Rituals and Relationships: Examining the Relationship Between Family of Origin Rituals and Young Adult Attachment

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ABSTRACT. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between family of origin rituals and young adults' attachment style when controlling for parents' attachment style. The sample consisted of 222 paired young adults and one parent (representing 208 families) from 36 different states. Family of origin rituals were measured using the Family Ritual Questionnaire (FRQ) and attachment was measured using the Experiences in Close Relationships Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire. Results indicated a negative relationship between family of origin ritual meaning and young adult attachment anxiety. Results also indicated that family of origin ritual meaning significantly predicted young adult anxiety after controlling for parent attachment. doi:10.1300/J002v42n01_02 *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2007 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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INTRODUCTION

The Carters are a skiing family, the Whites a reading family, and the Davisons a river-running family. It is not unusual for people to describe their family in terms of their family rituals because "families frequently describe their qualities in terms of the rituals they maintain" (Wolin & Bennett, 1984, p. 403). Subsequently, family rituals can serve as a window into the identity of a family. These "repetitious, highly valued, symbolic family occasions are the core of family culture" (Wolin & Bennett, 1984, p. 402).

Researchers have regularly found a positive relationship between family leisure and family life satisfaction (Orthner & Mancini, 1990; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Family leisure experiences play a central role in the family experience and in family strength (Orthner & Mancini, 1990), and shared leisure time is one of the 15 qualities most commonly found in healthy families (Curran, 1983). One way that families participate in family leisure may be through family rituals. According to Doherty (1997), families need to be intentional about their interactions to avoid the tendency towards weakening family relationships and family dissolution. Doherty (1997) states that this is done through family ritualization.

Family ritualization helps create meaning in family leisure activities in a way that helps family members create strong family bonds and a strong family identity (Doherty, 1997). Family rituals have been shown to influence feelings of support, connection, and bonding between family members (Sanguinetti, 2001). These feelings of belongingness created by family rituals provide a sense of family identity among family members (Viere, 2001), and strengthen family relationships (Sanguinetti, 2001).

Another family of origin characteristic affecting family relationships and family processes is family members' attachment style. Parent-child interactions have a significant effect on the development and maintenance of children's attachment working models (Izard & Haynes, 1991). These working models are carried into adulthood and have been linked to romantic love style, development of romantic relationships, and overall relationship quality in adults (Berman & Sperling, 1994). Furthermore, Hazan and Shaver (1987) found that individuals with a secure attachment style had lower rates of divorce than individuals with anxious and ambivalent attachment styles. In addition, their relationships tend to endure longer than anxious and avoidant individuals and they describe their important love relationships in positive terms such as happy, trusting, and friendly.

Leon and Jacobvitz (2003) stated that future studies investigating the relationship between adult attachment and ritual quality would be useful in answering questions regarding "the role of family ritual quality in the intergenerational transmission of attachment" (p. 429). Although there have been many studies investigating attachment style and its possible factors, family of origin rituals have not been investigated in conjunction with young adult attachment. Because family rituals promote family interaction and strong family relationships, family rituals may also be related to family members' formation of attachment working models. Consequently, family rituals may influence young adult attachment styles as a result of their effect on the formation of attachment working models. Therefore, the purpose of this study was twofold: first, to investigate the relationship between family of origin ritual patterns and young adults' attachment style; and second, to determine whether there is a relationship between family of origin rituals and young adult attachment after controlling for parents' attachment style.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Family Leisure

The value of family leisure experiences has been widely acknowledged by both professionals and families, and researchers consistently report a positive relationship between family leisure and family life satisfaction and stability (Orthner & Mancini, 1990). Holman and Epperson (1984) stated that "both families and professional family helpers see joint leisure time as an important element in promoting marital and family quality" (p. 285). Subsequently, leisure and recreation experiences seem to play a central role in the family experience and family strength (Orthner & Mancini, 1990). "The home is the most common locale and family members are the usual companions for most kinds of weekday, weekend, and vacation leisure" (Kelly, 1978, p. 48). Similarly, the family is the context for all leisure activities that adults rank as most important to them except solitary reading (Kelly, 1978). Family leisure time is at the core of individuals' leisure patterns, and it remains important throughout the life cycle (Orthner & Mancini, 1990).

Current definitions of personal leisure typically emphasize freedom of choice, intrinsic motivation, and enjoyment as central to leisure experiences. Shaw and Dawson (2001) suggested that such conceptions of personal leisure may not, however, be descriptive of all family leisure and they recommended using the term purposive leisure to describe parents' perspective of family leisure. According to Shaw and Dawson (2001), parents often plan and facilitate purposive leisure for family members to assist the family in achieving such goals as improved family functioning through improved interaction and communication, intergenerational transmission of healthy lifestyle behaviors and moral values, and increased cohesion-based on feelings of family unity.

Similar to Shaw and Dawson's (2001) description of purposive leisure is Doherty's (1997) description of the intentional family. Members of intentional families work and plan towards building and maintaining family ties. They also create meaningful activities to help family members bond, and to create a strong family identity (Doherty, 1997). According to Doherty, an intentional family is a ritualizing family, and it is through family rituals that families build and maintain family ties.

Rituals

Family rituals are a form of symbolic activity that convey identity and a sense of belonging to family members (Segal, 2004). Wolin and Bennett (1984) proposed that rituals are repetitious, highly valued, and symbolic family occasions that form the core of family culture. Rituals, therefore, transmit families' values, attitudes, goals, and paradigms (Bossard & Boll, 1950; Wolin & Bennett, 1984). This is not to say that family rituals are a family ideology or family paradigm, but they help to transmit those values and paradigms and are a window into the beliefs and myths that make up a family's ideology.

Aspects of rituals. According to Doherty (1997), there are three key aspects of a family ritual and each must be present for an activity to be considered a family ritual. The first aspect of a ritual is that it must be coordinated. If only one member of the family eats a meal everyday it is not a family ritual; however, if the whole family gets together on a regular basis to eat dinner it is likely a ritual. The second characteristic of a ritual is that it is a repeated activity. One family dinner would not constitute a family ritual, but a daily or weekly family dinner the family anticipates and organizes would likely be a ritual. The final qualification of a ritual is that the activity has meaning and significance for the participants. For example, if upon returning home everyday a husband's greeting to his wife expresses affection and has symbolic meaning his return greeting can become a ritual. If, however, upon returning home he goes about his business only greeting her when they pass, his return home would not be a ritual activity as it is not symbolic and his actions are primarily instrumental, not meaningful.

The meaning and significance of rituals appears to be central to family rituals, and researchers have demonstrated the degree of meaning in a ritual can be measured and described by two factors (Fiese & Kline, 1993; Markson & Fiese, 2000). The first factor is *ritual meaning*; it measures the symbolic significance of family rituals. The second is *ritual routine*; it measures the prescribed roles and routines of family activities, and indicates the degree to which rituals have lost their symbolic meaning and function almost as routines.

Several studies link family life satisfaction more strongly with a ritual's meaning than with the actual ritual itself (Marks, 2004). Family rituals provide symbolic and emotional meaning that conveys family identity and family values. Family ritual meaning is also negatively related to anxiety and positively related to lovability in family members. In contrast, rituals high in their degree of routine (and low in their level of meaning) have been found to be positively related to anxiety and negatively related to feelings of lovability (Fiese & Kline, 1993). In addition to these findings regarding the benefits of family ritual meaning, a more general look at family rituals has uncovered several additional benefits of family rituals in the areas of family relationships and family stability.

Ritual benefits. Rituals are a dimension of strong families (Kelley & Sequeira, 1997) and they bring about feelings of support and bonding between family members (Sanguinetti, 2001). Rituals help establish family identity by clarifying expected roles, delineating boundaries, defining family rules (Wolin & Bennett, 1984), and creating feelings of belongingness (Fiese, 1992). Researchers have also found a significant positive relationship between family rituals and family cohesion (Hammond, 2001; Schrader, 1997).

Based on these findings it seems that family rituals are a forum in which family interactions take place and through these interactions family members create family relationships. Consequently, these ritual interactions may affect the way children develop and learn about attachments and relationships with others.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was initially conceived as a general personality development theory focusing primarily on mother-infant attachments (Bowlby, 1981). According to attachment theory, children's behavior is oriented toward keeping them within proximal distance to their caretaker to promote "felt security" based on parent's responsiveness (Bowlby, 1982; Bretherton, 1985, 1992).

Working models and infant attachment. A parent's degree of responsiveness to a child has a profound impact on the child's developing personality (Bowlby, 1973; Collins & Read, 1990). The quality of the infant-caregiver relationship is determined by the caregiver's responsiveness to the child, and the degree to which the infant comes to view the caregiver as a source of security (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Based on the quality of the infant-caregiver relationship the child creates beliefs and expectations about relationships; these beliefs are known as *working models.* Bowlby (1973) identified the two main facets of children's developing working models:

> (a) whether or not the attachment figure is judged to be the sort of person who in general responds to calls for support and protection; (and) (b) whether or not the self is judged to be the sort of person towards whom anyone, and the attachment figure in particular, is likely to respond in a helpful way. (p. 204)

These working models serve as a relationship heuristic providing the child with rules about relationships and attachments (Kobak & Sceery, 1988). The operation of these working models in an individual's relationships creates an individuals attachment style that persists into later years.

Adult attachment dimensions. A basic tenet of attachment theory is that attachment relationships continue to be important throughout the life span, and research has found that attachment styles formed through relationships with early primary caregivers continue into adulthood (Ainsworth, 1982; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). As a result, several researchers have translated the infant attachment styles into terms, dimensions and descriptions appropriate for adult relationships (Collins & Read, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Simpson & Rholes, 1998).

Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998) suggested that there are two fundamental dimensions of adult attachment. One dimension is attachment-related anxiety. People high on this dimension tend to worry about whether their partner is available and responsive. The second dimension is attachment-related avoidance. People high on this dimension are not comfortable opening up to or depending on others (Fraley, 2004). Individuals who are low on these dimensions are considered to have a secure attachment style.

Attachment style and romantic relationships. These attachment styles exert a pervasive influence on romantic relationships because they reflect the individual's view of the rewards and dangers of intimate relationships (Feeney & Noller, 1990). Hazan and Shaver (1987) proposed that Bowlby's (1969) attachment model could illuminate certain aspects of both adolescent and adult romantic love, and explain certain behavior and experiences of individuals in romantic relationships. "Avoidant adults, for example, are reluctant to self-disclose and become psychologically intimate with romantic partners; anxious-ambivalent adults are prone to jealousy and obsessive preoccupation with romantic partners; secure adults tend to view their partners as trustworthy friends" (Shaver et al., 1996, p. 582).

Similarly, Collins and Read (1990) found that participants with a secure attachment style had a higher sense of self-worth, greater self-confidence, and were more expressive. Their beliefs about the world were also positive, and they viewed people as dependable and trustworthy. Individuals with secure attachments were also characterized by demonstrating less game playing and more selflessness in their relationships. The romantic relationships of secure individuals tended to last longest, while romantic relationships of anxious-ambivalent individuals were the least enduring (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). These findings regarding the positive relationship quality of securely attached individuals suggest that securely attached individuals are more successful in their romantic relationships.

In contrast, individuals with a more anxious attachment style demonstrated very different behavior than securely attached individuals (Collins & Read, 1990). Individuals with an anxious attachment style had negative views of themselves and others, including lower self-worth and sense of control. They were also more likely to have an obsessive, dependent style of relationship. Given the attachment style's effect on relationship formation and relationship quality, factors that influence the creation of an individuals' attachment style are important to investigate.

Factors Affecting Attachment Style

Researchers found that one factor influencing whether children develop a secure or insecure attachment style is parents' attachment style (Pederson et al., 1998; Van IJzendoorn, 1995; Ward & Carlson, 1995). The effect of parents' attachment style on children is powerful enough that parents' attachment style predicts approximately 25% of the variation in infant attachment (Van IJzendoorn, 1995). One reason for this is that parents express their attachment style in how responsive they are to their children (Hammond, 2001; Ward & Carlson, 1995). For example, securely attached parents are able to interpret their children's attachment signals more accurately, and are more willing to react promptly and adequately to children's needs, than are insecure parents (Van IJzendoorn, 1995).

These parent-child interactions, however, are not a sufficient explanation for children's attachment style, as parental attachment style explains only one-fourth of the variation in children's attachment security. This suggests that there are other variables influencing children's attachment style, one of which may be family ritualization.

Attachment and Rituals

Several studies have found a relationship between parents' attachment and family rituals. Leon and Jacobvitz (2003) proposed that adult attachment is an important predictor of family ritual quality. They found that couples' attachment was associated with the family's pattern of ritualization. Similarly, Thalhuber (2002) examined the relationship between adult attachment style and the quality of family rituals, and found that maternal insecure attachment was associated with higher routinization of family rituals.

Not only is there a relationship between parents' attachment style and rituals, but along with other family of origin characteristics, rituals affect family members' relationship beliefs. Kelly (2002) investigated the contribution of family of origin structure (divorced or intact marital status of parents) and family of origin characteristics (including family rituals) in predicting adult children's attachment style. She found that family of origin characteristics (such as family rituals), rather than its structure (parent's marital status), predicted positive and negative relationship communication strategies, relationship beliefs, and fear of intimacy in adult children. In addition, positive family of origin characteristics, including family rituals, was more predictive of

relationship beliefs and fear of intimacy in adult children than the absence or presence of negative family of origin characteristics.

Summary and Hypothesis

The characteristics and benefits of rituals suggest that they may be associated with attachment formation. Children's family life and family interactions are important in their creation of attachment working models (Bowlby, 1982). Owing to the influence that rituals have on family cohesion and family bonding, family rituals may be one significant variable in relationship formation, and consequently, the formation of children's attachment representations. Based on the literature and these possible relationships, this study was designed to test the following hypotheses.

> *Hypothesis 1*. There is a positive relationship between family of origin rituals and young adult attachment style.

> *Hypothesis 2*. There is a positive relationship between family of origin rituals and young adult attachment after controlling for parents' attachment style.

METHODS

Sample

According to Erickson's (1959) theory of psychosocial development the most important developmental task for young adults is to achieve intimacy with others. Because achieving intimacy is the primary developmental task for young adults, attachment should be more pronounced in individuals in this developmental stage than individuals in other stages, making young adults well suited for attachment research.

The sample consisted of 222 paired sets (each paired set consisted of one parent and one young adult child) and represented 208 families total. The participants were from 36 different states in the Unites States, 4 from Canada, and 2 from other countries. Participants were a convenience sample recruited via e-mail beginning with college classes at 12 universities and colleges throughout the United States. Young adults ranged from 17 to 31 years of age with a mean age of 21.46 years ($SD = 2.38$). They consisted of 22% male and 78% female participants.

Parents' ages ranged from 39 to 66 years with a mean age of 49.49 years ($SD = 5.60$). The parent sample consisted of 28% male and 72% female participants. The majority of the parents were Caucasian (89%), with 2% Hispanic, 5% African-American, and 4% other ethnicities. Parent household annual incomes ranged from less than $10,000 to over $150,000; 55% made less than $70,000. Of the parents, 77% had 4 years, or less, of post high school education and 33% had more than 4 years of post high school education. The majority of the parents were married (88%), 8% were divorced, and the other 4% were single, unmarried, separated, or widowed.

Although findings from this study provide considerable insight into the formation of young adult attachment, some limitations of the sample must be acknowledged. The sample for this study was predominantly female. This indicates a potential for female bias. Owing to the sample size, however, it is believed that the number of men is large enough to be adequately representative. Both male and female young adults were recruited for the study, but 78% of participants who volunteered were women; also indicating a possible self-selection bias. The young adults recruited the parents themselves, and it was assumed that the young adults would recruit the parent they were closest to and most accustomed to asking for assistance which would likely be their primary caregiver. It was appropriate to have the primary caregiver respond because that is the parent whose attachment has the most powerful effect on the young adults' attachment and on the family of origin rituals. It is not surprising that there were more mothers than fathers as many children view their mother as their primary caregiver. This is also appropriate in regard to investigating family of origin rituals because most often mothers are believed to be the keepers of the family rituals (Doherty, 1997). Findings regarding the lack of evidence for the transmission of father attachment (Miljkovitch et al., 2004) also support the predominance of mother respondents. Of the parent sample, 88% were married. In addition, because the findings of this study were based primarily on two parent families, the findings may not be generalized to other populations including single and divorced parents.

Measures

The online questionnaire contained two instruments and a section of demographic questions. The first section measured family of origin rituals using the Family Ritual Questionnaire (FRQ). The second section

assessed adult attachment style as measured by the Experiences in Close Relationships Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire.

Family of origin rituals. Family of origin rituals were assessed using the FRQ (Fiese & Kline, 1993), a 56-item questionnaire-based on the Wolin and Bennett Family Ritual Interview (Wolin & Bennett, 1984). The FRQ assesses family rituals in seven settings: dinner time, weekends, vacations, annual celebrations, special celebrations, religious celebrations, and cultural traditions. The FRQ also measures family rituals on eight dimensions: occurrence, roles, routines, attendance, affect, symbolic significance, continuation, and deliberateness.

Each question on the FRQ has two descriptions of a family routine or tradition. The participants chose which of the two descriptions most accurately described the participant's family of origin. The participant then decided if that description was "really true" or "sort of true" of his or her family of origin. For example, question one has two descriptions "Some families regularly eat dinner together" and "Other families rarely eat dinners together." After deciding which description was most like the participant's family, the participant decided if that description was really true or sort of true for his or her family.

Two components of family rituals measured by the FRQ have been established using factor analysis (Fiese & Kline, 1993). A Family Ritual Routine score was obtained by summing the responses to the roles and routines dimensions, and a Family Ritual Meaning score was obtained by summing responses to occurrence, attendance, affect, and symbolic significance questions. The routine score summarized the enactment of the rituals through roles and routines, the meaning score summarized the meaning ascribed to rituals (Fiese, 1992).

Evidence of construct validity of the FRQ has been demonstrated through "significant correlations found between established measures of family organization and negative correlations with anxiety and physical symptoms" (Fiese & Hooker, 1993; Fiese & Kline, 1993). A test-retest reliability coefficient of .88 was established over a 4-week period (Fiese & Kline). Internal consistency coefficients on all the dimensions and settings of the FRQ have ranged from .52 to .90 (Markson & Fiese, 2000). Internal consistency coefficients tested for this study were consistent with previous results ranging from .54 to .78.

Attachment. A measure of attachment was obtained using the ECR-R (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). The ECR-R is a 36-item self-report attachment measure. The ECR-R assesses basic orientation towards closeness and distance in romantic relationships (Lopez & Hsu, 2002). The ECR-R yields scores on two subscales that measure attachment

avoidance (discomfort with closeness and discomfort with depending on others) and attachment anxiety (or fear of rejection and abandonment).

To complete the ECR-R, participants were asked to think about their close relationships without focusing on a specific person, and were asked to rate how accurately each item describes the participant's close relationships (e.g., "I worry a lot about my relationships"). The participant rated how strongly they agreed with the statement on a seven-point scale ranging from "disagree strongly" to "agree strongly."

Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998) reported Cronbach alphas of .94 and .91 for the Avoidance and Anxiety scales of the ECR-R, and found that the scale scores correlated in expected directions with scores on touch aversion and postcoital emotions. Internal consistency tested for this study indicated a Cronbach alpha of .94 for avoidance and .93 for anxiety.

The final section of the questionnaire was a series of demographic questions including questions regarding the participant's gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, level of education, annual income, years married, and family size.

Procedures

Young adults were asked through e-mail to participate in the study and were asked to forward the e-mail to their parents inviting them also to participate. In the e-mail, the young adults and parents were given the Website address where the questionnaire could be taken. Upon entering the Website, participants were asked to enter the last 4 digits of the parents' home phone number. This number was used to identify the participants (no names were used) and to match the parents' and young adult's responses to each other. The first section of the questionnaire was the consent form indicating that participation was voluntary and that submission of the questionnaire implied consent. Following the informed consent form, the participants completed the research questionnaire. The online format would not allow participants to skip questions thus eliminating missing data. The final page was a reminder to the young adults to forward the e-mail to their parents. The results of the questionnaires were then e-mailed to the researcher.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the statistical package SAS. The researchers reviewed the data for missing responses or data entered incorrectly, and examined the data for skewing and multicollinearity. Descriptive statistics were computed for the FRQ and ERC-R total and subscale scores as well as the demographic information. A variety of preliminary analyses were performed before hypothesis testing. The first was an ANCOVA to ensure that the parents and young adults reported their family rituals similarly, the second was a backwards selection to determine whether the demographic variables were significant predictors of young adult family ritual scores, and the third was an ANCOVA to verify whether there was a relationship between young adult attachment and parent attachment before controlling for that relationship.

The hypothesis that there was a positive relationship between young adults' attachment style and their family of origin rituals was tested through pairwise correlations performed on the FRQ subscale scores and the young adult's ECR-R subscale scores. They were tested at the $p < .01$ level of significance to correct for the multiple correlations performed.

To test the hypothesis that there was a positive relationship between family of origin rituals and young adult attachment after controlling for parents' attachment style, an ANCOVA was performed using the categorical variables of gender, parents' marital status and young adult's marital status, and the continuous variables of the young adult's FRQ subscale scores and the parents' ECR-R subscale scores as the independent variables with the dependent variables of the young adult's ECR-R subscale scores. They were tested at the $p < .01$ level of significance to correct for the multiple analyses performed.

RESULTS

General Ritual and Attachment Findings

Young adult scores on the FRQ ranged from 92 to 208 for the FRQ total score ($M = 149.69$, $SD = 23.37$), 16 to 45 for the ritual routine score ($M = 31.09$, $SD = 5.99$), and 39 to 112 for the ritual meaning score ($M = 81.49$, $SD = 14.49$). Parent scores on the FRQ ranged from 85 to 223 for the FRQ total score ($M = 155.21$, $SD = 24.58$), 17 to 55 for the routine score ($M = 32.50$, $SD = 6.24$), and 46 to 112 for the meaning score ($M = 84.36$, $SD = 14.15$).

Young adult scores on ECR-R ranged from 36 to 195 for ECR-R total score ($M = 98.59$, $SD = 35.90$), 18 to 104 for attachment anxiety score

(M = 51.11, SD = 20.67) and 18 to 113 for attachment avoidance score (M = 47.47, SD = 20.63). Parent scores on the ECR-R ranged from 36 to 177 for the total ECR-R score (M = 81.69, SD = 35.06), 18 to 104 for anxiety score (M = 38.32, SD = 18.44), and 18 to 99 for avoidance score (M = 43.37, SD = 20.85).

Several preliminary investigations were performed before hypothesis testing to account for possible confounding variables. The first preliminary investigation was performed to ensure that parents and young adults reported family rituals similarly. Results of an ANCOVA indicated that all of the parent scores on the FRQ (total and subscales) were significant predictors of the young adult scores on the FRQ (p = < .0001 level). This also provides evidence of inter-rater reliability between a parent and a young adult responses concerning family rituals As a result of this finding the subsequent analyses on family of origin rituals were performed using the young adult FRQ scores (unless otherwise specified), as their responses were indicative of both parents' and children's perceptions of family rituals.

A second preliminary analysis using backwards selection was used to determine if any of the demographic variables (parent marital status, parent gender, young adult gender, parent income, number of children in the family of origin, parent years married, and parent education) were significant predictors of young adult family ritual scores. The following factors were significant: the number of years the parents were married significantly predicted young adults' ritual scores for the religious rituals setting (F(1, 197) = 7.29, p = .008), and parents' gender significantly predicted young adults' rituals score for the vacations setting (F(1, 217) = 8.89, p = .003) with fathers reporting higher scores on the vacation setting. Parents' level of education significantly predicted young adults' ritual deliberateness score–the advanced preparation and planning associated with an activity (F(1, 208) = 7.08, p = .008), young adults' ritual affect score–the emotional investment in an activity (F(1, 208) = 8.98, p = .003), ritual occurrence score, how often an activity occurs (F(1,206)= 8.03, p = .005), and the young adults' ritual meaning score (F(1, 208) = 11.41, p = .001). Young adults' gender significantly predicted young adults' ritual occurrence score, (F (1, 206) = 7.45, p = .007) with the women reporting higher ritual occurrence. The young adults' anxiety score significantly, negatively predicted young adults' ritual occurrence score (F(1, 206) = 10.32, p = .002), and young adults' ritual significance score, the attachment of meaning to a score (F(1, 207) = 9.27, p = .003).

The third preliminary analysis was performed to verify that there was a relationship between parents' attachment and young adults' attachment before controlling for that relationship (Hypothesis 2). Results of an ANCOVA determined that parent anxiety was a significant predictor of young adult anxiety (F(1, 220) = 8.54, p = .004). This represents a positive relationship between parent anxiety and young adult anxiety. There was not a significant relationship between parent avoidance and young adult avoidance (F(1, 220) = 1.34, p = .25) or parent total attachment score and young adult total attachment score (F(1, 220) = 5.02, p = .03).

Hypothesis Testing

To address the first hypothesis, pairwise correlations were calculated to examine the relationship between family of origin ritual total and subscale scores and young adult attachment total and subscale scores. Results indicated that young adults' total family ritual score was negatively correlated with young adult anxiety (r = −.25, p = .0001), and total attachment score (r = −.21, p = .001) (Table 1). Family ritual meaning was negatively correlated with young adult anxiety (r = −.27, p = .0001), and with total attachment score (r = −.24, p = .0004). Results for young adults did not indicate a relationship between any family ritual scores and young adult avoidance or family ritual routine and young adult anxiety or avoidance.

The second hypothesis predicted a relationship between young adult attachment and family of origin rituals after controlling for parent attachment. Results of an ANCOVA determined that after controlling for parent attachment scores (anxiety and avoidance), the family of origin ritual meaning significantly predicted young adult anxiety (F(1, 217) = 11.07, p = .001), but did not significantly predict young adult avoidance, although it approached significance (F(1, 217) = 5.43, p = .02). This represents a negative relationship between ritual meaning and attachment scores. Ritual routine did not significantly predict young adult anxiety (F(1, 217) = .10, p = .76) or young adult avoidance scores (F(1,217) = 3.09, p = .08).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between family of origin ritual patterns and young adults' attachment style. Results indicated that there was a relationship between family of origin

TABLE 1. Young Adult Attachment and Ritual Pairwise Correlation Coefficients

Variable	Anxiety	Avoidance	ECR Total
	Young Adults (n = 222)		
Occurrence	−0.33914**	−0.20268*	−0.31168**
Roles	−0.03993	0.09658	0.03250
Routines	−0.17753*	−0.05205	−0.13211
Attendance	−0.15209	−0.14783	−0.17249*
Affect	−0.19216*	−0.10646	−0.17179
Significance	−0.27368**	−0.11320	−0.22259**
Continuation	−0.19040*	−0.08476	−0.15831
Deliberateness	−0.15016	−0.07670	−0.13051
Dinner	−0.20054*	−0.13459	−0.19278*
Weekend	−0.20306*	−0.07707	−0.16118
Vacation	−0.12508	0.00705	−0.06796
Annual	−0.19327*	−0.10731	−0.17291*
Special	−0.18884*	−0.12482	−0.18043*
Religious	−0.17025	−0.08298	−0.14569
Cultural	−0.18857*	−0.07749	−0.15308
Meaning	−0.27077**	−0.14058	−0.23665**
Routine	−0.11855	0.02899	−0.05159
FRQ Total	−0.25342**	−0.11891	−0.21421*

*$p < .01$; **$p < .001$.

rituals and young adult attachment, and the relationship was still present after controlling for parent attachment. To explicate this study more, the findings regarding the hypothesis testing and the findings regarding family of origin rituals and young adult attachment style are discussed. Implications of the research and recommendations for future research are also addressed.

Main Findings

Findings regarding the first hypothesis indicated that as the meaning in family rituals decreased, young adult attachment anxiety increased. In other words, the more meaningful family of origin rituals were, the less anxious those children were in relationships as adults. Consequently, the more meaningful the family of origin rituals the more those children

were able to make healthy secure attachments as adults. These results add further empirical support to Fiese and Kline's (1993) conclusions that family ritual meaning is negatively related to general anxiety and positively related to lovability in family members. In addition, ritual routine was not related to young adult attachment, thus supporting findings that it is the ritual meaning, as opposed to empty routine, that is an important dimension of family rituals (Marks, 2004).

These findings indicate that, for this sample, if parents create family rituals that are meaningful and increase the meaning in family rituals (as opposed to rituals being rigid and hollow), their children may be more likely to create meaningful relationships later in life. Because their family of origin had meaningful family rituals, as young adults they will likely have a more secure attachment style, which is associated with a higher sense of self-worth, greater self-confidence (Collins & Read, 1990), and longer lasting relationships (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Results of this study, however, did not indicate a relationship between family of origin rituals and young adult avoidance. The reason for lack of significant findings regarding attachment avoidance may be in part because avoidant individuals are less attentive to material with emotional, attachment-related themes, and as a result, avoidant individuals have greater difficulty recalling such material (Edelstein et al., 2005). Family rituals are meaningful because of the emotion they carry. For this reason, the participants who had high levels of attachment avoidance may have had difficulty accurately remembering the emotion and attachment-related aspects of family ritualization, aspects that are central to family rituals. Another reason for the lack of finding a relationship between family of origin rituals and young adult avoidance may be due to the sample. Individuals who were avoidant may have elected not to participate in the study due to an avoidance of discussing personal matters and attachments.

As a follow-up to the first hypothesis, findings of the second hypothesis indicated that, after controlling for parent attachment, which has been found to be related to young adult attachment (Pederson et al., 1998; Van IJzendoorn, 1995; Ward & Carlson, 1995) and family ritualization (Thalhuber, 2002), family of origin ritual meaning still significantly predicted young adult anxiety. In other words, higher levels of meaningful family ritualization predicted less attachment anxiety in young adults regardless of parent attachment style. Such findings clearly provide new insight into the formation of young adult attachment working models. Family rituals are a factor that has not previously been

related to relationship attachment, and there has been very little empirical research providing insight into specific processes or behaviors that lead to the development of attachment style. Current findings suggest that for this sample, regardless of parental attachment style, the more a family is involved in meaningful family rituals, the more likely children were to develop secure, healthy relationships and attachments in their young adult romantic relationships.

Additional Aspects of Ritual and Attachment Findings

Parent and young adult attachment. As past research suggests (Van Ijzendoorn, 1995; Ward & Carlson, 1995), parent anxiety was a significant predictor of young adult anxiety. According to attachment theory, people with high-attachment anxiety tend to worry about whether their partner is available and responsive. Parents with high-attachment anxiety may act with a lot of attachment anxiety in their relationships with their children, thus teaching their children that such anxious interactions are how to perceive and behave in relationships. This frequent exposure to attachment anxiety may cause children to internalize the attachment anxiety.

In contrast, parent avoidance did not significantly predict young adult avoidance. According to attachment theory, people with high-attachment avoidance are not comfortable opening up to or depending on others (Fraley, 2004). These avoidant feelings may not have been as outward and evident in the parents' interactions with children, and may have resulted in a lack of children's internalization of attachment avoidance.

Demographic factors. There were some unexpected findings in the analysis of the demographic information in relation to the young adult ritual scores; parent marital status, parent income, and the number of children in the family were not significant predictors of young adult family ritual dimensions or settings. These findings indicate that these aspects of family of origin structure are not important factors in family ritualization. This supports Kelly's (2002) findings that family of origin characteristics, (such as family rituals) rather than its structure (parent's marital status) predicted relationship communication strategies, relationship beliefs, and fear of intimacy in adult children.

These findings regarding the nonsignificance of family structure are encouraging for less traditional families, such as single parent families, lower income families, and larger families. Surprisingly, parent income did not predict the family vacation score which indicates that the cost of

the vacations and the elaborateness of family vacations may not be as important as other factors, such as the meaning of the vacation. These findings are surprising as lower income is often seen as a leisure constraint (Dattilo et al., 1994). Income may not be a constraint to family rituals due to many important family rituals not being dependent on family income (e.g., family dinners or family religious rituals).

In contrast to family structure and income, parent education, however, was a significant predictor of several aspects of family rituals: ritual deliberateness, ritual affect, ritual meaning, and ritual occurrence. Perhaps this is because educated parents are more aware of the options open to them within the realm of family togetherness and are better able to understand parenting within family leisure. Larson, Gillman, and Richards (1997) found a relationship between mother's education and mother's and adolescent's freedom during family leisure. Parental education may allow parents to overcome leisure constraints because they have more experience in problem solving and analytical thinking. They would then be able to find alternative methods of creating family rituals and would be able to overcome possible constraints to family rituals.

Implications

These findings are useful to therapists and other professionals who work with families. If a therapist was concerned with attachment-related insecurity in children he or she could help the family create meaningful family rituals to help children create secure attachment styles. Family workers who are concerned with children's insecure attachments traditionally try to improve parent's relationships and interactions with their children, because parent attachment has an impact on the parent-child relationship and subsequently affects children's attachment. Attachment style, however, is considered to be highly stable, and a parent's attachment style is likely to be very difficult to change. Developing new family rituals may be an easier and more effective way of affecting parent-child interactions than trying to change parent attachment.

Therapists trying to treat families with attachment disorders often try to create interventions in the parent-child relationship. One of the interventions commonly applied to families is to create a co-construction of meaning between parents and children (Hughes, 2004). Helping a family establish family rituals offers another way of encouraging this co-construction of meaning in the dyadic relationship. Consequently, creation of meaningful family rituals may be a way to influence children's attachment even if the parent's attachment style is a potential risk factor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings that family of origin ritual meaning significantly predicted young adult anxiety implies that it is beneficial for family professionals to help families create meaningful family rituals. For family therapists and family professionals to be able to help families create meaningful family rituals, more information is needed on what makes a ritual meaningful. Further investigation into how to create meaningful rituals will yield information that can be applied to families to assist them in creating meaningful family rituals that may better protect family members from insecure attachment patterns.

The findings that family rituals and parents' attachment significantly predicted young adult anxiety, but did not predict young adult avoidance, should be further investigated. These finding are contrary to previous research (Van IJzendooron, 1995; Ward & Carlson, 1995) and general beliefs about young adult attachment (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). Children's attachment is commonly found to be affected by parent attachment and there has not been any distinction between anxiety and avoidance. There has been research on the different consequences of relationship anxiety and avoidance, but there has not been research into the separate creation and transmission of the two factors. Based on these unexpected findings that indicated a difference in the transmission of attachment anxiety and avoidance, further investigation on how the two factors of anxiety and avoidance are diversely affected and created would be beneficial. Current findings suggest that the transmission and the factors that contribute to anxiety and avoidance may not be as simple and one-dimensional as previously conceived.

Consequently, findings from the current study should be interpreted with caution until more research can be done investigating family of origin rituals in single and divorced-parent families.

The predominance of mothers in the sample limits the information regarding fathers. Based on this possible limitation, further research focusing on men and fathers would be beneficial to better understand the fathers' role in attachment transmission and men's perceptions of family rituals.

Based on the impact of parent's education level on family of origin ritual deliberateness, affect, meaning, and occurrence scores, further research is warranted to increase our understanding of how parents' education level affects family ritualization. Further research may indicate whether this relationship is due to a matter of educated parents having more problem solving skills to negotiate ritual constraints, or whether it is a matter of educated parents knowing more ways to enact family rituals, or perhaps another factor altogether. This might help professionals know how to help less educated parents who may be at a disadvantage; findings may indicate, for example, that less educated families may benefit from information on how to create family rituals or how to negotiate family ritual constraints. Findings may also indicate that parents are unaware of how their attachment patterns and interactions with their children affect their children's attachment. This will direct professionals to help parents be educated about their interactions with their children and how these interactions affect their children's ability to have secure relationships as adults.

Although further research is needed, these findings are beneficial to family practitioners and families. Current conditions indicate a trend toward a weakening of families (Doherty, 1997). In addition, marital dissolution and relationship discord are also very common. Family rituals are one way in which families can improve their cohesion and build family identity. But not only will it improve those relationships in the family, but findings of this study indicate that young adults whose families had meaningful family rituals will have a more secure attachment style as young adults, which is related to happier, more fulfilling, and longer lasting relationships.

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