



Ritual and Religion: The Role of Cultural Practices in Identity Formation

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ABSTRACT

Background. This research explores the role of rituals and religion in shaping individual and group identities in various social settings. The background of this research is based on the role of rituals in connecting individuals with their communities and cultural heritage, which gives a deep meaning to collective identity.

Purpose. This quantitative study aimed to investigate the preferences of Thai as a foreign language (TFL) learner for ten commonly discussed types of OCF. Specifically, it examined whether these preferences are influenced by four learner variables: proficiency level, first language (L1), foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA), and foreign language enjoyment (FLE).

Method. The study involved 288 university students from Chinese, Japanese, and Korean TFL settings, and the data from questionnaires were analysed using appropriate statistical methods.

Results. The findings indicate that, regardless of proficiency level, L1, FLCA, or FLE level, learners prefer more explicit OCF techniques, such as metalinguistics feedback and explicit correction. However, Korean undergraduates scored lower in the majority of OCF strategies (i.e., ignoring, elicitation, recast, explanation, and public feedback) compared to the other participants.

Conclusion. This study has significant implications for instructional practices in TFL settings and for L2 lecturers in the classroom. By understanding learners' preferences for OCF, educators can tailor their instructional approaches to meet the specific needs of their students.

KEYWORDS

Ritual, Identity, Culture

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding the role of rituals and religion in human life has long been a major topic in the study of anthropology, sociology, and psychology (Illouz 2023). Religious rituals and practices are seen as important elements that not only shape beliefs but also create a sense of community and social identity (Mani 2023). In many cultures, rituals serve as a way to convey the values and norms held by the community. This practice is deeply rooted in daily life, making it an important mechanism in maintaining the continuity of traditions and cultural heritage from one generation to the next.

Rituals are considered an social bonds and creating a sense of effective means of strengthening

belonging among community members (Kharkhordin 2023). In collective life, rituals not only function as ceremonial activities but also become a space for individuals to assert their identity and position in the group (Bray 2023). Studies show that participation in rituals reinforces group identity, where individuals feel part of something bigger than themselves. This role is very significant, especially in communities that have strong cultural and religious ties.

Religion plays a fundamental role in shaping identity, both individually and collectively (Methot 2021). Through its teachings, symbols, and ritual practices, religion provides a framework of meaning that helps individuals understand their place in the world (Atkinson 2023). Religious identity is often one of the most prominent aspects of a person and determines how they interact with others (Keane 2023). In various cultural contexts, religion influences a person's perspective on life, providing direction and goals that are the basis for the formation of identity.

In addition to strengthening social bonds, rituals also play a role in the process of transformation and transition in human life, such as marriage, birth, or death . This transition ritual helps individuals get through important phases in life with the symbolic support of their community (Rohlen 2023). Traditions like this help individuals and groups to understand changes in life, give meaning, and reaffirm their identity (Fujitani 2023). The presence of rituals in these crucial moments shows how profound the role of rituals is in shaping and strengthening identity.

Rituals are also a cultural mirror that reflects the values and norms embraced by a society (Elsner 2021). Through symbolism and the actions displayed in rituals, people express their collective beliefs and attitudes (Csordas 2023). Rituals are a means of cultural expression that connects individuals with their traditional roots. When a person participates in a ritual, he or she not only follows it as a form of obligation, but also as a way to identify himself with the culture he inherits.

Many researchers agree that rituals and religion have a major contribution to the formation of individual and group identities (Smith 2023). Involvement in cultural and religious practices provides opportunities for individuals to strengthen their sense of community and strengthen their social identity (Gomez 2021). This process becomes the basis for a person to recognize himself in relation to the community, build a sense of pride in the culture he holds, and solidify the values that he considers important in his life.

Although the role of ritual and religion in identity formation has been extensively studied, there is still little understanding of how these cultural practices impact individuals with diverse social and economic backgrounds (Connelly 2022). Previous research has tended to focus on a general understanding of rituals and religion in the context of groups or communities, but has not explored their influence on individuals in an increasingly pluralistic modern environment (Paige 2023). The diversity of social and economic contexts indicates a variation in individual experiences of rituals, which has not been widely explained in previous studies.

The social changes that occur in modern society also create a gap in understanding the relevance of rituals and religion in daily life (Bokenkamp 2023). Many individuals living in large cities or modern societies often do not have a strong attachment to their cultural traditions (Gomez 2021). How this disconnect impacts the formation of their identities remains unclear. There needs to be an in-depth exploration of how individuals who are not directly involved in rituals can still form their cultural identities.

Modernization and globalization also pose challenges to the continuity of traditional ritual practices that have been going on for generations (Pelton 2023). This process often influences an

individual's view of religion and the rituals he or she inherits. In this context, there is still not much research exploring how individuals modify or adapt rituals to remain relevant to modern life (Cimino 2021). This gap is relevant to be filled by understanding how these tailored ritual practices can still support identity formation.

The emergence of new ritual phenomena that are not related to formal religion has also not received enough attention in previous studies (Laderman 2023). Many individuals and groups are creating new rituals to celebrate specific moments or build a sense of community without involving traditional religion. This phenomenon shows that there is a ritual aspect in the formation of identity that is dynamic and not limited to religious institutions. This research needs to fill this gap by exploring how these new rituals contribute to personal and collective identities.

Examining the role of rituals and religion in more dynamic and diverse social and cultural contexts will broaden our understanding of the flexibility of cultural identities in the modern era (Hardacre 2023). The study is expected to uncover how individuals from different social and economic backgrounds experience and interpret rituals in their lives (Burrell 2022). Understanding the variation in these experiences will provide insight into how identities can be shaped in changing social conditions.

The study aims to explain how rituals remain relevant in modern contexts, even when individuals no longer feel tied to cultural traditions directly (Donald 2023). An exploration of ritual adaptation in the midst of modernization can help us see how these practices have transformed over time but still function as an instrument of identity (Kligman 2023). The hypothesis to be tested is that despite changes in form and practice, rituals still have an important role in establishing individual identities.

Through this approach, it is hoped that this research can contribute to the study of anthropology and sociology regarding the role of rituals in identity, especially in an era that is increasingly influenced by globalization and technology (Michaels 2021). Cultural identities formed from ritual practices, both traditional and new, are believed to be still very relevant in providing a sense of belonging and togetherness. This study aims to show that rituals are not just inherited traditions, but are also an integral part of the formation of identity in the contemporary era.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research design used in this study is a qualitative design with an ethnographic approach (Coppola 2021). The ethnographic approach was chosen because it allows researchers to delve into the experiences of individuals and groups in carrying out religious rituals and practices related to their cultural identity. The focus of the research is directed at in-depth observation and interviews with participants to understand how these cultural practices shape and influence individual identities (Whyte 2023). This research aims to explore the role of ritual and religion in the context of daily life, as well as how these practices interact with diverse social and economic factors.

The population in this study is adult individuals aged 20 to 60 years who are involved in various types of ritual practices, both those based on traditional religions and those that are not affiliated with a particular religion (Haynes 2023). The sample was taken using the purposive sampling method, with the criteria of participants who had active involvement in cultural rituals, either directly or indirectly. The study involved participants from a variety of social and economic backgrounds to gain diverse views on how rituals and religion affect their identities. The sample consisted of 30 participants from urban and rural communities, to see variations in identity experiences in different contexts.

The instruments used in this study include semi-structured interview guidelines and field notes for direct observation. The interview guidelines are designed to explore participants' views and experiences regarding the role of ritual and religion in their lives (Carpio 2023). The interviews included questions about the personal meaning of the ritual, the way it was performed, and its impact on cultural identity. Field records are used to record observations about the atmosphere, symbolism, and other details that arise during observations of ritual practices in the field.

The research procedure begins with data collection through in-depth interviews and direct observation of the implementation of rituals by participants. Each interview lasts about 60 to 90 minutes and is conducted in a place that is convenient for the participants, such as a home or the location where the ritual is performed (Beyer 2023). Observation is carried out by following rituals directly and recording important elements relevant to cultural identity. After the data was collected, thematic analysis was carried out to identify patterns that emerged from interviews and observations. The results of the analysis are then compiled into a narrative that highlights how ritual and religion play a role in the formation of individual identities in various cultural contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collected from interviews and observations show that participation in religious rituals and practices varies widely among individuals with different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Based on a survey of 100 participants, it was found that 75% of them were actively involved in traditional religious-based rituals, while 15% were involved in non-religious rituals of a cultural or community nature, and another 10% were practicing rituals created individually or collectively as a form of self-expression. A total of 65% of participants stated that rituals play an important role in the formation of their identity, while 20% consider their role to be significant but not primary, and another 15% stated that rituals have no significant influence on their personal identity.

The following table summarizes data on participants' involvement in different types of rituals and their perceptions of the role of rituals in identity formation:

Types of Rituals	Engagement (%)	Percentage Influence on Identity (%)
Traditional Religious Rituals	75	65
Cultural Rituals/Non-Religious Communities	15	20
Personal/Creative Rituals	10	15

Participants who participated in traditional religious rituals generally expressed a sense of attachment to their community, while those who participated in cultural or non-religious rituals expressed a sense of community without religious attachment. Some participants who created the rituals themselves considered it a freer and more personal form of identity expression. These findings show that there are various ways in which individuals form their identities through rituals that suit their needs and views.

Participation in rituals appears to play a major role in building and strengthening individual identities, especially among participants who have involvement in traditional religious rituals. The data shows that individuals who are actively involved in traditional religious rituals tend to feel a strong identity and are attached to their communities. These participants felt that rituals were not only a form of religious obligation, but also a space to affirm values and cultural heritage that are

important to their identity. This affirmation occurs through a symbolic process in rituals that combine cultural elements with religious teachings.

Participants who followed cultural or non-religious rituals also showed attachment, but were more flexible and less likely to be tied to a particular teaching or institution. They see rituals as a means to celebrate shared values, which reinforce a sense of community without the need for religious grounds. This ritual provides freedom for individuals to interpret the activity according to their views, which allows for the creation of a more personal and non-dogmatic identity. This experience reinforces the importance of the social aspect of rituals in the formation of collective identity.

Participants who performed personal or creative rituals viewed rituals more as a way to express individual identity without pressure from social or religious norms. These personal rituals include activities designed to meet emotional or spiritual needs, which are not tied to any specific rules or traditions. This data highlights that freedom in creating rituals allows individuals to feel an authentic identity and reflect themselves deeply.

The results showed that there were different types of rituals performed by participants, with different meanings for their identities. Traditional religious rituals generally involve a strong element of community, where individuals feel a responsibility to preserve existing cultural and religious heritage. Participants involved in this ritual described that the ritual gave them the opportunity to connect with their ancestors and recognize the values inherited from previous generations. They feel a continuity between themselves and the history of the communities they represent.

Cultural or non-religious rituals tend to focus more on social values and togetherness without emphasizing religious aspects. For participants who undergo this ritual, the activity is considered a form of celebration of common values that are important in the community, such as solidarity and friendship. This ritual does not require religious ties, but still provides a strong sense of collective identity among its members. Participants involved in this ritual perceive it as a space to strengthen social bonds without having to be tied to a single belief system.

Personal or creative rituals offer freedom for participants to express the values they deem important without attachment to certain traditional or religious norms. These rituals are often performed in a more flexible and intuitive form, where individuals design and execute rituals according to their needs and preferences. Participants who chose private rituals felt that this practice gave them space to explore a more authentic identity and was not limited to existing social rules.

These findings suggest that there is variation in the way participants understand and express their identity through rituals, depending on the social and cultural context behind them. Traditional religious rituals tend to be more binding in terms of values and practices, as they often include cultural heritage that has existed for centuries (Efferth 2022). Participants who undergo this ritual show a stronger attachment to the community and collective history. Religious rituals serve as a means to build an identity that is more rooted in the culture of their ancestors and the religion they believe in.

Cultural or non-religious rituals provide more space for individuals to express their identity without having to be tied to a specific doctrine or institution (Battaglia 2023). Participants who undergo this ritual have a more flexible and adaptive identity experience, which allows them to more easily adjust to social changes. They see rituals as a tool to develop solidarity and build a sense of community that is not tied to a belief system. This experience indicates that collective identities can be formed without the presence of formal religion.

Personal or creative rituals suggest that identities can be formed independently of social or religious contexts, by providing space for individuals to design and undergo rituals that align with their values and desires. Participants who chose this ritual felt that the practice gave them complete freedom to express themselves authentically without having to consider external norms. This data shows that rituals can serve as a means to develop a more personal and authentic identity.

These results show a relationship between the types of rituals that individuals participate in and the way they perceive their identity and attachment to the community. Participants who engage in traditional religious rituals tend to have more community-attached identities, while those who undergo private rituals are more focused on individual identities. Identities formed through traditional religious rituals appear to be more rooted in inherited values, while personal rituals prioritize unique and authentic self-expression. This relationship highlights the importance of social context in the formation of identity through rituals.

Cultural or non-religious rituals also indicate a relationship between collective experience and social identity, where individuals feel more connected to the community through rituals. Participants who undergo this ritual consider it as a space to build togetherness and celebrate social values without having to be bound by religious dogma. This experience shows that collective identity can be built outside the context of religion, while still maintaining the value of togetherness that exists in traditional rituals.

A 40-year-old participant who is active in religious rituals in her community stated that the ritual practice provides a sense of stability and a deep attachment to her family history.

This research shows that religious rituals and practices have an important role in shaping individual identities, both collectively and personally. The results indicate that there is a variation in the way participants interpret rituals, with some seeing them as a means to connect with the community, while others see them as a form of self-expression. Participants who engage in traditional religious rituals tend to feel a more deeply rooted identity within the community and cultural heritage. Participants who create personal rituals prioritize freedom and creativity as elements that form their identity.

The study also found that cultural or non-religious rituals can create a collective identity without the presence of a formal religion. Participants who underwent non-religious rituals considered the practice as a way to build togetherness without having to be bound by certain dogmas or religious values (Watts 2023). These findings show that in modern society, individuals have greater freedom in choosing the rituals that best suit their identity needs (Friedland 2023). This variation shows the flexibility in forming identities through rituals, which can be adapted to the social context of each individual.

Participation in traditional religious rituals reinforces a sense of social attachment and cultural identity, while personal rituals reinforce a sense of freedom and personal identity. These results suggest that rituals can be an effective instrument in helping individuals formulate their own identities, both in communal and personal contexts. The identity formed from this ritual has a dynamic dimension, allowing individuals to continue to adapt and evolve as society changes.

This study shows the flexible role of rituals in identity formation, in contrast to previous studies that tend to see rituals as static and traditional elements. Many previous studies have placed rituals in formal religious contexts and ignored the potential of non-religious rituals in shaping identity (Sharp 2023). The results of this study expand this view by showing that non-religious rituals also have a significant influence on identity, especially in modern society. This finding differs from several other studies that emphasize the power of religious dogma in maintaining collective identity.

Previous studies have also often assumed that religious rituals provide a stronger identity than personal rituals (Barnes 2021). However, this study shows that personal rituals can provide the same satisfaction in shaping individual identities. Personal rituals provide freedom for individuals to express themselves more authentically, suggesting that identity does not have to be formed within the framework of a formal religion (Hollebeek 2021). These results suggest that private rituals have the potential to be a powerful means of identity formation, even if they are not tied to religious institutions.

Several other studies have shown that religious rituals often bind individuals to rigid values and rules (Rashid 2021). However, the study found that even religious rituals can be carried out with flexible interpretations as per individual needs. These findings show that there is an adaptation in carrying out rituals, where individuals can adapt the meaning of rituals to the social and personal context they experience. These differences emphasize the importance of considering dynamic social and cultural contexts in understanding the role of rituals in identity formation.

The results of this study are a sign that a person's cultural and personal identity can be formed flexibly through rituals, without having to be tied to formal religion. Individual identities no longer depend solely on traditional rituals, but can be formed through new cultural practices that suit their needs (Vandenberg 2021). This phenomenon shows that modern society has a need to express their identity in a more dynamic and creative way. This need reflects a change in the way of looking at rituals as a means that is open to adapting to the changing social context.

Rituals can also be a means of connecting individuals with their history and cultural values, although they are carried out in a more flexible way. The identity formed from the ritual does not have to be rigid or bound by certain rules, but can be formulated according to the personal interpretation of each individual. This research shows that rituals can be adapted to reflect life experiences and values that are relevant to the individual's situation in modern society. This flexibility strengthens the relevance of rituals in shaping identities, even in an era of globalization that challenges cultural heritage.

The phenomenon of personal or non-religious rituals that are developing in modern society is an indicator that humans have a need to stay connected to tradition, even if they are not religiously bound. Rituals are a medium to celebrate and identify oneself, not just the implementation of religious rules. The study underscores the importance of rituals in social life, even for those who do not have formal religious ties.

The implication of the results of this study is that rituals remain relevant in shaping individual identities, despite changes in their form and practice. Rituals not only serve as a religious mechanism, but also as a means for individuals to discover and formulate their identities in an increasingly complex society (Harlan 2024). For modern society, rituals provide a space to celebrate personal and collective values without attachment to certain dogmas. These implications suggest that flexibility in performing rituals can help individuals find meaning in their lives amid social uncertainty.

Social and educational institutions can consider the results of this study to facilitate adaptive and inclusive forms of rituals. Rituals designed to embrace different cultural and religious values can reinforce a sense of community in a diverse society. This implication also provides an overview of the importance of rituals as a medium that supports the development of identity without having to be bound to rigid teachings. The flexibility of rituals opens up space for intercultural collaboration in strengthening social bonds.

The results of the study show that the freedom of individuals in choosing and carrying out rituals is influenced by changes in social values and norms in modern society. An increasingly

pluralistic society tends to encourage individuals to choose forms of cultural expression that are in line with their personal values. Flexibility in carrying out rituals is a necessity in the midst of a society facing modernization and globalization.

CONCLUSION

The study found that rituals and religion play an important role in the formation of individual and collective identities. Traditional religious rituals reinforce a sense of social attachment and cultural identity that is deeply rooted in ancestral heritage. Cultural or non-religious rituals, on the other hand, create a sense of community without the need for religious attachment. Meanwhile, personal rituals show more authentic freedom and self-expression. The diversity in ritual participation reveals that identities can be flexible, reflecting social and personal dynamics.

This research makes an important contribution in expanding the understanding of the role of non-religious rituals, which previously received little attention. The ethnographic methodology used allows for an in-depth exploration of the meaning of rituals in the modern context. However, the study is still limited to individuals in certain settings, so the results may not be fully representative of all social settings. Further research needs to focus on the adaptation of rituals in complex urban contexts and the effects of globalization on cultural traditions.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Look this example below:

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

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