



Creating a space for the sacred in a secular world: Shabbat dinners as a vehicle for collective effervescence, social connection, and meaning

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Abstract

Scholars have long argued that religious rituals are essential for maintaining society, bringing meaning to life and increasing connections via the collective effervescence that they engender. A world in which fewer people attend religious services does not mean that people no longer benefit from the important outcomes associated with religious rituals. The current research examined whether people experience collective effervescence and positive outcomes in home-based rituals—specifically, Shabbat dinners facilitated by a Jewish organization that provides resources for home-based Shabbat dinners. Survey data was collected on almost 1000 attendees of the Shabbat dinners. The results suggest that (a) Shabbat dinners include both components of collective effervescence (a sensation of sacredness and connection to others); (b) “transcendence” collective effervescence was related to religiosity and meaningfulness, whereas “connectedness” collective effervescence was related to belonging and satisfaction; and (c) using instructional resources predicted increased meaning via religiosity and increased satisfaction via belonging. The authors conclude that home-based rituals can provide valuable outcomes in a world in which people are less likely to attend religious services.

Résumé

Les chercheurs affirment depuis longtemps que les rituels religieux sont essentiels au maintien de la société, donnant un sens à la vie et renforçant les liens grâce à l’effervescence collective

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qu'ils engendrent. Un monde dans lequel moins de personnes assistent aux services religieux ne signifie pas que les gens ne bénéficient plus des retombées importantes associées aux rituels religieux. La présente étude vise à déterminer si les gens font l'expérience d'une effervescence collective et de résultats positifs lors de rituels à domicile, particulièrement lors de dîners de shabbat animés par une organisation juive qui fournit des ressources pour les dîners de shabbat à domicile. Des données d'enquête ont été recueillies auprès de près de 1 000 participants aux dîners de shabbat. Les résultats suggèrent que (a) les dîners de shabbat comprennent les deux composantes de l'effervescence collective (une sensation de sacré et de connexion avec les autres) ; (b) l'effervescence collective "transcendance" est liée à la religiosité et à la signification, tandis que l'effervescence collective "connexion" est liée à l'appartenance et à la satisfaction ; et (c) l'utilisation de ressources pédagogiques prédit une augmentation de la signification via la religiosité et une augmentation de la satisfaction via l'appartenance. Les auteurs concluent que les rituels domestiques peuvent avoir des effets bénéfiques dans un monde où les gens sont moins susceptibles d'assister à des services religieux.

Keywords

Shabbat, Judaism, collective effervescence, home ritual, well-being

Mots clés

Shabbat, judaïsme, effervescence collective, rituel domestique, bien-être

Introduction

Organized religion has traditionally been a means by which people find social cohesion and a sense of meaning (Durkheim, 1912). Rituals organized by religious leaders allow people to come together, reaffirm social norms, and interact with one another (Durkheim, 1912). According to Durkheim (1912), these rituals provide a sense of meaning by separating the sacred (that which makes life meaningful) from the profane (that which is mundane). Durkheim proposed a mechanism for this effect: he argued that religious rituals gain their power by fostering a sense of collective effervescence. Collective effervescence is a combination of feeling connected to other people and a sensation of sacredness that occurs in group activities like religious gatherings (Gabriel et al., 2020).

However, the decreasing number of people attending religious services suggests that people will have fewer and fewer opportunities to access these psychological experiences because they engage in fewer and fewer of the activities that Durkheim described. Indeed, younger generations are much less likely to consider themselves religious and attend religious events (Cox, 2022), and people who consider themselves as having no religious affiliation constitute the fastest-growing group of Americans (Pew Research Center, 2021). This leads to a real conundrum: religious rituals have played a role in fostering well-being and community for as long as human history has been recorded, so what happens when they disappear? In this article, we examine the hypothesis that people are able to achieve collective effervescence—and the positive outcomes associated with it—in home-based rituals that do not rely on an affiliation with organized religion or attendance at a church, synagogue, or mosque. In other words, we propose that the fact

that people are attending fewer religious services does not mean that people are no longer able to find collective effervescence and the associated positive outcomes that come from religious rituals.

Collective effervescence

Durkheim (1912) argued that, as individuals, humans are self-interested and shallow, immoral and depraved. However, when engaged in social activities, the individual selfish mind can be quieted and a sense of transcendence, ecstasy, and well-being can be developed. It is this sense of transcendence that makes submersion in a group so enjoyable. Durkheim proposed that collective activities separate the sacred from the profane by fostering a sense of collective effervescence. In other words, he argued that collective effervescence separates that which is special from that which is “everyday” and mundane.

Building on Durkheim’s theories, Haidt et al. (2008) propose a “Hive Hypothesis” for ritual action. They argue that people must occasionally lose themselves in a larger social organism to achieve the highest levels of individual well-being, which protects them against what Cacioppo et al. (2014) call “collective loneliness.” Based on sociological texts arguing that the rituals that lead to collective effervescence are a ubiquitous part of both older and more recent group activities in every part of the world (Ehrenreich, 2006; McNeill, 1995), they argue that the kinds of activities likely to cause collective effervescence should be more effective in increasing well-being and decreasing loneliness.

In support of the key role of collective effervescence, research suggests that components of collective effervescence mediate the effects of group participation on a plethora of positive outcomes (Páez et al., 2015). Páez et al. (2015) studied individuals after they had engaged in group activities both in the laboratory (an experimentally induced collective protest demonstration) and in the field (pseudo-military folkloric marches and protest demonstrations). Across four studies, the participants who engaged in collective gatherings experienced increases in positive affect, happiness, positive social beliefs, identity fusion, and enhanced collective and personal self-esteem. Importantly, these effects were mediated by a sense of collective effervescence (which was operationalized as a perception of shared emotion).

Evidence for the key role of collective effervescence also comes from research suggesting that the more people engage in effervescent assembly, the higher they tend to score on a number of well-being variables (Gabriel et al., 2017). The Tendency for Effervescent Assembly Measure (TEAM) assesses the frequency of experiencing effervescent assembly. Scores on the TEAM predict decreased loneliness, increased positive feelings, a sense of meaning in one’s life, self-awareness, and spiritual transcendence above and beyond the effects of the big-five factors of personality and collective and relational interdependence (Gabriel et al., 2017). Furthermore, the results suggested that the positive outcomes associated with the TEAM are due to social-need fulfillment. In other words, above and beyond the effects of having solid relationships with others and the effects of personality differences, people who experience more collective effervescence tend to be happier with their lives, feel like their lives have more meaning, are less likely to suffer from anxiety and depression, and show more resilience to stress (Gabriel et al., 2017).

Recently, empirical research has examined collective effervescence by developing and validating a scale that measures the degree to which an event involves collective effervescence (Gabriel et al., 2020). This allows researchers not only, for the first time ever, to empirically measure collective effervescence during events, but also to gain a fuller understanding of the nature of collective effervescence. Those studies found that collective effervescence is best understood as a multifaceted experience that involves two different components (Gabriel et al., 2020). Specifically, collective effervescence involves the intertwining of a sense of connection to others and a sensation of sacredness. In other words, when people engage in collective activities, they may feel a combination of connection to the other people there and a connection to something beyond the physical realm. That combination of two psychological experiences is at the heart of collective effervescence. Collective effervescence taps into our basic need to feel connected to others *and* our basic need to feel as if parts of life are special and meaningful. In the current work, we propose that people may be able to experience collective effervescence in home-based religious events and that the amount of collective effervescence felt will be related to the impact of the home-based religious events.

Organized religion and home-based practices

It is important to study home-based religious practices because affiliation with organized religion is declining (Putnam, 2000). For example, one in four millennials report having no religious affiliation, compared to one in seven baby boomers at a comparable point in their lives (Cox, 2022). Attendance at religious services has plummeted by 13% in just the last few years (PRRI, 2023). For example, with Judaism, synagogue membership has declined substantially in the past years (Rebhun, 1997). Without organized religion, people may be losing some of the benefits that have traditionally been gained from rituals organized by religious leaders—for example, the sense of collective effervescence that comes from singing a hymn in a church service led by clergy, and the positive psychological outcomes associated with that collective effervescence.

However, it may be possible to receive the benefits of religious rituals outside of the physical confines of organized religions. Recent research suggests that collective effervescence can occur in many kinds of collective gatherings (Gabriel et al., 2020). Thus, it may be that despite declining participation in organized religious services, people are finding other ways to experience religious rituals, collective effervescence, and positive outcomes (Cohen and Eisen, 2000). For example, people are increasingly likely to take part in home-based observances (Goldscheider, 2004), and home-based rituals are associated with greater enjoyment of holidays (Sezer et al., 2016). For Jews, home-based observances are often centered on celebrations of Shabbat—in particular, the Friday-night Shabbat dinner.

Shabbat dinners include lighting candles, saying prayers, and eating a meal (Soria, 2015). Shabbat begins with blessings over candles and wine. A dinner follows, but it is not just the dinner but also the dedication of time away from day-to-day life that makes Shabbat special. Shabbat is thought to provide people with the energy needed for the other six days of the week (Ginsburg, 1989). Shabbat is seen by some as both a gift from God and an earthly incorporation of the spirit of God. Despite its links to the divine, Shabbat is also celebrated by some Jews who do not consider themselves religious

(Hatch and Marks, 2022). For those individuals, it can be seen as a connection to culture and history.

From a theological perspective, Shabbat involves setting aside time in the week to gather with friends and family and let in the divine. It is among the most ancient continuing weekly home practices (Marks et al., 2018). Shabbat is the most commonly listed meaningful activity in surveys of Jewish families (Marks et al., 2018). Participants in the Marks et al. survey wrote that they valued Shabbat because it brought them close to other people and gave structure to their lives. People value Shabbat because they say that it is a ritual that brings families together and marks a divergence from the everyday (Hatch and Marks, 2022).

The current research examines whether people experience collective effervescence in home-based Shabbat dinners and if that collective effervescence then leads to positive outcomes. As previously described, collective effervescence is best understood as a combination of two related but distinct components: a feeling of connection to others and a feeling of transcendence (Gabriel et al., 2020). This suggests that Shabbat dinners may offer two related but distinct pathways to increasing well-being: making people feel a sense of connection to others and making them feel as if life is sacred and meaningful. Both components contribute to well-being (Gabriel et al., 2017) and are benefits that religion has traditionally provided (Durkheim, 1912). Based on this, our first three hypotheses are:

Hypothesis 1: Shabbat dinners will involve both components of collective effervescence—transcendence and connection to others.

Hypothesis 2: “Transcendence” collective effervescence will be related to an increased sense of religiosity and meaningfulness.

Hypothesis 3: “Connectedness” collective effervescence will be related to an increased sense of belonging and satisfaction.

Durkheim (1912) further argued that an essential function of religious rituals is that they communicate the values and norms of society, and thus provide meaning and satisfaction. This is one area in which home-based rituals may be lacking. Specifically, without a religious leader or established text, canon, and instructions, there may be little communication of values and norms in a home-based ritual. Therefore, we argue that home-based rituals will be stronger when they are aided by resources that tie them to a canon, instructions, and norms. These resources should be related to both increased meaning (by tying the rituals to spiritual practices) and increased satisfaction (by increasing the feeling that others, across time and space, are doing the same thing). Based on this, our final two hypotheses are:

Hypothesis 4: Using resources will be related to increased meaning via transcendence and religiosity.

Hypothesis 5: Using resources will be related to increased satisfaction via connection and belonging.

To study this, data collected by OneTable was examined. OneTable was founded in 2014 to help a generation of young Jews establish Shabbat as a valuable practice. OneTable helps connect hosts who want to create Shabbat dinner experiences with guests who want to attend them, and provides resources (including recipes, ritual guides, and testimonials from participants) to empower all participants to elevate and personalize their experience. Since its founding, over 200,000 participants have engaged in over 100,000 Shabbat dinners together.

OneTable can be seen as part of a larger trend to do-it-yourself (DIY) Judaism (Shain et al., 2013). DIY Judaism is a reaction to the decreased interest in organized religion and synagogue attendance amongst younger Jews. The goal of DIY projects is to empower and teach young Jews, allowing them to create their own Jewish identities and find new ways to express their Judaism. DIY Judaism emphasizes individualism, meaningfulness, authenticity, and active participation rather than passive consumerism (Shain et al., 2013). Compared to worldwide traditional religions, DIY Judaism operates on a much smaller and localized level, relying on the expertise of organizers. Although very little is known about the efficacy of such practices, the one existing study that looked at them did not find reason for optimism, and instead suggested that DIY Judaism has not substantially altered the lives of the majority of Jewish young adults (Shain et al., 2013).

We propose that the things that make OneTable different from some other DIY trends will lead their Shabbat events to be related to an increase in well-being via collective effervescence. OneTable events provide people who are interested in Shabbat with the resources and knowledge to have a Shabbat dinner that truly taps into the long-established positive aspects of Shabbat and religious gatherings more generally. If our hypotheses are supported, we will provide evidence that home-based religious rituals can be extremely beneficial when guidance is available to participants, and shed light on one way for people to find spiritual connection in a world in which people attend fewer religious services.

The hypotheses were pre-registered at OSF before the data analysis.¹

Methods

Data was gathered by OneTable in the form of a post-participation questionnaire administered to participants in dinners from April to June 2023; 928 people completed the questionnaire, with the incentive of winning a \$100 gift card. Because we relied on data collected by OneTable, we did not design the questionnaire and were not able to measure demographics. However, other data from OneTable suggests that 90% of OneTable participants identify as Jewish; 61% identify as women; 33% identify as men; and 6% identify as non-binary, gender fluid, genderqueer, agender, or two-spirit.

Questionnaire

The participants were asked a number of questions about their Shabbat experience. First, they were given the State Collective Effervescence Measure and were asked to assess how each of the items described their Shabbat experience (Gabriel et al., 2020). The questionnaire had eight items. Four items assessed the connection component of collective

effervescence (e.g. “I felt as if everyone there felt the same emotions”; “I felt connected to others who were present at the event”; $\alpha = .86$) and four items assessed the transcendence component of collective effervescence (e.g. “I felt as if there was something sacred about the event”; “I felt as if there was a greater purpose to the event”; $\alpha = .84$).

Next, the participants were given a list of all the available OneTable resources and asked which ones they used. The resources included a Shabbat guide, #HowIShabbat videos, and other miscellaneous resources.² The participants then answered a number of items about their experience. Among these questions were three items to tap into feelings of religious connection (i.e. “I felt religiously fulfilled”; “I felt spiritually fulfilled”; “I felt more connected to my Jewish identity or background”; $\alpha = .85$) and four items to tap into increased feelings of belonging (i.e. “I got closer with people”; “I had interesting conversations”; “I had deep, meaningful conversations”; “I felt less lonely”; $\alpha = .87$).

Finally, the amount of meaning gained from the event was measured with one item: “My experience at that OneTable dinner was highly meaningful.” Overall satisfaction with the event was measured with one item: “I was very satisfied with my experience at my OneTable dinner.” Each item was answered on a 4-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*).

Results

Hypothesis 1: Shabbat dinners will involve both components of collective effervescence—transcendence and connection to others

The descriptive statistics and intercorrelations between the variables are presented in Table 1. The means of the items suggest that the participants were affected by the Shabbat dinners. For example, the average collective effervescence transcendence experienced was 4.04 on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Similarly, the average collective effervescence connection was 4.30 on the same 5-point scale. Thus, people tended to feel both a transcendence and connection collective effervescence at the Shabbat events.

Hypotheses 2 and 3: Transcendence collective effervescence will be related to religiosity and meaningfulness, whereas connectedness collective effervescence will be related to belonging and satisfaction

We examined these hypotheses in two regression analyses in which collective effervescence connection or collective effervescence transcendence were predicted by overall meaningfulness, overall satisfaction, increased belonging, increased religiosity, and the other kinds of collective effervescence.³

As predicted, collective effervescence connection was related to overall satisfaction, $\beta = .112$, $t(914) = 4.198$, $p < .001$, and to increased belonging, $\beta = .168$, $t(914) = 10.678$, $p < .001$. It was unrelated to overall meaningfulness, $\beta = -.041$, $t(914) = -1.034$, $p = .301$. It was negatively related to increased religiosity, $\beta = -.042$, $t(914) = -2.926$, $p = .004$. Consistent with past research, collective effervescence connection was strongly related to collective effervescence transcendence, $\beta = .551$, $t(914) = 22.739$, $p < .001$.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the variables.

Variable	Collective effervescence connection	Collective effervescence transcendence	Increased spirituality	Increased sociality	Number of resources	Overall satisfaction	Overall meaningfulness
Collective effervescence connection	–	.690	.401	.510	.141	.301	.343
Collective effervescence transcendence	.690	–	.529	.395	.183	.216	.394
Increased spirituality	.401	.529	–	.513	.157	.251	.437
Increased sociality	.510	.395	.513	–	.117	.332	.379
Number of resources	.141	.183	.157	.117	–	.067	.128
Overall satisfaction	.301	.216	.254	.332	.067	–	.550
Overall meaningfulness	.343	.394	.437	.379	.128	.550	–
<i>M</i>	4.33	4.04	5.47	5.95	0.34	3.89	3.80
<i>SD</i>	0.623	0.689	1.268	1.066	0.709	0.357	0.454

Note: All of the correlations are significant at $p < .001$ except the correlation between number of resources and overall satisfaction, which is significant at $p = .042$.

As predicted, collective effervescence transcendence was related to overall meaningfulness, $\beta = .213$, $t(914) = 4.958$, $p < .001$, and to increased religiosity, $\beta = .160$, $t(914) = 10.94$, $p < .001$. It was negatively related to increased belonging, $\beta = -.054$, $t(914) = -2.998$, $p = .003$, and overall satisfaction, $\beta = -.164$, $t(914) = -3.218$, $p < .001$. Consistent with past research, it was strongly related to collective effervescence connection, $\beta = .655$, $t(914) = 22.739$, $p < .001$.

In summary, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were fully supported. Transcendence collective effervescence was positively related to religiosity and meaningfulness, whereas connectedness collective effervescence was positively related to belonging and satisfaction. There were unexpected negative relationships, which will be discussed below.

Hypotheses 4 and 5: Using resources will predict increased meaning via transcendence and religiosity, and increased satisfaction via connection and belonging

We examined Hypotheses 4 and 5 using mediation—bootstrapping with 5000 samples (Preacher and Hayes, 2008: Model 4). First, we examined the relationships between using OneTable resources and finding meaning from the event. We tested a parallel mediation model in which we entered both components of collective effervescence, religiosity, and belonging as mediators of the effect of OneTable resources on finding meaning in the event. We also included satisfaction as a mediator because of the strong correlation between satisfaction and meaning. The model, ab paths, and c and c' paths can be found in Figure 1. The A and B paths can be found in Table 2.

Consistent with our hypotheses, collective effervescence transcendence and religiosity were positive mediators (and collective effervescence connection and belonging were not positive mediators). This is consistent with our hypothesis that finding meaning in the Shabbat dinner is highly related to the religious nature of the Shabbat dinner, and that using resources for the ritual is related to a religious atmosphere, which then predicts increased meaning. As expected, due to their strong correlation, satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between the number of resources used and finding meaning in the Shabbat dinner.

Next, we examined mediation—bootstrapping with 5000 samples (Preacher and Hayes, 2008: Model 4)—in the relationships between using OneTable resources and satisfaction. We tested a parallel mediation model in which we entered both kinds of collective effervescence, religiosity, and belonging as mediators of the effect of OneTable resources on satisfaction with the event. We also included meaning as a mediator because of the strong correlation between satisfaction and meaning. The model, ab paths, and c and c' paths can be found in Figure 2. The A and B paths can be found in Table 3.

Consistent with our hypotheses, collective effervescence connection and belonging were both positive mediators (and collective effervescence transcendence and religiosity were not positive mediators). This is consistent with our hypothesis that satisfaction with the events is highly related to the social nature of the Shabbat dinner, and that using resources increases the connection to others, which then leads to increased satisfaction. As expected, due to their close relationship, finding meaning significantly mediated the

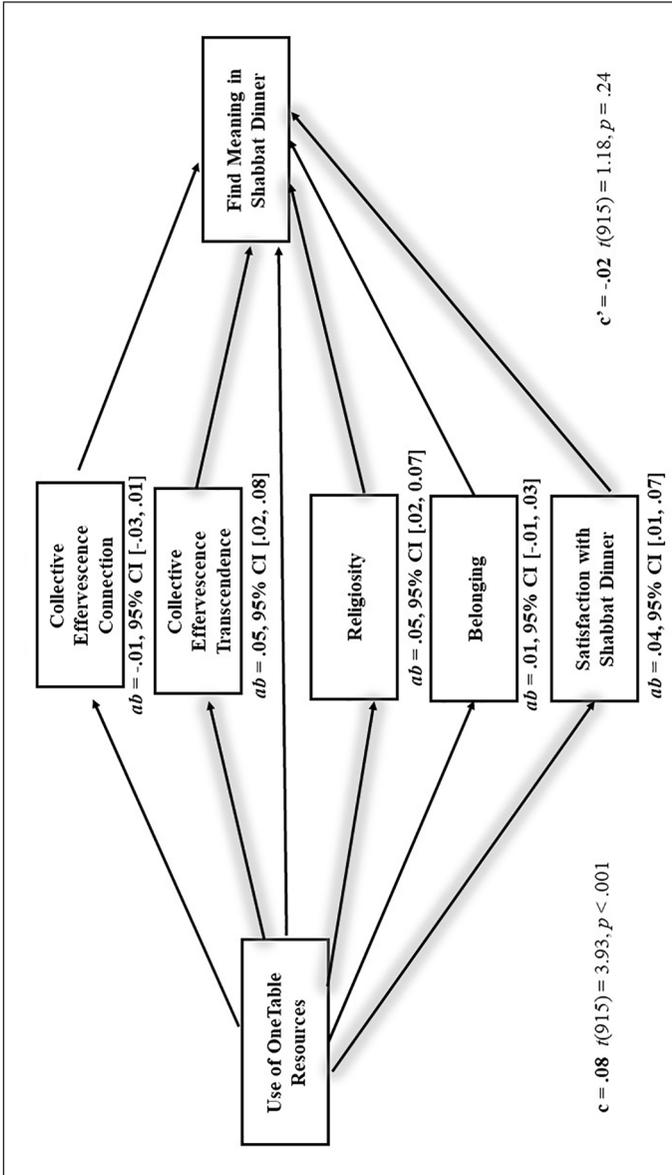


Figure 1. Mediation analysis of using OneTable materials and finding meaning in the Shabbat dinner.
Note: Paths with positive, significant mediation are highlighted.

Table 2. A and B paths in the mediation analysis of using OneTable materials and finding meaning in the Shabbat dinner.

Path	β	95% confidence interval	$t(915)$	p
Number of resources to collective effervescence connection (A path)	.12	.07, .18	4.31	< .001
Number of resources to collective effervescence transcendence (A path)	.18	.11, .24	5.64	< .001
Number of resources to satisfaction with event (A path)	.28	.17, .40	4.82	< .001
Number of resources to stronger relationships (A path)	.18	.08, .27	3.58	< .001
Number of resources to satisfaction with event (A path)	.03	.001, .07	2.03	.04
Collective effervescence connection to finding meaning (B path)	-.03	-.08, .03	-1.04	.30
Collective effervescence transcendence to finding meaning (B path)	.12	.07, .17	4.84	< .001
Feeling more religious to finding meaning (B path)	.07	.05, .10	6.30	< .001
Stronger relationships to finding meaning (B path)	.03	.003, .06	2.18	.03
Satisfaction with the event to finding meaning (B path)	.56	.49, .62	16.22	< .001

relationship between the number of resources used and satisfaction with the Shabbat dinner. Unexpectedly, collective effervescence transcendence was a negative mediator of the effect. When accounting for all the other variables, collective effervescence transcendence predicted lower levels of satisfaction. We will return to this below.

Discussion

In these times of decreasing affiliation with formal religious services and organized religion, the current research suggests that people may be able to fill some of the same needs through home-based religious rituals, particularly if they have guidance with those rituals.

We were particularly interested in the role of collective effervescence in home-based rituals. Durkheim (1912) argued that collective effervescence is the psychological process that occurs during religious ceremonies that transforms the profane into the sacred. Collective effervescence does this in two different ways: through a sense of social connection and through a sense of sacredness/transcendence (Gabriel et al., 2020). The data strongly suggests that the OneTable Shabbat dinners gave people both components of collective effervescence. In addition, the data suggests that the connection component of collective effervescence was related to feeling bonded to the other attendees and general satisfaction with the event, whereas the transcendence component of collective effervescence was connected to an increased sense of connection to religion and the event being meaningful.

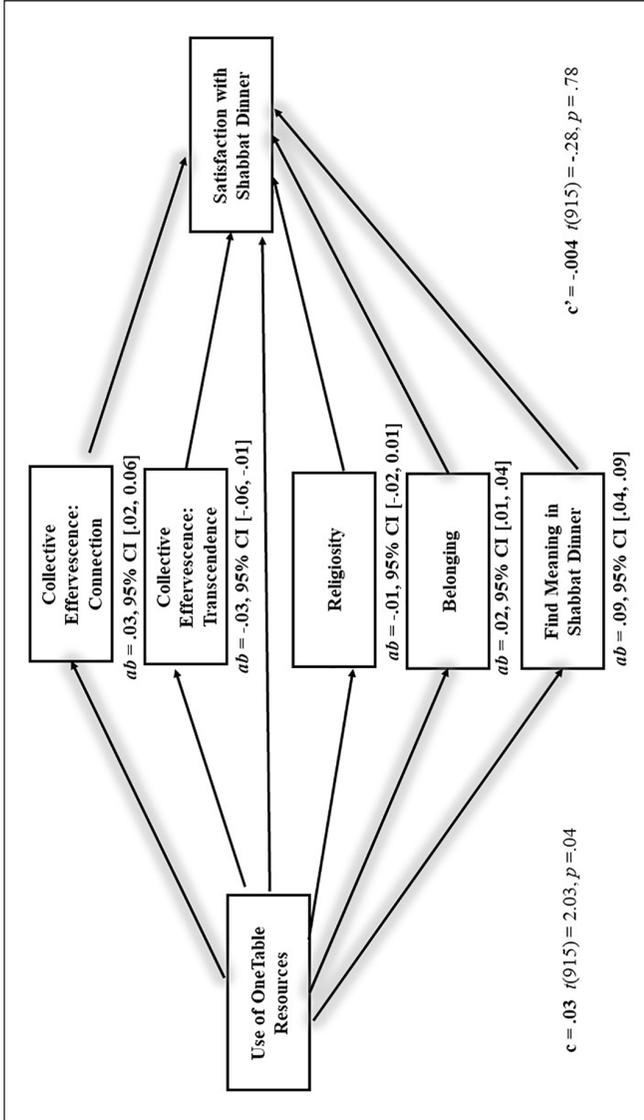


Figure 2. Mediation analysis of using One Table materials and satisfaction with the Shabbat dinner.
Note: Paths with positive, significant mediation are highlighted.

Table 3. A and B paths in the mediation analysis of using OneTable materials and satisfaction with the Shabbat dinner.

Path	β	95% confidence interval	t(915)	p
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Number of resources to collective effervescence transcendence (A path)	.18	.11, .24	5.64	< .001
Number of resources to feeling more religious (A path)	.28	.17, .40	4.82	< .001
Number of resources to stronger relationships (A path)	.18	.08, .27	3.58	< .001
Number of resources to finding meaning (A path)	.08	.04, .12	3.93	< .001
Collective effervescence connection to enjoyment (B path)	.10	.05, .14	4.20	< .001
Collective effervescence transcendence to enjoyment (B path)	-.07	-.11, .03	-3.18	< .001
Feeling more religious to enjoyment (B path)	-.01	-.03, .01	-0.89	.38
Stronger relationships to enjoyment (B path)	.04	.02, .06	3.49	< .001
Finding meaning to enjoyment (B path)	.40	.35, .45	16.22	< .001

The research is also highly consistent with the idea that religious rituals are important because they provide connections to well-established societal behaviors (Durkheim, 1912; Sezer et al., 2016). The people who utilized the OneTable resources (which provided guidance on rituals, food, and activities) had more meaningful and enjoyable experiences. The social variables (collective effervescence connection and belonging) mediated the relationship between using the resources and satisfaction with the event. The spiritual variables (collective effervescence transcendence and religiosity) mediated the relationship between using the resources and the event being meaningful. In other words, the positive effects of the Shabbat dinners were highly related to materials that tied them to established rituals via both increased meaning and connection to others.

We were surprised to find that, in a few cases where we predicted finding no relationship, we instead found a negative relationship in the regression and mediation analyses. Importantly, there were no negative simple correlations between the variables (see Table 1). In other words, these effects only emerged when other variables were controlled for. The strongest example was collective effervescence transcendence and satisfaction, which were negatively related to one another in both the regression and mediation analyses (i.e. the more collective effervescence transcendence, the less people enjoyed the Shabbat), but had a positive simple correlation (i.e. the more collective effervescence transcendence, the more people enjoyed the event). It may be that people are willing to “put up with” a ritual that is not fun for them because of its religious meaning. This is merely speculative and future research would be necessary to examine this hypothesis.

There are some other areas where more research would be useful to address the limitations of this research. For example, this study focused on just one religious ritual. Future work should look at other home-based religious rituals and directly compare them to non-religious rituals. Second, people who experienced the events got to choose to participate in the study, potentially skewing the sample. This limitation suggests that the data showing extreme satisfaction and meaningfulness should be interpreted with caution. However, it does not cast doubt on the data suggesting two different paths for home-based rituals or the importance of using resources. Future work may want to examine people who observe Shabbat dinners but never attend Shabbat services in order to see whether collective effervescence is present for those who are not used to getting it from another religious source. Another limitation is the correlational nature of the data. For example, we did not manipulate how many OneTable resources the participants used. More research using experimental manipulations would be useful. Future research should also include pretest data and long-term outcomes.

Despite the limitations of the research, the findings add to the literature on religion and well-being by suggesting a pathway whereby people can find some of the benefits of organized religion in a world in which fewer people attend religious services. In addition, it points to the important role of collective effervescence. Previous research (e.g. Gabriel et al., 2017) suggests that collective effervescence events have many positive long-term effects, including lower depression and anxiety, and increased happiness. This suggests that home-based religious events may have long-term effects on well-being. Future research examining this area might prove fruitful.

Conclusion

The decrease in overall religiosity does not mean that people no longer benefit from the important outcomes associated with religious rituals. The transmission of societal norms, the connections to other people, and the feeling that the current moment transcends the ordinary to be sacred are things that will always be important to human beings. The current research suggests that people may be able to achieve these outcomes in the modern world with home-based rituals—in particular, if they have guidance in carrying them out in a meaningful way.

Declaration of conflicting interests

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Data availability

The data and other materials needed to duplicate and replicate the findings in this article will be made available by emailing the corresponding author.

Notes

1. See <https://osf.io/n47je/>
2. All of the resources are publicly available at <https://onetable.org>
3. The tests run on both regressions and both mediation analyses suggested no evidence for multicollinearity (all had a variance inflation factor of > 2.23).

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