



# Cultural Practices/ Family and Community Traditions

The Science of Resilience

✉ [rrc@dal.ca](mailto:rrc@dal.ca)

🌐 [www.resilienceresearch.org](http://www.resilienceresearch.org)

© R2 RESILIENCE



RRC - Evaluation  
and Training Institute

# Table of Contents

Definition .....	1
Relationship to Resilience .....	2
Social Norms and Continuity.....	2
Sense of Meaning and Positive Coping Strategies.....	3
Connection to Others and Self-Knowledge.....	4
Buffering the Impacts of Discrimination .....	5
Case Study Examples.....	6
Religious Traditions.....	6
Cultural Traditions/Knowledge .....	6
Family Traditions/Rituals .....	7
Improving .....	7
Activities.....	8
Assessment .....	9
Religiosity Scales (more focused on belief than tradition) .....	9
Cultural Connectedness Scales .....	9
Family Ritual Scales.....	10
Other Notes.....	10
References .....	12
Appendix A: 12-Item Quest Scale .....	15
Appendix B: Revised 12-Item Religious Fundamentalist Scale .....	16
Appendix C: Beliefs and Values Scale.....	17
Appendix D: The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure .....	18
Appendix E: Cultural Connectedness Scale-Short Version.....	19

## Definition

‘Tradition’ can be used to describe cultural or religious practices that are shared between members of a family or community. ‘Traditions’ are distinguished from ‘beliefs,’ in that they are the activities in which one can participate, though these activities may be more or less formalized. However, ‘traditions’ and ‘beliefs’ can be very difficult to distinguish in practice and are often not differentiated in academic literature. This is particularly true because cultural and religious practices often have deeper meanings, which then intertwines them with beliefs. Family traditions, likewise, vary considerably between families and across cultures, but typically contain both a practical component (the activity that is done) and a symbolic component (that solidifies group identity and facilitates meaning making) (Fiese et al., 2002). This document will focus on the more practical components of traditions (i.e. traditions as things you ‘do’), which can encompass a wide range of activities. While these activities may be shared amongst a social group, they may be completed by persons acting alone or in groups of different sizes. Importantly, what distinguishes rituals or traditions from routines is a sense of group belonging; where routines say to us “this needs to be done,” rituals or traditions say something about who we are. Further, these practices provide a sense of continuity between and across generations (Fiese et al., 2002). [See our write-up on Orderly and Regular Routines for how routines can contribute to resilience].

Scholars tend to discuss religious beliefs/traditions as distinct from other cultural practices, though there is considerable overlap. Religious traditions may include religious service attendance (Brodsky, 2000; Casen et al., 2012), prayer (Brodsky, 2000), participation in activities organized by the larger religious community (Brodsky, 2000), and engagement in religious holidays (Snodgrass et al., 2017).

‘Cultural connectedness’ is described as the knowledge of and engagement with aspects of one’s culture (Snowshoe et al., 2017). Though cultural connectedness is a term most frequently discussed in relation to global Indigenous resilience, the term lends itself to expansion and can refer to the connection individuals have to the beliefs and practices of their ancestors. Consequently, the range of activities that can be considered cultural traditions is quite broad, encompassing everything from taking time to learn about one’s cultural history (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2006), listening to cultural teachings by community elders (Gray & Cote, 2019), to spending time on ancestral lands (Gray & Cote, 2019; Reid et al., 2016; Wexler et al., 2016). However, we would argue that cultural traditions can also encompass things like preparing and sharing cultural food, including subsistence activities (Wexler et al., 2016), engaging with traditional music, and storytelling. Additionally, insofar as ‘religion’ can be seen as a component of overall culture, religious traditions can also constitute cultural traditions and practices.

Family traditions are often discussed in terms of ‘family rituals.’ Rituals can be defined as “a series of repetitive, symbolic and sequential acts, which are performed by a group and

passed on from generation to generation” (Compañ et al., 2001, p. 89). These rituals are seen as important for the individuals within the family and the family as a whole, facilitating individual growth and development and maintaining cohesion of the family unit (Compañ et al., 2001; Schuck & Bucy, 1997; Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Compañ et al. (2001) describe two different types of family rituals. Homeostatic rituals are those that help to maintain balance and stability within the family – these rituals would include things like shared family dinners and celebrating annual holidays. Conversely, ‘morphogenetic’ rituals are those that facilitate change and transition in families, including life cycle rituals (birthdays, weddings, etc.). Importantly, family rituals are often grounded in cultural or religious practices, which means there is considerable overlap in discussing the three kinds of traditions (Denham, 2003). However, some scholars distinguish family traditions from other family rituals (like religious and cultural celebrations), noting that family traditions are unique to each family (events like birthdays, wedding anniversaries, and family reunions) rather than shared across families within a particular culture or religious group (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2006; Wolin & Bennett, 1984). For new families, family-specific rituals tend to become more established and robust once the first child progresses from infant to older child; however, cultural or religious rituals that parents practiced prior to having children often remain consistent and provide stability as the parents transition from couplehood to a family (Fiese et al., 1993). It is also not uncommon for families to hold less rigidly to their family rituals as children in the household progress through adolescence (Wolin & Bennett, 1984).

## Relationship to Resilience

### Social Norms and Continuity

One of the ways religious/cultural/family traditions and practices have been associated with resilience is through the establishment and maintenance of social norms and associated prosocial behaviour. Scholars argue that family rituals and traditions are an important mechanism through which the family’s values and acceptable social behaviours are passed from one generation to the next (Schuck & Bucy, 1997; Wolin & Bennett, 1984).

Stolz et al. (2013) hypothesize that participation in religious traditions/practices helps to legitimate and reinforce social norms, which in turn promotes resilience as it encourages prosocial behaviour and helps individuals to adapt to society’s expectations. While Stolz et al. (2013) spoke specifically of religious practices, the same can be said of cultural practices/traditions that reinforce social norms. In this sense, religious and cultural traditions may prevent some social adversities by increasing the fit and belonging of individuals within their social groups, hopefully leading to less adversity by conflict. Therefore, in settings where religiosity is valued, religiosity is associated with improved psychosocial outcomes and higher self-esteem (Bender & Yeresyan, 2014).

Additionally, in their conversation about political and social conservatism among older adults, Van Hiel and Brebels (2011) suggest that conservatism may promote wellbeing in older adults because closely following existing social norms lessens feelings of anxiety and promotes feelings of continuity, which in turn enhances self-esteem. Therefore, it is also reasonable to speculate that religious and cultural traditions can create a sense of stability and continuity, which may promote psychosocial wellbeing. Fiese et al. (2002) suggest that family traditions function in much the same way – not only cultivating a sense of belonging, but continuity. Family rituals or traditions create stability because of their consistency, remaining predictable year after year. Conducting the ritual in the present moment grounds the family in relation to their past and creates a sense of knowability about the future (Wolin & Bennet, 1984). Consequently, Fiese et al. (2002) argue that when our rituals or traditions are disrupted, it can threaten family cohesion. The authors note several studies that demonstrate the positive impact of family routines and rituals on child and adolescent sleep, physical health, parent-child conflict, identity, lovability, and psychological symptomatology. Though the mechanisms between family routines/rituals and positive outcomes and adaptation are often unclear, it appears that continuity plays an important role in these processes, creating a sense of stability (Fiese et al., 2002; Schuck & Bucy, 1997).

### Sense of Meaning and Positive Coping Strategies

Błażek and Besta (2012) propose that religiosity can contribute to an individual's self-concept clarity (the extent to which an individual's beliefs are clear, defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable), which in turn is associated with higher self-esteem, perceived meaning in life, and overall psychological wellbeing. They found this was truer for people for whom religiosity was intrinsic (internally motivated) than extrinsic (externally motivated). This suggests that participating in religious traditions because of personal, felt connection with them will have greater protective benefits than for individuals who participate in religious traditions to meet other, non-spiritual, needs. Though participating in religious practices for social reasons may have some benefits (see below), participation for intrinsic reasons promotes greater meaning making, which may help people to cope more effectively with adversity.

Religious practices (such as religious attendance or prayer) have been shown to help individuals cope with different adversities. For example, in a study of religious attendance and religiosity for youth at-risk for depression, Kasen et al. (2012) found that religious attendance had a greater protective effect for youth exposed to more adversities than parental depression alone. Further, Snodgrass et al. (2017) note that while religious rituals and celebrations may actually invoke existential anxieties, as is the case for the festivals of Holi and Navaratri in India, these rituals also subsequently relieve them – helping people to effectively cope with these anxieties.

Finally, prayer was found to be an active coping strategy for dealing with stress and uncertainty. For African American single mothers living in unsafe neighborhoods, prayer helped to provide a sense of agency over the safety of their children whom they otherwise struggled to protect (Brodsky, 2000). One of the benefits of religious practices like prayer is their adaptability – these practices can be used at home, which may be helpful for those who do not feel connected to local religious groups.

For family rituals, some studies have shown that meaningful family rituals are associated with lower levels of anxiety in children; however, the mechanisms behind this protective influence are not fully understood and it is possible that more positive coping is a consequence of the continuity and stability discussed previously (Markson & Fiese, 2000).

### Connection to Others and Self-Knowledge

One of the most important ways that cultural, religious, and family traditions and practices promote resilience is by connecting individuals to their communities and through enhancing knowledge of self. One of the primary ways this occurs is through strengthening social bonds within the family. Family rituals help to solidify family identity and transmit family values (Denham, 2003; Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Even simple family rituals like sitting down to share a family meal every day can signal to members of the family who they are and where they belong. Studies have found that in families of adolescents experiencing psychological dysfunction, families practice fewer homeostatic and life cycle rituals (Compañ et al., 2001). It's possible that the stability and connection provided through family rituals are protective of mental health. This can be particularly important for providing stability and reaffirming family identity in adolescents experiencing significant developmental change (Compañ et al., 2001; Denham, 2003). For parents with infants and preschool children, those with more meaningful family rituals reported higher levels of marital satisfaction (Fiese et al., 1993). Fiese et al. (1993) propose that one reason for this is that rituals provide an opportunity to renew and refresh relationships which, in the case of new parents, may be neglected due to parenting responsibilities. However, their study was limited in terms of racial and socioeconomic diversity, which means these processes may operate differently in non-White families.

Religiosity strengthens social ties with fellow believers and may enhance a sense of responsibility toward one another (Bender & Yeresyan, 2014). This was seen in the examples provided by several authors. Snodgrass et al. (2017) found that community solidarity was an important mechanism through which participation in religious rituals contributed to reductions in stress and anxiety for Sahariya conservation refugees in India. Additionally, in a study of African American single mothers, the women who attended church regularly noted the important social connections they developed through church participation. This included relationships with religious officials, who provide a source of guidance and support, and the building of community support through church friends. Churches also provided mothers with a source of activities and engagement for their children and at times served as community hubs

that help to meet other needs – like food, clothing, etc. (Brodsky, 2000). Thus, it is clear that connection to others may help meet both social and material needs, which in turn can support resilience through many different pathways. Additionally, in a study of ethnically and culturally diverse female American university students, ethnic identity search was positively correlated with resilience. The authors propose that higher levels of resilience are associated with greater self-knowledge and having connections to a wider social group and its support/resources (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2006).

Cultural connectedness (which is partly made possible through the sharing of cultural traditions and practices) is seen as an important buffer for the impacts of colonization, particularly as a means of addressing cultural loss for Indigenous peoples. Gray and Cote (2019), in their study of one Anishinabe community, found that families exposed to Indian Residential Schools (IRS) were 18% less likely to report high levels of mental health. For these families, higher levels of cultural connectedness were significantly protective for mental health, in a way that was not true for families not exposed to IRS. While they reported this association, the authors noted an inability to distinguish the mechanisms by which cultural connectedness facilitates resilience. It seems likely that cultural connectedness and participating in cultural traditions helps to reaffirm cultural belonging and pride, which is otherwise disrupted due to colonization and racism.

Crooks and colleagues (2015) found that modifying a violence-prevention program for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) youth in Canada facilitated positive outcomes in youth via increased self-knowledge, which was associated with higher levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and positive identity development. Additionally, the program allowed youth to cultivate a sense of belonging, which they note is especially important for FNMI youth who frequently feel marginalized in the mainstream school system. Thus, the program helped them feel more connected to their culture and FNMI peers as well as the school where the programming was offered. Increased self-confidence and connection with others was also associated with improved academic outcomes for youth who participated. For Indigenous youth in Alaska, cultural rites/traditions served as an important way that knowledge, skills, and social roles are passed on from one generation to the next. These resources not only helped youth to survive and adapt in challenging circumstances, but also added meaning to their lives and promoted positive coping (Wexler et al., 2014).

### Buffering the Impacts of Discrimination

Collective self-esteem is an important protective factor for countering the effects of racism and discrimination. When one feels connected to a social group and feels positively about the qualities of that social group, this may confer benefits upon self-esteem. This is true for both cultural and religious group affiliation. Oulali et al. (2019) note that religious collective self-esteem has been shown to have greater protective effects for minority populations, who perhaps rely more on positive in-group identification because of the marginalization they

experience in society. An example of this can be seen in a study by Bender and Yeresyan (2014); they found that the more discrimination perceived by Turkish Muslim adolescents in the Netherlands, the higher their levels of cultural adherence and religiosity. Additionally, they found that maintaining parental culture had positive impacts on self-esteem (Bender & Yeresyan, 2014).

## Case Study Examples

### Religious Traditions

Brodsky (2000) provided many examples that illustrate how religious traditions bolstered resilience in African American single mothers living in an impoverished Washington community. Half of the women interviewed expressed that regular church attendance was an important part of their lives. Attending church, a religious tradition, provided these mothers with important coping resources. Church officials and fellow religious adherents provided an important source of emotional support and guidance during times of difficulty. This included reaffirming values about how to live a good life. Church attendance also fostered a sense of community and belonging, both for the mothers and presumably for some of the children who attended community activities hosted by the church. The resources provided by religious communities and facilitated by religious tradition provided stability, positive identity, and positive coping mechanisms for mothers who faced considerable hardship in their day to day lives.

In Timor-Leste, the Fataluku-speaking Timorese community used ritual exchange and religious action to fight oppression from the Indonesian government (1975-1999). Fatalukus perceive interaction with the ancestors and spiritual domain as a way to maintain equilibrium in life. However, after the military invasion in 1975, most of them converted to Catholicism, to avoid being targeted as a communist or a resistance due to the obligation from the Indonesian government to choose one of the five designated world religion. Fataluku inserted their rituals and religious activity toward their ancestors into their Catholic rituals (McWilliam, 2011). McWilliam (2011) found that converting to Catholicism allowed them to practice their religious activities and rituals, which focused on maintaining interaction between the living (their group kin) and interaction with the ancestors. These interactions gave them extended supports in life and a sense of communality. It is also their way to fight oppressions from 'Javanese Islam' Indonesian government who forced them to change religious orientation, stop practicing their religious activities, and deployed an excessive military force in Timor Leste (McWilliam, 2011).

### Cultural Traditions/Knowledge

Crooks et al. (2015) describe the positive impacts noted by adults closely connected to a modification of the Fourth R violence-prevention program tailored for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) youth in Canada. The modified program emerged because a local school district



recognized that the transition into grade nine was providing particularly difficult for FNMI students, many of whom only recently entered the school system outside of their communities. It was recognized by all stakeholders that programming needed to be culturally relevant in order to be impactful. Consequently, cultural storytellers and community elders were brought in to deliver elements of the program using storytelling, drum making, traditional medicine, and ceremony. They found that the program helped to reduce marginalization and increase belonging for FNMI children entering the mainstream school system, which is often an isolating experience. Additionally, the program helped youth to feel secure in their cultural identity, reducing a conflict which had previously gotten in the way of school performance. As a result, they found that the program helped to increase graduation rates for FNMI youth and provided many students with the opportunity to take on leadership roles in the school that inspired them to take on roles as leaders in their communities.

Cultural practices have long been a source of resistance and resilience for Indigenous peoples in Canada. Hatala et al. (2016) explore how Cree Elders practiced their culture and passed down their knowledge despite government oppression. Indigenous people in Canada were banned from practicing their culture and spirituality, and the children were sent to residential schools designed for assimilation. They were not allowed to talk in their language and were abused. The Elders recounted how, as an act of resistance, they sang their traditional songs and played traditional games. Singing and playing traditional games asserted their bonds and identities, which had been erased in the residential schools. Practicing their culture and affirming their identity fostered their sense of agency, achievement and gave them the power to resist domination. Storytelling also plays a key role in the transmission of the core values, culture, and knowledge of Indigenous people because they are untouched by the government. Stories become a vehicle for their spirituality and can improve people's well-being. However, some stories faded away, thus some rituals are also forgotten. The Elders perceive this as a change, within the same core culture (Hatala et al., 2016).

### Family Traditions/Rituals

Baxter and Braithwaite (2006) describe a family tradition created for the adopted daughter of the first author. Every year, on the anniversary of the child's adoption, the family celebrates "Gotcha Day." The day involves many of the same components as a birthday, like presents, treats, and the singing of a special song, that set the day aside as special. Additionally, because the child's birthday occurs in the summer and is, therefore, not celebrated during the school year, the family brought "Gotcha Day" into the school as a celebration so that the child could share this day with her classmates. This not only affirms the importance of her adoption, a sensitive topic in many families, but teaches other children about adoption. This tradition reaffirms the child's identity and emphasizes the connection between the child and her parents. It also provides stability and helps to build connections with others.

## Improving

Because of the diversity of practices which fall under the umbrella of religious/cultural traditions and practices, it is difficult to make recommendations for how to improve this aspect of one's life. However, this section builds on observations from the literature which may prove useful to some. While attending religious services is an important way for some people to connect with their communities, others have negative experiences that deter them from participating in more social forms of religiosity (Brodsky, 2000). Thus, while attending religious services may be a good recommendation for some (Kasen et al., 2012), positive outcomes are not guaranteed. However, people may consider how religious elements, such as prayer or other practices, can be brought into the home if public religious services are not a good fit.

People can seek out information about their cultural history and practices, if they are not already familiar (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2006). People can participate in cultural or religious practices taught to them by family members or those with authority in their communities (Claus-Ehlers et al., 2006). It's possible that seeking out cultural knowledge and practices, particularly from parents, can help to alleviate family conflict associated with acculturation. However, it is also true that youth may feel pressured to adopt practices of the host culture, which may be a source of conflict with family who more rigidly stick to cultural traditions (Park & Kim, 2010). Additionally, it should be acknowledged that while strong connections to cultural and religious traditions may serve as a buffer against discrimination in host-cultures, adopting some elements of host cultures may be important for making friends, gaining access to employment, etc. (Bender & Yeresyan, 2014). This suggests that negotiating cultural connectedness may be a complex process.

Cultural practices and teachings can be integrated into programs delivered within particular cultural communities. For example, programs delivered to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities can integrate spiritual teachings, drum circles, smudging, and other practices as appropriate and under the guidance of an Elder (Crooks et al., 2015; Gray & Cote, 2019).

People working with families can encourage families to maintain family traditions that are meaningful to them or even create new ones. This can be particularly important for families in transition, such as those who have just experienced a loss or blended families (Nelms, 2005). Additionally, family rituals can be modified or flexible to account for changes in family life that ensure the rituals remain meaningful, instead of becoming hollow (Wolin & Bennet, 1984). Whiting (2003) proposes several strategies for designing therapeutic family rituals to be used by family therapists. They propose that some elements are common to almost all rituals and can be used creatively to construct new rituals. These elements include an overall ritual theme (what the ritual is about, the symbolic action being accomplished by the ritual), symbols (objects or words used to represent relationships, meaning of events, etc.), closed elements (things about the ritual that will always remain the same), open elements (knowledge about which parts of the ritual can change or be improvised from time to time or those parts which a family can customize for themselves), and a time and space for the ritual to be done (how often

the ritual is done, when and where it is conducted that should set the ritual apart from everyday life in some way) (Whiting, 2003).

## Activities

While it is difficult to develop generic interventions or activities for a resilience factor as personal and nuanced as cultural/religious/family traditions and practices, the following are some suggestions for ideas that might be helpful for some looking to increase this resilience factor:

- Find out more about your family's migration story, if applicable. This may be as simple as talking to grandparents or other family knowledge keepers about your family story. Prompts for questions to ask can be found here: <https://reimaginingmigration.org/moving-stories-my-ancestors-story/>. However, sometimes it can be hard to find a family member to help, in which case there are also resources available to help trace your history, such as: <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/genealogy/Pages/introduction.aspx>
- Prepare and share cultural food (passed down to you by family OR using recipes from the internet). For more information, see: <https://freelymagazine.com/2017/01/07/what-food-tells-us-about-culture/>
- Listen to traditional music (google language translations if you need them)
- Learn the language your ancestors spoke
- Attend religious services (if your local community doesn't feel like a good fit, some communities livestream their services online, which makes it easier to find a community that feels right for you)
- Visit your local cultural center
- Connect with your cultural/religious group online
- Participate in religious/cultural holidays
- Create new family traditions! This can involve turning everyday routines like mealtimes or bedtimes into rituals, taking an annual family vacation or having an annual family outing day, or developing new holiday traditions (Brenner, 2014). For ideas, see: <https://www.parents.com/parents-magazine/parents-perspective/10-tips-for-creating-memorable-family-traditions-year-round/>
- Add a meaningful element to routines you already do to turn them into rituals/traditions. For example, singing a song passed down to you by an older relative during your child's bedtime routine makes it more meaningful to both of you (Schuck & Bucy, 1997).

## Interventions

The author of this document would caution members of dominant populations about developing cultural interventions for groups they do not personally belong to. Sometimes, interventions are developed and outcomes are measured using instruments that have little meaning to the cultural/religious community and can falsely assess the wellbeing of that community (Reid et al., 2016). It is therefore recommended that programs or interventions addressing cultural/religious tradition and connectedness are conducted by members of the community in question or, if not possible, in close partnership with cultural/religious authorities. Additionally, cultural and religious communities already have tools and resources available to them that they use to cope with adversity. Understanding and facilitating these existing practices may be more beneficial than attempting to introduce interventions from outside agents (Snodgrass et al., 2017).

### Sister of Nia Program

Belgraves et al. (2004) ran the Sister of Nia program, small group intervention for African American adolescent girls to enhance their ethnic identity, promote their role, and enforce positive relationships with peers. The program provided fifteen 1.5 hours-sessions on being of African descent. Female staff acted as their role models (*Mzees*; Kiswahili for respected elders). Each session started with the girls and *mzees* standing in a circle and conducted a libation, “an African ritual of pouring water onto a plant to remember one’s ancestors” (Belgrave et al., 2004, p. 332) while calling out the name of their ancestors, relatives, friends, and historical figures. They poured a drop of water into a plant for each of the name, with an acknowledgment by everyone. This process is conducted to honour their ancestors’ experiences. After the ritual, the girls were separated into groups of 12 with 2 *mzees* mentors per group. They studied African proverb and *Nguzo* principles for healthy living: *Umoja* (unity), *Kujichagulia* (self-determination), *Ujima* (cooperative economics), *Nia* (purpose), *Kuumba* (creativity), *Imani* (faith), and *Hesehema* (respect). The girls were encouraged to find principles and proverb that fits the goals, expectations, and the focus of each session. They were also involved in team-building exercises and went on two field trips (recreational and cultural).

The program sessions consisted of: “(a) exposing participants to Africa and African people, (b) presentations on natural hair care and healthy body image, (c) playing “personal hygiene” trivia, (d) discussing how African Americans are portrayed in the media, (e) presenting African American women in leadership roles, (f) discussing the value of education, and (g) developing long-and short-term goals)” (Belgrave et al., 2004, p. 334). Belgrave et al. (2004) found that girls who participated in the program had a significant increase in their ethnic identity recognition and role. The program gave participants a chance to engage in prosocial behaviours that engender resiliency, particularly in the early adolescence period.

## Assessment

## Religiosity Scales (more focused on belief than tradition)

### **12-item Quest Orientation Scale (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991; Appendix A)**

- Measures the degree to which an individual's religion involves an open-ended, responsive dialogue with existential questions raised by the contradictions and tragedies of life
- Cronbach's alphas range from .75 to .82

### **The Revised 12-Item Religious Fundamentalist Scale (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004; Appendix B)**

- Revised version of the 20-item Religious Fundamentalist Scale

### **20-item Beliefs and Values Scale (King et al., 2006; Appendix C)**

- Measures spirituality across a broad religious and non-religious perspective
- Two factor structure: the second factor (3 items) contains statements referring to spiritual belief outside of a religious context.
- Cronbach's alpha = .94

## Cultural Connectedness Scales

### **12-item Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Roberts et al., 1999; Appendix D)**

- Adapted from Phinney's (1992) measures for adolescents
- Roberts et al., (1999) found a two-factor structure: affirmation/belonging/commitment and exploration
- Cronbach's alpha = .84 in a sample of high school students from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- More information and full measure available here:  
<https://elcentro.sonhs.miami.edu/research/measures-library/meim/index.html>

### **Cultural Connectedness Scale-Short Version (Snowshoe et al., 2017; Appendix E)**

- Created specifically for Indigenous communities
- Has three subscales: Identity; Traditions; and Spirituality
- Cronbach's alpha = .70

## Family Ritual Scales

### **56-item Family Ritual Questionnaire (Fiese, 1992; Fiese & Klein, 1993)**

- Assess family rituals across 7 settings (dinnertime, weekends, vacations, annual celebrations, special celebrations, religious holidays, and cultural traditions) and across

8 dimensions (occurrence, roles, routine, attendance, affect, symbolic significance, continuation, and deliberateness)

- Cronbach's alpha for the subscales (settings and dimensions) ranged from .58 to .90
- Test-retest at 4 weeks = .88

***20-item Family Traditions Scale (McCubbin & Thompson, 1991)***

- Contains four subscales:
  - Holidays – measures to what extent the family is involved in maintaining traditions around the Holidays (items 1-6)
  - Transitions – measures to what extent the family is involved in maintaining traditions around transitions/ changes in the family, such as marriage, death, locations, etc. (items 7-12)
  - Religious – measures the extent to which the family is involved in maintaining traditions around religious occasions (items 13-16)
  - Family – measures the extent to which the family is involved in maintaining the traditions around special events (items 17-20)
- Uses a “yes-no” response scale by which respondents indicate whether the item is a tradition in their family
- Cronbach's alpha = .85
- Link to scale here: <https://www.mccubbinresilience.org/measures.html>

## References

- Batson, C. D., & Schoenrade, P. A. (1991). Measuring religion as quest: 2) Reliability concerns. *Journal for the scientific study of Religion*, 430-447.
- Baxter, L.A., & Braithwaite, D.O. (2006). Family rituals. In L.H. Turner & R. West, *The Family and Communication Sourcebook* (pp. 259-280). Sage Publications.
- Belgrave, F. Z., Reed, M. C., Plybon, L. E., Butler, D. S., Allison, K. W., & Davis, T. (2004). An evaluation of Sisters of Nia: A cultural program for African American girls. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 30(3), 329–343.
- Bender, M., & Yeresyan, I. (2014). The importance of religiosity and cultural maintenance for self-esteem: The case of second-generation Turkish-Dutch adolescents. In R. Dimitrova, M. Bender, & F. vans de Vijver (Eds.) *Global Perspectives on Well-Being in Immigrant Families* (pp. 115-133). New York: Springer
- Blanc, J., Rahill, G.J., Laconi, S., & Mouchenik, Y. (2016). Religious beliefs, PTSD, depression and resilience in survivors of the 2010 Haiti earthquake. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 190, 697-703. doi:10.1016/j.jad.2015.10.046
- Błazek, M., & Besta, T. (2012). Self-concept clarity and religious orientations: Prediction of purpose in life and self-esteem. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 51, 947-960. doi:10.1007/s10943-010-9407-y
- Brenner, A. (2014). 5 ways to create family traditions: And 5 reasons why we should. *Psychology Today* (website). Retrieved May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-flux/201405/5-ways-create-family-traditions>
- Brodsky, A.E. (2000). The role of religion in the lives of resilient, urban, African American, single mothers. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 28(2), 199-219.
- Ciarrochi, J., & Heaven, P.C.L. (2012). Religious values and the development of trait hope and self-esteem in adolescents. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 51(4), 676-688.
- Clauss-Ehlers, C.S., Yang, Y-T.T., & Chen, W-C.,J. (2006). Resilience from childhood stressors: The role of cultural resilience, ethnic identity, and gender identity. *Journal of Infant, Child, and Adolescent Psychotherapy*, 5(1), 124-138. doi:10.2513/s15289168jicap0501\_7
- Compañ, E., Moreno, J., Ruiz, M.T., & Pascual, E. (2001). Doing things together: Adolescent health and family rituals. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 56(2), 89-94. doi:10.1136/jech.56.2.89
- Crooks, C., Burleigh, D., & Sisco, A. (2015). Promoting First Nations, Metis, and Inuit youth wellbeing through culturally-relevant programming: The role of cultural connectedness and identity. *International Journal of Child and Youth Resilience*, 3(1), 101-116.
- Denham, S.A. (2003). Relationships between family rituals, family routines, and health. *Journal of Family Nursing*, 9(3), 305-330. doi:10.1177/1074840703255447
- Fiese, B.H., Hooker, K.A., Kotary, L., & Schwagler, J. (1993). Family rituals in the early stages of parenthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 55(3), 633-642.

- Fiese, B.H., Tomcho, T.J., Douglas, M., Josephs, K., Poltrock, S., & Baker, T. (2002). A review of 50 years of research on naturally occurring family routines and rituals: A cause for celebration? *Journal of Family Psychology, 16*(4), 381-390. doi:10.1037//0893-3200.16.4.381
- Gray, A.P. & Cote, W. (2019). Cultural connectedness protects mental health against the effect of historical trauma among Anishinabe young adults. *Public Health, 176*, 77-81. doi:10.1016/j.puhe.2018.12.003
- Hatala, A. R., Desjardins, M., & Bombay, A. (2016). Reframing Narratives of Aboriginal Health Inequity: Exploring Cree Elder Resilience and Well-Being in Contexts of Historical Trauma. *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(14), 1911–1927. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315609569>
- Kasen, S., Wickramaratne, P., Gameroff, M.J., & Weissman, M.M. (2012). Religiosity and resilience in persons at high risk for major depression. *Psychological Medicine, 42*, 509-519. doi:10.1017/S0033291711001516
- King, M., Jones, L., Barnes, K., Low, J., Walker, C., Wilkinson, S., ... & Tookman, A. (2006). Measuring spiritual belief: development and standardization of a Beliefs and Values Scale. *Psychol Med, 36*(3), 417-425.
- Markson, S., & Fiese, B.H. (2000). Family rituals as a protective factor for children with asthma. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 25*(7), 471-479.
- McCubbin, H. I., & Thompson, A. I. (2013). Family Traditions Scale (FTS) 1991.
- McWilliam, A. (2011). Exchange and resilience in Timor-Leste. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 17*(4), 745–763.
- Nelms, B.C. (2005). Giving children a great gift: Family traditions. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care, 19*, 345-346. doi:10.1016/j.pedhc.2005.07.010
- Oulali, I., Bos, H., van den Akker, A., Fukkink, R.G., Merry, M.S., & Overbeek, G. (2019). Development and validation of the religious collective self-esteem scale for children. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 11*(3), 188-202. doi:10.1037/rel0000145
- Park, Y.S., & Kim, B.S.K. (2010). Acculturation, enculturation, parental adherence to Asian cultural values, parenting styles, and family conflict among Asian American college students. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 1*(1), 67-79. doi:10.1037/a0018961
- Reid, J., Varona, G., Fisher, M., & Smith, C. (2016). Understanding Maori 'lived' culture to determine cultural connectedness and wellbeing. *Journal of Population Research, 33*, 31-49. doi:10.1007/s12546-016-9165-0
- Roberts, R. E., Phinney, J. S., Masse, L. C., Chen, Y. R., Roberts, C. R., & Romero, A. (1999). The structure of ethnic identity of young adolescents from diverse ethnocultural groups. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 19*(3), 301-322.
- Schuck, L.A., & Bucy, J.E. (1997). Family rituals: Implications for early intervention. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 17*(4), 477-493.
- Snodgrass, J.G., Most, D.E. & Upadhyay, C. (2017). Religious ritual is good medicine for Indigenous Indian conservation refugees: Implications for global mental health. *Current Anthropology, 58*(2), 257-284. doi:10.1086/691212



- Snowshoe, A., Crooks, C.V., Tremblay, P.F. & Hinson, R.E. (2017). Cultural connectedness and its relation to mental wellness for First Nations youth. *Journal of Primary Prevention, 38*, 67-86. doi:10.1007/s10935-016-0454-3
- Stolz, H.E., Olsen, J.A., Henke, T.M., & Barber, B.K. (2013). Adolescent religiosity and psychosocial functioning: Investigating the roles of religious tradition, national-ethnic group, and gender. *Child Development Research*. doi:10.1155/2013/814059
- Van Hiel, A., & Brebels, L. (2011). Conservatism is good for you: Cultural conservatism protects self-esteem in older adults. *Personality and Individual Differences, 50*, 120-123. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2010.09.002
- Wexler, L., Joule, L., Garoutte, J., Mazziotti, J., & Hopper, K. (2014). "Being responsible, respectful, trying to keep the tradition alive:" Cultural resilience and growing up in an Alaska Native community. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 51*(5), 693-712. doi:10.1177/1363461513495085
- Whiting, R.A. (2003). Guidelines to designing therapeutic rituals. In E. Imber-Black, J. Roberts, & R.A. Whiting, *Rituals in Families and Family Therapy* (pp. 88-122). W.W. Norton.
- Wolin, S.J., & Bennett, L.A. (1984). Family rituals. *The Family Process, 23*, 401-420.

## Appendix A: 12-Item Quest Scale

Batson & Schoenrade (1991)

Items arranged by intended subdimensions

### **Readiness to face existential questions without reducing their complexity**

1. I was not very interested in religion until I began to ask questions about the meaning and purpose of my life
2. I have been driven to ask religious questions out of a growing awareness of the tensions in my world and in my relation to my world
3. My life experiences have led me to rethink my religious convictions
4. God wasn't very important for me until I began to ask questions about the meaning of my own life

### **Self-criticism and perception of religious doubt as positive**

5. It might be said that I value my religious doubts and uncertainties
6. For me, doubting is an important part of what it means to be religious
7. I find religious doubts upsetting\*
8. Questions are far more central to my religious experience than are answers

### **Openness to change**

9. As I grow and change, I expect my religious also to grow and change
10. I am constantly questioning my religious beliefs
11. I do not expect my religious convictions to change in the next few years\*
12. There are many religious issues on which my views are still changing

\*Items are reverse coded

## Appendix B: Revised 12-Item Religious Fundamentalist Scale

Altemeyer & Hunsherger (2004, p.51)

TABLE 2  
The Revised 12-Item Religious Fundamentalism Scale

This survey is part of an investigation of general public opinion concerning a variety of social issues. You will probably find that you *agree* with some of the statements, and *disagree* with others, to varying extents. Please indicate your reaction to each statement by blackening a bubble in SECTION 1 of the bubble sheet, according to the following scale:

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Blacken the bubble labeled | -4 if you <i>very strongly disagree</i> with the statement. |
|                            | -3 if you <i>strongly disagree</i> with the statement.      |
|                            | -2 if you <i>moderately disagree</i> with the statement.    |
|                            | -1 if you <i>slightly disagree</i> with the statement.      |
| Blacken the bubble labeled | +1 if you <i>slightly agree</i> with the statement.         |
|                            | +2 if you <i>moderately agree</i> with the statement.       |
|                            | +3 if you <i>strongly agree</i> with the statement.         |
|                            | +4 if you <i>very strongly agree</i> with the statement.    |

If you feel exactly and precisely *neutral* about an item, blacken the "0" bubble.

You may find that you sometimes have different reactions to different parts of a statement. For example, you might very strongly disagree ("-4") with one idea in a statement, but slightly agree ("+1") with another idea in the same item. When this happens, please combine your reactions, and write down how you feel on balance (a "-3" in this case).

1. God has given humanity a complete, unailing guide to happiness and salvation, which must be totally followed.
2. No single book of religious teachings contains all the intrinsic, fundamental truths about life.<sup>a</sup>
3. The basic cause of evil in this world is Satan, who is still constantly and ferociously fighting against God.
4. It is more important to be a good person than to believe in God and the right religion.<sup>a</sup>
5. There is a particular set of religious teachings in this world that are so true, you can't go any "deeper" because they are the basic, bedrock message that God has given humanity.
6. When you get right down to it, there are basically only two kinds of people in the world: the Righteous, who will be rewarded by God; and the rest, who will not.
7. Scriptures may contain general truths, but they should NOT be considered completely, literally true from beginning to end.<sup>a</sup>
8. To lead the best, most meaningful life, one must belong to the one, fundamentally true religion.
9. "Satan" is just the name people give to their own bad impulses. There really is *no such thing* as a diabolical "Prince of Darkness" who tempts us.<sup>a</sup>
10. Whenever science and sacred scripture conflict, *science* is probably right.<sup>a</sup>
11. The fundamentals of God's religion should never be tampered with, or compromised with others' beliefs.
12. *All* of the religions in the world have flaws and wrong teachings. There is *no* perfectly true, right religion.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> indicates item is worded in the con-trait direction, for which the scoring key is reversed.

## Appendix C: Beliefs and Values Scale

King et al. (2006)

1. I am a spiritual person
2. I believe I have a spirit or soul that can survive my death
3. I believe in a personal God
4. I believe meditation has value
5. I believe God is an all pervading presence
6. I believe what happens after I die is determined by how I have lived my life
7. I believe that there are forces for evil in the Universe
8. Although I cannot always understand, I believe everything happens for a reason
9. I believe human physical contact can be a spiritual experience
10. I feel most at one with the world when surrounded by nature
11. I believe in life after death
12. I am a religious person
13. Religious ceremonies are important to me
14. I believe life is planned out for me
15. I believe God is a life force
16. At least once in my life, I have had an intense spiritual experience
17. I believe that there is a heaven
18. I believe the human spirit is immortal
19. I believe prayer has value
20. I believe there is a God

Factor 2 is underlined, remainder are factor 1

The scale has five possible responses: strongly agree (4), agree (3), neither agree nor disagree (2), disagree (1), strongly disagree (0)

Possible range of score: 0-80 with higher scores indicating stronger spiritual beliefs

## Appendix D: The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

Roberts et al. (1999)

### **Revised (12-item) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure**

In this country, people come from a lot of different cultures and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or ethnic groups that people come from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are Hispanic, Black, Asian-American, Native American, Irish-American, and White. These questions are about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it or react to it.

Please fill in: In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be \_\_\_\_\_

Use the numbers below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

(4) Strongly agree; (3) Agree; (2) Disagree; (1) Strongly disagree

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
2. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.
3. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.
4. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.
5. I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.
6. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.
7. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.
8. To learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.
9. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments.
10. I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.
11. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.
12. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.

The affirmation/belonging subscale includes items 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, and 12. The exploration subscale includes items 1, 2, 4, 8, and 10. (Item 3 loads on both subscales)

## Appendix E: Cultural Connectedness Scale-Short Version

Snowshoe et al. (2017)

### Identity subscale

- 4. I plan on trying to find out more about my [Aboriginal/FNMI] culture, such as its history, traditions, and customs<sup>a</sup>
- 6. I have spent time trying to find out more about being [Aboriginal/FNMI], such as its history, traditions and customs<sup>b</sup>
- 7. I have a strong sense of belonging to my [Aboriginal/FNMI] community or Nation<sup>b</sup>
- 8. I feel a strong attachment towards my [Aboriginal/FNMI] community or Nation<sup>b</sup>

### Traditions subscale

- 3. I use tobacco for guidance<sup>a</sup>
- 5. I have a traditional person, Elder, or Clan Mother who I talk to<sup>a</sup>
- 10. How often does someone in your family or someone you are close with use sage, sweetgrass, or cedar in any way or form<sup>c</sup>

### Spirituality subscale

- 1. I know my cultural/spirit name<sup>a</sup>
- 2. In certain situations, I believe things like animals and rocks have spirit like [Aboriginal/FNMI] people<sup>a</sup>
- 9. The eagle feather has a lot of meaning to me<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> “No or yes” response format

<sup>b</sup> “Strongly disagree, disagree, do not agree or disagree, agree, strongly agree” response format

<sup>c</sup> “Never, once/twice in the past year, every month, every week, every day” response format



For more information about R2 or to discover how you can bring the program to your organization, business or educational setting, please contact us.

**Paul McGuinness**

Operations Manager

✉ [rrc@dal.ca](mailto:rrc@dal.ca)

☎ (902) 494-8482

**Michael Ungar, PhD**

Director

✉ [michael.ungar@dal.ca](mailto:michael.ungar@dal.ca)

☎ (902) 229-0434



RRC - Evaluation  
and Training Institute