



<http://www.diva-portal.org>

Postprint

This is the accepted version of a paper published in *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society*. This paper has been peer-reviewed but does not include the final publisher proof-corrections or journal pagination.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Jarnkvist, K. (2019)

Narratives on ritual transfer: An interview study about the creation of civil ceremonies in today's Sweden.

Nordic Journal of Religion and Society, 32(2): 106-116

<https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1890-7008-2019-02-01>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:miun:diva-38067>

Narratives on ritual transfer: An interview study about the creation of civil ceremonies in today's Sweden

Karin Jarnkvist

Mid Sweden University, Sweden

Email: karin.jarnkvist@miun.se

Abstract

In the 21st century, the Church of Sweden has lost its dominant position with regard to the ritualization of birth, marriage, and death. Above all, civil ceremonies have become more common. These are very free in form and content, but ritual actors often make them similar to church rituals. This article aims to investigate how practices used in ritualization in religious organizations are transferred to and given meaning in a civil context. In the study, 12 narrators talked about experiences of name-giving ceremonies, civil weddings, and civil funerals that they had designed and experienced. The results show that ritual actors' social, religious, and cultural contexts have an impact on how ritual transfer is undertaken and given meaning. Civil ceremonies can connect to, as well as express resistance toward, religious organizations, religious traditions, and beliefs.

Keywords: Ritualization, civil wedding, name-giving ceremony, civil funeral, meaning-making

Introduction

The practice of ritualizing major life events such as birth, marriage, and death is currently evolving in Western Europe. Researchers have identified an increase in privatization, in religious diversity, and in new constellations of religion and secularity (Venbrux et al. 2013). This change is also evident in Sweden, partly because ritual customs are increasingly heterogeneous. For many years, the Church of Sweden has been a leading actor when it comes to the ritualization of major life events. However, during the 21st century, other forms of ritualization, such as name-giving ceremonies, civil weddings, and civil funerals, have become more common. Except for a few juridical regulations in the wedding ceremony, civil ceremonies are free in form and content, unlike those in religious communities. However, research shows that civil ceremonies are often inspired by religious communities' rites (Høeg 2008; Jarnkvist 2011). Sequences of rituals performed within religious congregations are transferred from a religious context to a civil context. How this is done, and how the practices are given meaning in the new context, has seldom been subject to close review. Can civil ceremonies, for example, be part of constructing a religious identity? Such questions need to be explored to find relevant ways to study ritualization in relation to religion and secularity in the present time. The aim of this article is to investigate how practices used in ritualization in religious organizations are transferred to and given meaning in a civil context.

Previous studies on rites of passage in Sweden have mostly focused on rites conducted within the Church of Sweden (cf. Pettersson 2000; Gustafsson 2003; Bäckström, Edgardh Beckman, and Pettersson 2004; Bromander 2005, 2011). Most of these studies have been quantitative, investigating how members of the community understand rites on the basis of some predetermined criteria. With a few exceptions (cf. Høeg 2008; Jarnkvist 2011), there has been little interest in qualitatively studying civil ceremonies in the Nordic countries from a sociological perspective. Such studies are needed to gain a deeper understanding of what ritualization of significant life events means for people in Sweden today. This study focuses on

name-giving ceremonies, civil weddings, and civil funerals. The data cover interviews with 12 people who described nine ritual occasions, which they had conducted and performed with others. A narrative method was used. Theoretically, I draw on ritual practice theory (Bell 1997; Humphrey and Laidlaw 2006), as well as the theory of Langer et al. (2006) on the transfer of ritual, according to which changes in the ritual's context lead to changes in internal dimensions, such as its meaning. As the analysis shows, the transfer of practices used in ritualization in religious communities may be a way to relate to, and create distance from, religious organizations and their belief systems.

The construction of meaning in rituals

In ritual studies, rituals that are not performed within religious congregations are often regarded as “secular rituals.” Ritual elements that do not refer to “a transcendental frame of understanding” (Warburg 2015, 141) can also be defined as secular. Here, I do not categorize rituals as secular or religious. Drawing from social constructivism and ritual practice theory, I focus on how narrators talk about ritual as practice. My starting point is that ritualization is conducted in relation to the social context to which the individuals belong (Bell 1997; Bromberg 2005); there is no specific meaning imbedded in the ritual itself. Instead, the ritual actor constructs the meaning. Sometimes the action is meaningless. “Thus, meaning is at best a derivative feature of ritual—highly variable and indeed sometimes effectively absent,” (Humphrey and Laidlaw 2006, 274). This study focuses on how individuals construct meaning in the transfer of ritual sequences from a religious setting to a civil context. One issue is how they relate to religion in their construction of meaning. From a social constructivist perspective, religiosity is constructed in relation to other humans and can be a way to place oneself in a social context or mark access to a group, such as the person being a religious subject instead of a secular Other (Avishai 2008). Distancing from things one perceives as religious can also be a way to form identity and mark belonging in relation to others (Day 2012). Bromberg (2005) argues that rites of passage are especially appropriate for studies on how religious and cultural

identities are constructed, as rites “seem to interrupt the flow of time and elicit a declaration of identity” (2005, 16). Bromberg (2005) identifies strategies used for constructing identity: identity-building, identity-blurring, and identity-avoiding. Identity-building is about creating and upholding boundaries between group identities by modulating similarities and emphasizing differences. Identity-blurring focuses on similarities and tones down differences, thereby undermining boundaries between groups. Identity-avoiding states that a whole category of identity (e.g., “faith”) is irrelevant in the ritual.

Former research on rites of passage has primarily studied the construction of gender, class, and cultural identity in medial (Winch and Webster 2012; Heise 2012) and personal (Bromberg 2005; Broekhuizen and Evans 2016; Le Goff and Ryser 2010) narratives. Studies on wedding rituals in religious and civil contexts reveal that individuals construct femininity (Adeniji, 2008), motherhood (Jarnkvist 2011) as well as fatherhood (Le Goff and Ryser 2010) and social class (Jarnkvist 2011, 2019) in the ritualization. Baptism (Reimer 1995; Høeg 2008), weddings (Jarnkvist 2011), and funerals (Bäckström, Edgardh Beckman, and Pettersson 2004; Wiig-Sandberg 2006) held in the Nordic folk churches can be a way of showing loyalty to the country and its culture. Church weddings and baptism are found to be part of constructing a religious identity by relating to the organization and its beliefs (Bromberg 2005; Høeg 2008) and civil ceremonies may be used to show autonomy in relation to religious organizations (Høeg 2008; Jarnkvist 2011, 2019).

Transfer of ritual

Previous studies on civil ceremonies in the Nordic countries reveal that rituals performed in Protestant folk churches, such as the Church of Sweden, function as role models for the creation of civil ceremonies (Høeg 2008; Jarnkvist 2011; Davidsson Bremborg and Jarnkvist 2015; Liljas Stålhandske 2009). The Church of Sweden has, for a long time, dominated the ritual scene for most rites of passages in Sweden, and is still a part of a middle-class habitus (Jarnkvist 2011,

2019). This is probably why church rituals are normative in Sweden. However, according to anthropologists, all rituals are stipulated and archetypical (Humphrey and Laidlaw 2006, 276–78). Thus, even though a practice is ritualized by the participants' actions, rituals are not totally in the hands of the participants. "An actor both is and is not the author of his or her acts," the authors write (2006, 279). A historian of religion, Catherine Bell (1997), argues that "traditionalization," which she describes as "the attempt to make a set of activities appear to be identical to or thoroughly consistent with older cultural precedents" (1997, 145), is a significant factor in ritualization. Bell describes a rite as part of a historical process in which old cultural patterns are reproduced, but emphasizes that ritual actors can reinterpret and change these patterns. The rite is tied to and integrated with the community's worldview (1997, 81–3). Thus, rites are not only traditional acts, but also imbibe changes in society and culture. Bell argues that a new ritual paradigm has developed in the U.S.A. and Europe. Rites have primarily come to be a way of expressing that the focus is on the individual, instead of God or society (1997, 264). The new ritual paradigm is related to the emergence of modernization, in which norms of individualization and autonomy became strong forces in Western societies. Individualism has a great impact on people's ways of relating to religious authorities and practices, such as ritualization (Heelas and Woodhead 2005), and the norm of individualization is visible in several studies (e.g., Høeg 2009; Jarnkvist 2011; Leth-Nissen and Trolle 2015). However, in striving to make the rituals personal and authentic, many ritual actors copy acts from others (Åkesson and Salomonsson 2010; Jarnkvist 2011).

Similarly to Bell, anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff (1993) focus on rituals' creative power. They argue that rituals have the ability to include new associations and interpretations. What is highly valued in a culture at a certain time can easily be included in a rite. Sometimes the ritual may legitimize society; other times it stands in contrast to society, or may function in both ways (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, xxi). One way of studying the changes and creativity of rituals and ritualization is to focus on the transfer of ritual. According

to Langer et al. (2006), this takes place when aspects of the context—geographical, spatial, cultural, religious, social, and gender-specific—are changed. The transfer of ritual leads to changes in one or more internal dimensions, such as performance, structure, ritual contents, or ascribed meanings. Furthermore, the participants accomplish this process. The authors argue that the contextual aspects, the internal dimensions, and the participants are interrelated in complex ways. However, not only entire rituals, but also sequences of rites, symbols, clothes, or objects may be transferred. In these cases, there is an additional contextual aspect: the ritual in which the rite is embedded. Here, I study the transfer of ritual sequences from a religious to a civil context.

Method

This article presents the results of a pilot study on civil ceremonies, approved by The Regional Ethical Review Board in Uppsala (Reg. No. 2016/488). Interviewees included parents of children who were the subject of name-giving ceremonies, couples who had civil weddings, and relatives of persons given a civil funeral. Celebrants and personal contacts helped me find people to interview. In selecting interviewees, I wanted to represent the different types of civil ceremonies, and conducted nine interviews with 12 persons during the spring, 2017. The interviewees ranged in age from 28 to 68 years and lived in different parts of Sweden. Eight were born in Sweden, while four had immigrated as adults. All were well educated: two were university students while the rest had university degrees. Each interview focused on a certain ceremony that took place in 2013–2017.

Interviews were conducted (mostly) at the interviewees' homes. Each interview session was 70–150 minutes, with an average of 90 minutes. The narrators talked about the background of the rites, practices, and material used in the ritual, and how they experienced and interpreted the practices and artifacts. Each interview was subsequently transcribed and anonymized.

I used a narrative method, in which the person's story is central, as it says something about the individual as well as the subject discussed. Each story is also marked by the context in which it

is told (Johansson 2005; Prins 2006). As such, life story narratives contain important actual information, but can also be analyzed as representations. Narratives describe how people draw on different categories in constructing their life story (Prins 2006). I strove both to take the actual information about ritual creation seriously, and analyze how, for example, religious meaning was constructed discursively. Therefore, I have conducted a narrative analysis focusing on both content and form (c.f. Lieblich, Tuval-Maschiach, and Zilber 1998). In the analysis, I concentrated on the parts of the narratives that described ritual transfer and how the interviewees talked about the transfer. The following questions were central: What kind of social, religious, and cultural context characterizes the ritual narrative? How is the ritual transfer described? How is meaning constructed in the narrative? and How does the narrator relate to religion in the narrative?

Three ritual narratives were identified which I present below in the form of three persons' narratives: Jenny, Anette, and Sheila. Their narratives are similar to others in the way the narrators talk about the transfer of ritual and how they relate to religion in their construction of meaning. I chose these three because they have clear story lines and the narrators describe the transfer of ritual sequences as well as their understanding of it in detail. The three narratives illustrate how differences in social, religious, and cultural contexts led to differences in ritual transfer and ways of constructing meaning in civil ceremonies.

Narratives of ritual transfer

Three narratives are revealed in the interview material below. Jenny is one of the Swedish-born narrators who transferred sequences from Church of Sweden rituals to a civil context. The positioning of bodies in the room, choice of clothes, and design of the ceremony are largely similar to the rites of the Church of Sweden. However, they also create distance from the Church of Sweden by changing the practice slightly or proclaiming a meaning for the practice other than a religious one.

Ritual transfer can also be a way of constructing religiosity, in the sense of expressing belonging to religious organizations and religion. The interview material reveals two ways in which this was done. The first is when a person identifies with a religious institution and its religion without being a member, as in the funeral of Anette's mother. Here, Swedish-born narrators who were not members of the Church of Sweden but identified with Christianity recounted the narrative. In Sweden, only members of the Church of Sweden are allowed to have church weddings or funerals. Non-members normally have a civil ceremony, or attend another religious organization. The final example is when the ritual actors use the civil ceremony as a way to construct religiosity in a religiously neutral context, as in the wedding of Sheila and Ali. Here, practices from two religious traditions met in the civil wedding. They used the civil ceremony as a neutral platform to mix their different religions. In my interview material, couples who had immigrated to Sweden constructed meaning in this way. The different narratives are presented below.

Jenny

Jenny created a form of name-giving ceremony for her and her husband's child. By selecting a civil ceremony instead of a church ceremony, they broke a strong tradition in Jenny's family. Jenny says that it was important to her to justify the name-giving ceremony to the family. Making the ceremony as similar to baptism as possible, without copying it, was one way of doing this. They hired a celebrant, who helped them construct the ritual. Even though Jenny did not want her child to be baptized, she describes baptism as important as a tradition. "All the cousins, brothers, and sisters are baptized. (...) I guess I therefore have the need to have it," she says. The child wore the christening gown that Jenny's grandmother had made and which Jenny and her siblings wore when they were baptized. Jenny describes this as an important act of transfer. "And just this thing with being able to use the christening gown (...) so that one does not totally break with the tradition." According to Christian tradition, the long christening gown is a symbol for letting the child grow in faith. Jenny says that the symbolism is "nice" but that

she gave the dress a new meaning. To her, the length of the gown symbolized that the child would “grow in faith in herself.” During the ceremony, Jenny told the others about the new symbolism of the christening gown. She wanted to “show family that she had been thinking on her own,” and had not simply copied something from traditional baptism.

There were also other examples of ritual transfer in the name-giving ceremony. Instead of water on the head of the child, as in baptisms, Jenny’s husband put a leaf necklace around the child’s neck. For Jenny, the leaf shape symbolized nature, to which the family has strong connections. The parents also planted a tree to honor the child, and the necklace commemorated that. The act “confirm[ed] that the child is an individual of its own, that it is its own person, but also one of us.” The church’s ritual practice of reading texts from the Bible was also transferred to the civil ceremony, but instead of Bible texts, the celebrant read texts from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and poems that Jenny had chosen about children’s rights.

In baptism, the child is given a sponsor, who is intended to guide the child in the Christian faith. In the name-giving ceremony, the sister of Jenny’s husband and Jenny’s brother became sponsors to the child. During the ceremony, Jenny told everyone about her interpretation of the act. “I said something about the sponsor, who is supposed to be like an extra adult for the child. Someone that the child could turn to when we as parents are not enough... yeah, a bit like an adult friend.”

My interpretation is that Jenny’s social and cultural background is central to her ritualization, and to how she talks about it. Like many of the other interviewees, Jenny broke a long tradition in the family of ritualizing significant life events in church. Making the civil ritual similar to the church ritual was a way to practice the norm of ritualization, which was socially important for Jenny. It can also be a way of constructing middle-class femininity. Women are often the ones who maintain family traditions, and taking part in church rituals seems mainly to be part of the middle-class habitus in Sweden nowadays (cf. Jarnkvist 2011). The similarities with the church ritual also gave the ceremony a traditional character (cf. Bell 1997).

Høeg (2008) describes private name-giving ceremonies as events for friends and family with the potential to define the nuclear family and the couple's closest friends and relatives. Jenny's use of the handmade christening gown, the necklace, and choice of sponsors confirms this interpretation. The rite also has a clear identity-forming function in its confirmation of the parents' beliefs and philosophy of life (Høeg 2008), which, here, were expressed in the readings. In the transfer of acts and artifacts such as the christening gown and use of sponsors from baptism to name-giving ceremonies, a new meaning was constructed. The changed context of the ritual led to a change in its internal dimensions (cf. Langer et al. 2006). The individual (here, the child) and the individual's social community (the nuclear family) replace God and the religious collective (cf. Bell 1997). Jenny's express quest for authenticity was a way of conveying autonomism in relation to the Church of Sweden as a religious organization and constructing a secular identity. This way of creating distance from religious organizations and their beliefs was recognized in previous research on civil ceremonies (Høeg 2008; Jarnkvist 2011). Jenny uses an identity-building strategy when describing her interpretations of the different practices and symbols. She constructs a secular identity, in opposition to the religious context from which the practices and symbols are derived.

Anette

Anette is about 30 years old and lives with her partner and their three-year-old son. Anette's mother had died after a short illness. Anette described her mother as her best friend and a very important person for the whole family, especially her son. She says that she had wished to have a church funeral, but as her mother was no longer a member of the Church of Sweden, that was not possible. Anette does not know why her mother had asked to withdraw from the church, but is convinced that it was not because her mother did not believe in God. "My mother had faith. Childhood faith. She has always been reading prayers and singing hymns. We were raised in that spirit." Words like "God," "heaven," and "angel" were frequently used in Anette's story and she talked about her own as well as her mother's faith. Because Anette wanted to have a presiding

official with a “connection to the church,” she tried initially to get a priest, but was unsuccessful. Instead, she hired a celebrant. In retrospect, Anette was pleased about having had a civil funeral. “It made it possible for us to make it more personal.” In contrast to the church ritual, in which the priest is the director, Anette decided what the ritual should be like and the celebrant acted and spoke according to her wishes. Anette was glad, however, that they “at least” had the funeral in a chapel. “There is a certain feeling in a church. It is a feeling of respect. A sense of peace and quietness. There is a certain mood if you see what I mean.” When the janitors asked Anette if she wanted them to cover religious symbols in the chapel, she answered directly that she absolutely wanted them to be uncovered. The symbols gave her a chance to talk with her son about God, angels, and heaven.

I would find it sad if they had covered them. Thus, I definitely did not want them to do that. And, only such a question as ‘Well, who is the one hanging on the cross?’, so ‘Yes, that is Jesus, son of God!’ Yes, but who is God?’ Well, I told him: ‘I believe that my mother is with God in heaven. One comes to God when one dies and there are also the angels.’ However, that is so abstract for a small child. Anyhow, it is nice to try to describe it. That he was able to see. It was a lot for his sake. Yes, he will have it with him as a part of his early life, that there is a kind of faith if he wants to. It is also a part of the cultural heritage in a way.

The funeral clearly referenced Christian tradition in several ways. For example, those assembled sang Christian hymns. “We wanted the church feeling,” Anette said. A soloist sang songs about heaven and angels and the celebrant read a prayer that Anette had chosen. All in all, the civil funeral was very similar to a church funeral.

My interpretation is that Anette strove to create a church funeral in a civil context. Many practices and symbols remained unchanged. In creating a civil funeral, Anette constructed religiosity on the basis of her childhood Christian faith. The church room and the Christian doctrine functioned as a frame of reference in her construction of the civil funeral. She describes it as important to relate to the Church of Sweden as an institution as well as the Christian faith. Thus, I understand the civil rite to be a part of Anette’s construction of religiosity (e.g. Aviashai

2008). Unlike Jenny, Anette did not change the interpretation of the ritual practices, but made the ritual transfer as smooth as possible.

Anette also emphasized the importance of spatiality in how the rite was experienced: the church provides a feeling of solemnity and respect. She described Christianity as a part of Sweden's cultural heritage. Relating to Christianity, the church building, and the Church of Sweden as an institution can be part of constructing cultural identity as a Swede (cf. Wiig-Sandberg 2006). Using the words of Bromberg (2005), Anette used an identity-building strategy as she clearly related to the Church of Sweden and to Christianity in her ritualization.

Sheila

Sheila and Ali immigrated to Sweden as adults, Sheila from a European country and Ali from an Asian country. They married in a park in a Swedish town in the presence of about 60 guests from 12 nations. During the interview, Sheila says that it was important to them to put a religious stamp on the wedding, as they both believe in God. Sheila is Catholic and Ali is Muslim. They chose to have a civil wedding because it is religiously neutral and they were free to design it as they pleased. Moreover, it was important for them that the place be religiously neutral, which is why they chose the park.

I would say that the common ground is the faith in God. I think none of us would go to the extreme and say 'Yeah, ok, we will do it like a Muslim tradition or wedding, or we will do it as a, some Christian tradition' because I wouldn't force him and he wouldn't force me, but we can do it outside (...). It is not in [the] building of a church, but it is in front of God.

As Sheila indicates, and returned later to in the interview, it was their common faith in God, rather than dissimilarities in their religious traditions, that was important to her and Ali. Therefore, it had been impossible to follow one particular tradition during the ceremony. Instead, they wanted to create something new together. During the ceremony, some of Sheila and Ali's friends, who were Christians and Muslims, read texts from the Bible and Koran, respectively.

The texts were about marriage and about humans as God's creation, and are commonly read at religious weddings. According to Sheila and Ali, the texts have the same message although they come from different religious traditions. The friends read all texts in Sheila's and Ali's mother tongues, as well as in their common language, English.

My interpretation is that Sheila and Ali constructed religiosity in their civil wedding. Their wedding symbolized unity between cultures and religions. Bromberg (2005) calls this form of identity construction "blurred identity." In this construction, religious unity is focused, marked by a common faith in God, and symbolized by the choice of a neutral place for marrying as well as readings of koranic and biblical texts. Borders between the religious traditions were blurred. As I see it, the readings of religious texts in different languages had several functions. First, it was practical, as a way for everyone to understand the readings, but it was also symbolically important, like a language which unites people across national borders. By confirming their religious unity before friends and family, the couple also confirmed their relationship. They signaled that a common faith in God is tying them together and strengthening their bond as a couple. Concomitantly, they showed friends and family that the two religions can function as a unit. In Bromberg's (2005) study, blurring was tolerated as a consequence when it was seen as the best way to please as many audiences at once as possible. This may have been the same for Sheila and Ali.

Discussion

This study contributes to knowledge about the transfer of ritualization of major life events in Sweden. Differences in a ritual's external dimensions are shown to have led to changes in its internal dimensions. For many, church ceremonies function not only as a normative foundation out of which civil rites are designed, but also as a frame of reference, something to relate to or create distance from. When church rites function as a foundation, civil rites are designed in a way that is similar. This is what gives the civil ceremony, which was new to many of the

interviewees' families, social legitimacy. The form is also important to how the actors experience the rite. That it is stipulated, archetypical, and carried out in a way which the actors were familiar with, gives it a traditional character. Ritual transfer in this sense is also part of shaping one's cultural identity as a Swede, at least among well-educated people (Jarnkvist 2011, 2019), such as the narrators.

However, like Jenny, several narrators also distanced themselves from the Church of Sweden and its faith. They modified the transferred practices somewhat and interpreted the transferred actions differently. In line with the individualization paradigm (cf. Bell), many people choose not to take part in rituals that they experience as empty or meaningless. Instead, they create something new and interpret the actions accordingly. However, not everyone declares their interpretations to others during the ritual, as Jenny did. Some used an identity-avoiding strategy (cf. Bromberg 2005). In any case, they created distance from religious institutions by changing the practice. My interpretation is that they did this to express authenticity as well as distance, as previous research on civil ceremonies has indicated (Høeg 2008; Jarnkvist 2011).

What was not revealed in previous research on civil rituals is that ritual transfers may also be part of the construction of religious identity. Anette's mother's funeral was filled with acts that, according to Anette, referenced Christianity and the Church of Sweden in different ways. This type of civil funeral will probably become more common as the number of Church of Sweden's members decreases. Anette's narrative makes it clear that one cannot assume that those who are not Church of Sweden members will always want a ceremony free from religious symbols or practices.

While Anette used the rite as a way to mark religious and cultural identity, Sheila and Ali blurred their religious and cultural identities (cf. Bromberg 2005). They showed affiliation with their religious traditions, but instead of marking these as two separate units, they visualized what was common to both. The couple's choice of a religiously neutral ceremony and wedding venue

became a common platform on which they could create a bridging cultural and religious rite.

Because of globalization, even this way of ritualizing may be more common in Sweden in future.

Several interviewees described the attractiveness of the civil ceremonies as the possibility of designing a rite according to their own wishes and interpretation of the acts. Seeking authenticity can be seen as a part of contemporary individualization, and it is highlighted as precarious in today's ritualization (Jarnkvist 2011; Åkesson and Salomonsson 2010). Moreover, several of the interviewees wanted the rite to be a big experience for those involved. Previous research on ritualization has drawn attention to this (see, for example, Åkesson and Salomonsson 2010). The open form of civil ceremonies makes it possible to show affiliations and distance from religious organizations and belief systems, and to construct different forms of religious and cultural identity. This may be done in the same rite and be more or less conscious for the actors.

The study contributes to knowledge of new forms of ritualization. Studying various forms of ritualization provides a good means of understanding how people relate to religion in today's Sweden. This study also makes clear that ritualization gains its meaning from the social context in which it occurs. Future research on rites and ritualization must attend to how humans also construct, for example, class and gender in these rites, and how that is done in relation to religion. I advocate intersectional studies, which take into consideration power relations between different social strata, to understand how relations of power leads to various ritual prerequisites for different groups of people.

One limitation is that the interviewees may have been more interested in ritualization than people in general, and thus more involved in the design of the ritual than is common. As always in qualitative studies, the results say something only about those interviewed, and cannot be generalized. More research is needed to draw more general conclusions.

Acknowledgments

Jarnkvist conducted the study presented in this article in 2017, when she was a guest researcher at Uppsala University. This research received financial support from the Church of Sweden. Many thanks to those who participated in this study. Thanks also to the research seminar group at Uppsala Religion and Society Research Centre (CRS), Uppsala University, who read and commented on previous versions of this article.

References

- Adeniji, Anna. 2008. *Inte den typ som gifter sig? Feministiska samtal om äktenskapsmotstånd*. [Not the Marrying Kind? Feminist Conversations on Marriage Resistance.] Göteborg: Makadam.
- Avishai, Orit. 2008. “‘Doing Religion’ in a Secular World.” *Gender & Society* 22 (4): 409–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243208321019>.
- Bäckström, Anders, Ninna Edgardh Beckman, and Per Pettersson. 2004. *Religiös förändring i norra Europa: En studie av Sverige: ‘Från statskyrka till fri folkkyrka’ Slutrapport* [Religious Change in Northern Europe: A Study of Sweden: ‘From State Church to Free Church.’ Final report]. Uppsala: Diakonivetenskapliga institutet.
- Bell, Catherine. 1997. *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Broekhuizen, Fancien, and Adrienne Evans. 2016. “Pain, Pleasure and Bridal Beauty: Mapping Postfeminist Bridal Perfection.” *Journal of Gender Studies* 25 (3): 335–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2014.959478>.
- Bromander, Jonas. 2005. *Medlem i Svenska kyrkan: En studie kring samtid och framtid*. [Member of the Church of Sweden: A Study of Present and Future.] Stockholm: Verbum.
- Bromander, Jonas. 2011. *Svenska kyrkans medlemmar* [Members of the Church of Sweden]. Stockholm: Verbum.
- Bromberg, Minna. 2005. “When Are the Two One? Interfaith Couples and Identity Construction.” PhD diss., North Western University.
- Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. 1993. *Modernity and its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Davidsson Bremborg, Anna, and Karin Jarnkvist. 2015. “Sociologiska perspektiv på Riter” [Sociological Perspectives on Rites]. In *Sociologiska perspektiv på religion i Sverige*, edited by Mia Lövheim and Magdalena Nordin, 91–107. Stockholm: Gleerups.
- Day, Abby. 2012. “Non-religious Christians.” *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 24 (1): 35–

- Goff, Jean-Marie Le, and Valérie-Anne Ryser. 2010. "Meaning of Marriage for Men During Their Transition to Fatherhood: The Swiss Context." *Marriage and Family Review* 46 (1–2): 107–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494921003648654>.
- Gustafsson, Göran. 2003. *När det sociala kapitalet växlas in. Om begravningar och deltagandet i begravningar* [When Social Capital is Cashed in: On Burials and Participation in Funeral Services]. Lund: Lunds University.
- Heelas, Paul, and Linda Woodhead. 2005. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Heise, Franka. 2012. "'I'm a Modern Bride': On the Relationship between Marital Hegemony, Bridal Fictions, and Postfeminism." *M/C Journal* 15 (6). Accessed 20 february 2019. <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/573>.
- Humphrey, Caroline, and James Laidlaw. 2006. "Action." In *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, edited by Jens Kreinath, J.A.M. Snoek, and Michael Stausberg, 265–83. Leiden Boston: Brill.
- Høeg, Ida Marie. 2008. "'Velkommen til oss': Ritualisering av livets begynnelse» [Welcome to Us: Ritualization of the Beginning of Life]. PhD diss., University of Bergen.
- Jarnkvist, Karin. 2011. "'När jag gifter mig ska jag göra det på riktigt': En intervjustudie om barn, brudar och bröllop" ['When I Get Married, I'll Do it For Real': An Interview Study About Children, Brides and Weddings]. PhD diss., Umeå University.
- Jarnkvist, Karin. 2019. "Childbearing and Marriage: Investigating the Importance of Context for Meaning Making of First-time Marriage." *Marriage and Family Review* 55 (1): 38–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2018.1458002>.
- Johansson, Anna. 2005. *Narrativ teori och metod* [Narrative Theory and Method]. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Langer, Robert, Dorothea Lüddeckens, Kerstin Radde, and Jan Snoek. 2006. "Transfer of Ritual." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 20 (1): 1–10.
- Lieblich, Amia, Rivka Tuval-Maschiach, and Tamar Zilber. 1998. *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Liljas Stålhandske, M. 2009. "'Jag tror inte på äktenskapet men längtar efter ceremonin.' Om sex, kärlek och framtidsdrömmar hos unga i Sverige" ['I Do Not Believe in Marriage but Long for the Ceremony.' About Sex, Love and Dreams of the Future among Adolescents in Sweden]. In *Kärlekens förändrade landskap. Teologi om samlevnad*, edited by Mikael Lindfelt and Johanna Gustafsson Lundberg, 115–45. Stockholm: Verbum.
- Leth-Nissen, Karen Marie, and Astrid Krabbe Trolle. 2015. *Dåb eller ej? Rapport om*

småbørnsföräldres til- og fravalg af dåb [Baptism or Not? Report on Parents' Choice of Letting the Child be Baptist or Not.]. Det Teologiske Fakultet: Center for Kirkeforskning.

Pettersson, Per. 2000. *Kvalitet i livslånga tjänsterelationer – Svenska kyrkan ur tjänsteteoretiskt och religionssociologiskt perspektiv* [Quality in Lifelong Service Relations: The Church of Sweden from Perspectives of Service Theory and Sociology of Religion]. Stockholm: Verbum.

Prins, Baukje. 2006. "Narrative accounts of origins." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13 (2): 277–90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506806065757>.

Reimers, Eva. 1995. *Dopet som kult och kultur: bilder av dopet i dopsamtal och föräldraintervjuer* [Baptism as Cult and Culture: Images of Baptism in Parents' Talks with Priests and in Interviews with Parents]. Stockholm: Verbum.

Venbrux, Eric, Thomas Quartier, Claudia Venhorst, and Brenda Mathijssen. 2013. *Changing European Death Ways*. Zurich: Lit verlag.

Warburg, Margit. 2015. "Secular Rituals." In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Anthropology*, edited by Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern, 127–45. London: Routledge.

Wiig-Sandberg, Unni. 2006. *Den nödvändiga riten? Om upplevelser av kvalitet i begravningsgudstjänsten* [The Necessary Rite? On Experiences of Quality in the Funeral Service]. Uppsala: Diakonivetenskapliga institutet.

Winch, Alison and Anna Webster. 2012. "Here comes the Brand: Wedding Media and the Management of Transformation." *Continuum* 26 (1): 51–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2012.630143>.

Åkesson, Linn, and Karin Salomonsson. 2010. "Ritualernas marknad: etnologisk forskning om livscykelritualer och upplevelseindustri" [The Market of Rituals. Ethnological Research on Life Cycle Rituals and Experience Industry]. In *Den rituella människan: Flervetenskapliga betraktelser*, edited by Anne-Christine Hornborg, 53–63. Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press.