Building on previous research documenting the effects of enacting individual rituals in improving consumption experiences and assuaging grief after losses (Vohs et al. 2013; Norton and Gino 2014), we explore whether rituals performed as a family are beneficial to the members who enact the ritual—over and above any benefits obtained from performing individual rituals on one's own.

A century of research in anthropology beginning with Durkheim (1915) has outlined the benefits of group rituals for fostering and maintaining group cohesion (for a recent review, see Whitehouse and Lanman 2014; Watson-Jones and Legare 2016). Several streams of research from marketing (Belk 1988; Bates and Gentry 1994; Curasi et al. 2004; Moisio et al. 2004), sociology (Bielby and Bielby 1989), and psychology (Bolea 2000; Fiese et al. 2002) have highlighted that family rituals help members to express "who we are as a family" (Epp and Price 2008). We therefore posited that families with rituals are more likely to come together for the holidays and more likely to enjoy the holiday experience, compared to both families who do not come together and families who do come together and do not enact a family ritual. Moreover, given the strong link between holidays and family, we posited that individual holiday rituals would not be associated with more positive experiences.

We also investigate why family rituals might predict increased enjoyment of the holiday experience, exploring a role for increased closeness between family members as well as greater involvement in the holiday experience—colloquially speaking, more getting along between family members and less time being distracted by devices. A large body of research suggests that group members who feel affiliated with one another act in collaborative ways (Aron et al. 2004; Spoor and Kelly 2004; Hove and Risen 2009; Balliet and Van Lange 2013). Other work shows that rituals can promote prosociality (Xygalatas et al. 2013). As a result, we assess family closeness as a possible driver of the benefits of family rituals.

In addition, research on individual rituals has revealed that involvement, defined as deriving intrinsic pleasure from acts themselves (Csikszentmihalyi 1975; van der Hart 1983), is a psychological driver of the impact of rituals in enhancing consumption experiences (Vohs et al. 2013). Therefore, we explore whether involvement also plays a role in the beneficial effects of family rituals on holiday enjoyment, operationalizing involvement as intrinsic interest—as assessed by a well-established measure of flow experiences (Trevino and Webster 1992). We predicted that family rituals on holidays would increase feelings of closeness and greater intrinsic interest, with each acting as a statistical mediator undergirding increased holiday enjoyment. We tested our account in three correlational studies on different holidays and found a similar pattern: family rituals on holidays boost feelings of closeness and greater intrinsic interest in the holiday, which in turn increases holiday enjoyment.

STUDY 1: FAMILY AND INDIVIDUAL RITUALS ON CHRISTMAS

Christmas marks an important point in families' calendars (Bell 1997; Páez et al. 2011), and rituals on this holiday often have a symbolic meaning for families who celebrate this holiday (Friesen 1990; Freeman and Bell 2013). We tested the relationship between holiday rituals and enjoyment during Christmas, predicting that participants who reported having a family ritual would be both more likely to spend the holiday with their family and to experience greater enjoyment, compared to both families who did not come together and families who did come together but did not enact a family ritual.

Moreover, we tested whether participants who reported having family rituals would feel closer to their families and experience greater intrinsic involvement, which in turn would lead to higher enjoyment. We also assessed other possible mediators of the family ritual-enjoyment link, including attention focus, curiosity, and control, as well as family liking and family entitativity (the sense of being a group).

Previous research points to the efficacy of individual rituals in enhancing consumption (Vohs et al. 2013) and alleviating grief (Norton and Gino 2014). Therefore, participants were also asked about individual holiday rituals, allowing us to assess the potential independent effect of individual rituals versus family rituals.

Method

Participants. One hundred and forty adults (M_{age} = 37.46, SD = 11.64; 38.1% female) on Amazon's Mechanical Turk

participated in exchange for $.50. We included several comprehension checks to ensure that participants paid attention and eliminated the five participants who failed these checks. Four participants started but did not complete the survey and could not be included in analyses. Sample size was based on previous studies on rituals (Vohs et al. 2013).

Design and Procedure. Participants completed the survey on the day after Christmas 2013. They read that a ritual "is a series of actions performed in a prescribed order before, during, or after an event to achieve a desired outcome." We asked participants whether their family engaged in a ritual on Christmas; if participants answered yes, they then reported the number of rituals in which their families engaged. In open-ended format, we then asked participants to describe in detail one ritual that their family performed, why they performed that ritual, how that ritual originated, how many years they had been performing that ritual as a family, and how they felt about that ritual.

All participants indicated whether they spent Christmas with their family. Next, we asked participants whether they had an individual ritual on Christmas, using the same definition of ritual but specifically asking whether they engaged in a ritual by themselves on Christmas.

Next, participants rated how much they enjoyed Christmas on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). They then rated how close they felt to their families during the holiday on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). Next, participants rated how much they liked their family and how trustworthy they considered the people in their family to be on 7-point scales (1 = not at all, 7 = very much); we averaged these two items to create a composite measure of family liking ($\alpha = .87$).

They next completed three-item indexes measuring four components of flow (Trevino and Webster 1992): attention focus (e.g., "During Christmas, I thought about other things," "During Christmas, I was aware of distractions," "During Christmas, I was absorbed in what I was doing"; $\alpha = .64$), intrinsic interest (e.g., "Christmas was boring," "Christmas was fun," "Christmas activities were intrinsically interesting"; $\alpha = .88$), curiosity (e.g., "Christmas excited my curiosity," "Christmas activities made me curious," "Christmas aroused my imagination"; $\alpha = .93$), and control ("During Christmas, I was in control," "I felt like I had no control during Christmas," "Christmas activities allowed me to control my interactions with others"; $\alpha = .77$) on 7-point scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Five items assessed perceptions of family entitativity (e.g., "How similar are members of your family?"; Rydell and McConnell 2005), on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much; $\alpha = .91$). Next, participants completed the Satisfaction with Life Scale (e.g., "In most ways my life is close to my ideal"; Diener et al. 1985) on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; $\alpha = .92$). Last, participants answered demographic questions. (A complete set of data used in this study is available online.)

Results

Type of Family Rituals. Participants reported an average of 2.11 (SD = 1.13) family rituals. Participants elaborated only on one ritual; two independent coders analyzed the content of these responses and identified subcategories of family rituals. They agreed 99% of the time about the title of each category and resolved disagreements through discussion.

Five categories of Christmas rituals emerged: (1) opening presents, (2) family dinner, (3) tree decoration, (4) religious ceremony, and (5) playing games. Once the coders decided on this final set of topics, they reread each response and indicated the most appropriate category (table 1 shows the categorization of family rituals on Christmas, with examples). The most common category was opening presents (38.82%), followed by family dinner (34.12%), tree decoration (10.59%), attending a religious ceremony (10.59%), and playing games (5.88%).

Frequency of Family Rituals and Spending Time with Family. The majority of participants had a family ritual but not an individual ritual: 60.7% of participants (85 out of 140) reported having a family ritual on Christmas, whereas only 10.7% of participants (15 out of 140) had an individual ritual. Out of the 85 participants who reported a family ritual, just 3.5% did not spend Christmas with their family. In contrast, out of 55 participants who did not have a family ritual, 30.9% did not spend this holiday with their family ($\chi^2(2, N = 140) = 20.44$, $p < .001$). As expected, family rituals are associated with spending the holiday with family. Table 2 shows means and standard deviations for the dependent variables.

Enjoyment. Because only three participants reported having a family ritual but not spending the holiday with their family, the small sample size in this cell renders the analytic model of a 2 (family ritual: yes or no) × 2 (spent holiday with family: yes or no) ANOVA analytic strategy inappropriate. As a result, we used simple comparisons to document the influence of family rituals in the analyses below.

Table 1. Topic Categorization and Examples of Christmas, New Year's Eve, and Easter Rituals

Christmas ritual		New Year's ritual		Easter ritual	
Category	Example	Category	Example	Category	Example
Opening presents (38.82%)	"I went to my in-laws were we open gifts in chronological age order of oldest to youngest one year and youngest to oldest the next."	Family dinner (49.12%)	"For New Years, every year my family has a huge family gathering and we have dinner. My mother believes that starting the New Year off with a good, healthy meal brings good luck in the year."	Family dinner (36.39%)	"The ritual consists of preparing special menu items that have been part of my family's traditional since I was a child. The desserts which usually consist of a fruit pie and a cake are prepared the night before. The ham is also prepared the night before with pineapple, cloves, and a ginger brown sugar glaze. Macaroni and cheese, brussel sprout, yams, and cranberries are also part of the menu but are prepared the day of Easter. The entire meal is served on dinnerware that is only used for Easter."
Family dinner (34.12%)	"We go and eat dinner, my grandma makes ham and chicken wings and tons of desserts. When we leave my grandma makes sure we take home a ton of leftovers."	Watching the ball drop (15.79%)	"We sit together in the living room and just watch the ball drop on TV at Time square."	Religious ceremony (24.46%)	"We went to church as a family. We do this every year to give thanks to Jesus for his sacrifice. We all got dressed nicely and went to morning service to worship and sing praise."

Tree decoration (10.59%)	"We pull the tree down from the attic and decorate it. First you have to fan out the (fake) leaves and then string lights around it. Then we put the ornaments on, the same exact ones every year."	Countdown (12.28%)	"We count down the clock when it is 10 seconds to midnight."	Egg hunt (22.32%)	"We performed an Easter egg hunt in which we all looked for eggs hidden by my wife around the house which contained candy and money."
Religious ceremony (10.59%)	"We went to several worship services. We went to the 3:30 pm service for young children. We went to the 6:00 pm service. This was a service of readings and carols."	Drinking (12.28%)	"Drinking alcoholic beverages: mixing Crown Royal with Canada Dry on ice or mixing Russian vodka with cranberry juice on ice."	Egg decoration (9.17%)	"We draw on Easter eggs and then soak them in dye to color them. Its pretty fun and we all take turns."
Playing games (5.88%)	"We all sat on the couch and play boardgames."	New Year's resolutions (7.02%)	"Me and a bunch of my family members all get together and reflect on our new years. We also talk about some things we would like to achieve for next year, and how we can improve on ourselves."	Preparing Easter basket (7.65%)	"We put candy in Easter eggs the night before. We also fill up everyone's baskets with a little gift, usually under $20, and put a little candy in there."
		Playing games (3.51%)	"We all get together and hug and sing Auld Lang Syne. All of us kids (2 sisters and a brother), my parents, and now days are significant others and children. And we play games."		

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Measures in Study 1

	No ritual, not with family	No ritual, with family	Ritual, with family
Enjoyment	3.71 (1.99)	4.92 (1.34)	5.99 (1.08)
Closeness	2.29 (1.69)	5.05 (1.36)	6.15 (1.01)
Family liking	4.58 (2.04)	5.41 (1.31)	6.10 (.96)
Intrinsic interest	3.62 (1.83)	4.66 (1.31)	5.67 (.97)
Attention focus	3.50 (.94)	3.41 (.99)	4.28 (1.13)
Curiosity	2.90 (1.47)	4.12 (1.50)	5.03 (1.04)
Perceived control	4.45 (1.55)	4.54 (1.20)	5.27 (1.03)
Family entitativity	3.81 (1.81)	4.51 (1.25)	5.52 (1.08)
Life satisfaction	3.35 (1.74)	4.07 (1.40)	4.47 (1.42)

Note.—Standard deviations in parentheses.

Participants who were not with family and who reported not having a family ritual experienced less enjoyment than those who were with their family and reported not having a family ritual ($t(53) = 2.66$, $p = .01$, $d = .71$), demonstrating that being with family—independent of having a ritual—is associated with holiday enjoyment (Sen 2010; Hammons and Fiese 2011). Most germane to our account, being with family and having a family ritual was associated with greater enjoyment than being with family and not having a family ritual. Participants who spent Christmas with family and who had a family ritual enjoyed the holiday more than those who were with family but did not have a family ritual ($t(118) = 4.64$, $p < .001$, $d = .88$; table 2), suggesting that enacting a family ritual predicts greater enjoyment than simply being with family.

We next investigated whether the type of family ritual that participants enacted influenced enjoyment, by conducting independent-samples *t*-tests between each group. The type of ritual—opening gifts, family dinner, tree decoration, attending a religious ceremony, or playing games—did not influence enjoyment, with no significant differences between any of the ritual types (all $p > .29$). These results offer support for the notion that having a ritual is more important for enjoyment than the specific form that ritual takes.

Closeness. Participants who were not with their families and who did not have a family ritual reported lower levels of closeness to their families than those who were with their family but did not have a family ritual ($t(53) = 6.46$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.79$). More germane to our thesis was the finding that those who were with their families and who had a family ritual felt even closer to their families than those who were with their families but did not have a family ritual ($t(118) = 4.69$, $p < .001$, $d = .92$), suggesting that having a family ritual predicts greater family closeness in addition to spending the holiday with family.

Family Liking. Participants who were not with family and who did not have a family ritual and those who were with their family but did not have a family ritual reported similar levels of family liking ($t(53) = 1.79$, $p = .08$, $d = .48$). More important, those who were with family and who had a family ritual liked their families more than those who were with family but did not have a family ritual ($t(118) = 3.25$, $p = .002$, $d = .60$), suggesting that having a family ritual predicts family liking.

Intrinsic Interest. Participants who were not with family and who did not have a family ritual reported lower levels of intrinsic interest in the holiday than those who were with family but did not have a family ritual ($t(53) = 2.38$, $p = .02$, $d = .65$). Participants who were with family and who had a family ritual reported greater intrinsic interest than those who were with family but did not have a family ritual ($t(118) = 4.74$, $p < .001$, $d = .88$). These findings suggest that being with family and enacting a family ritual predicted greater intrinsic interest than simply being with family.

Attention Focus. Participants who did not spend Christmas with family and who did not have a family ritual and those who were with family and reported not having a family ritual reported similar levels of attention focus ($t(53) = .32$, $p = .75$, $d = .09$). Participants who were with family and who reported having a family ritual had higher attention focus than those who were with their family but did not have a family ritual ($t(138) = 3.74$, $p < .001$, $d = .75$).

Curiosity. Participants who were not with family and who reported not having a family ritual had lower levels of curiosity than those who were with family but reported not having a family ritual ($t(53) = 2.81$, $p = .007$, $d = .82$). Participants who spent Christmas with family and had a family ritual enjoyed the holiday more than those who were with family but did not have a family ritual ($t(118) = 3.87$, $p < .001$, $d = .71$).

Perceived Control. Participants who were not with family and who did not have a family ritual and those who were with their family but did not have a family ritual reported

similar levels of control ($t(53) = .24$, $p = .81$, $d = .07$). Participants who were with family and who had a family ritual reported higher levels of control than those who were with family but did not have a family ritual ($t(118) = 3.40$, $p = .001$, $d = .65$).

Family Entitativity. Participants who were not with family and who reported not having a family ritual and those who were with their family but did not have a family ritual reported similar levels of family entitativity ($t(53) = 1.66$, $p = .10$, $d = .45$). Participants who were with family and who had a family ritual perceived their families as more entitative than those who were with family but did not have a family ritual ($t(118) = 4.52$, $p < .001$, $d = .87$).

Life Satisfaction. Among participants who did not have a family ritual, those who were with family and those who did not spend the holiday with family reported similar levels of life satisfaction ($t(53) = 1.62$, $p = .11$, $d = .46$). Similarly, participants who were with family and who had a family ritual and those who were with their family and who reported not having a family ritual reported similar levels of life satisfaction ($t(118) = 1.44$, $p = .11$, $d = .32$).

Individual Rituals. We also investigated whether individual rituals influenced any of these outcomes. Having an individual ritual did not influence enjoyment ($t(138) = 1.14$, $p = .48$, $d = .19$), closeness ($t(138) = 1.42$, $p = .16$, $d = .24$), family liking ($t(138) = 1.63$, $p = .11$, $d = .28$), attention ($t(138) = .78$, $p = .44$, $d = .13$), intrinsic interest ($t(138) = .78$, $p = .44$, $d = .13$), curiosity ($t(138) = 1.51$, $p = .1$, $d = .26$), perceived control ($t(138) = 1.33$, $p = .19$, $d = .22$), family entitativity ($t(138) = 1.16$, $p = .25$, $d = .20$), or life satisfaction ($t(138) = .83$, $p = .41$, $d = .14$).

Mediation. Entering the survey measures simultaneously into a regression predicting enjoyment revealed that closeness, attention, greater intrinsic interest, perceived control, and life satisfaction were associated with significantly higher enjoyment ($\beta = .25$, $p = .003$; $\beta = .17$, $p = .004$; $\beta = .32$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .15$, $p = .007$; $\beta = 19$, $p < .001$, respectively). Family liking ($\beta = .03$, $p = .73$), curiosity ($\beta = .04$, $p = .57$), and family entitativity ($\beta = .19$, $p = .71$) were not associated with enjoyment.

We conducted a mediation analysis comparing participants who reported having a family ritual and spending the holiday with their family to all other participants. A path analysis revealed that closeness to family and intrinsic interest drove the relationship between having a family ritual and being with one's family and enjoyment (fig. 1). Those who spent the holiday with their family and who had a family ritual reported greater family closeness, and greater family closeness was associated with greater intrinsic interest in Christmas activities, which in turn predicted increased holiday enjoyment. When we included closeness in the model, predicting intrinsic interest, the effect of having a family ritual and being with family was reduced (from $\beta = .48$, $p < .001$, to $\beta = .08$, $p = .23$), and family closeness was a significant predictor of intrinsic interest ($\beta = .72$, $p < .001$). The 95% bias-corrected confidence interval for the size of the indirect effect excluded zero (.69, 1.49), suggesting a significant indirect effect. When we included family closeness and intrinsic interest in the model, predicting enjoyment, the effect of having a family ritual and being together with fam-

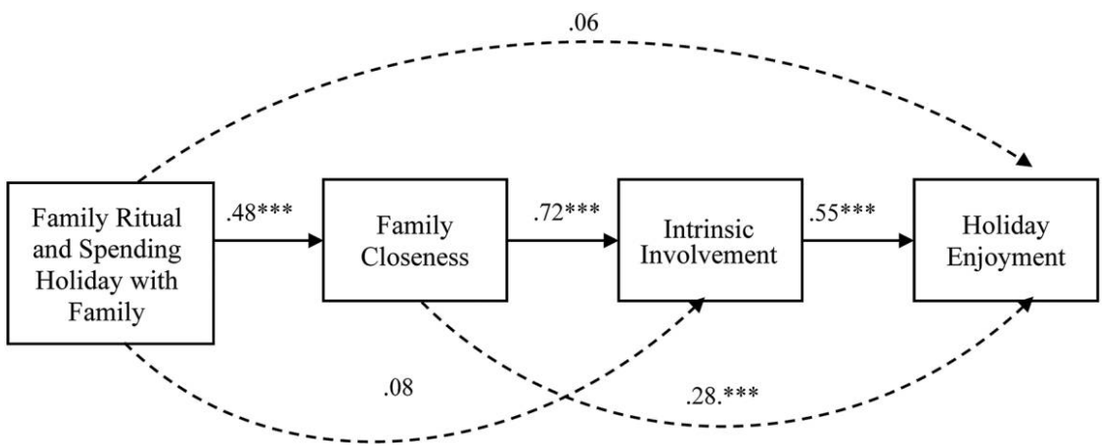

Figure 1. Path analysis in study 1 showing that family closeness and intrinsic involvement drove relationships between family ritual and spending the holiday with family and holiday enjoyment. Standardized β coefficients displayed. ***$p < .001$.

ily was reduced (from $\beta = .48$, $p < .001$, to $\beta = .06$, $p = .34$), and both family closeness ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$) and intrinsic interest ($\beta = .55$, $p < .001$) were significant predictors of enjoyment. The 95% bias-corrected confidence interval for the size of the indirect effect excluded zero (.39, 1.100), suggesting a significant indirect effect (Baron and Kenny 1986; Preacher and Kelley 2011).

Discussion

Study 1 offers five primary contributions. First, participants who reported having family rituals were more likely to spend the holiday with family, suggesting that family rituals are associated with family gathering together. Second, among participants who spent the holiday with family, those who enacted rituals experienced greater enjoyment than those who did not enact rituals, suggesting that having a family ritual is associated with greater enjoyment than merely being with family. Third, the link between enacting rituals with family and increased enjoyment was mediated by family closeness and greater involvement. Fourth, while previous research has documented the role of food and game-playing rituals in family life, our results show that the specific type of ritual does not influence enjoyment but rather that enacting a ritual is more important than the type of ritual enacted. Finally, study 1 shows that across all measures, individual rituals were not associated with the affective experiences of holidays.

STUDY 2: NEW YEAR'S EVE RITUALS

New Year celebrations provide another occasion for families to gather for ritual (Rosenthal and Marshall 1988; Bell 1997; Páez et al. 2011). We aimed to investigate whether the same relationship holds for family rituals on New Year's Eve. Moreover, compared to Christmas—where many participants in study 1 reported attending a religious ceremony as their family ritual—New Year's Eve is a secular holiday in the United States, allowing us to examine the influence of family rituals on less religious holidays. We expected to replicate study 1: family rituals would lead members to feel closer to their families, leading to greater intrinsic interest, in turn driving increased holiday enjoyment. We again expected individual rituals to exert less of an effect on holiday enjoyment.

Method

Participants. One hundred and fifty-two adults (M_{age} = 36.39, SD = 12.63; 42.8% female) on Amazon's Mechanical Turk participated in exchange for $.50. We included several comprehension checks to ensure that participants paid attention and did not eliminate any participants. The sample size was based on previous studies on rituals (Vohs et al. 2013).

Design and Procedure. Study 2 employed the same procedure as study 1. On January 1, 2013, participants reported whether they engaged in a family ritual or individual ritual on New Year's Eve. Participants then completed the open-ended questions for family rituals, survey items, and demographics as in study 1. (A complete set of data used in this study is available online.)

Results

Type of Family Rituals. Participants reported an average of 1.54 (SD = .88) family rituals for New Year's Eve. Participants then elaborated on one ritual only. We asked two independent coders to analyze the content of the responses and identify subcategories in family rituals. They agreed 97% of the time about the title of each category and resolved disagreements through discussion. For New Year's Eve rituals, six distinct categories emerged: (1) family dinner, (2) watching the ball drop, (3) countdown, (4) drinking, (5) New Year's resolutions, and (6) playing games. Once the coders decided on this final set of topics, they reread each response and indicated which category best suited each response. Table 1 shows the categorization of family rituals on New Year's Eve, with examples. The top category was family dinner (49.12%), followed by watching the ball drop (15.79%), countdown (12.28%), drinking (12.28%), New Year's resolutions (7.02%), and playing games (3.51%).

Frequency of Family Rituals and Spending Time with Family. For New Year's Eve, as for Christmas in study 1, family rituals were much more common than individual rituals: 37.5% of participants (57 out of 152) reported that they engaged in a family ritual for New Year's Eve, whereas only 5.9% of participants had an individual ritual for this holiday. Among 57 participants who reported a family ritual, just 10.5% of them (six participants) did not celebrate New Year's Eve with family. But, out of 95 participants who did not have a family ritual, 47.4% of them (45 participants) did not spend this holiday with family ($\chi^2(2, N = 152) = 21.69$, $p < .001$). Replicating our previous results, having a family ritual was associated with spending the holiday with family. Table 3 provides the means and standard deviations for all dependent variables in study 2.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Measures in Study 2

	No ritual, not with family	No ritual, with family	Ritual, with family
Enjoyment	3.78 (1.88)	4.52 (1.61)	6.12 (.99)
Closeness	2.47 (1.56)	5.12 (1.49)	6.22 (1.03)
Family liking	5.28 (1.46)	5.69 (1.48)	6.13 (.94)
Intrinsic interest	3.90 (1.61)	4.33 (1.55)	5.84 (.99)
Attention focus	3.93 (1.17)	3.86 (1.30)	4.45 (1.21)
Curiosity	3.72 (1.66)	3.71 (1.63)	4.96 (1.14)
Perceived control	4.94 (1.19)	4.99 (1.07)	5.52 (.87)
Family entitativity	4.44 (1.28)	5.08 (1.35)	5.79 (.89)
Life satisfaction	3.49 (1.53)	4.18 (1.64)	4.96 (1.44)

Note.—Standard deviations in parentheses.

Enjoyment. As in study 1, there were few ($n = 6$) participants who reported a family ritual but did not celebrate New Year's Eve with their families. Among participants who did not have a family ritual, those who were with their families enjoyed it more than those who did not spend the holiday with their families ($t(93) = 2.07$, $p = .041$, $d = .42$). Most important for our account, those who were with family but did not have a family ritual enjoyed New Year's Eve less than their counterparts who had a family ritual ($t(99) = 6.03$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.19$). As in study 1, being with family was better than being without family, and being with family and enacting a ritual was associated with the greatest enjoyment.

As in study 1, we examined whether the type of ritual influenced enjoyment. There were no differences in enjoyment ratings associated with having a family dinner, watching the ball drop, counting down, drinking, and playing games (all $p > .16$). New Year's resolutions were associated with less enjoyment than family dinner, watching the ball drop, countdown, and drinking (all $p < .05$), although only four participants listed New Year's resolutions, making these results tentative. Overall, these results align with those of study 1 in suggesting that the specific type of family ritual is less important than the mere fact of having a family ritual.

Closeness. Participants who were not with their families and who reported not having a family ritual reported lower levels of closeness to their families than those who were with their family but reported not having a family ritual ($t(93) = 8.42$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.74$), suggesting that being with family—independent of having a ritual—is associated with family closeness. However, having a family ritual influenced feelings of closeness in addition to being with family: participants who spent New Year's Eve with their families and who had a family ritual felt even closer to their families than those who were with their families but did not have a family ritual ($t(99) = 4.30$, $p < .001$, $d = .86$).

Family Liking. Participants who were not with family and who reported not having a family ritual and those who were with their family but did not have a family ritual reported similar levels of family liking ($t(93) = 1.37$, $p = .18$, $d = .28$; $\alpha = .92$). But participants who were with their families and who had a family ritual liked their families marginally more than those who were with family but did not have a family ritual ($t(99) = 1.78$, $p = .08$, $d = .35$).

Intrinsic Interest. Participants who were not with family and who did not have a family ritual and those who were with their family but did not have a family ritual had similar levels of intrinsic interest ($t(93) = 1.32$, $p = .19$, $d = .27$; $\alpha = .89$). More germane to our predictions, those who were with family and had a family ritual reported greater intrinsic interest than those who were with family but did not have a family ritual ($t(99) = 5.83$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.16$).

Attention Focus. Participants who were not with family and who reported not having a family ritual and those who were with their family but reported not having a family ritual reported similar levels of attention focus ($t(93) = .28$, $p = .77$, $d = .06$; $\alpha = .72$). Participants who spent New Year's Eve with family and had a family ritual reported greater attention focus than those with family but did not have a family ritual ($t(99) = 2.36$, $p = .02$, $d = .47$).

Curiosity. Participants who were not with family and who reported not having a family ritual and those who were with their family but reported not having a family ritual reported similar levels of curiosity ($t(93) = .02$, $p = .99$, $d = .006$; $\alpha = .95$); those with family who had a family ritual reported greater curiosity than those with family but without a family ritual ($t(99) = 4.46$, $p < .001$, $d = .89$).

Perceived Control. Among participants who did not have a family ritual, those who were with family and those who were not with family reported similar levels of perceived control ($t(93) = .23$, $p = .82$, $d = .04$; $\alpha = .69$). Participants with family who did not have a family ritual had lower levels of perceived control than those who were with family and had a family ritual ($t(99) = 2.73$, $p = .007$, $d = .54$).

Family Entitativity. Among participants who did not have a family ritual, those who were with family perceived their families as more entitative than those who did not spend the holiday with family ($t(93) = 2.37$, $p = .02$, $d = .49$; $\alpha = .91$). Participants who were with family but who did not have any family ritual perceived their families as less entitative than those who were with family and had a family ritual ($t(99) = 3.12$, $p = .002$, $d = .62$).

Life Satisfaction. Participants who were not with family and who reported not having a family ritual were less satisfied with their lives than those who were with their family but reported not having a family ritual ($t(93) = 2.13$, $p = .036$, $d = .44$; $\alpha = .94$). Participants with family who had a family ritual reported higher life satisfaction than those with family but without a family ritual ($t(99) = 2.53$, $p = .01$, $d = .51$).

Individual Rituals. We also investigated whether individual rituals influenced any of these measures. Our results indicated that having an individual ritual did not influence enjoyment ($t(150) = .84$, $p = .40$, $d = .14$), closeness ($t(150) = .623$, $p = .97$, $d = .11$), family liking ($t(150) = .21$, $p = .83$, $d = .03$), attention ($t(150) = -.35$, $p = .73$, $d = .06$), intrinsic interest ($t(150) = .66$, $p = .51$, $d = .11$), curiosity ($t(150) = 1.21$, $p = .23$, $d = .20$), perceived control ($t(150) = -.715$, $p = .48$, $d = .12$), family entitativity ($t(150) = .79$, $p = .43$, $d = .13$), and life satisfaction ($t(150) = .52$, $p = .61$, $d = .09$).

Mediation. Entering the survey measures simultaneously into a regression predicting enjoyment revealed that closeness, greater intrinsic interest, and curiosity were associated with significantly higher enjoyment ($\beta = .17$, $p = .008$; $\beta = .51$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .15$, $p = .02$, respectively). Family liking ($\beta = .08$, $p = .29$), attention ($\beta = .02$, $p = .71$), perceived control ($\beta = .07$, $p = .16$), family entitativity ($\beta = .06$, $p = .45$), and life satisfaction ($\beta = .10$, $p = .06$) were not associated with enjoyment.

Replicating study 1, a path analysis revealed that closeness to family and intrinsic interest mediated the relationship between having a family ritual in combination with being with one's family and enjoyment (fig. 2). Those who spent the holiday with their family and who had a family ritual had higher family closeness, and higher family closeness was associated with greater intrinsic interest in New Year's Eve activities, which in turn predicted increased holiday enjoyment. When we included closeness in the model, predicting intrinsic interest, the effect of having a family ritual and being together with family was reduced (from $\beta = .49$, $p < .001$, to $\beta = .18$, $p = .01$), and family closeness was a significant predictor of intrinsic interest ($\beta = .57$, $p < .001$). The 95% bias-corrected confidence interval for the size of the indirect effect excluded zero (.73, 1.41), suggesting a significant indirect effect. When we included family closeness and intrinsic interest in the model, predicting enjoyment, the effect of having a family ritual and being together with family was reduced (from $\beta = .51$, $p < .001$, to $\beta = .07$, $p = .19$), and both family closeness ($\beta = .20$, $p = .001$) and intrinsic interest ($\beta = .68$, $p < .001$) were significant predictors of enjoyment. The 95% bias-corrected confidence interval for the size of the indirect effect excluded zero (.54, 1.12), suggesting a significant indirect effect (Baron and Kenny 1986; Preacher and Kelley 2011).

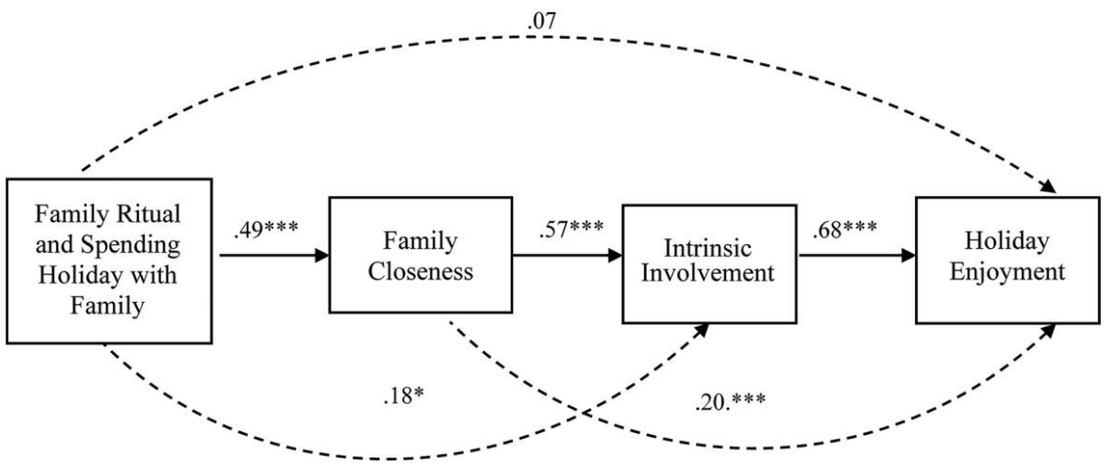

Figure 2. Path analysis in study 2 showing extent to which family closeness and intrinsic involvement mediated the relationship between family ritual and spending the holiday with family and holiday enjoyment. Standardized β coefficients displayed. $^{*}p < .05$, $^{***}p < .001$.

Discussion

Study 2 focused on family rituals on New Year's Eve. As it is a secular holiday, one could imagine that the pattern of results might have differed from those of study 1, which focused on a religious holiday, Christmas. Instead, the results were highly similar, attesting to the strength of family rituals. Enacting a family ritual was associated with the high levels of enjoyment. Family rituals also enabled family closeness and involvement in the experience, which were responsible for the peak enjoyment. In addition, we again found that the specific type of family ritual did not influence enjoyment and that individual rituals were rare and, when enacted, not predictive of enjoyment.

STUDY 3: EASTER RITUALS

In studies 1 and 2, participants described their rituals and then reported their holiday enjoyment. Asking about rituals first could have led participants with family rituals to recall positive memories and participants without rituals to feel regret, such that our effects may not result from actual enjoyment of the holiday. To address this issue, in study 3 participants are randomly assigned to either describe their rituals first and then report their enjoyment of the holiday or report their enjoyment first and then describe their rituals. In addition, we conducted studies 1 and 2 the day after a holiday, which could have caused some types of families to be left out of our sample, given that some families may be traveling the day after Christmas and on New Year's Day. To address this issue, we conducted study 3 three weeks after a holiday.

For this study, we chose the religious celebration of Easter, a widely celebrated holiday that is important to families and frequently includes family rituals (Wolin and Bennett 1984; Rosenthal and Marshall 1988; Meske et al. 1994). We predicted that participants who reported having a family ritual would be more likely to both spend the holiday with their family and experience greater enjoyment, regardless of whether they answered ritual questions first or assessed the holiday first. We also predicted that, as in our previous studies, participants who reported having family rituals would feel closer to their families and experience greater involvement, which in turn would lead to increased enjoyment.

Method

Participants. Eight hundred and six individuals (M_{age} = 36.70, SD = 11.26; 45.8% female) recruited on Amazon's Mechanical Turk participated in this study roughly 3 weeks after Easter in 2016 in exchange for $1. We included several comprehension checks to ensure that participants paid attention. Seven participants did not pass the filter questions and were eliminated from the study automatically. The sample size was based on previous studies on rituals (Vohs et al. 2013) and was larger than the previous studies because we experimentally manipulated order.

Design and Procedure. We randomly assigned participants to one of the two conditions. In the *ritual-first condition*, participants reported whether they engaged in a family ritual on Easter and completed the same open-ended questions about those rituals as in studies 1 and 2 and then completed the same dependent measures (enjoyment, etc.) as in studies 1 and 2. In the *enjoyment-first condition*, participants first completed the dependent measures (enjoyment, etc.) and then reported whether they engaged in a family ritual on Easter and completed the open-ended questions. Last, participants answered demographic questions. (A complete set of data used in this study is available online.)

Type of Family Rituals. Participants reported an average of 1.90 (SD = .89) family rituals on Easter. Participants elaborated on one ritual; two independent coders analyzed the content of these responses and identified subcategories of family rituals. They agreed 98% of the time about the title of each category and resolved disagreements through discussion.

Five categories of Easter rituals emerged: (1) family dinner, (2) religious ceremony, (3) egg hunt, (4) egg decoration, and (5) preparing Easter baskets. Once the coders decided on this final set of topics, they reread each response and indicated the most appropriate category (table 1 shows the categorization of family rituals on Easter, with examples). The most common category was family dinner (36.39%), followed by attending a religious ceremony (24.46%), egg hunt (22.32%), egg decoration (9.17%), and preparing Easter baskets (7.65%).

Frequency of Family Rituals and Spending Time with Family. Three hundred and twenty-seven out of 806 participants (40.6%) reported having a family ritual on Easter. Out of the 327 participants who reported a family ritual, just 4.6% did not spend Easter with their family. In contrast, out of 479 participants who did not have a family ritual, 41.5% did not spend this holiday with their family ($\chi^2(2, N = 806) = 134.98$, $p < .001$). Replicating our previous results, having a family ritual was associated with spend-

ing the holiday with family. Table 4 provides means and standard deviations for outcome variables.

Enjoyment. As in the previous studies, because few participants ($n = 15$) reported having a family ritual but not spending the holiday with their family, the use of an ANOVA is not appropriate. Therefore, as in the previous studies, we used simple comparisons to assess the influence of family rituals in the entire sample, then reported simple comparisons separately for the ritual-first and enjoyment-first conditions.

As in the previous studies, participants who were not with family and who reported not having a family ritual reported that the holiday was less enjoyable than those who were with family and reported not having a family ritual ($t(477) = 10.81$, $p < .001$, $d = .99$), who experienced less enjoyment than those who were with family and had a family ritual ($t(590) = 6.53$, $p < .001$, $d = .54$). Importantly, these comparisons were significant in both the ritual-first condition ($t(199) = 6.13$, $p < .001$, $d = .87$, and $t(295) = 7.35$, $p < .001$, $d = .86$, respectively) and the enjoyment-first condition ($t(276) = 8.98$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.08$, and $t(293) = 1.96$, $p = .05$, $d = .23$, respectively), suggesting that our effects in studies 1 and 2 are not driven solely by participants' first reflecting on rituals before reporting their holiday enjoyment.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics and Statistical Comparisons for Measures in Study 3

	No ritual, not with family	No ritual, with family	Ritual, with family
Ritual-first condition:			
Enjoyment	3.74 (1.67)	5.00 (1.24)	6.06 (1.18)
Closeness	2.24 (1.45)	5.03 (1.44)	6.10 (1.16)
Family liking	4.96 (1.83)	5.68 (1.26)	6.20 (1.02)
Intrinsic interest	3.42 (1.38)	4.34 (1.38)	5.73 (1.17)
Attention focus	3.51 (1.06)	3.42 (1.14)	4.48 (1.29)
Curiosity	2.51 (1.32)	3.32 (1.52)	4.79 (1.50)
Perceived control	4.94 (1.16)	5.01 (1.03)	5.20 (1.06)
Family entitativity	4.33 (1.61)	5.04 (1.38)	5.78 (1.06)
Life satisfaction	3.87 (1.82)	4.00 (1.59)	4.75 (1.46)
Enjoyment-first condition:			
Enjoyment	3.48 (1.41)	5.10 (1.52)	5.44 (1.48)
Closeness	2.33 (1.44)	4.81 (1.72)	5.42 (1.68)
Family liking	4.90 (1.76)	5.68 (1.33)	5.97 (1.27)
Intrinsic interest	3.19 (1.37)	4.62 (1.55)	5.05 (1.38)
Attention focus	3.24 (.88)	3.77 (1.09)	3.94 (1.23)
Curiosity	2.72 (1.40)	3.97 (1.50)	4.31 (1.62)
Perceived control	4.71 (1.11)	5.20 (1.21)	5.03 (1.18)
Family entitativity	4.07 (1.62)	5.03 (1.36)	5.36 (1.34)
Life satisfaction	3.69 (1.59)	4.30 (1.73)	4.46 (1.59)

Note.—Standard deviations in parentheses.

We then investigated whether the type of family ritual that participants enacted influenced enjoyment, by conducting independent-samples *t*-tests between each group. The type of ritual—family dinner, attending a religious ceremony, egg hunt, egg decoration, or preparing Easter baskets—did not influence enjoyment, with no significant differences between any of the ritual types (all $p > .32$).

Closeness. Participants who were not with their families and who did not have a family ritual reported lower levels of closeness to their families than those who were with their family but did not have a family ritual ($t(477) = 18.21$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.67$), who reported lower levels of closeness than those who were with their families and had a family ritual ($t(590) = 7.29$, $p < .001$, $d = .60$). More important, these comparisons were significant in both the ritual-first condition ($t(199) = 13.55$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.92$, and $t(295) = 7.08$, $p < .001$, $d = .82$, respectively) and the enjoyment-first condition ($t(276) = 12.58$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.51$, and $t(293) = 3.05$, $p = .003$, $d = .36$, respectively).

Family Liking. Participants who were not with family and who did not have a family ritual liked their families less than those who were with their family but did not have a family ritual ($t(475) = 5.35$, $p < .001$, $d = .49$; $\alpha = .92$), who in turn liked their families less than those who were with family and who had a family ritual ($t(588) = 4.18$, $p < .001$, $d = .35$). Importantly, these comparisons were significant in the ritual-first condition ($t(197) = 3.26$, $p = .001$, $d = .46$, and $t(293) = 3.93$, $p < .001$, $d = .46$, respectively) and the enjoyment-first condition ($t(276) = 4.23$, $p < .001$, $d = .51$, and $t(293) = 1.82$, $p = .07$, $d = .21$, respectively).

Intrinsic Interest. Participants who were not with family and who did not have a family ritual reported lower levels of intrinsic interest in Easter than those who were with family but did not have a family ritual ($t(476) = 9.07$, $p < .001$, $d = .83$; $\alpha = .89$), who in turn reported lower intrinsic interest than participants who were with family and who had a family ritual ($t(589) = 8.21$, $p < .001$, $d = .68$). Importantly, these comparisons were significant in both the ritual-first condition ($t(198) = 4.66$, $p < .001$, $d = .66$, and $t(294) = 9.34$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.09$, respectively) and the enjoyment-first condition ($t(276) = 7.89$, $p < .001$, $d = .95$, and $t(293) =$

2.48, $p = .014$, $d = .29$, respectively), suggesting that our effects in previous studies for intrinsic interest are not driven solely by participants' first reflecting on rituals before reporting their holiday enjoyment.

Attention Focus. Participants who were not with family and who did not have a family ritual reported lower levels of attention than those who were with family and reported not having a family ritual ($t(476) = 2.76$, $p = .006$, $d = .25$; $\alpha = .64$), who reported lower levels of attention than participants who were with family and had a family ritual ($t(589) = 6.24$, $p < .001$, $d = .51$). The first comparison was not significant in the ritual-first condition ($t(198) = .54$, $p = .59$, $d = .08$), but the second comparison was significant ($t(294) = 7.20$, $p < .001$, $d = .84$). However, the first comparison was significant in the enjoyment-first condition ($t(276) = 4.29$, $p < .001$, $d = .52$), but the second comparison was not significant ($t(293) = 1.23$, $p = .22$, $d = .14$).

Curiosity. Participants who were not with family and who reported not having a family ritual had lower levels of curiosity than those who were with family but reported not having a family ritual ($t(476) = 7.88$, $p < .001$, $d = .72$; $\alpha = .89$), who in turn had lower curiosity than participants who were with family and had a family ritual ($t(589) = 6.92$, $p < .001$, $d = .57$). These comparisons were significant in both the ritual-first condition ($t(198) = 3.97$, $p < .001$, $d = .56$, and $t(294) = 8.16$, $p < .001$, $d = .95$, respectively) and the enjoyment-first condition ($t(276) = 7.03$, $p < .001$, $d = .85$, and $t(293) = 1.88$, $p = .06$, $d = .22$, respectively).

Perceived Control. Participants who were not with family and who did not have a family ritual reported lower levels of control than those who were with family but did not have a family ritual ($t(476) = 3.00$, $p = .003$, $d = .28$; $\alpha = .66$), who reported similar levels of control as participants who were with family and had a family ritual ($t(589) = .008$, $p = .99$, $d = .0006$). These comparisons were not significant in the ritual-first condition ($t(198) = .50$, $p = .62$, $d = .07$, and $t(294) = 1.45$, $p = .15$, $d = .17$, respectively). However, the first comparison was significant in the enjoyment-first condition ($t(276) = 3.43$, $p = .001$, $d = .41$), but the second comparison was not significant ($t(293) = 1.23$, $p = .22$, $d = .14$).

Family Entitativity. Participants who were not with family and did not have a family ritual reported lower levels of family entitativity than those who were with their family but did not have a family ritual ($t(475) = 6.23$, $p < .001$, $d = .5$; $\alpha = .93$), who reported lower levels of entitativity than participants who were with family and had a family ritual ($t(588) = 5.41$, $p < .001$, $d = .45$). Importantly, these comparisons were significant in both the ritual-first condition ($t(197) = 3.36$, $p = .001$, $d = .48$, and $t(293) = 5.19$, $p < .001$, $d = .60$, respectively) and the enjoyment-first condition ($t(276) = 5.34$, $p < .001$, $d = .64$, and $t(293) = 2.09$, $p = .037$, $d = .24$, respectively).

Life Satisfaction. Among participants who did not have a family ritual, those who were with family reported lower levels of life satisfaction than those who did not spend the holiday with family ($t(475) = 2.63$, $p = .009$, $d = .24$; $\alpha = .94$), who reported lower levels than participants who were with family and had a family ritual ($t(588) = 3.41$, $p = .001$, $d = 28$). The first comparison was not significant in the ritual-first condition ($t(197) = .54$, $p = .59$, $d = .08$), but the second comparison was significant ($t(293) = 4.13$, $p < .001$, $d = .48$). However, the first comparison was significant in the enjoyment-first condition ($t(276) = 2.99$, $p = .003$, $d = .36$), but the second comparison was not significant ($t(293) = .81$, $p = .42$, $d = .09$).

Mediation. Entering the survey measures simultaneously into a regression predicting enjoyment revealed that closeness, greater intrinsic interest, and family entitativity were associated with significantly higher enjoyment ($\beta = .32$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .53$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .13$, $p = .03$, respectively). Family liking ($\beta = .11$, $p = .07$), attention focus ($\beta = .04$, $p = .33$), curiosity ($\beta = .07$, $p = .05$), perceived control ($\beta = .06$, $p = .17$), and life satisfaction ($\beta = .05$, $p = .11$) were not associated with enjoyment.

We conducted a mediation analysis comparing participants who reported having a family ritual and spending the holiday with their family to all other participants. A path analysis revealed that closeness to family and intrinsic interest drove the relationship between having a family ritual and being with one's family and enjoyment (fig. 3). Those who spent Easter with family and had a family ritual reported greater family closeness, and greater family closeness was associated with greater intrinsic interest, which in turn predicted increased holiday enjoyment. When we included closeness in the model, predicting intrinsic interest, the effect of having a family ritual and being with family was reduced (from $\beta = .43$, $p < .001$, to $\beta = .10$, $p < .001$), and family closeness was a significant predictor of intrin-

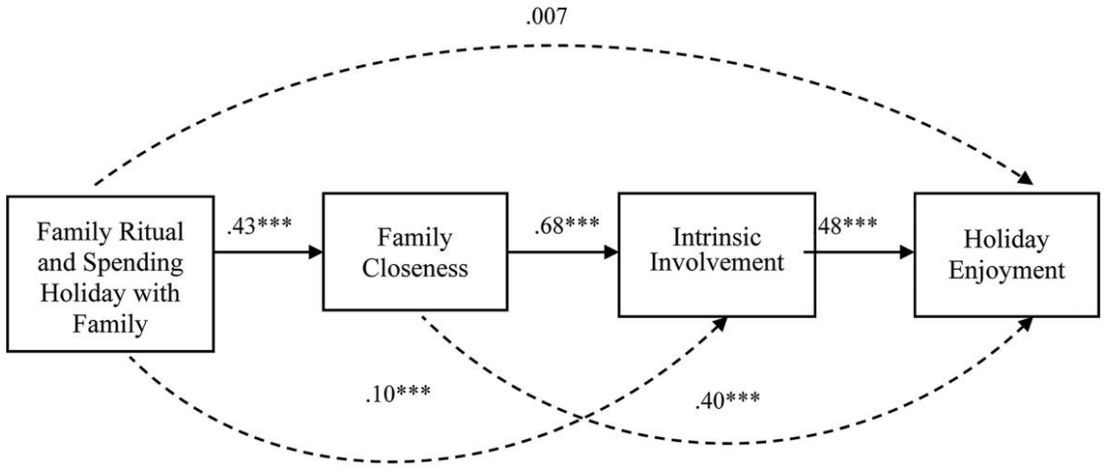

Figure 3. Path analysis in study 3 in which family closeness and intrinsic involvement are shown to drive the relationship between family ritual and spending the holiday with family and holiday enjoyment. Standardized β coefficients displayed. $^{***}p < .001$.

sic interest ($\beta = .68$, $p < .001$). The 95% bias-corrected confidence interval for the size of the indirect effect excluded zero (.92, 1.22), suggesting a significant indirect effect. When we included family closeness and intrinsic interest in the model, predicting enjoyment, the effect of having a family ritual and being together with family was reduced (from $\beta = .39$, $p < .001$, to $\beta = .07$, $p = .76$), and both family closeness ($\beta = .40$, $p < .001$) and intrinsic interest ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$) were significant predictors of enjoyment. The 95% bias-corrected confidence interval for the size of the indirect effect excluded zero (.43, .66), suggesting a significant indirect effect (Baron and Kenny 1986; Preacher and Kelley 2011).

Discussion

Study 3 shows that people who have Easter family rituals are likely to spend the holiday with family and, when they do, report greatly enjoying the holiday. As we found in the previous studies, family closeness and greater intrinsic interest in the experience drove this increased enjoyment. Most crucially, while the link between rituals and enjoyment was typically more pronounced when participants first reflected on rituals and then reported their enjoyment (and completed our other dependent measures)—as evidenced by larger mean differences—these links (enjoyment, family closeness, and intrinsic interest) were statistically significant even when participants first reported their enjoyment and then reflected on rituals. These results suggest that a cueing explanation does not fully account for the link we observe between family rituals and enjoyment, instead offering evidence that people enjoy family holidays that include rituals more whether or not they are asked to focus on those rituals. At the same time, these experimental results suggest that one means by which to further increase the retrospective enjoyment of family holidays is to reflect on the rituals enacted during those holidays. Our data suggest that differences in enjoyment are even greater when people are cued to reminisce about their family rituals.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Three studies provided evidence that family rituals are associated with increased enjoyment of the holidays. These effects persisted across both religious and secular holidays: Christmas, New Year's Eve, and Easter. We identified two mediators of the link between family rituals and enjoyment. Rituals promote feelings of family closeness and greater intrinsic involvement, which serve to benefit family rituals. Our findings suggest that the prevalence of family rituals makes good sense: they are associated with both family gathering for holidays and having better holiday experiences once gathered. Moreover, in all three studies, the forms that family rituals took—from religious services to egg hunts, from games to New Year's countdowns—were not associated with different levels of enjoyment, suggesting that enacting a family ritual is more important than the specific form that the ritual takes.

Our research contributes to research on the social function of rituals (e.g., Durkheim 1915; Whitehouse and Lanman 2014; Watson-Jones and Legare 2016), in four ways. First, we show that a wide range of family rituals—from game playing to tree decorating to egg hunts—are associ-

ated with greater attendance at and enjoyment of major holidays, offering further support for the notion that social rituals bind groups together and enhance group experiences. In addition, we identify two psychological processes that underlie the association between family rituals and enjoyment: they not only promote greater closeness but also increase immersion in family activities, two distinct mechanisms that each predicts the benefits of rituals for improving family experiences. Third, we show that it is specifically family rituals—as opposed to any type of ritual, including individual rituals—that improve holiday experiences, suggesting that at least for major holidays, family rituals play a uniquely important role in enjoyment over and above any benefits of individual rituals. Fourth, in addition to the first two correlational studies, we show in our experimental study 3 that our findings are not merely due to individuals' being cued to elaborate on family rituals; rituals are associated with greater holiday enjoyment even when people are not currently reflecting on those rituals. Taken together, these studies advance our understanding of the importance of symbolic interactions in family life by identifying a potential avenue for intervention, especially in moments when family gatherings can become stressful.

Family rituals can take many forms. Previous research suggests, for example, that religious rituals and services are associated with greater well-being (Seybold and Hill 2001; Mochon, Norton, and Ariely 2008); similarly, food consumption is frequently a common aspect of family rituals (Belk 1990; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991; Tynan and McKechnie 2006) that acquire symbolic meaning and promote family closeness (Rook 1985; Rozin 2005; Rossano 2012). Indeed, these two elements are present in our studies; for example, in studies 1 and 3 religious ceremonies were very commonly reported family rituals; in studies 2 and 3, family dinner was the most frequently reported ritual. However, in study 1, the first and third most common were opening presents and tree decoration; in study 2, watching the ball drop and counting down to New Year's were also common; and in study 3, an egg hunt was among the top three most common rituals, suggesting that our results are not merely driven by food and religious rituals but instead apply across a wide array of family rituals.

While our results suggest that the specific ritual in which participants engage does not significantly affect their enjoyment, might the sheer number of rituals in which families engage predict emotional outcomes? Although we asked participants to describe only one family ritual in detail, they also reported the total number of rituals they performed on each holiday: 2.11 ($SD = 1.13$) on Christmas, 1.54 ($SD = .88$) on New Year's Eve, and 1.90 ($SD = .89$) on Easter. Across the three studies, the number of family rituals was significantly correlated with each of our key dependent measures: enjoyment ($r = .12$, $p = .009$), closeness ($r = .13$, $p = .006$), and intrinsic interest ($r = .15$, $p = .002$). The number of rituals was also correlated with curiosity ($r = .10$, $p = .028$), family entitativity ($r = .10$, $p = .025$), and family liking ($r = .19$, $p < .001$) but was not correlated with attention focus ($r = .08$, $p = .08$), perceived control ($r = -.007$, $p = .87$), or life satisfaction ($r = .07$, $p = .13$). Taken together, our results suggest that while the specific form that a family ritual takes may not be strongly related to hedonic outcomes, what might matter more is the sheer number of family rituals.

Our research advances the understanding of how symbolic consumption can aid consumer well-being. Although holidays in contemporary times are often criticized for elevating materialistic values and consumption of useless products (Etzioni and Bloom 2004), giving and receiving gifts as part of a family rituals may serve to turn those materialistic purchases into an act of symbolic shared consumption; as we show, such behaviors are associated with increased family closeness and enjoyment of family time around the holidays. Indeed, these emotional benefits of deeply symbolic family rituals may be so strong that even though these rituals are repeated year after year, they do not appear to result in a typical pattern of satiation (Coombs and Avrunin 1977; Redden 2008)—possibly leading to decreased liking—but instead enhance the holiday experience. Indeed, to the extent that family rituals are experienced as unusual when first encountered (by younger family members) but then come to be experienced as routine over time (by older family members) they may perfectly align with research suggesting that younger consumers gain greater hedonic benefits from extraordinary experiences whereas older consumers benefit more from ordinary experiences (Bhattacharjee and Mogilner 2014).

In addition to these contributions, our research also points to possible directions for future research. First, future studies could deepen our understanding of the causal link between family rituals and holiday enjoyment. While study 3 includes an experimental manipulation of ritual cuing, further experimental studies are needed to establish causal links between family rituals and holiday experiences. Indeed, it is possible and even likely that families who have rituals may consist of members who are already close to each other and enjoy time together, such that longitudinal stud-

ies and experimental interventions would be helpful in further understanding the causal nature of the family ritual-enjoyment link. Further, there may be other effects of family rituals that contribute to positive outcomes during the holidays. For instance, families who enact ritualistic behaviors have children with better self-control and higher self-esteem than families lacking rituals (Fiese and Kline 1993; Brody and Flor 1997; Fiese 2002; Seaton and Taylor 2003), suggesting additional mechanisms that may contribute to positive outcomes in family gatherings.

Our studies had one member of a family reporting on the ritual. It is likely that family members differ in their interpretations of the meanings and significance of family rituals and consumption practices, on the basis of the influence of family members' decision roles, intergenerational differences, and the existing hierarchy in the family (Epp and Price 2008). Each of these factors, and in particular each family member's unique role, exerts a distinct influence on the family's microenvironment (Cotte and Wood 2004; Kerrane and Hogg 2009), which in turn likely affects the outcomes of family rituals. Future work should solicit evaluations of the same family ritual from different members of that family, to examine when and why members' emotional experiences align versus diverge.

Conclusion

Although holidays are often a source of happiness and joy, they can also be a stressful, frustrating time with an array of demands—from family members wondering why the turkey is not prepared the way Grandma always did to children complaining about giving up their bedroom for Grandpa. We show that family rituals may serve as a buffer to such potential downsides by increasing family closeness and involvement—thereby improving the holidays.

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