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TILL DEATH DO US PART? A STUDY OF AMERICAN WEDDING RITUALS AND MARITAL OUTCOMES

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TILL DEATH DO US PART? A STUDY OF AMERICAN
WEDDING RITUALS AND MARITAL OUTCOMES

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
General Experimental Psychology

by
Tiffany Diane Wagner
June 2015

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ABSTRACT

Couple rituals range from everyday activities to once-in-a lifetime events. Weddings are arguably the most elaborate, complex, and rare couple ritual. Few studies have examined the association between wedding rituals and marital outcomes, yet millions of Americans marry and celebrate weddings each year. The purpose of the current study was to examine the associations between wedding ritual enactment, wedding ritual satisfaction, and marital satisfaction and commitment. The wedding rituals examined in the current study were the bridal shower, bachelor/bachelorette party, wedding reception, and honeymoon. It was hypothesized that enactment of a bridal shower, wedding reception, and honeymoon would be positively associated with marital outcomes whereas bachelor/bachelorette party enactment would be negatively associated with marital outcomes. We additionally hypothesized that satisfaction with all wedding rituals would be positively associated with satisfaction and commitment and that wedding ritual conformity would be associated with overall wedding ritual satisfaction. Our exploratory analyses examined unique predictability of wedding ritual enactment and wedding ritual satisfaction on marital outcomes. Results indicated expected and unexpected associations. Three of the predicted wedding rituals, bachelor/bachelorette party, wedding reception, and honeymoon enactment were associated with marital outcomes. Satisfaction with each wedding ritual significantly predicted marital outcomes. Lastly, wedding ritual conformity was found to be negatively associated with wedding ritual satisfaction.

In our exploratory analyses, we found that wedding reception enactment was the most significant contributor to satisfaction whereas bachelor/bachelorette party enactment was the most significant contributor to marital commitment. Study limitations and directions for future research are discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Couple rituals are behaviors that are implemented repetitively over time and hold a positive meaning for both partners (Campbell & Ponzetti, 2007). They are developed through the unique experiences that partners share together. Research shows that rituals have a direct and positive impact on intimate relationships. They promote stability (Bruess & Pearson, 1997), help partners form a joint identity, and augment relationship satisfaction (Campbell & Ponzetti, 2007). Rituals also ease anxiety about the future and help partners through major life transitions (Wolin & Bennett, 1984; Chesser, 1980; Campbell & Ponzetti, 2007). The consistency and predictability of rituals whether they occur daily, monthly, or annually, provide order and make life more manageable (Bruess & Pearson, 1997; Fiese et al., 2002).

Rituals range from simple, everyday experiences to more complex and rare occurrences. Daily couple rituals often evolve from routines and include activities such as household chores and saying good morning or good night (Bruess & Pearson, 1997). Daily rituals may include practices that are recognized by the larger culture, yet are enacted according to personalized preferences (Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Other couple rituals are less frequent and more complex. These rituals include participating in special events, celebrations, or

vacations. Valentine's Day is an example of a more rare ritual. Although this holiday is celebrated on the same day across the U.S., couples often celebrate in different ways depending on their relationship norms and preferences.

Wedding rituals are arguably the most elaborate, complex, and important couple ritual. Despite attractive alternatives to getting married, such as cohabitation, marriage rates remain high (Currie, 1993; Campbell & Wright, 2010). Americans perceive marriage as the ultimate commitment and as a rite of passage into adulthood (Kalmijn, 2004). Although a vast majority of Americans participate in wedding rituals and an inordinate amount of money, time, and effort are invested in these customs (Currie, 1993), few researchers have examined their association with marital outcomes. In this study, the association between wedding rituals and the outcomes of satisfaction and commitment will be examined. Symbolic interaction theory is used to frame the investigation.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic interaction helps explain how cultural meanings and practices (macro processes) influence people's relationships and perceptions (micro processes) (White & Klein, 2002). The central premise of the theory is that shared meanings are created through social interactions. People develop their identities and make sense of how the world works through their interactions with others. One way individuals interact is by using symbols. Symbols are objects that individuals assign meaning to and that are used as a basis for

communication both within and between cultures (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin, & Demiburken, 2009). When symbolic meaning is created within a culture, it must be agreed upon by most members of that culture in order to hold meaning. For example, in North American culture, a ring worn on the fourth finger of the left hand symbolizes marriage. Elements of the customary wedding ritual are also symbolic and meaningful; a white dress represents a virgin bride, vows reflect the promise of commitment and love, and a reception party helps celebrate and blend two social networks.

Role and identity are concepts within symbolic interaction theory that can be used to explain the association between wedding rituals and marital outcomes. Roles refer to positions people occupy that have culturally prescribed expectations and responsibilities (White & Klein, 2002). In a heterosexual American wedding, roles include the woman as a bride and the man as a groom. Individuals may have many roles at one time; for example, the bride may also be a woman, daughter, sister, mother, and/or professional. Identity pertains to the meaning an individual assigns to their socially prescribed roles (White & Klein, 2002). People create a mental hierarchy of their roles and those at the top of the hierarchy are most important for personal fulfillment. Salient roles are often the ones in which people try to excel. Generally, on the day of the wedding, as well as in the months or year(s) leading up to the wedding, the roles of bride and groom tend to be at the top of the hierarchy.

Couples devote significant time and resources toward fulfilling cultural expectations and acting out socialized scripts for their marital roles (Currie, 1993; Kalmijn, 2004). Symbolic interaction theory can be used to understand the planning and execution of American wedding customs. In the proceeding literature review, the theory is used to help explain wedding rituals and their cultural meanings. The review focuses on heterosexual wedding rituals because they tend to differ from those of homosexual couples (Kimport, 2012). For example, many same sex couples forego heteronormative pre-wedding rituals, and focus on the union itself (Montemurro, 2006). Heterosexual wedding rituals are additionally guided by gendered norms, which tend to be more flexible in same sex partnerships.

Wedding Rituals

Bridal Shower

Pre-wedding rituals help prepare the prospective bride and groom for their transitions into the roles of wife and husband (Montemurro, 2006). The shower is a pre-wedding ritual traditionally reserved for the bride that celebrates her progression from single to married life and is used to demonstrate social approval of her upcoming status. The first American bridal showers were documented in the early 1900s and served the same function they do today (Montemurro, 2006).

Despite being prominent in the workforce and living independently, many brides continue to celebrate homemaker roles through their pre-wedding rituals (Montemurro, 2003; 2006). The scripts and symbols of bridal showers are influenced by traditional cultural norms and widely adhered to by ritual participants. For example, even women who do not perceive themselves as feminine, feel pressured to behave in a hyper-feminine manner at their bridal showers because they fear negative judgment from shower attendees (Montemurro, 2006). Brides are expected to display culturally appropriate feelings throughout the shower including graciousness toward guests, gratitude for gifts, and excitement for the upcoming nuptials.

The most common events at bridal showers include gift-giving and game playing. Gift-giving is the primary and often mandatory activity (Montemurro, 2005; 2006). Most gifts are purchased from a bride's registry and center on homemaking. Typical gifts include pots and pans, china, linens, and small kitchen appliances. Some gifts focus on the bride's upcoming sexual role and may include lingerie, massage oil, and items for the honeymoon. The bridal shower may also consist of games to help socialize the bride into a traditional, feminine role.

The most popular bridal shower games focus on themes of romance, domesticity, and/or sexuality. Romance games emphasize love and marriage and include wedding trivia and word scrambles. Domestic games test homemaking or cooking skills and may involve activities such as blindfolding the

bride and asking her to distinguish the texture of flour from sugar. Sexuality customs perpetuate the idea of a virgin bride who is eager for children. An example of this type of game is to count the number of ribbons torn during the gift opening because they symbolize the number of children the bride will bear (Montemurro, 2006).

Though the rights of women have changed from the early 1900s when bridal showers were first enacted, traditional scripts remain prominent components of these rituals. Today, women experience greater sexual freedom, engage in sexual activity prior to marriage, and may choose to focus on education and career achievements before motherhood, if they become parents at all (Gordon, 2012). Given these cultural changes, it is surprising that women perpetuate activities that reinforce traditional roles through their rituals.

Montemurro (2006) found that most brides cited “tradition” as the main reason for continuing such customs. Nevertheless, a majority of brides and their shower guests enjoy celebrating the impending status change and perceive it as a positive transition, regardless of the ritual’s rigid scripts and roles (Montemurro, 2006).

Showers help connect the bride to the culture at large and to her social network. Their enactment helps strengthen the bride’s sense of belonging as well as her actual support system. Using symbolic interaction theory, we predict that conforming to these cultural expectations and gaining the support of her network provides the bride with greater satisfaction overall, which positively impacts her

marital relationship. Empirical research demonstrates that strong support systems benefit partners by helping them cope with stressors (Miller, 2012) and discouraging dissolution (Barry, Bunde, Brock, & Lawrence, 2009). Based on the propositions of symbolic interaction theory and prior empirical work, we expect that the enactment of bridal showers will positively associate with marital satisfaction and commitment.

Bachelor and Bachelorette Parties

The male parallel to women's bridal showers has historically been the bachelor party, which signified a man's last night of sexual freedom (Marin, 1999). Much has changed since the 1984 film featuring Tom Hanks entitled "Bachelor Party," which portrayed these events as inhibition-less and involving hotels, exotic dancers, and abundant alcohol. More recently, men have diversified the manner in which they celebrate their bachelorhood by attending baseball games, going golfing, or taking camping trips with friends. Many men forego exotic dancers at their events (Kulish, 2002).

Although bachelor parties date back to Ancient Greece, bachelorette parties are relatively new to American culture. More than ever, prospective brides are participating in bachelorette parties prior to their wedding (Marin, 1999; Kulish, 2002). Women began enacting bachelorette parties in the 1960s, around the time of the sexual revolution and women's rights movement (Montemurro, 2003; 2006). This shift coincided with changing gender role norms for men and women, and more equalized power in education and the work force. The advent

of the birth control pill in the 1960s helped make it possible for women to delay childbearing and pursue educational and/or career goals. Since that time, women have progressively moved toward equality with men regarding their sexual rights and social power (Gordon, 2012). Traditional rituals that once encouraged men to celebrate their last days of bachelorhood, while brides celebrated their upcoming role as wives are being challenged by women who now have more relational, economic, and social authority (Montemurro, 2006).

Since their inception, bachelorette parties have differed from other wedding rituals because they reject subservient feminine scripts for the bride-to-be (Montemurro, 2006). Most bachelorette parties are planned by one or more of the bridesmaids and include having cocktails, visiting spas, and going out to nightclubs or strip clubs. The planning tends to be more difficult than for bridal showers because fewer cultural norms exist to guide these events. Despite the unclear script, bachelorette parties are often structured and well-planned. Montemurro (2006) comprehensively studied these rituals and found certain elements to be customary such as an all-female guest list (99% of those examined), sexual themes (81%), and alcohol consumption (83%). The giving of sexual gifts (e.g., lingerie) and embarrassing the bride-to-be by making her wear items related to her upcoming status (e.g., decorative wedding veil), were also commonly practiced.

Some bachelor and bachelorette parties function as a celebration of the upcoming wedding (Montemurro, 2003). It is becoming more common for brides

and grooms to participate in these parties together rather than separately. Also, gift-giving at bachelor and bachelorette parties can serve to celebrate the bride and groom's sexual union (Montemurro, 2003). The wedding industry has capitalized on gag gifts such as penis veils and penis shaped straws for brides, and plastic ball and chains for grooms to use during their festivities. These types of gifts are highly sexual, and serve to embarrass the participants while perpetuating traditional, gendered roles.

Although modern bachelor and bachelorette parties contain more pro-commitment properties than those of the past, many partners still engage in anti-commitment activities during these rituals. Such activities include interacting with sex workers and engaging in infidelity. When anti-commitment activities become part of the festivities, individuals are likely to conceal details from their partners (Montemurro, 2006). Intimate relationships require trust, and when one partner deceives the other either by lying or concealing information, their actions adversely affect the quality of the relationship (Miller, 2012). Perhaps those who choose to enact anti-commitment rituals (i.e., those involving exotic dancers and/or infidelity) just prior to the ultimate pro-commitment ritual of marriage are less prepared for monogamy. Therefore, we expect that enactment of a bachelor/bachelorette party will be negatively associated with marital outcomes.

Wedding Ceremony and Reception

Bridal showers and bachelor/bachelorette parties help build anticipation for the most important marital ritual, the wedding ceremony. The ceremony, in

the most traditional sense, is a public, formal declaration of the partners' commitment (Chesser, 1980). Wedding ceremonies were historically considered essential, especially before the introduction of legal documentation (e.g., marriage license/certificate). Several traditions exist within the ceremony such as walking down the aisle and reciting vows. A majority of couples recite a religious oath; however, modifications are commonly made to reflect a more modern, equal partnership (Currie, 1993). Outdated phrases such as "love, serve, and obey," and "obedient and faithful" are being omitted by many couples. A popular alternative to traditional vows are those that partners write themselves and share during the ceremony. Another tradition is the ring exchange, which symbolizes the eternal bond between partners. Rings represent the new roles each partner has assumed and serve as an outward, public display of their married status (Chesser, 1980).

After the ceremony, most couples hold a wedding reception to celebrate and merge their social networks (Kalmijn, 2004). One study found that 94% of couples enact some form of party or celebration following their ceremony and that the majority are large events (Kalmijn, 2004). Couples who have the support of family and friends are more likely to host a wedding reception compared to those who do not have network support. Those whose wedding marks a radical change from their single to married life (e.g., those who did not cohabit prior to marriage, partners who marry at a young age) tend to have more elaborate wedding receptions. A longitudinal study by Kalmijn (2004) found that elaborate

celebrations symbolized a greater emphasis on the marital bond compared to more simple events. Couples who allocate a significant amount of resources toward their wedding celebration and who invite a large number of people to witness their ceremony are less likely to retract their commitment in later years (Kalmijn, 2004). More recently, Francis-Tan and Mialon (2015) found that couples with large wedding receptions but who spent less money on their receptions had longer marriages compared to those who spent more money and had smaller events.

Celebrating nuptials with one's social network provides support during a major life transition (Barry, et al., 2009; Kalmijn, 2004; Miller, 2012, Francis-Tan & Mialon, 2015). Family and friends who demonstrate acceptance of the couple's decision to marry are more likely to provide advice, emotional support, and material support during times of need (Miller, 2012). Social support is associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction and personal well-being (Barry, et al., 2009). Given that wedding receptions help merge two social networks (Kalmijn, 2004), and because social support affects well-being (Barry, et al., 2009), we predict that wedding reception enactment will be positively associated with marital satisfaction and commitment.

Honeymoon

The honeymoon is the final wedding ritual and helps solidify the spouses' identity as a married couple. For this ritual, spouses remove themselves from typical responsibilities, such as careers, to focus solely on their new roles

(Bulcroft et al., 1999). Honeymoons are perceived as a once-in-a-lifetime, exceptionally romantic experience (Bulcroft et al., 1999). This expectation prompts Americans to spend significant amounts of money on their honeymoons. A popular bridal website, The Knot Inc. (<http://www.theknot.com>), reported that 1.4 million American couples enacted a honeymoon in 2010 (“2010 Honeymoon Study,” 2011). The average honeymoon length was reported to be eight days and the average amount spent was \$4,500. The three most popular destinations were Mexico, Hawaii, and Jamaica. In choosing among destinations, couples prioritize beaches and tropical weather because the media and wedding resources (e.g., magazines, websites) promote exotic locations as most romantic (Bulcroft et al., 1999). Honeymoon resorts perpetuate cultural scripts by offering gifts and amenities such as in-room flowers, heart-shaped Jacuzzi tubs, champagne, and chocolate covered strawberries (Bulcroft et al., 1999).

Cultural prescriptions are reinforced when couples follow the typical script, which includes going out of town for their honeymoon and partaking in couple-focused activities. Honeymoon activities encourage couples to interact regularly, rehearse conjugal roles, and develop their sexual relationship (Bulcroft et al., 1999). Each partner has socialized expectations that influence whether they perceive the honeymoon to be important, and which may also dictate their preferred destination and itinerary. Partners who conform to personal and cultural expectations tend to feel more satisfied with their experience. For example, in the 2010 Honeymoon Survey (2011), 67% of spouses who vacationed in exotic

honeymoon destinations reported having an “extremely enjoyable” experience, whereas 57% who travelled within the U.S. reported the same.

Honeymoons help the newlyweds unwind from the stressors of everyday life as well as those experienced from wedding planning. During their time away, partners withdraw from the demands of work, family, and the community and focus on their commitment to each other. More specifically, couples use this time to practice their marital roles and solidify a joint identity (Bulcroft et al., 1999). Honeymoon satisfaction is influenced by the degree to which partners meet cultural expectations for the ritual. If symbolic representations of the honeymoon (e.g., a tropical location, romance, and passion) are lacking, satisfaction may be adversely impacted. The honeymoon represents the sum of romantic, everyday couple rituals combined to form one complex, all-encompassing super-ritual (Bulcroft et al., 1999). Using the propositions of symbolic interaction theory and prior empirical work, we expect that honeymoon enactment will be positively associated with marital satisfaction and commitment.

Couple Relationship Outcomes

Ritual enactment is one of many factors that influence couple satisfaction and commitment. For the purpose of the current study, the most common predictors of relationship satisfaction and commitment are reviewed, including how couple rituals relate to each outcome. Although several studies have demonstrated an associated between couple rituals and satisfaction and

commitment, few have examined the specific link between wedding rituals and these outcomes. Therefore, the proceeding review focuses on couple rituals more broadly.

Relationship Satisfaction

According to social exchange or interdependence theories, the balance of relationship rewards and costs predicts satisfaction (Miller, 2012). These theories explain that partners regularly evaluate the pros (rewards) and cons (costs) of their intimate relationship. A reward is anything perceived as beneficial that fulfills a person's needs. Costs refer to undesirable relationship attributes such as conflict and stress. Partners typically invest in relationships that are rewarding and that they believe will continue to be rewarding over time (Le & Angew, 2003). When relational costs outweigh the benefits and one or both partners are unsatisfied, they may attempt to reduce their costs and increase rewards, or terminate the relationship.

In addition to rewards and costs, personality traits, relationship equity, and role satisfaction may impact satisfaction (Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Schutte, Bhullar & Rooke, 2010; Miller, 2012; White & Klein, 2002). Each of the "Big Five" personality traits is associated with relationship satisfaction. Openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness are positively associated with satisfaction, whereas neuroticism has a direct, negative impact. Neurotic individuals have a propensity toward criticism, contempt, and defensiveness,

which are devastating for partnerships (Gottman & Notarius, 2000; Malouff et. al, 2010).

Equity occurs when partners receive relationship benefits that mirror their relationship contributions (Miller, 2012). In satisfying unions, partners work towards equity and avoid inequity. Distress and dissatisfaction result from inequity. Role satisfaction occurs when individuals adhere to the cultural scripts prescribed for their particular roles (White & Klein, 2002). People feel more satisfied in life and their relationships when they conform to prescribed cultural norms for their roles.

Couple rituals and relationship satisfaction demonstrate a bi-directional association in that satisfied couples tend to enact more rituals and the enactment of rituals predicts relationship satisfaction (Campbell & Ponzetti, 2007). Couple rituals are rewarding because they involve activities both partners find pleasurable, such as frequenting a favorite restaurant or celebrating holidays together. Rituals are predictable events, which provide stability in life, particularly during stressful events or transitions (Fiese et al., 2002). Partners who practice rituals through turmoil experience greater relationship satisfaction and better adjustment.

Commitment

Relationship satisfaction is the primary predictor of relationship commitment. Partners typically persist in relationships that provide happiness and fulfillment and terminate relationships that are dissatisfying (Miller, 2012; Le

& Agnew, 2003). According to Johnson and colleagues (1999), three types of commitment underlie most relationships. The first is personal commitment, which is that people stay committed because they *want* to be in the relationship and find the relationship rewarding. In North America, personal commitment is the primary reason couples stay together (Campbell & Wright, 2010; Miller, 2012). Constraint commitment involves feeling as though one *has* to continue a relationship for fear of losing valuable resources such as money, time, and/or status. Moral commitment involves staying together out of obligation or feeling as though one *ought* to persist in a relationship for ethical or religious reasons.

Arriaga and Agnew (2001) identified three distinct cognitive components of commitment: (a) partners expect their relationship to continue, (b) partners maintain a long-term view of their relationship, and (c) partners are psychologically attached to one another (interdependence). In addition to these components, committed individuals engage in cognitive and behavioral mechanisms that serve to maintain their relationships. For instance, they tend to have positive illusions about their relationship and believe their partnership is better than others' relationships (Miller, 2012). Committed partners are also willing to sacrifice their own preferences for those of their partner and may accommodate minor mistreatment in order to keep the relationship stable.

Rusbult and colleagues (1998) developed the most widely used measure of commitment, the Investment Model Scale (IMS). According to this measure, commitment can be collectively predicted from relationship satisfaction,

relationship investments, and the quality of alternative partners. Satisfaction refers to the perceived benefits of a relationship. Investments pertain to valuable resources that would be lost or hampered by the dissolution of a partnership such as time, shared social networks, and/or material possessions (Le & Agnew, 2003). The quality of alternatives refers to whether alternative partners are believed to offer greater rewards than what can be obtained from the current relationship. Committed partners tend to have high satisfaction and investments and low quality of alternatives; however, any combination of these components can result in relationship commitment (Le & Agnew, 2003).

Each aspect of Rusbult's (1998) commitment measure may be theoretically linked to couple rituals. Given that rituals are rewarding to the involved partners, couple members are expected to gain satisfaction from their enactment. Rituals also contribute to relationship investments because they help partners build a shared meaning system and joint identity that would be lost if the relationship were to end. This shared understanding may also lead partners to perceive alternatives as less desirable because they lack intimate knowledge of their habits and preferences. Public rituals, or rituals that are visible to others, may similarly decrease the likelihood of alternative prospects because they cause outsiders to view the relationship as strong and impenetrable.

Individual Differences

As demonstrated in the preceding review, marital outcomes are multi-dimensional. A few studies have focused on how individual differences such as religiosity and/or religious affiliation (Perry, 2013; Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2006; Larson & Goltz, 1989) and ethnicity (Perry, 2013; Duncan, 2012; Sano, 2002) influence marital outcomes. This research indicates that spouses who share the same religious beliefs, who are greatly influenced by religion when selecting a partner, and who marry spouses who are religiously-committed have higher marital quality compared to those couples in which religion is less prevalent (Perry, 2013). Orathinkal and Vansteenwegen (2006) found that couples who attend church regularly are less likely to divorce and Larson and Goltz (1989) found that church-going couples exhibit greater personal commitment. Certain factors are also known to influence African Americans' marital outcomes including the family of origin's views on marriage (Perry, 2013), the couple's socio-economic status, and overall lower marriage rates among African Americans (Duncan, 2012). Sano (2002) found that in general, European American/white couples tended to report higher levels of marital satisfaction than their African American counterparts overall.

Research has also found that relationship satisfaction differs between parents and non-parents (Twenge, Campbell & Foster, 2003). Satisfaction tends to decline once couples have children. This is due to increased inequity among partners, added stressors, reduced time together as a couple, and interference

with partner companionship. Based on research indicating that marital outcomes may differ based on religion, ethnicity, and parental status, we will explore whether demographic differences exist for the outcome variables in our study.

Research Summary and Hypotheses

As evidenced in the preceding review, a variety of factors influence relationship satisfaction and commitment, including rituals (Chesser, 1980; Campbell & Ponzetti, 2007; Bruess & Pearson, 1997). Couple rituals are highly valued because they reflect unique experiences partners share together and connect partners to the broader culture. Wedding traditions are among the most significant couple rituals. They provide predictability during a major transition and help partners establish their lives together. Symbolic interaction theory helps explain the widespread popularity of wedding rituals: People seek acceptance from others and feel they are able to gain this recognition through the enactment of traditional customs. Although wedding rituals socialize the bride and groom into their roles as wife and husband, one particular ritual, the bachelor/bachelorette party, seems paradoxical in nature. This ritual occurs just prior to the wedding ceremony and may contain anti-commitment attributes such as exotic dancers and gifts that mock the bride and groom's upcoming status. Although researchers have examined couple rituals in a broad sense, research pertaining to the influence of wedding rituals on marital outcomes is limited. The

current study will fill this gap by testing the following 17 hypotheses and two exploratory research questions.

Hypothesis 1. Bridal shower enactment will be positively associated with marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2. Bachelor/bachelorette party enactment will be negatively associated with marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3. Wedding reception enactment will be positively associated with marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4. Honeymoon enactment will be positively associated with marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5. Bridal shower satisfaction will be positively associated with marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 6. Bachelor/bachelorette party satisfaction will be positively associated with marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 7. Wedding reception satisfaction will be positively associated with marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 8. Honeymoon satisfaction will be positively associated with marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 9. Bridal shower enactment will be positively associated with marital commitment.

Hypothesis 10. Bachelor/bachelorette party enactment will be negatively associated with marital commitment.

Hypothesis 11. Wedding reception enactment will be positively associated with marital commitment.

Hypothesis 12. Honeymoon enactment will be positively associated with marital commitment.

Hypothesis 13. Bridal shower satisfaction will be positively associated with marital commitment.

Hypothesis 14. Bachelor/bachelorette party satisfaction will be positively associated with marital commitment.

Hypothesis 15. Wedding reception satisfaction will be positively associated with marital commitment.

Hypothesis 16. Honeymoon satisfaction will be positively associated with marital commitment.

Hypothesis 17. Adherence to cultural wedding scripts will be positively associated with overall wedding ritual satisfaction.

Research Question 1. Does wedding ritual satisfaction impact marital satisfaction above and beyond the effects of wedding ritual enactment? This question will be examined for each of the wedding rituals (i.e., bridal showers, bachelor/bachelorette party, wedding reception, and honeymoon).

Research Question 2. Does wedding ritual satisfaction impact marital commitment above and beyond the effects of wedding ritual enactment? This question will be examined for each of the wedding rituals (i.e., bridal shower, bachelor/bachelorette party, wedding reception, and honeymoon).

CHAPTER TWO

METHODS

Recruitment and Procedure

Participants completed an online survey that was hosted on [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). Marital customs vary across the country, and in order to capture greater perspectives on rituals, we broadened the study to encompass populations outside of the university subject pool. Students were recruited through SONA Systems at CSUSB and non-student participants were recruited through study advertisements on [Craigslist.org](https://www.craigslist.org). The study announcement contained a link to the online consent form. Upon indicating their consent to participate, individuals were presented with the survey. The survey contained open- and closed-ended questions regarding wedding rituals, marital satisfaction, marital commitment, and demographic characteristics. It took approximately 35-45 minutes to complete. At the conclusion of the survey, student participants were awarded two extra credit points that could be used toward their classes. No other incentives were offered for non-student participants. In order to maintain participant anonymity, no names or identifiers were recorded. All participants were treated in accordance with the “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct” (American Psychological Association, 2002).

Measures

Wedding Rituals

The enactment of wedding rituals was assessed with questions that were written by the researchers. Participants indicated whether they had enacted a bridal shower, bachelor/bachelorette party, wedding reception, and/or honeymoon by responding to the following question: “Did you or your partner have a [fill in ritual]?” The same question was posed for each ritual. They responded by selecting either “yes” or “no.” These questions are shown in bold on pages 60, 66, 78, and 86 in Appendix C.

Marital Satisfaction and Commitment

The Investment Model Scale (IMS; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998) was used to assess relationship satisfaction and commitment. The IMS is a self-report, 37-item questionnaire made up of four subscales: Satisfaction level (10 items), commitment level (7 items), quality of alternatives (10 items), and investment size (10 items) (Rusbult et al., 1998). Only the satisfaction and commitment subscales were analyzed for the current study. Sample satisfaction items include, “I feel satisfied with our relationship,” and “Our relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc.” Sample commitment items include, “I want our relationship to last for a very long time,” and “I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.” Participants rate how well each statement represents their thoughts and feelings using a 9-point Likert scale with response options ranging from 0 (*do not agree at all*) to 8

(*agree completely*). The IMS has demonstrated excellent psychometric properties in numerous studies with thousands of participants across the world (Rusbult et al., 1998; Le & Agnew, 2003). High reliability has also been demonstrated with alpha coefficients for commitment level ranging from .91 to .95, and satisfaction level ranging from .92 to .95 (Rusbult et al., 1998). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .98 for satisfaction and .91 for commitment. This measure is shown in its entirety on pages 92-95 in Appendix C.

Wedding Ritual Satisfaction

The wedding ritual satisfaction scale was comprised of 12 items that were written by the researchers. Each wedding ritual (e.g., bridal shower, bachelor/bachelorette party, wedding reception, and honeymoon) was assessed with the following three items: "Right after my [fill in ritual], I was happy with how it went," "At the time, I felt disappointed with my [fill in ritual]" (reverse coded), and "When my [fill in ritual] happened, I felt satisfied." Participants indicated their responses using the options of "*very true*" (3) "*somewhat true*" (2), and "*not true at all*" (1). Items were summed to produce a composite score for wedding ritual satisfaction. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was .80. These questions are shown in bold on pages 62, 66, 82, and 88 in Appendix C.

Wedding Ritual Conformity

The wedding ritual conformity scale was comprised of 12 items that were written by the researchers. Each wedding ritual (e.g., bridal shower,

bachelor/bachelorette party, wedding reception, and honeymoon) was assessed with the following three items: "I didn't want my [fill in ritual] to be like everyone else's" (reverse coded), "I wanted a standard [fill in ritual]", and "I wanted a [fill in ritual] just like everyone else's." Participants indicated their responses using the options of "*very true*" (3), "*somewhat true*" (2), or "*not at all true*" (1). Items were summed to produce a composite score for wedding ritual conformity. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was .82. These questions are shown in bold on pages 63, 67-68, 83-84, and 89 in Appendix C.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

Participants

Participants included 725 heterosexual, married individuals (518 females; 207 males) over the age of 18 years old. Participants' mean age was 29.31 years ($SD = 9.72$ years; Range = 18-64 years), and the mean relationship length was 5.78 years ($SD = 7.61$ years; Range = <1-40 years). The ethnic composition of the sample was diverse and included 43.6% European Americans, 38.6% Latino/as, 10.1% African Americans, 6.3% Asian Americans, and 1.4% other. A majority (76%) of participants were residing in the Western United States, 10% were in the South, 6% were in the East, 4 % were in the Midwest, 3% were in the North, and 2% were in the Northeast. Less than half of the sample (44%) had children. Ritual enactment frequencies showed that 47.4% ($N = 344$) of participants enacted a bridal shower, 49.8% ($N = 361$) enacted a bachelor/ bachelorette party, 71.6% ($N = 519$) enacted a wedding reception, and 62.6% ($N = 454$) enacted a honeymoon.

Analyses

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to test hypotheses one through seventeen and two sequential multiple regression analyses were utilized to test research questions one and two. A significance level of $p < .05$ was set for

all statistical tests. Parametric screening of the data indicated no major violations. Distributions of variables including Marital Satisfaction, Marital Commitment, Wedding Cultural Conformity, and Wedding Ritual Satisfaction met the assumptions of normality based on observations of variable histograms. The variable of Marital Commitment was slightly positively skewed, yet transformation techniques were not used to correct for violations because prior work has shown that people in committed relationships tend to score high on this particular measure (Rusbult et al., 1998). Further analysis indicated no evidence of multicollinearity, and yielded no significant outliers ($z = \pm 3.5$). The final sample included all cases, $N = 725$. Correlations, means and standard deviations for all variables are shown in Table 2.

Correlation coefficients were used to examine whether the demographic variables of gender, ethnicity, religiosity, and parental status would be significantly associated with satisfaction and commitment in our sample. The decision to examine ethnicity, even though prior work has not demonstrated ethnic differences in the outcome variables is because our sample was especially diverse. Previous studies have not included such a large percentage of Latino/as in their samples. Results indicated that for marital satisfaction, significant differences existed for participants who identified as European American ($r(723) = -.07, p = .05$), Latino/a ($r(723) = .09, p = .02$), and/or had children ($r(723) = -.10, p = .01$). Results also indicated significant differences in marital commitment for participants who had children ($r(703) = -.16, p = .00$). All

demographic correlations are presented in Table 1. The statistically significant demographic variables were controlled for in the regression analyses reported below.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses I-IV: Bridal shower enactment, wedding reception enactment, and honeymoon enactment will be positively associated with marital satisfaction, whereas bachelor/bachelorette party enactment will be negatively associated with marital satisfaction. Hypotheses one through four were tested by computing Pearson correlations. The correlational coefficients are shown in Table 2. Note that only bachelor/bachelorette party enactment was significantly associated with marital satisfaction ($r(340) = .09, p = .01$) and the direction of effect was positive, which contradicts our prediction. A correlation coefficient of .09 indicates a weak effect (Cohen, 1988).

Hypotheses V- VIII: Bridal shower satisfaction, bachelor/bachelorette party satisfaction, wedding reception satisfaction, and honeymoon satisfaction will be positively associated with marital satisfaction. Hypotheses five through eight were tested by computing Pearson correlations. The correlation coefficients are presented in Table 2. Note that bridal shower satisfaction ($r(342) = .18, p = .00$), wedding reception satisfaction ($r(522) = .12, p = .01$), and honeymoon satisfaction ($r(447) = .14, p = .00$) were significantly associated with marital

satisfaction. Although these correlations are weak (Cohen, 1988), they are consistent with our hypotheses.

Hypotheses IX- XII: Bridal shower enactment, wedding reception enactment, and honeymoon enactment will be positively associated with marital commitment, whereas bachelor/bachelorette party enactment will be negatively associated with marital commitment. Hypotheses nine through twelve were tested by computing Pearson correlations. The correlation coefficients are presented in Table 2. Bachelor/bachelorette party enactment ($r(723) = .18, p = .00$), wedding reception enactment ($r(723) = .14, p = .00$), and honeymoon enactment ($r(723) = .09, p = .01$) were significantly associated with marital commitment. All coefficients represent weak correlations (Cohen, 1988).

Hypotheses XIII-XVI: Bridal shower satisfaction, bachelor/bachelorette party satisfaction, wedding reception satisfaction, and honeymoon satisfaction will be positively associated with marital commitment. Hypotheses nine through twelve were tested by computing Pearson correlations. The correlation coefficients are presented in Table 2. Note that satisfaction with each wedding ritual was significantly associated with marital commitment. The strongest correlation was honeymoon satisfaction ($r(447) = .27, p = .00$) followed by wedding reception satisfaction ($r(522) = .17, p = .00$), bridal shower satisfaction ($r(342) = .15, p = .00$), and bachelor/bachelorette party satisfaction ($r(340) = .14, p = .01$).

Hypothesis XVII: Adherence to cultural wedding scripts will be positively associated with overall wedding ritual satisfaction. To investigate whether there was a statistically significant association between wedding ritual conformity and wedding ritual satisfaction, a Person's correlational coefficient was computed between the 12-item Wedding Ritual Conformity scale and the 12-item Wedding Ritual Satisfaction scale. The correlation was significant, $r(153) = -.19, p = .01$. The direction of the correlation was negative and indicates a small effect (Cohen, 1988). Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations are shown in Table 2.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: Does wedding ritual satisfaction impact marital satisfaction above and beyond the effects of wedding ritual enactment? A three stage sequential multiple regression was conducted with marital satisfaction as the dependent variable. The demographic variables of European American, Latino/a, and parental status were entered in block one of the regression to control for significant demographic variables. Each of these demographic variables was dummy coded (1 = yes; 0 = no). Wedding ritual enactment variables (i.e., bridal shower, bachelor/bachelorette party, wedding reception, and honeymoon) were entered in block two, and wedding ritual satisfaction variables (i.e., bridal shower, bachelor/bachelorette party, wedding reception, and honeymoon) were entered in block three.

The regression analysis revealed that at block one, demographic variables were not significant predictors of marital satisfaction, $F(3, 162) = 1.00, p = .39$, and only accounted for 1.9% of the variance. Introducing wedding ritual enactment variables explained an additional 14.5% of variation in marital satisfaction and this change in R^2 was significant, $F(7, 162) = 4.34, p = .00$. The strongest predictor was wedding reception enactment ($\beta = .27, p = .03$) followed by parental status ($\beta = -.16, p = .04$). Adding wedding ritual satisfaction to the regression model explained an additional 1.4% of the variation in marital satisfaction, $F(11, 162) = 2.96, p = .00$; however this change in R^2 was not significant, $p = .64$. Together the three independent variables accounted for 17.8% of the variance in marital satisfaction. Intercorrelations between the variables are presented in Table 2 and regression results are shown in Table 3.

Research Question II: Does wedding ritual satisfaction impact marital commitment above and beyond the effects of wedding ritual enactment? A three stage sequential multiple regression was conducted with marital commitment as the dependent variable. The demographic variable of parental status was entered in block one of the regression to control for significant demographic variables. Parental status was dummy coded (1 = yes; 0 = no). Wedding ritual enactment variables (i.e., bridal shower, bachelor/bachelorette party, wedding reception, and honeymoon) were entered in block two, and wedding ritual satisfaction variables (i.e., bridal shower, bachelor/bachelorette party, wedding reception, and honeymoon) were entered in block three.

The regression analysis revealed that at block one, parenthood was not a significant predictor of marital commitment, $F(1, 162) = 1.31, p = .25$, and accounted for less than 1% of the variance. Introducing wedding ritual enactment variables explained an additional 25.6% of variation in marital satisfaction and this change in R^2 was significant, $F(5, 162) = 11.27, p = .00$. The strongest predictor in block two was bachelor/bachelorette party enactment ($\beta = .31, p = .00$) followed by parental status ($\beta = -.17, p = .02$). Adding wedding ritual satisfaction to the regression model explained an additional 6% of the variation in marital satisfaction and this change in R^2 was significant, $F(9, 162) = 8.11, p = .01$. Bachelor/bachelorette party enactment was the strongest predictor in block three ($\beta = .34, p = .00$), followed by honeymoon satisfaction ($\beta = .21, p = .01$), bachelor/bachelorette party satisfaction ($\beta = .16, p = .04$), and parental status ($\beta = -.13, p = .05$). Together the three independent variables accounted for 32.4% of the variance in marital commitment. Intercorrelations between the variables are presented in Table 2 and regression results are shown in Table 4.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

Review

The purpose of this study was to examine the association between wedding rituals and marital satisfaction and commitment. Although prior work has demonstrated the numerous benefits of couple rituals, few researchers have explored wedding rituals specifically. The overarching framework for this study was symbolic interaction, which focuses on the meanings individuals make about themselves, their relationships, and environments. This theory is used throughout the discussion to help explain our study findings.

Ritual Enactment and Marital Outcomes

The rituals assessed in the present study included the bridal shower, bachelor/bachelorette party, wedding reception, and honeymoon. Contrary to our prediction, bridal showers were negatively associated with marital satisfaction, yet positively associated with marital commitment. That is, participants who had a bridal shower reported low marital satisfaction and high marital commitment. We expected brides who enacted a shower to report high marital commitment because of the support they receive from their social networks during the ritual. The role of showers is to demonstrate acceptance of the union and the activities enacted (e.g., gift-giving, game-playing) reinforce support for the upcoming

nuptials. Bridal showers are typically guided by rigid social scripts (Montemurro, 2005; 2006), which may help explain why brides reported low marital satisfaction. Brides are expected to embody a hyper-feminine image at their shower and demonstrate graciousness, excitement, and gratitude towards their guests. Many brides find these expectations difficult to uphold and experience stress from the event. For instance, the presence of future in-laws often causes awkwardness and makes it difficult for the bride to relax and enjoy the celebration. Bridal showers also tend to reinforce traditional gender role norms (Montemurro, 2006). Possibly the rigid, traditional scripts cause brides to feel responsible for domestic duties, which then has a negative impact on their marital satisfaction.

We originally hypothesized that bachelor and bachelorette parties would be negatively associated with marital outcomes, yet we found the opposite. That is, couple members who enacted a bachelor/bachelorette party reported high marital satisfaction and commitment. These results could be due to a variety of factors. One possibility is that bachelor/bachelorette parties serve to strengthen the bond between the couple members and their support network.

Bachelor/bachelorette parties tend to be more relaxed than other wedding rituals and are guided by fewer social scripts (Montemurro, 2006). The guest lists are comprised of the bride or groom's closest friends rather than future in-laws or people who are invited out of obligation. The event may therefore be highly enjoyable and buffer the stress of wedding planning and the impending nuptials. Previous research has demonstrated that strong support networks help protect

relationships from dissolution (Miller, 2012); and these events could arguably strengthen such ties. Another explanation is that partners are increasingly electing to celebrate their bachelor/bachelorette parties together rather than separately (Montemurro, 2005; 2006), which could encourage relationship solidarity and discourage infidelity or deceitful behavior. These various factors could help explain the positive association we found between bachelor/bachelorette parties and marital satisfaction and commitment.

We also found a positive association between wedding reception enactment and marital commitment. Although the association between wedding reception enactment and marital satisfaction was not significant, it was also positive. These results are consistent with Kalmijn (2004), Francis-Tan and Mialon (2015), and Barry et al. (2009) who found that marital commitment is strengthened when couples share their wedding celebration with family and friends. Taken together, these results highlight the importance of social networks during major life transitions and the potential influence of wedding celebrations on marital outcomes.

Honeymoon enactment was positively associated with marital satisfaction and marital commitment. Both findings are consistent with prior research (Bulcroft, et al., 1999; "2010 Honeymoon Study," 2011) as well as the researchers' hypotheses. The honeymoon allows couples time away from mundane responsibilities to experience privacy and intimacy and focus on conjugal roles (Bulcroft, et al., 1999). The period of time following a wedding

represents a monumental transition in the couple's life. Several of the basic functions of rituals apply to the honeymoon such as easing anxiety, promoting stability, and helping partners develop a joint identity (Wolin & Bennett, 1984; Chesser, 1980; Campbell & Ponzetti, 2007).

Ritual Satisfaction and Marital Outcomes

We examined whether satisfaction with each of the wedding rituals would associate with marital outcomes and found a positive association for satisfaction with each ritual (i.e., bridal showers, bachelor/bachelorette parties, wedding receptions, and honeymoons). Bridal shower satisfaction was positively associated with both marital satisfaction and commitment. Satisfaction with the bridal shower may be partially based on the bride's personality characteristics. Agreeable or extroverted individuals might express greater satisfaction with their rituals and be happier in their relationships overall compared to those with neurotic traits who are more likely to perceive the ritual pessimistically and experience dissatisfaction and dissolution in their relationships (Suls & Martin, 2005). In addition to personality traits, personal beliefs could also affect a bride's perception of the ritual. For instance, women with progressive, feminist views might be dissatisfied with bridal showers because of the traditional gender role norms underlying these events. Future research should examine whether ritual satisfaction is impacted by factors such as personality and belief systems.

Satisfaction with the bachelor/bachelorette party was positively associated with marital satisfaction and commitment. This finding may be explained by symbolic interaction theory. By conforming to established cultural scripts for celebrating the end of singlehood, participants may have felt more satisfied with their ritual and ready to enter the marital union. These events often involve acting as though one is a bachelor or bachelorette, which may cause participants to realize they are more satisfied in a monogamous relationship and enter marriage with a sense of closure. It is also possible that participants enacted either a pro-commitment bachelor/bachelorette party or a combined (both partners present) ritual. Celebrating with close friends and de-stressing from wedding planning responsibilities could have augmented satisfaction with the bachelor/bachelorette party; and, depending on the types of activities enacted, the bachelor/bachelorette party could have served as a pro-commitment ritual.

Associations between wedding reception satisfaction and marital satisfaction and commitment were positive, which is consistent with our expectations. These findings are also consistent with prior research, which has demonstrated a positive association between wedding receptions and commitment (Kalmijn, 2004; Francis-Tan & Mialon, 2015). Additionally, our findings are consistent with Barry et al. (2009) and Miller (2012), who found that celebrating nuptials with one's social network provides support during a major life transition. Partners who receive support from their social networks regarding their decision to marry are more satisfied with their wedding reception ritual and

therefore report high levels of marital satisfaction and commitment in their marriages.

In the present study, honeymoon satisfaction was positively associated with marital satisfaction and commitment. Symbolic interaction theory helps explain this finding. When couples follow cultural scripts for their rituals, they receive positive feedback from society, which reinforces their decision (Bulcroft et al., 1999). Perhaps the observed association was driven by individuals who adhered to a typical honeymoon script that included an exotic locale and romantic experience. These results are consistent with the 2010 Honeymoon Survey (2011), which found that spouses who followed cultural norms by vacationing in exotic honeymoon destinations reported having a more enjoyable experience than those who travelled within the United States.

Wedding Cultural Conformity and Wedding Ritual Satisfaction

Contrary to our prediction, the association between wedding ritual conformity and wedding ritual satisfaction was negative. That is, the more individuals followed cultural norms when celebrating their wedding rituals, the less satisfied they were with those rituals. Although prior research would suggest the opposite effect (Currie, 1993), one explanation is that Americans are currently experiencing a more individualistic pattern of consumption compared to the past. Societies tend to undergo cyclic trends pertaining to reception size and honeymoon enactment (Kalmijn, 2004). For periods of time, couples adhere to

cultural norms for their wedding celebrations, and other times, couples resist cultural prescriptions (Kalmijn, 2004). Raphelson (2014) described the millennial generation (i.e., those who are currently 20-30 years old) as the most individualistic of prior cohorts and suggests that they are governed by less strict social scripts and feel less pressure to conform. She also indicated that millennials are responsible for current marriage trends. For instance, in 1965, the average age of marriage was 20 years old whereas the age of first marriage today is 27 years old (Raphelson, 2014). Given that the average age of participants in our study was under 30 years, they would be considered millennials and therefore more likely to resist cultural conformity.

Predictability of Wedding Ritual Enactment and Wedding Ritual Satisfaction

We explored the unique predictability of wedding ritual enactment and wedding ritual satisfaction on marital outcomes and found that bachelor/bachelorette party enactment was the most significant contributor toward marital commitment. Satisfaction with bachelor/bachelorette party and honeymoon were also important contributors toward marital commitment above and beyond what was already predicted by ritual enactment. These results did not hold for marital satisfaction. Our results suggest that marital satisfaction was more strongly impacted by wedding ritual enactment. This finding can be explained by prior research regarding the relationship benefits of couple rituals (Bruess & Pearson, 1997; Campbell & Ponzetti, 2007; Wolin & Bennett, 1984;

Fiese et al., 2002). Numerous benefits of ritual enactment have been identified in prior work such as augmenting relationship stability (Bruess & Pearson, 1997), facilitating the formation of a couple identity, easing anxiety about the future, helping couple members through life transitions (Wolin & Bennett, 1984; Campbell & Ponzetti, 2007), and enhancing relationship satisfaction (Campbell & Ponzetti, 2007). Our finding provides further support that relationships are positively impacted by the simple enactment of couple rituals.

Summary

In summary, our findings were both expected and unexpected. We originally hypothesized that bridal shower enactment, wedding reception enactment and honeymoon enactment would be positively associated with marital satisfaction and commitment whereas bachelor/bachelorette party enactment would be negatively associated with these outcomes. We found support for these predictions except that bachelor/bachelorette party enactment was positively associated with marital outcomes, which contradicts our expectations. We additionally expected wedding ritual satisfaction (i.e., bridal shower satisfaction, bachelor/bachelorette party satisfaction, wedding reception satisfaction, and honeymoon satisfaction) to be positively associated with marital outcomes. Findings indicated that satisfaction with all wedding rituals was positively correlated with marital outcomes. Finally, it was hypothesized that wedding ritual conformity would be positively associated with overall wedding

ritual satisfaction, yet we found the reverse to be true. Through the examination of additional research questions, we found that wedding ritual enactment predicted marital satisfaction, but only when wedding ritual satisfaction was not included. Wedding reception enactment was the most significant contributor to marital satisfaction. However, both ritual enactment and ritual satisfaction were important contributors toward marital commitment. Bachelor/bachelorette party enactment was the most significant contributor to marital commitment, followed by honeymoon satisfaction, and bachelor/bachelorette party satisfaction. Although some of the findings countered our predictions, the study contributes meaningful information regarding wedding rituals and marital outcomes. We hope researchers might use the information to explore this topic further. The following section outlines the limitations of our study and provides directions for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Wedding rituals including the bridal shower, bachelor/bachelorette party, wedding reception, and honeymoon are commonly practiced in the United States (Chesser, 1980; Francis-Tan & Mialon, 2015). Their popularity is due in part to the connection they facilitate between couple members and the culture at large. Wedding rituals also help partners transition from one role and stage of life to another. The examination of wedding rituals and marital outcomes will remain relevant so long as couples continue to marry and divorce.

Limitations

As with any research, it is important to note the study's limitations. First, the data were based on a self-report questionnaire, which poses a concern regarding social desirable response bias. Participants may have responded to questions based on what they thought the researcher was trying to elicit rather than reporting on their true thoughts and behaviors (Borden & Abbott, 2011). Also, participants' responses could have been affected by their current relationship dynamics and may not have accurately represented their feelings at the time of the wedding rituals. Despite these limitations, self-report measures have advantages such as allowing access to a geographically expansive

population, being inexpensive, and capturing subjective experiences (Borden & Abbott, 2011).

Given that only one member of each couple participated in the study, the data represent only one person's perception. It would have been ideal to include both partners in the study and to examine whether discrepancies in their accounts were predictive of marital outcomes. Although this study found no differences in the dependent variables based on gender, it is important to recognize that the majority of respondents were female. In the future, researchers may wish to examine whether men perceive their wedding rituals differently than women.

Our assessment tools were also limiting in that several questions yielded binary data (e.g., "did you or your partner have a [fill in ritual]?"). Participants were asked to respond either "yes" or "no." It would have been optimal to include multiple items for each variable or to at least offer a wider range of response options for single item assessments. A larger range of response options would have allowed for greater variability and more precise measurement. The researchers who originally created the questions did not pilot test their measures and the data were collected before embarking on this particular study, which made it difficult to correct for this limitation.

A final limitation relates to the Wedding Ritual Satisfaction and the Wedding Ritual Conformity scales. Again, both scales were developed without pilot testing. Although reliability was satisfactory for these measures, pilot testing

the items could have improved their psychometric properties. For example, the wedding ritual conformity items may not capture a participant's actual desire to follow current cultural trends. Participants may be reluctant to agree with wanting a "standard [ritual]" or a "[ritual] just like everyone else's" even if traditional customs provided the foundation for their celebrations.

Implications for Future Research

Future researchers might follow up on our work by investigating why certain wedding rituals are positively associated with marital outcomes whereas others are negatively associated. This information might help partners decide which rituals to enact and which to forego. Longitudinal studies will help identify causal relationships between wedding rituals and marital outcomes. It would be beneficial to obtain data early in the wedding planning process and continue to assess couples years into the marriage. As noted in the limitations section, participants' retrospective reflections of their wedding rituals may have been influenced by the passage of time and recent couple dynamics. Previous research has demonstrated that marital satisfaction tends to decline over time (Miller, 2012), which makes longitudinal work on this topic particularly important.

Future research will need to consider whether other variables such as socio-economic status (SES) affect the enactment and quality of wedding rituals. SES was not assessed in the current study, yet income level is likely to influence the amount, size, and elaborateness of rituals enacted, as well as the stress

associated with ritual planning and execution. Francis-Tan and Mialon (2015) recently found that couples who espouse a “less is more” approach to wedding rituals had a longer lasting marriage compared to those who enacted more expensive and extravagant celebrations. Other variables likely to influence wedding rituals include age, and whether the participant was previously married. Possibly, those who marry later in life have more resources for their rituals and/or enact fewer pre-wedding rituals, such as bridal showers and bachelor/bachelorette parties. Similarly, those who have been married before tend to re-marry at an older age, and may place less importance on pre-wedding rituals, and/or enact smaller, more intimate celebrations. It would be interesting to examine whether these variables offer additional information about the association between wedding rituals and marital outcomes.

In our study, several rituals were predictive of marital satisfaction and commitment, yet the mix of positive and negative associations remains unclear. Future research will help elucidate our mixed and unexpected findings. The symbolism of these rituals has likely changed over time and it would be worth documenting such changes as societal practices continue to evolve. Researchers might also examine for example, why couples continue to enact wedding rituals despite having viable alternatives to marriage such as cohabitation. This study has hopefully opened avenues for more work on this important topic.

APPENDIX A:
TABLES

Table 1.

Correlation Matrix for Demographic Variables

Variable	Gender	Euro American	African American	Latino/a	Asian American	Religiosity	Children	SAT	COMM
Gender	1.00	.12**	-.00	-.10**	-.04	.08*	.03	-.05	.02
Euro American		1.00	-.30**	-.65**	-.22**	-.10**	.12**	-.07*	-.04
African American			1.00	-.27**	-.09*	.14**	.04	.00	-.02
Latino/a				1.00	-.21**	-.01	-.90*	.09*	.07
Asian American					1.00	.04	-.08*	-.01	-.03
Religiosity						1.00	.05	.00	.05
Children							1.00	-.10*	-.16**
Marital Satisfaction								1.00	.56**
Marital Commitment									1.00

Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix for all Variables

Variable	BS	BP	REC	HONEY	BS SAT	BP SAT	REC SAT	HONEY SAT	RIT SAT	RIT CONFORM	SAT	COMM	M	SD
Bridal Shower	1.00	.28**	.45**	.32**	.15**	.34**	.17**	.03	.44**	-.11	-.04	.06		
Bachelor/ Bachelorette Party		1.00	.24**	.27**	.32**	.14**	.18**	.10*	.28**	-.17*	.09*	.18**		
Wedding Reception			1.00	.31**	.06	.27**	.20**	.04	.46**	-.10	.02	.14**		
Honeymoon				1.00	.07	-.05	.08	.17**	.23**	-.02	.00	.09*		
Bridal Shower Satisfaction					1.00	.23**	.27**	.32**	.72**	-.15*	.18**	.15**	6.71	.87
Bachelor/ Bachelorette Party Satisfaction						1.00	.21**	.12	.69**	-.07	.08	.14**	6.46	1.00
Wedding Reception Satisfaction							1.00	.39**	.69**	-.22**	.12**	.17**	6.77	.79
Honeymoon Satisfaction								1.00	.73**	-.15	.14**	.27**	6.80	.75
Wedding Ritual Satisfaction									1.00	-.19*	.24**	.34**	26.89	2.32
Wedding Ritual Conformity										1.00	.04	-.07	21.41	4.54
Marital Satisfaction											1.00	.56**	23.69	5.41
Marital Commitment												1.00	39.20	6.34

Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 3

Summary of Sequential Multiple Regression Analysis for Ritual Enactment (Independent Variables) and Ritual Satisfaction (Independent Variables) Predicting Marital Satisfaction.

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	<u>β</u>	<u>r²</u>	<u>Adj R²</u>	<u>ΔR²</u>
Step 1				.02	.00	.02
European American	.99	1.08	.09			
Latino/a	1.19	1.15	.10			
Parenthood	-1.23	.95	-.11			
Step 2				.16	.13	.15**
European American	-.38	1.10	-.03			
Latino/a	-.00	1.11	.00			
Parenthood	-1.91	.90	-.16*			
Bridal Shower	.02	3.32	.00			
Bachelor/Bachelorette	4.18	2.65	.17			
Wedding Reception	7.19	3.21	.27*			
Honeymoon	.18	2.07	.01			
Step 3				.18	.12	.05
European American	-.37	1.06	-.03			
Latino/a	.07	1.12	.01			
Parenthood	-1.70	.92	-.14			
Bridal Shower	-1.14	3.46	-.04			
Bachelor/Bachelorette	4.80	2.80	.19			
Wedding Reception	6.11	3.47	.23			
Honeymoon	.06	2.11	.00			
Bridal Shower SAT	.24	.55	.04			
Bachelor/Bachelorette SAT	.44	.52	.07			
Wedding Reception SAT	-.14	.70	-.02			
Honeymoon SAT	.56	.66	.08			

Note: N = 162. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 4

Summary of Sequential Multiple Regression Analysis for Ritual Enactment (Independent Variables) and Ritual Satisfaction (Independent Variables) Predicting Marital Commitment.

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	<u>β</u>	<u>r²</u>	<u>Adj R²</u>	<u>ΔR²</u>
Step 1				.01	.00	.01
Parenthood	-1.29	1.03	-.09			
Step 2				.26	.24	.26**
Parenthood	-2.20	.91	-.17*			
Bridal Shower	5.72	3.40	.16			
Bachelor/Bachelorette	8.57	2.71	.31**			
Wedding Reception	2.37	3.30	.08			
Honeymoon	2.50	2.12	.09			
Step 3				.32	.28	.06*
Parenthood	-1.74	.90	-.13*			
Bridal Shower	4.09	3.43	.12			
Bachelor/Bachelorette	9.55	2.77	.34**			
Wedding Reception	2.06	3.45	.07			
Honeymoon	1.72	2.09	.06			
Bridal Shower SAT	-.42	.54	-.06			
Bachelor/Bachelorette SAT	1.10	.52	.16*			
Wedding Reception SAT	-.94	.70	-.11			
Honeymoon SAT	1.70	.66	.21**			

Note: N = 162. *p < .05. **p < .01.

APPENDIX B:
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form

The following study is designed to assess various types of wedding rituals. This study is being conducted by Dr. James C. Kaufman, Associate Professor of Psychology and Dr. Kelly Campbell, Assistant Professor at the California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). This study has been approved by the Psychology Department Institutional Review Board subcommittee of the California State University, San Bernardino. A copy of the official Psychology IRB Committee stamp of approval should appear somewhere on this consent form.

In this study you will be asked to complete a survey about your wedding rituals. You will also be asked questions about your relationship and demographic characteristics such as gender, age, etc. The online survey should take approximately 35-45 minutes to complete. All of your responses will be anonymous. At no time will your name be requested or recorded during your participation. If you are a CSUSB student, you will be asked to provide your name and SONA ID for extra credit points. This information will be stored separately from your survey responses so to protect the anonymity of your responses. Upon completing the survey, all participants will have the option to enter a draw for a creativity book signed by the author. Should you choose to enter this drawing, your contact information will be stored separate from your survey responses. Presentation of the results will be reported in a group format only. Upon completion of this study, you may receive a report of the group results. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdrawal your participation at any time during the study without penalty. You are also free to remove any data at any time. This study entails no risks beyond those routinely encountered in daily life, nor does it provide any direct benefits to individual participants. However, you may learn more about wedding rituals or your couple relationship from participating in this study. If you are a CSUSB student, at your instructor's discretion, you may receive 2 units of extra credit. If you have any questions concerning this survey, the results, or your participation in this research please feel free to contact Dr. James C. Kaufman at (909) 537-3841 or jkaufman@csusb.edu, or Dr. Kelly Campbell at (909) 537-7687 or Kelly@csusb.edu.

You may also contact the Human Subjects office at California State University, San Bernardino (909) 537-7588 if you have any questions or concerns about this study.

I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

APPENDIX C:
SURVEY

Survey

Wedding Survey- (researcher-created)

In this study, we are trying to learn about your wedding rituals, including the proposal for marriage (or the decision to marry), bachelor/bachelorette parties, bridal shower, wedding, and honeymoon (if applicable). When responding to the questions below, please be as honest as possible.

Proposal for marriage

1. Was your proposal:

Expected

Unexpected

2. Who proposed to who:

I proposed to my partner

My partner proposed to me

Hard to say/we proposed equally to each other

3. If your partner proposed to you, did you know your answer right away?

I was 100% sure

I was a little bit unsure

I was very unsure

I had to be persuaded/ convinced

4. Did either of you seek parental permission to propose:

I asked my partner's parents for permission

My partner asked my parents for permission

We both asked parental permission

Neither of us asked parental permission

5. How traditional was the proposal (e.g., getting down on one knee)?

Very traditional

Somewhat traditional

Not at all traditional

6. How much did your cultural background influence the proposal?

Very much

Somewhat

Not at all

7. If your cultural background influenced your proposal, please specify your culture: _____

8. Who was present at the proposal (check all that apply):

Family

Friends

Members of the general public

My spouse and I

9. The engagement ring was (check all that apply):

Simple

Elaborate

Expensive

Family heirloom

Designed by me

Designed by my partner

Jointly designed

There was no ring at the proposal

10. Right after my proposal, I was very happy with how it went.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

11. At the time, I felt disappointed with my proposal.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

12. When my proposal happened, I felt satisfied.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

13. If I could go back in time, I would completely re-do my proposal.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

14. Looking back, my proposal went really well.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

15. How creative was the proposal?

Very creative

Somewhat creative

Not at all creative

16. It was important for me that my proposal was creative.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

17. I didn't want my proposal to be like everyone else's.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

18. Imagination was used in planning my proposal.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

19. I wanted a standard proposal.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

20. I wanted a proposal just like everyone else's.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

21. My proposal was primarily planned by:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

Religious leader(s)

My Friends

My partner's friends

22. My proposal turned out the way it did because of:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

My friends

My Partner's Friends

23. I was happy with my level of planning the proposal.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

Not applicable

24. Other people were too involved in the planning of my proposal.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

Not applicable

25. I wish I had been more involved in the planning of my proposal.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

Not applicable

26. I felt in control of my proposal.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

Not applicable

27. I felt too much pressure to have a proposal.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

Not applicable

Bachelor/ Bachelorette Parties

1. Did you have a bachelor or bachelorette party?

Yes

No

IF NO:

2. Why not? (Please check all that apply)

It was too expensive

It goes against my morals/values

I didn't feel it was necessary/no desire to have one

My partner would object or get angry if I had one

I had no family or friends to invite

Not sure why I didn't

Other: _____

3. Did you want to have a bachelor/bachelorette party?

Yes

No

Didn't care

IF YES:

4. Was your partner present?

Yes, for the whole time

Yes, for part of the time

No

5. Did your partner know the details (e.g., full story) about what happened at the party soon after it happened?

Yes

No

6. Does your partner **now** know the details (e.g., full story) about what happened at the party?

Yes

No

7. If your partner does not know all the details, would he/she be angry or upset if he/she knew?

Yes

Maybe

No

8. Did your partner object to the guest list?

Yes

No

Partner was unaware of the complete guest list

9. Were strippers (exotic dancers) at the party?

Yes

No

10. Right after my bachelor/bachelorette party, I was very happy with how it went.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

11. At the time, I felt disappointed with my bachelor/bachelorette party.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

12. When my bachelor/bachelorette party happened, I felt satisfied.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

13. If I could go back in time, I would completely re-do my bachelor/bachelorette party.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

14. Looking back, my bachelor/bachelorette party went really well.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

15. It was important for me that my bachelor/bachelorette party was creative.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

16. I didn't want my bachelor/bachelorette party to be like everyone else's.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

17. Imagination was used in planning my bachelor/bachelorette party.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

18. I wanted a standard bachelor/bachelorette party.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

19. I wanted a bachelor/bachelorette party just like everyone else's.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

20. My bachelor/bachelorette party was primarily planned by:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

Religious leader(s)

My Friends

My partner's friends

21. My bachelor/bachelorette party was primarily paid for by:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

My friends

My Partner's Friends

22. My bachelor/bachelorette party turned out the way it did because of:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

My friends

My Partner's Friends

23. I was happy with my level of planning the bachelor/bachelorette party.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

24. Other people were too involved in the planning of my bachelor/bachelorette party.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

25. I wish I had been more involved in the planning of my bachelor/bachelorette party.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

26. I felt in control of my bachelor/bachelorette party.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

27. I felt too much pressure to have a bachelor/bachelorette party.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

28. If there is additional information you would like to tell us about your bachelor/bachelorette party (or reasons why you may not have had one), please comment here: _____.

Bridal Shower

1. Did you or your partner have a bridal shower?

Yes

No

2. Right after my bridal shower, I was very happy with how it went.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

3. At the time, I felt disappointed with my bridal shower.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

4. When my bridal shower happened, I felt satisfied.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

5. If I could go back in time, I would completely re-do my bridal shower.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

6. Looking back, my bridal shower went really well.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

7. It was important for me that my bridal shower was creative.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

8. I didn't want my bridal shower to be like everyone else's.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

9. Imagination was used in planning my bridal shower.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

10. I wanted a standard bridal shower.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

11. I wanted a bridal shower just like everyone else's.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

12. My bridal shower was primarily planned by:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

Religious leader(s)

My Friends

My partner's friends

13. My bridal shower was primarily paid for by:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

My friends

My Partner's Friends

14. My bridal shower turned out the way it did because of:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

My friends

My Partner's Friends

15. I was happy with my level of planning the bridal shower.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

16. Other people were too involved in the planning of my bridal shower.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

17. I wish I had been more involved in the planning of my bridal shower.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

18. I felt in control of my bridal shower.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

19. I felt too much pressure to have a bridal shower.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

Wedding

1. Our wedding was:

Big

Medium

Small

2. The degree of planning involved with our wedding was:

A lot

A little

Almost no planning

3. We got married:

In a religious institution

At someone's home

Outdoors, but not at someone's home/backyard

At city hall

At a hotel, hall, or similar venue

At another venue (specify)

4. Our wedding was:

Expensive

Medium priced

Inexpensive

5. Our wedding was:

Formal

Somewhat formal

Informal

6. Our wedding was:

Elaborate

Simple

7. Did you have a professional photographer at your wedding?

Yes

No

8. The decorations at our wedding (e.g., flowers, centerpieces, etc.) were:

Elaborate

Average

Minimal

9. The bridal dress was (check all that apply):

Simple

Elaborate

Expensive

Previously worn by a family member

Custom made

10. The wedding rings were (check all that apply):

Simple

Elaborate

Expensive

Family heirloom(s)

Designed by me

Designed by my partner

Designed by my partner and I

A gift

11. Who wrote your vows?

I did

My partner

Jointly between my partner and I

Traditional

Chosen by me

Chosen by m partner

Selected by religious leader

12. Who wrote your partner's vows?

I did

My partner

Jointly between my partner and I

Traditional

Chosen by me

Chosen by m partner

Selected by religious leader

13. Did you share your vows with your partner beforehand?

Yes

No

14. Did your partner share his/her vows with you beforehand?

Yes

No

15. If you and your partner wrote your own vows, did you find this process:

Easy

Hard

16. If yes, how important to you was it to be creative/different?

Very important

Somewhat important

Not at all important

17. If you and your partner selected vows, did you find this process:

Easy

Hard

18. If yes, how important to you was it to be creative/different?

Very important

Somewhat important

Not at all important

19. Did your vows include the words “till death do us part” or “as long as you both shall live” or something indicating for the rest of your life or forever?

Yes

No

Comments: _____.

20. Did you have fun at your wedding?

Yes, the most fun possible

Yes, for the most part

Yes, but I wish I would have had more fun

No

21. Right after my wedding, I was very happy with how it went.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

22. At the time, I felt disappointed with my wedding.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

23. When my wedding happened, I felt satisfied.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

24. If I could go back in time, I would completely re-do my wedding.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

25. Looking back, my wedding went really well.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

26. It was important for me that my wedding was creative.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

27. I didn't want my wedding to be like everyone else's.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

28. Imagination was used in planning my wedding.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

29. I wanted a standard wedding.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

30. I wanted a wedding just like everyone else's.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

31. My wedding was primarily planned by:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

Religious leader(s)

My Friends

My partner's friends

32. My wedding was primarily paid for by:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

My friends

My Partner's Friends

33. My wedding turned out the way it did because of:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

My friends

My Partner's Friends

34. I was happy with my level of planning the wedding.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

35. Other people were too involved in the planning of my wedding.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

36. I wish I had been more involved in the planning of my wedding.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

37. I felt in control of my wedding.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

38. I felt too much pressure to have a wedding.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

Reception

1. Did you have a wedding reception?

Yes

No

IF YES:

2. Our reception was:

Big

Medium

Small

3. Our reception was:

Expensive

Medium priced

Inexpensive

4. Our reception was:

Formal

Somewhat formal

Informal

5. Our reception was:

Elaborate

Simple

6. Did you have alcohol at your reception?

Yes, open bar

Yes, paid for by guests

No, too expensive

No, venue wouldn't allow it

No, it goes against our values

7. Did you have music at your reception?

Yes, live music

Yes, DJ

Yes, we used a pre-recorded mix made for our wedding

Yes, a friend played recorded music for us

No

8. Did you have food at your reception?

Yes, served by waiters

Yes, buffet

Yes, prepared by family members

Yes, potluck or other informal arrangement

No

9. Did you have toasts at your reception?

Yes, many

Yes, a few

No

10. Did you have dancing at your reception?

Yes, lots

Yes, some

No

11. Did you and your partner have a "first dance"?

Yes

No

12. Did you have a dance with your parent?

Yes

No, but my partner did

Neither my partner nor I did

13. Did you have a cake (check all that apply)?

Yes, it was elaborate

Yes, it was simple

Yes, it was baked/ prepared by one or more family members

Yes, I was involved in the baking/preparation

No

14. Did you and/or your partner shove cake in the other's face?

Yes, I shoved it in my partner's face

Yes, my partner shoved it in my face

We shoved it in each other's face and I did it first

We shoved it in each other's face and my partner did it first

No

15. Did you or your partner remove the garter belt?

Yes, my partner did

Yes, I did

Yes, someone other than my partner and I did it

No

16. Was there a bouquet toss?

Yes

No

17. Did you have fun at your reception?

Yes, the most fun possible

Yes, for the most part

Yes, but I wish I would have had more fun

No

18. Right after my reception, I was very happy with how it went.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

19. At the time, I felt disappointed with my reception.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

20. When my reception happened, I felt satisfied.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

21. If I could go back in time, I would completely re-do my reception.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

22. Looking back, my reception went really well.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

23. It was important for me that my reception was creative.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

24. I didn't want my reception to be like everyone else's.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

25. I used my imagination in planning my reception.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

26. I wanted a standard reception.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

27. I wanted a reception just like everyone else's.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

28. My reception was primarily planned by:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

Religious leader(s)

My Friends

My partner's friends

29. My reception was primarily paid for by:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

My friends

My Partner's Friends

30. My reception turned out the way it did because of:

Me

My spouse

My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

My friends

My Partner's Friends

31. I was happy with my level of planning the reception.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

32. Other people were too involved in the planning of my reception.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

33. I wish I had been more involved in the planning of my reception.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

34. I felt in control of my reception.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

35. I felt too much pressure to have a reception.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

Honeymoon

1. **Did you have a honeymoon?**

Yes, we both wanted a honeymoon

Yes, I was the only person who wanted a honeymoon

Yes, my partner was the only person who wanted a honeymoon

No, joint decision

No, my decision

No, my partner's decision

IF NO:

2. Why not (check all that apply)?

Financial reasons

No time

I was not interested

My partner was not interested

Delaying for another time

Something came up that interfered with our plans to go

Other: _____

IF YES:

3. How long was it: _____ days.

4. Did you take your honeymoon right after the wedding?

Yes

No

5. Did you go out of town?

Yes

No

6. Who decided on the honeymoon location?

Me

My partner

Jointly my partner and I

Family members

Friends

7. Was it romantic?

Extremely

Somewhat

No, by choice

No, I wish it had been more romantic

8. Did you have fun on your honeymoon?

Yes, the most fun possible

Yes, for the most part

Yes, but I wish I would have had more fun

No

9. Right after my honeymoon, I was very happy with how it went.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

10. At the time, I felt disappointed with my honeymoon.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

11. When my honeymoon happened, I felt satisfied.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

12. If I could go back in time, I would completely re-do my honeymoon.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

13. Looking back, my honeymoon went really well.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

14. It was important for me that my honeymoon was creative.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

15. I didn't want my honeymoon to be like everyone else's.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

16. I used my imagination in planning my honeymoon.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true.

17. I wanted a standard honeymoon.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

18. I wanted a honeymoon just like everyone else's.

. Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

19. My honeymoon was primarily planned by:

- . Me
- My spouse
- My partner and I both
- My family members
- My partner's family members
- Religious leader(s)
- My Friends
- My partner's friends

20. My honeymoon was primarily paid for by:

- Me
- My spouse
- My partner and I both
- My family members
- My partner's family members
- My friends
- My Partner's Friends
- Gift points (e.g., air miles) or other reward system

21. My honeymoon turned out the way it did because of:

- Me
- My spouse
- My partner and I both

My family members

My partner's family members

My friends

My Partner's Friends

22. I was happy with my level of planning the honeymoon.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

23. Other people were too involved in the planning of my honeymoon.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

24. I wish I had been more involved in the planning of my honeymoon.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

25. I felt in control of my honeymoon.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

26. I felt too much pressure to have a honeymoon.

Very true

Somewhat true

Not at all true

Investment Model Scale: Satisfaction Level

Note: adapted from Rusbult, C. E., Martz, J. M., & Agnew, C. R. (1998).

The investment model scale: Measuring commitment level, satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. *Personal Relationships*, 5, 357-391.

Please indicate the degree to which each of the following statements pertains to your current relationship.

1a) My partner fulfills my needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.).

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

b) My partner fulfills my needs for companionship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company etc.).

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

c) My partner fulfills my sexual needs (holding hands, kissing, etc.).

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

d) My partner fulfills my needs for security (feeling trusting, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc)

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

e) My partner fulfills my needs for emotional involvement (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc).

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

2. I feel satisfied with our relationship.

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

3. My relationship is much better than others' relationships.

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

4. My relationship is close to ideal.

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

5. Our relationship makes me very happy.

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

6. Our relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc.

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

Investment Model Scale: Commitment Level

Note: adapted from Rusbult, C. E., Martz, J. M., & Agnew, C. R. (1998).

The investment model scale: Measuring commitment level, satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. *Personal Relationships*, 5, 357-391.

Please indicate the degree to which each of the following statements pertains to your current relationship.

1. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

3. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

4. It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

5. I feel very attached to our relationship - very strongly linked to my partner.

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

6. I want our relationship to last forever.

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

7. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).

- Don't agree at all, agree somewhat, agree completely

Demographic Characteristics

1. Are you a: Man or Woman

2. Is your partner a: Man or Woman

3. What is your age? _____

4. Please indicate your ethnic background (Select one)

a) European/Caucasian/White American

b) African American /Black

c) Hispanic/Hispanic American or Latino

d) Native American/American Indian

e) Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander

f) Other: _____

5. Please indicate the ethnic background of your partner (Select one)

a) European/Caucasian/White American

b) African American /Black

c) Hispanic/Hispanic American or Latino

d) Native American/American Indian

e) Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander

f) Other: _____

6. What is your sexual orientation (Select one)

a) Heterosexual

c) Lesbian

e) Asexual

b) Gay

d) Bisexual

f) Other

7. In what region of the country are you currently living?

a) East

c) North

e) Midwest

b) West

d) South

f) Northeast

8. When did you get married? (Indicate date)

9. How long have you been married? (Indicate in years and/or months):

10. How long before the marriage had you been romantically involved with the person you married? _____ months.

11. How old were you when you married your current spouse? _____

12. Do you have any children? YES or NO

13. What is your religious or spiritual preference?

- | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------|
| a) Christian | b) Jewish | c) Muslim | d) Hindu |
| e) Buddhist | f) Confucianist | g) Taoist | h) Muslim |
| i) Agnostic | k) Atheist | l) Spiritual | j) Other: |

14. How religious do you consider yourself to be?

- a) Very religious
- b) Fairly religious
- c) Slightly religious
- d) Not religious at all

15. Which political party do you most identify with?

- a. Democrat
- b. Republican
- c. Independent

- d. Libertarian
- e. Green Party
- f. Not political
- g. Other (please specify)

16. Would you consider your political beliefs to be:

- a. Extremely liberal
- b. Liberal
- c. Liberal moderate
- d. Conservative moderate
- e. Conservative
- f. Extremely Conservative
- g. Not political
- h. Other (please specify)

17. Are you currently involved in your first marriage?

18. Is your partner currently involved in their first marriage?

19. Do you have any final comments you would like to add to the survey?

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