TYPES OF AND NEGOTIATION OF CONNECTION
RITUALS IN NEWLYWED COUPLES

by

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The purpose of this study was to examine the types of connection rituals and negotiation patterns that newlywed couples use in their marriage. Past research has shown that rituals can have a positive effect on marital satisfaction. Five research questions guided the study: (1) Who initiates rituals and the frequency in which the rituals are performed? What process does the couple go through to negotiate them? (2) What percentage of rituals do newlywed couples take from their family of origin? (3) Are women the “kin keepers” in their family/relationship? (4) Are there certain factors newlyweds take into consideration when negotiating? and (5) Are there some rituals more important to marital satisfaction?

The research questions were tested with data from twenty newlywed couples who completed a survey designed specifically for this study. Results found that women initiate rituals more frequently in newlywed couples, verbal communication was the highest reported process couples go through to negotiate, family of origin practices are more often taken from the wife’s family, and there are connection rituals both for
husbands and wives that aid to their marital satisfaction. Implications and suggestions for future research are also presented.
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Rituals have been shown to influence family life by creating family identity, (Bossard & Boll, 1950; Wolin & Bennet, 1984) providing a framework for social roles and expectancies (Schuck & Bucy, 1997; Wolin & Bennet) and expressing beliefs and family values (Bossard & Boll; Laird, 1984; Schuck & Bucy; Wolin & Bennet). In addition to these global areas of family identity and affect, there have been a number of research projects on the relationship between rituals and specific content areas. These include disruption of family rituals because of alcohol abuse (Fiese, 1993; Steinglass, Bennet, Wolin, & Reiss, 1987; Wolin, Bennet, & Jacobs, 2003) adoption (Christensen, 2003; Whiting, 2003), and divorce (Berg-Cross, Daniels, & Carr, 1992; Pett, Lang, & Gander, 1992) just to name a few.

While there is a considerable amount of research on how rituals affect the family, very little research has been done on rituals and marriage. The authors of one study reported that the more ritualized the marriage the higher the satisfaction (Fiese, Hooker, Kotary, & Schwagler, 1993). From the self-help literature, Doherty (2001) proposed that some specific rituals can be used to promote increased positive affect and satisfaction. While helpful, these studies that examine rituals in marriages are often limited to couples in general, without accounting for the length of marriage. This is an important factor to look at, as the relationship between marital satisfaction and rituals may not be the same in
different stages of the family life cycle. The process of deciding which rituals to incorporate and who will initiate them has not been explored thus far in the research.

Theoretical Framework

There have been many theories used to describe rituals and their meanings in family life. One theory that best fits with this study would be systems theory, as it helps understand key variables in the complex process of bonding two people in a marriage. Systems theory explains that behaviors in the family can be understood by looking at all components or subsystems within the system. This may include parents and siblings in the family and can also extend to neighbors, school and other groups that have an impact on actions of the system. Worden (2003) described systems theory as a way of "conceptualizing related elements that act as an entity" (p. 8). In other words systems theory teaches us to look at several variables within a marriage and how they relate to the husband, the wife, and the couple as a whole. This will give us a better understanding of their system and how they have created their rituals.

This study will look at the different dimensions of how a couple forms a new life together while still trying to maintain things learned from their family of origin. "Spouses bring to a new marriage an interpretive system. The [merging] of stories in married couples are characterized by a process of taking parts of each and creating a new frame which fits for their unique relationship" (Becvar & Becvar, 1982, p. 45). Systems theory, unlike other family theories, looks directly at how changes in one part of the system will create change in other aspects of the system. For example, a new marriage will affect not only the couple but their family of origin. As marriage is a time in life where two people
are creating a new system, new negotiation and rituals will be created. In turn these rituals may increase, decrease, or simply maintain marital satisfaction. Systems theory will be the framework for this study as the marital dyad is a changing system that will be researched.

The family life cycle theory can also be of assistance in looking at this population. Carter and McGoldrick (2005) shared that this cycle is a process in which the family as a system moves through time. These transitions include moving out of the house, getting married, and starting a family to name just a few. The concept of this theory/framework is important to this study as it establishes predictable outcomes for families moving through the different stages. This study will examine the phase of being newly married. In terms of rituals, this transition can be a big change as both parties are going through the process of carrying traditions from their family of origin over to their marriage while still negotiating and creating rituals into their marriage. These can very clearly mark the transition to a new stage in the family life cycle as they create rituals that define them as a couple. For example, a couple may create rituals early on in marriage to define them as a couple. Later, the couple may create rituals as they have children, or move through other life cycle stages.

One concept that aids couples in creating rituals is boundaries. Boundaries, or rules that we set in place for ourselves, can help a couple create distance from their family of origin in making their own system. Such rules can also help husband and wife create boundaries for themselves as they are creating a new identity for themselves individually (McGoldrick, 2005). For example, rituals can help each person in a couple
create this sense of individuality while still in a marriage. In turn once these boundaries are set they can help in generating and maintaining rituals as a couple.

Conceptual Definitions

This study will use several terms numerous times, which for clarity will be briefly defined in this section. As we will be creating our own paradigm from which to work under, we must have a working definition of three concepts: newlyweds, negotiation, and rituals. For this study we will define newlywed as a couple that has been married less than a year and a half and more than six months (Haws & Mallinckrodt, 1998). The cutoff provides a population who are still negotiating what rituals they will continue doing as well as those couples that are just beginning to incorporate rituals into their marriage. Negotiation will be defined as the process of discussing a subject with others until an agreement is made. Rituals, specific to marriage, are repeated events that are significant to each spouse. One specific category or type is called connection rituals. These are small rituals that couples carry out one or more times during the day that connect them as a couple. As these are small rituals that could have an impact on newlyweds’ early life together this study will explore this specific category of ritual (Doherty, 2001).

Purpose of the Study

Many authors have researched the impact that rituals can have on family life. These studies have shown a relationship between rituals and marital satisfaction (Fiese et al., 1993). Other studies have shown that a lack of rituals can decrease satisfaction and lead to divorce (Berg-Cross et al., 1992). These studies show the importance of rituals in
marriage; however, neither of these studies looked specifically at the effect of rituals on newlywed couples. If rituals have an effect on newlywed couples as they do in seasoned marriages there are strong implications for therapists and premarital counselors dealing with newlywed or premarital couples. The purpose of this study is to examine the negotiation patterns of newlywed couples in creating rituals and incorporating them into their marriage.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter a review of the literature will include definitions of rituals, research related to rituals, importance of rituals for newlywed research, and how rituals are developed and used in new marriages. Methodological highlights and weaknesses will also be noted to show relevance for our current study.

History

Rituals have been studied for many years. These studies had their beginnings in the anthropological world where researchers studied societies and their religious rituals (Roberts, 2003). Since the trend was to study societies where religion played a large part of their culture, the study of rituals was limited to "...religious and magical aspects of a culture" (p. 7). The anthropological field looked at rituals in relation to the symbols associated with them. While studies were mainly based on religious holidays or celebrations, more research began to focus on birth and death ceremonies. However, no studies were done on everyday rituals in which the families participated (Roberts).

It was not until 1950 when Bossard and Boll did their landmark work on rituals and family life that rituals entered a new arena for study. Bossard and Boll took the definition that anthropologists had been using for rituals and turned it into another working definition that dealt more broadly with family life and everyday living. Their study sparked a great deal of interest given that research on rituals had been based solely on religion. Researchers today still draw from this study as Bossard and Boll were first

The study of rituals has been somewhat cyclical in nature. Bossard and Boll, as mentioned above, in the 1950s began the study of rituals and families. In the 1980s there was a great deal of research done on rituals in the context of alcoholic families (Steinglass et al., 1987). In the 1990s the trend was to study rituals in relation to marriage (Berg-Cross et al., 1992). It is for this reason that most literature done and reviewed here on rituals is dated. There has also been no research published dealing specifically with the marital rituals of newlyweds.

**Definition and Measurement of Rituals**

*Definition of Rituals*

Historically there have been a number of attempts to define rituals. Bossard and Boll (1950) described family ritual as “a prescribed procedure, arising out of a family interaction, involving a pattern of defined behavior, which is directed towards some specific end or purpose” (p. 29). While many researchers today use this definition as a standard framework, others have tried to make another definition more flexible and workable in a family system. For example, Fiese and colleagues (1993) believe that simply pairing meaning and affect to certain interactions is enough to constitute a ritual. Some believe that simply repeating a task or activity makes up a ritual (Doherty, 2001; Fulgham, 1995; Imber-Black & Roberts, 1992; Laird & Hartman, 1988; Leon & Jacobvitz, 2003; Paddock & Schwartz, 1986; Roberts, 2003). Perhaps Wolin and Bennet (1984) stated a definition that seems to best integrate the majority of definitions in the
literature, and gives a paradigm from which to work under. They wrote that ritual was a “symbolic form of communication, that owing to the satisfaction that family members experience through its repetition is acted out in a systematic fashion over time” (p. 41).

This definition allows everyday activities that happen over time to constitute a ritual, and also includes Bossard and Boll’s definition that rituals are specifically designed to serve a function in the family.

William Doherty (2001) used the above definition or paradigm of rituals stated by Wolin and Bennett (1984) and in the context of marriage clarifies how rituals work specific to marriages. He states that rituals in terms of married couples are “repeated… significant… and something that has emotional meaning to both parties” (p. 127). Therefore, marital rituals are those repeated patterns that each partner identifies as meaningful and special to them individually or as a couple.

While coming much earlier, Bossard and Boll’s (1950) categories of rituals fall under the paradigm created by Wolin and Bennett (1984). Wolin and Bennett grouped rituals into three categories. The first is patterned interactions, which are rituals done on a daily basis. Patterned interactions include morning routines, bedtime routines, and eating meals together. The second category according to Wolin and Bennett is family traditions. This category deals with rituals the family does on an annual basis and includes birthdays, anniversaries, and family reunions. The last category is family celebrations. Family celebrations are rituals that include culture-specific occasions such as holidays and weddings (Bossard & Boll). While these categories are very useful, they are very broad and have only been related to families, not newlyweds.
A later refinement by Imber-Black and Roberts (1992) showed four categories that are very similar to Bossard and Boll's (1950). The first is rituals done on a daily basis. Imber-Black and Roberts call these day-to-day essentials. These rituals include eating, sleeping, greetings, and goodbyes. The second category is family traditions or rituals the family participates in on a yearly basis. Some examples of traditions include family reunions, anniversaries, and vacations. Third are the holiday celebrations, or rituals that are created surrounding holidays. The final category is family life cycle rituals. These rituals are centered on individuals in the family making a transition from one important phase in life into another. Examples of this category would be baptisms, naming ceremonies, adoptions, baby showers, and engagement parties. Similar to Bossard and Boll's categories these are connected to family rather than marriage rituals.

The ritual category most related to marriage was explained by William Doherty (2001) and are labeled connection rituals. This ritual category, unlike others in the literature, is related specifically to marriage. Doherty, who is a husband and marriage and family therapist, takes case studies from his clientele as well as examples from his own marriage in hypothesizing and creating meaning in his book *Take Back Your Marriage*. Doherty defines connection rituals as times in the day when spouses spend time or pay attention to each other in a ritualized manner to become closer as a couple. These include greeting rituals such as how the couple says hello and goodbye to each other and talk rituals used when the couple spends time to talk with each other. These small interactions, Doherty states, connect spouses and define them as a couple. While these ideas appear to be consistent with the larger body of literature on rituals, these ideas have not been empirically based.
Doherty's (2001) connection rituals are very similar to Imber-Black and Roberts (1992) day-to-day essentials and Bossard and Boll's (1950) patterned interactions. However, Doherty's interpretation of rituals best fits this study as it is defined in the context of couples, while Bossard and Boll, and Imber-Black and Roberts were using rituals in the context of the family. This specific kind of ritual, namely connection rituals, may help the spouses make the life cycle change from an individual to a couple.

Measurement of Rituals

There have been few questionnaires designed to study rituals. The most common measure used throughout the literature is the Family Ritual Questionnaire (FRQ) designed by Fiese and Kline in 1993. This construct is a 42 item true/false questionnaire that looks at seven settings of rituals. These settings included dinnertime, weekends, vacations, annual celebrations, special celebrations, religious holidays, and cultural traditions. The survey included questions in regard to the roles, routines, attendance, affect, symbolic significance, and continuation of the ritual in regards to the seven ritual settings listed above. This construct was found to have good internal consistency, as well as test-retest reliability (Fiese & Kline). While the FRQ has been shown to measure rituals in family life effectively, it does not venture into the realm of newlywed rituals and more specifically connection rituals.

The second measure found in the literature was the Ritual Inventory, designed by Bryan Bingham in 1996. This couple focused measure, in the format of a checklist is comprised of 89 rituals, which were divided into three categories: family celebrations,
family traditions, and family interactions. Couples jointly completed the questionnaire indicating whether (1) rituals were done, but not discussed, (2) rituals done which the couple planned or discussed, or (3) rituals were not done but had been discussed or planned for future implementation. The hope for this questionnaire was to measure different rituals and their effect on marital satisfaction. While this construct is intended to measure rituals in newly married couples, it does not assess everyday rituals, or connection rituals that are specific to this study.

As seen throughout the literature there have been numerous studies conducted on rituals. The majority of the research was collected through interviews coupled with the researchers own questionnaires about rituals. An examination of the literature showed that the FRQ was the most used instrument, aside from a number of general interview surveys conducted by the various researchers (Berg-Cross et al., 1992; Fiese, 1993; Fiese & Kline, 1993; Fiese & Tomcho, 2001). Questionnaires that were constructed by the authors, the majority of the time, centered on asking questions contained in the FRQ in an open ended qualitative way rather than the traditional true/false response.

Function of Rituals

Rituals can have a number of effects on families. Bossard and Boll (1950) remarked that rituals are the “core of family life” (p. 18). Many researchers have found that through rituals individuals in the family are able to connect better with their family as well as with the world around them (Bossard & Boll; Breuss & Pearson, 1997; Dickstein, 2002; Fiese et al., 1993; Laird, 1984; Laird & Hartman, 1988; Pett et al., 1992; Schuck & Bucy, 1997; Schvaneveldt & Lee, 1983; Wolin & Bennet, 1984). Rituals have
also been found to promote family health (Bossard & Boll, 1950; Mackey, 1994; Wolin & Bennet), decrease stress (Paddock & Schwartz, 1986; Pett et al.; Schuck & Bucy), express beliefs and family values (Bossard & Boll; Laird; Schuck & Bucy; Wolin & Bennet), link the past and present (Breuss & Pearson; Imber-Black & Roberts, 1992; Laird; Laird & Hartman; Pett et al.; Rosenthal & Marshall, 1988; Schuck & Bucy; Wolin & Bennet), and create family identity (Fiese et al.; Laird; Laird & Hartman; Pett et al.; Schuck & Bucy; Wolin & Bennet).

This body of literature, cited above, all examined rituals and their relationship to family life. The evidence seems to show that rituals are associated with increased functioning in a variety of areas. While all of these areas are related to family strengths, there are only implied applications for marital relationships. Perhaps, the most closely related topic is that of family identity.

Wolin and Bennet (1984), for example, note that rituals can help establish family identity. Rituals can clarify and define roles and rules within the family that allow members to realize “…this is how our family works” (p. 401). When a family has this collective sense of itself it is termed family identity (Wolin & Bennet). Other researchers have also deduced the same idea. Pett et al. (1992) explained that rituals create family bonds that strengthen the family and in turn create family identity. Additionally, Laird and Hartman (1988) speculated that rituals teach us how to act as members of society and within our own family. Thus, there is an agreement among other researchers that the use of rituals leads to family identity; or in other words families can explain their identity by the rituals they maintain (Schuck & Bucy, 1997).
Through family interactions, and rituals concerning these interactions, family beliefs can be established (Wolin & Bennet, 1984). The way a family carried out rituals and the rituals they participate in help children know the beliefs and standards of their family (Wolin & Bennet). Laird (1984) stated that rituals reveal the “deepest levels of shared meanings and values” (p.124). As rituals require communication and a group’s shared instructions and metaphors, these ideas can help shape the world view of those involved (Laird). As rituals create identity in families, for newlyweds, rituals may aid the couple in creating an identity not only as an individual, but as a couple.

Rituals and Family Functioning

*Family Rituals*

Previous studies on rituals have included a myriad of topics. These studies focused on rituals in relation to families (Imber-Black, 2005b; Imber-Black & Roberts, 1992; Laird, 1984; Laird & Hartman, 1988; Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 1977), children (Mackey, 1994; O’Conner & Hoorwitz, 2003), adoption (Christensen, 2003; Whiting, 2003), alcoholics (Fiese, 1993; Steinglass et al., 1987; Wolin et al., 2003), grieving (Romanoff & Terenzio, 1998), divorce (Berg-Cross et al., 1992; Pett et al., 1992; Whiteside, 1989), religious realms (Imber-Black & Roberts), and marital adjustment (Bingham, 1996). While these studies are helpful in the field of rituals, not all can be generalized to the broader population of family. For example, some of these studies had methodological problems. These included small sample sizes (Berg-Cross et al.) or populations that were centered around small groups that could not be generalized to the majority of families (Bingham; Christensen). It is also important to note that some
of these resources were drawn from graduate student theses that have not been published (Bingham; Christensen).

While not all studies listed above are applicable to our study there are a great many that can give us insight into the importance of rituals in family life. They can also provide clues as to who creates rituals and continues them throughout the years and the effect it can have on marriage in terms of marital satisfaction.

**Disruption of Family Rituals**

Possibly one of the most common topics that rituals have been associated with in the mental health profession is that of alcoholism because of the ritual disruption that occurs in families with this problem. Steinglass et al. (1987) found that there was not a great deal of ritual activity in alcoholic homes because so much of the day was altered in order for the parents to drink. However, if the family participated in rituals they either had to hold to them strictly and exclude the drinker or modify the rituals to specifically include the drinker (Steinglass et al.). Wolin and Bennet (1984) also found that ritual disruption was associated with greater recursion of alcoholism while conversely ritual stability was associated with less alcohol transmission.

While these studies (Fiese, 1993; Steinglass et al., 1987; Wolin & Bennet, 1984) were conducted in the context of families and ritual disruption as a result of alcoholism, their results can still be applied to newlyweds. The authors found that major holidays were disrupted as a result of the drinker in the family. For most, these holidays are a time for the family to create and solidify a shared meaning and family identity. With the disruption of these holidays, families began to disconnect. Connection rituals, according
to Doherty (2001), are one way that a young couple can solidify meaning in their relationship. While we know that a disruption of rituals can be harmful to family life no research has been done on how creating such rituals can connect a family or marriage.

Marriage Rituals

In 1986, Paddock and Schwartz conducted a study on rituals and dual-earner couples. They commented that when both spouses work they are accustomed to “working hard, accomplishing their goals, while being appreciated, recognized, and rewarded for their efforts” (p. 453). As a result of these efforts, spouses may feel unappreciated at home unless accomplishments are acknowledged. These couples also experience a great deal of stress balancing work with their relationship. These authors, also psychotherapists, drew from experiences their clients encountered about the dissatisfaction of rituals after a day at work. After reviewing and completing a content analysis the authors found that couples who discussed their expectations learned a great deal about what their partner’s individual needs were and the amount of blame and withdrawal decreased. In addition they found that “…when partners create their own agreed-upon ways of getting back together…their anxiety appears to decrease” (p. 455). This article, although not articulating it, uses a type of connection rituals, namely greeting rituals. This discussion of expectations and negotiation is an aspect of newlywed life that has not been studied. The process that newlywed couples use to communicate or negotiate such rituals and the effect that this has on the couple will be addressed in this research.
Marital satisfaction and rituals. In 1983, Bahr, Chapell, and Leigh defined marital satisfaction as "a subjective evaluation of the overall degree to which needs, expectations, and desires are met" (p. 797). According to Miller (1976) marital satisfaction includes factors such as money management, recreation/entertainment, level of affection, chore performance, relationship with in-laws, sexual relations, and religious beliefs and practices. How many rituals surround these seven categories? These categories are not only items that are highly ritualized, but also ones that must be negotiated by the couple and happen on more of a day-to-day basis.

Berg-Cross et al. (1992) studied 77 middle class women, 42 of whom were married, and 25 of whom were divorced. The researchers wanted to see the effect that rituals had on their marriages. The authors reported that couples who actively participated in rituals would be deemed ritualized in their marriage. The study found that couples who were more ritualized tended to have a stronger relationship than those who were under ritualized. Greater marital satisfaction and success was also attributed to those couples that were ritualized. Among the divorced women, they reported that a lack of rituals was a key part of the divorce. Long-term marriages that stayed intact were characterized by more rituals than those that ended in divorce. Specifically the rituals that these divorced women felt lead to the divorce was a lack of togetherness in daily behaviors (Berg-Cross et al.). The lack of connection rituals had a negative affect on their marriage. There have also been other studies that have shown, similar to this study, the correlation between more meaningful rituals and higher marital satisfaction (Fiese et al., 1993; Fiese & Tomcho, 2001; Paddock & Schwartz, 1986; Pett et al., 1992).
Why does this matter? In 2001, Fiese and Tomcho set out to look at religious holidays, meanings associated with rituals and the effect both of those topics have on marital satisfaction. The authors studied 120 families that had been randomly picked for another research project. The couples participated in a 2 hour interview and filled out the Family Ritual Questionnaire (FRQ) and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). Couples were interviewed together, however, they took both questionnaires independent from one another. Fiese and Tomcho found that overall, holiday rituals that were created by the couple had a pattern of increasing marital satisfaction. This was shown through a content analysis the authors completed on the interview section of this study. Other research findings showed that husbands who actively participated in rituals seemed to work more to strengthen the marriage. Women in the study stated that their marital satisfaction would increase if their husbands took a more active role in rituals (Fiese & Tomcho). Husbands and wives not only have a role to play in participating in rituals, but also in maintaining rituals they have created.

Women as kin keepers. There has been another phenomena that has come to light out of researching rituals and family life. This is the idea that women act as the keepers of rituals and traditions (Fiese et al., 1993; Fiese & Tomcho, 2001; Pett et al., 1992). Studies that looked at rituals among parenthood, rituals among divorce, and rituals surrounding religious holidays all concluded that women, the majority of the time, maintained the rituals in families and in some cases introduced new rituals to their family. As a result of this women were labeled the family’s “kin keeper” (Fiese et al; Fiese & Tomcho; Pett et al.). This idea of women as kin keepers in their family has not been studied in newlyweds
and therefore cannot be generalized to this population. One goal of this study is to see if this research on women and kin keeping is consistent with newlywed marriages.

Newlyweds and Rituals

The newlywed stage can be stressful for many couples (Oggins, Veroff, & Leber, 1993). It is a time where both individuals are working towards connecting with their spouse, and together they are trying to create their identity as a couple. Communication during this time of life is very important.

Research (Oggins et al., 1993) has indicated that the early stages of marriage are very important to renegotiate and create these new rituals or ideas of eating, sleeping, having sex, etc. Researchers claim “marriage requires that two people renegotiate a great many issues that have previously been defined individually or in their families of origin, such as when and how to eat, sleep, talk, have sex, fight, work, and relax” (Imber-Black, 2005b, p. 233). However, there is limited research on how these couples negotiate such topics, when they discuss such topics, and how this process has hurt or strengthened their marriage. This kind of information will be further researched in this study.

This is also a critical time when the couple must discuss what ideas, standards and rituals they will adopt in their new relationship (Imber-Black, 2005a). Both will bring ideas and expectations from their family-of-origin (Wolin & Bennet, 1984). The couple needs to be willing to discard old traditions to make way for new ones that fit their couple lifestyle better (Paddock & Schwartz, 1986). Couples need to discuss new role assignments, and integrate their family-of-origin practices and beliefs (Fiese et al., 1993). Through negotiation, newlywed couples can begin to make these new decisions about
rituals in their lives, what will be incorporated from their old system and what will be created for their new system.

Negotiation

Newlywed couples have the large task of negotiating which rituals they will continue from their family of origin and which ones they will create on their own. The couple is also working on their own identity as a new couple or system (Oggins et al., 1993). The question then arises, how does negotiation happen in couples? While each couple may differ in the way they bargain, there has been research collected on couples and the negotiation process they go through.

One of debates in the literature in regards to negotiation surrounds gender differences (Carter, 1997). Reflecting on her years working with people, marriage and family therapist Betty Carter stated that there are certain differences in the way boys and girls are brought up. “Boys learn about hierarchy from day one…the guy with the most power wins. Girls are taught to be nice. Nice people don’t negotiate, they learn to give in” (Carter). Conversely, Kurdek (1995), an author that studied conflict resolution patterns, found perceptions of gender roles are learned from society. He proposes that the normal societal view is that the wife demands and the husband withdraws and that real negotiation is hard to come by. In other words, negotiation between a husband and wife can be a difficult process if the couple follows common gender roles.

Contradictory to societal views of how married couples negotiate, researchers have found that with the popularity of gender egalitarianism, couples are able to negotiate better on an equal plane (Denton, 2004). For example, Scanzoni and Godwin (1990)
interviewed 188 couples and how they felt about their negotiation effectiveness. They found that couples who are able to communicate and come to a consensus together report their relationship to be more stable. According to this research, it is important for each individual in the couple to initiate conversation and have equal say when negotiating topics. Gender is an important aspect that may affect the way a couple negotiates. Gottman and Porterfield (1981) report that women are more likely to bring up difficult areas the couple needs to talk about and the husband simply responds to her cues. This proposed study will look at traditional gender roles and whether it is true for newlywed couples when talking or negotiating connection rituals.

Research done on negotiation showed there were many studies that looked at how negotiation occurs (Scanzoni & Godwin, 1990) as well as some positive and negative aspects of negotiation in families (Best, 2006). While these studies were useful in their findings, they did not fulfill the requirements of looking specifically at marital negotiation. In 1980, Scanzoni and Polonko published an article entitled, “A Conceptual Approach to Explicit Marital Negotiation.” This article included a model designed specifically for married couples and had strong research to support their model. Scanzoni and Polonko’s research on negotiation, though dated, has been used in various research projects from the time of its publication. In 2004, SH used Scanzoni and Polonko’s (1980) research to research bargaining between husbands and wives in Taiwan. There have also been many other studies that have taken these negotiation factors and used them in research (Danes, Oswald, & DeEsnaola, 1998; Williams, Gardos, & Ortiz-Torres, 2001).
Scanzoni and Polonko (1980) offered four context variables that affect the way married people negotiate. The two authors reviewed thirty one articles on decision making, conflict resolution and negotiation theory in marriage. They also investigated research that identified aspects of life that affect the way a couple negotiates. More specifically, they looked at a model of explicit marital negotiation published by Strauss in 1978. From these resources they synthesized the information into four context variables that could affect negotiation. The first is the compositional variable or the makeup of who the couple is individually and as a couple. This includes factors such as race, age, length of marriage, and if the couple has any children. The second is resource variables or factors that are tangible factors about a spouse’s skills. These are education, job status, income, hours worked per week, and weeks worked per year. “Orientations governing the use of bargaining power” is the third variable (p.32). The idea behind this variable is how the initiator or “actor” uses their bargaining power. Factors that may influence this variable include self-esteem, and the importance of the issue. The last variable is “actor’s orientation regarding other’s past bargaining behavior” (p. 32). In other words the person initiating the bargaining recalls how the other spouse bargains and enters negotiation with past experiences in mind. These researchers propose that all four of these variables may have positive or negative repercussions in how the couple negotiates and comes to a consensus. This study aims to explore these variables and factors do have an impact on how newlywed couples negotiate rituals.
Summary

Researchers have studied rituals in regards to married couples and have tried to summarize the results in several ways. For example, Doherty (2001) hypothesized that connection rituals are ways in which a couple can interact on a daily basis in order to create couple identity. This includes things like greeting rituals, idioms and time together. While both spouses report that rituals are important in their marriage, researchers report that women are more involved in their initiation and maintenance.

While all of these studies offer relevant material on the topic of rituals, one important aspect is missing; none of these studies included newlyweds and therefore cannot be generalized to that population. Therefore, key elements from research will be studied specifically in this newlywed study such as: the negotiation couples go through in order to create rituals into their marriage; whether women are kin keepers in their relationships; and if couples follow the same pattern of ritual initiation as past research has shown. While these factors have been studied in regards to seasoned marriages, no study has explored these ideas in the newlywed population.

Research Questions

Research questions were created in order to examine trends seen in past research that may or may not be alike in a newlywed population. The exploratory design of the study allows the questions to be answered specific to newlyweds and not based solely on research done with different marital populations.
The following questions are to be examined through this newlywed study as current research has failed to address them.

1. Who initiates rituals and the frequency in which the rituals are performed? What process does the couple go through to negotiate them?
2. What percentage of rituals do newlywed couples take from their family of origin?
3. Are women the “kin keepers” in their family/relationship?
4. Are there certain factors newlyweds take into consideration when negotiating?
5. Are there some rituals more important to marital satisfaction?
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the negotiation patterns of newlywed couples in creating and incorporating rituals into their marriage. The design of the study, the sample, the collection of data, and the explanation of questionnaires will be explained in this section.

Design

This study utilized an exploratory design aimed at describing how newlyweds negotiate the creation of rituals into their marriages. The exploratory design is an appropriate method to “discover unforeseen or unexpected patterns...[for] gaining new insights and understanding natural phenomena” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 149). Asking couples to retrospectively report on rituals and their negotiation enabled a better understanding of the creation of rituals in new marriages.

Sample

The sample for this study is newlywed couples. Research by Haws and Mallinckrodt (1998) claimed that newlyweds are couples that have been married less than a year and a half and more than six months. These parameters allow for couples to have been married long enough to create and incorporate rituals into their marriages. It also eliminates couples with other factors which may influence their marital rituals (Oggins et al., 1993). Previous marriages or children may confound results because of history or an
extended time together as a couple. Therefore, only childless couples in their first marriage were included. Data were gathered from twenty couples. This number was needed in order to examine trends, patterns, and run appropriate statistical analyses of the data (Gall et al., 2003).

Initial recruitment was done in General Education classes at Utah State University. This allowed for a more diverse population of participants, since students from all majors are required to take general education courses. Announcements were made by professors prior to class and the voluntary nature of the study was explained. Couples who participated in the study were asked to list other couples they knew who would be interested in joining the study. This procedure created a snowball effect that provided the needed number of 20 couples. Fourteen of the 20 couples were signed on from general education classes, while the other 6 were recruited from the referrals. As an incentive to participate in the study, each couple had their name put in a raffle for a $50 gift certificate to a local bookstore.

The sample was gathered from Northern Utah. All participating couples completed demographic information about themselves. Both husbands and wives tended to be in their early to mid-twenties; all of the couples had been married within the specific parameters of the study (6 to 18 months) and had completed some form of higher education. Table 1 provides demographic factors for both the husbands and wives.
Table 1

Sample Characteristics of Husbands and Wives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Husbands</th>
<th></th>
<th>Wives</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>24.32</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>22.37</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Months married</td>
<td>12.42</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>12.32</td>
<td>4.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Months of courtship</td>
<td>10.58</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>11.32</td>
<td>5.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of education</td>
<td>15.21</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>15.53</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In regards to ethnicity and religious practices, the sample was highly biased. The majority of the sample reported belonging to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All participants were Caucasian with the exception of two husbands, one whom was Latin American and another who did not report his ethnicity (see Table 2).

Questionnaire

Ritual measures

To answer the research inquiries, a questionnaire was created with three sections assessing the couples' rituals, negotiation, and marital satisfaction. Twelve questions were generated by referencing Doherty's book (2001) regarding connection rituals. He lists the following twelve connection rituals in a couple's life: interactions such as daily greetings; daily goodbyes; morning and bedtime routines; the playing of games; dates;
Table 2

*Religious and Ethnic Demographics of Husbands and Wives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Husbands</th>
<th></th>
<th>Wives</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

regular talk time; cooking and eating meals as a couple; spending time together while doing different tasks; and leaving notes to each other.

These twelve questions examine what connection rituals the couple participates in, as well as drawing from prevalent themes seen throughout the research (maintenance of rituals, different role of ritual maintenance, negotiation of such rituals). Couples were asked to specify how many times daily connection rituals were initiated by the husband, the wife, or both. A complete copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B. Validity for this section of the questionnaire was established by two family life professionals with expertise in rituals who examined the questionnaire and revised it
accordingly. An additional source of content validity is demonstrated as questions and ideas were taken directly from Doherty’s (2001) work.

Validity and reliability may have been skewed somewhat for several reasons. For example, having each spouse average the amount of rituals done per day may not be accurate. If given the same survey everyday each spouse may report a different amount of rituals initiated by him/herself. The connection rituals listed may also have been interpreted differently by each spouse. For instance, husbands and wives may have interpreted what “morning routines” were and therefore answered in a different way if each ritual had been understood by both spouses.

**Negotiation Measure**

Assessing the negotiation of rituals was done using the same procedure as that used for rituals. Scanzoni and Polonko (1980) created a framework in their article. From their extensive research and content analysis the authors list factors such as age, race, length of marriage, hours worked per week, and self-esteem that affect the way married couples negotiate on all subjects. These factors were used to create this part of the questionnaire. Each factor was listed and participants used a Likert scale to rank whether the item was considered when negotiating with their spouse. The Likert scale ranged from 1 (I always consider this) to 5 (I never consider this; see Appendix B). Face validity was determined by two family life professionals who reviewed and edited this section of the questionnaire. This section on negotiation also shows content validity since the questions created were directly drawn from Scanzoni and Polonko’s (1980) research.
Marital Satisfaction Measure

Marital satisfaction was assessed with the Kansas Marital Satisfaction scale (Schumm, Jurich, & Bollman, 1986). This questionnaire consists of three questions: How satisfied are you with your marriage? How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband/wife? How satisfied are you with your husband/wife as a spouse? Respondents answered using a seven point Likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely satisfied) to 7 (extremely dissatisfied). This measure has evidence of concurrent validity as it was compared to scores on the quality marital index, with the results yielding \( t (53) = 2.80 \) and \( p < .01 \) (Schumm et al., 1986). The KMS has also been shown to have test retest reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha of .90 (Schumm et al.; see Appendix B).

In addition to the two family life educators who reviewed and edited the questionnaire, a pilot study was completed with four newlywed couples. These couples were asked to read the questionnaire, answer the questions, and edit portions as needed. Feedback included shortening and clarifying the instructions to be more specific, changing the format to be more user friendly, and cutting down on spaces between questions to shorten the length. The feedback was taken and the questionnaire was revised once more with the help of a family life professor at Utah State University.

Procedures

Before any recruitment was attempted, the study was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board of Utah State University to ensure that there was no harm to subjects
participating in the study (see Appendix A). Data collection commenced after the IRB gave their consent.

Participants were given a manila folder containing the following items: an informed consent, a postcard for the drawing, a questionnaire, and a return stamped envelope. The informed consent outlined the procedure of the study and what was required of participants. It specifically stated that if the couple returned the questionnaire, they had given their consent to participate in the study. Each spouse was directed to complete the survey individually and not converse with their partner while filling it out. Although, the couple did not put their name on the questionnaire, their gender was known from the demographic factors sheet. Of the 25 surveys given out, 20 were returned and used for analysis.

In order to identify a winner for the gift certificate some identification was needed. In the packet a postcard was included to leave some identifiable information to contact the couple (i.e., email address, phone number). A winner was drawn randomly from these cards.

Surveys were collected via the self-addressed stamped envelope included with the packet. The surveys were sent to the Family Life Center which has locked cabinets to store the questionnaires, and thus maintain the confidentiality of the participants’ responses. A few participants returned completed questionnaires to the professor who announced the study. Only members of the study team opened, read, and analyzed the questionnaires in order to ensure confidentiality.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

In this chapter the preliminary analyses and results for the research questions will be addressed. Each research question will be addressed in the same order presented in earlier chapters.

Research Question 1

Research question one (Who initiates rituals and the frequency with which they are performed? What process does the couple go through to negotiate them?) requires two different analyses. In order to analyze the first component of question one, who initiates rituals and the frequency with which they are performed, a table was constructed to compare husbands’ and wives’ answers about who initiates rituals more in their marriage (see Table 3). In examining who initiates the rituals, there appears to be some trends in who initiates rituals more. These trends will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The first comparison examined the self-report versus spousal report for both husbands and wives. For example, the husbands’ self-report of rituals initiated was compared to the wives’ report of the husband’s involvement. The husbands’ self-report on the number of rituals they initiated was very close to their wives’ report. In other words, husbands and wives generally agreed on the amount of rituals initiated by the husband (see Table 3). A comparison between wives’ self-report on rituals initiated and the husbands’ report of the wife was then done. Self-report from the wife on her initiation
of rituals and her husband’s views shows that husbands report their wives initiating more rituals than she herself reports. The husbands rated their wives initiating rituals more often on 10 of the 12 connection rituals. While the husbands’ answers were higher than the wives, the means were very close. The difference between means of husbands’ and wives’ answers were .12 and .53.

The second comparison included examining self report of husbands and wives. This comparison allowed the researchers to evaluate whether the husband or wife believes they are initiating rituals more often. Husbands reported they initiated four out of the twelve connections rituals on a more frequent basis [e.g., daily goodbyes, bedtime routines (to get ready for bed), morning routines (to get ready for work), and bedtime routines (before going to sleep)]. Wives reported they initiated 7 out of the 12 connection rituals more [regular talk time, eating meals together, going out of regular dates, spending time together daily, cooking meals together, leaving notes for each other, and morning routines (before getting up)]. There was one connection ritual, namely, daily greetings, which husbands and wives reported they initiated at similar rates on a daily basis.

The last comparison was the husbands and wives self report on how many times they both initiated daily rituals. While the numbers reported by each were similar, the husband reported a higher amount of rituals were initiated more by “both.” The husbands reported 9 out of the 12 rituals were initiated by both, and wives reported 2 out of 12. Husband and wife answered virtually the same on one question which was daily greeting.
Table 3

Statistics for Rituals Initiated by Husbands, Wives, and Both

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connection ritual</th>
<th>Initiated by husband</th>
<th>Initiated by wife</th>
<th>Initiated by both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Husband’s report</td>
<td>Wife’s report</td>
<td>Husband’s report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Greeting</td>
<td>2.17 1.40 2.09 0.94</td>
<td>2.27 0.91 2.10 1.10</td>
<td>2.57 1.28 2.50 1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Goodbye</td>
<td>1.88 1.13 1.56 1.13</td>
<td>1.44 0.73 1.64 0.81</td>
<td>2.54 1.33 1.92 1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedtime routines (to get ready for bed)</td>
<td>1.60 0.89 1.75 0.96</td>
<td>1.50 0.76 1.38 0.74</td>
<td>1.30 0.68 1.22 0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular talk time</td>
<td>1.57 0.79 2.00 1.00</td>
<td>2.38 1.91 1.75 1.06</td>
<td>2.58 2.23 2.15 2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning routines (to get ready for work)</td>
<td>1.50 0.58 1.00 0.00</td>
<td>1.38 0.74 1.00 0.00</td>
<td>1.44 0.73 1.13 0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedtime routines (before going to sleep)</td>
<td>1.43 0.79 1.17 0.41</td>
<td>1.43 0.54 1.25 0.46</td>
<td>1.60 0.84 2.00 1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating meals together</td>
<td>1.25 0.50 1.00 0.00</td>
<td>1.63 0.97 1.60 0.89</td>
<td>1.83 0.72 1.94 0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going out on regular dates</td>
<td>1.25 0.71 1.33 0.71</td>
<td>1.50 1.07 1.80 1.09</td>
<td>3.09 4.68 2.00 1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending time together daily</td>
<td>1.22 0.44 2.00 1.41</td>
<td>1.50 1.07 1.80 1.09</td>
<td>3.09 4.68 2.00 1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking meals together</td>
<td>1.00 0.00 1.00 0.00</td>
<td>1.45 0.52 1.33 0.50</td>
<td>1.50 0.54 1.42 0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving notes for each other</td>
<td>1.00 0.00 1.43 1.13</td>
<td>2.31 2.56 1.17 0.39</td>
<td>2.00 1.41 1.20 0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning routines (before getting up)</td>
<td>0.00 0.00 1.38 1.06</td>
<td>1.80 0.84 1.50 0.84</td>
<td>1.22 0.44 1.14 0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When examining the self-reported data on spousal initiation the trend is that the wives initiate more rituals than husbands. However, it must be noted that, looking across all 12 connection rituals, the averages between husband, wife, and both initiation are very small. Consequently, while the ranking appears to be showing both initiating the most, followed by the wife, and then the husband, the numbers are very close meaning the variance is small. The trend can be seen in this data that husbands, whether commenting on their own initiation or his wives’, reported a higher number of rituals than his wife on all three comparisons. Problems with data transformation and coding made it impossible to run further statistical tests. For example, in order to perform an analysis of variance the data needed to be analyzed in terms of what the couple meant when they answered “both” on the questionnaire. The way in which the question was posed and answered made this division, of what husband and wife answered, difficult. Also, numbers gathered were so small further analysis was difficult to complete. Finally, the way in which the data was entered in order to analyze other research questions, made it difficult to single out answers given by husband and wife and run an analysis of variance.

The second part of question one inquires after the process the couple used to negotiate rituals into their marriage. A pilot study, as stated in the methods section, was conducted to find any problems with the questionnaire. Participants in the pilot study, since this was an open ended question, answered with numerous specific techniques they used with their spouse to negotiate rituals. Consequently, this part of the questionnaire was deemed worthy to be included in the final survey. However, after receiving the questionnaires back from the study sample, responses were very
generally in explaining the actual processes the couple went through to negotiate. Additionally, this question was not answered by all participants. Since the answers were too general and the numbers collected too small, there was not enough data to complete an official analysis on this question.

The answers were, therefore, arranged in categories as reported separately by husbands and wives. These categories were created by grouping like responses together. The majority of answers were stated similarly across the questionnaires. For example, the majority of husbands and wives stated they used verbal communication. Some surveys stated “my wife and I sit down and talk about it” or vice versa. This response and others that were similar were collapsed into a category labeled verbal communication. All other responses were alike from survey to survey (i.e., listing pros and cons, and taking turns making decisions) and could be easily grouped together.

Twelve out of twenty wives stated they used verbal communication in order to negotiate or compromise with their spouse. Explanations of “verbal communication” ranged from “communication about doing what feels natural” to “verbal communication followed by compromise.” The other seven women reported a related but somewhat different process of negotiation with their husbands. One wife did not answer this question. Female participant responses can be seen on table 4.

Fifteen out of the twenty husbands answered this question. Eleven out of those who responded reported that some type of verbal communication took place while negotiating with their spouse. Answers based on verbal communication ranged from
Table 4  

Factors of Negotiation as Reported by Wives  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wives’ negotiation</th>
<th>(n = 19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal communication</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listing pros and cons</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Give into” husband’s ideas</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take turns making decisions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take turns explaining sides</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“verbal communication about what is fair” to “verbal communication along with compromise.” Four husbands gave answers other than verbal communication.

Two husbands reported they used verbal communication as well as “doing what comes naturally.” These results can be seen in Table 5. In addition to listing how negotiation happens between themselves and their wife, the husbands also listed other resources they turn to during negotiation. These included praying together as a couple, reading the scriptures together, and seeking counsel from family members.

The comparison of means for these data answers Research Question 1 by showing that wives initiate more rituals than their husbands. In terms of the process that the couples went through when negotiating these rituals the most common answer was verbal communication. The data gathered and reported above lists specifically the ideas and ways that these twenty newlywed couples negotiate in addition to verbal communication.
Table 5

Factors of Negotiation as Reported by Husbands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husbands’ negotiation</th>
<th>(n = 15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal communication</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take turns making decisions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listing pros and cons</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do what has worked in the past</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2

Research question two sought to identify the percentage of rituals that couples continue from their family of origin. Couples were asked to estimate the percentage of rituals, that were important to their marital satisfaction, taken from their family of origin, their spouse’s family of origin, and those implemented from both families into their marriage. The data was analyzed and average percentages were calculated to observe from which family the newlywed couple received the greatest amount of ritual activity (Table 6). Both husbands and wives reported that the majority of time, rituals were taken from both families. However, when comparing means between the spouses, both husbands and wives agree that more rituals are taken from the wife’s family of origin than from the husband’s family.
Table 6

Percentage of Rituals Taken from Family of Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Reported by Husband</th>
<th>Reported by Wife</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( M )</td>
<td>( SD )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rituals taken from husband’s family</td>
<td>28.21</td>
<td>21.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rituals taken from wife’s family</td>
<td>29.26</td>
<td>23.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rituals taken from both</td>
<td>42.53</td>
<td>36.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This analysis clearly shows the percentage of rituals taken from the husband’s family of origin, the wife’s family of origin and a combination of both of their families. It therefore directly answers research question two, what percentage of rituals newlywed couples take from their family of origin.

Research Question 3

The third research question (Are women the kin keepers of rituals in their families/relationships?) is best answered by running a paired \( t \) test between the initiation of rituals as reported by husband and wife. This statistical test is appropriate as the number of rituals is interval data, meaning the distance between responses is the same. Since a comparison will occur between husbands and wives the two variables are not independent of each other (Gall et al., 2003). Couples were asked on the questionnaire how frequently they and their spouse initiated rituals on a daily
basis. Therefore, data analysis consisted of comparing the husbands' report of
their wives' initiation of rituals and his initiation of rituals with the wives' report of
the husbands' initiation of rituals and her initiation of rituals. Table 7 shows the
results of this analysis.

The null hypothesis for this statistical test would state that there is no
difference between answers given by husbands and wives regarding initiation of
rituals. After running a t test and with a \( p < .05 \) the null hypothesis would be rejected
since \( p = .026, .001 \) on this test. This means there was a difference between husbands
and wives initiation. Looking directly at the means allows an in-depth comparison
between the husband's and wife's answers. For example, the wives reported that they
initiated more rituals than their husbands. The husbands' data was similar in that they
also reported that the wives initiated more rituals. Therefore, the data from this
question shows women in fact are most likely to initiate rituals into their marriage.
This initiation may lead to these women becoming kin keepers in their marriage.

Table 7

Comparison of Means of Husbands' and Wives' Initiation of Rituals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiation of ritual</th>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Wife</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( M )</td>
<td>( SD )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As reported by wife</td>
<td>23.96</td>
<td>9.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As reported by husband</td>
<td>23.44</td>
<td>14.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 4

For question four (Are there certain factors newlyweds take into consideration when negotiating?) a paired t test was the best statistical test as the level of data was interval. Interval data is when “the distance between any two adjacent points is the same” (Gall et al., 2003, p. 627). This statistical test was also utilized as a comparison was needed between husbands’ and wives’ answers on factors they consider when negotiating with their spouse. This question utilized marital negotiation factors from Scanzoni and Polonko’s (1980) research. Husbands and wives were asked to identify whether factors presented by these researchers were taken into consideration when they negotiated.

In order to understand these data (Table 8) some explanation is needed about how the participants answered these questions. Husbands and wives were asked whether they thought about the 12 factors listed in Table 8, when negotiating with their spouse. They answered this question using a Likert scale from 1 (I always consider this) to 5 (I never consider this). Therefore, means calculated show the average answer for husbands and wives using this five point scale.

An examination of each question revealed that the most highly rated factor for both husbands and wives was the factor “the importance of the issue to you.” Similarly, the factor that both husbands and wives considered the least was their spouse’s race. This may be a result that there was little variation of race in the sample. When examining the order of the means, husbands and wives ranked very
### Table 8

*Comparison of Means Between Husbands’ and Wives’ Negotiation Factors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors of negotiation</th>
<th>Husbands</th>
<th>Wives</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of the issue to you</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>-1.47</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem of your spouse</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past negotiation efforts/bargains</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your self-esteem</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>-1.36</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouses hours worked per week</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse’s job status</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse’s income</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of marriage</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse’s weeks worked per year</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse’s education</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>-1.23</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse’s age</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>-1.97</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse’s race</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
closely in which factors they did and did not consider during negotiating with their spouse. In fact, both husbands and wives answered they take very few of these factors into consideration. Husbands reported 10 out of the 12 factors they sometimes to never considered during negotiation. Wives reported 11 of the 12 factors they sometimes to never consider when negotiating with their spouse.

This research question aimed to examine which, if any, factors newlyweds think about as they are negotiating with their spouse. As a result of this analysis the twelve factors of negotiation can be put in ranking order according to how often the husband or wife take consider them.

Research Question 5

The fifth research question (Are there some rituals that are more important to marital satisfaction?) was answered by the husbands and wives listing which connection rituals were most important to their marital satisfaction. In the pilot study completed before the current data was obtained, participants answered this question with specific examples of rituals they did as a couple to increase marital satisfaction. When the questionnaires were received and analyzed from the study sample, the researchers discovered that study participants did not answer with specific rituals they created with their spouse. Instead, both husbands and wives listed connection rituals found on the survey. Therefore, data analysis consisted of entering the connection rituals the couples identified as increasing their marital satisfaction. Table 9 lists the frequency of connection rituals which were given by the husband and wife. This was
Table 9

*Connection Rituals and Marital Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connection ritual</th>
<th>Husbands’ frequency</th>
<th>Wives’ frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spending time together</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily greeting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedtime routine (before going to sleep)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular talk time</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating meals together</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily goodbye</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning routines (before getting up)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going out on regular dates</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedtime routines (to get ready for bed)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking meals together</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning routines (to get ready for work)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving notes for each other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the best analysis for this research question since numbers reported from participants were too small for further statistical analysis.

Of the 12 connection rituals, the husbands reported "spending time together on a daily basis" as the most important to their marital satisfaction. Rituals that did not contribute to the marital satisfaction of husbands are morning routines (to get ready for work) and leaving notes for their spouse. According to the wives, the two
most important connection rituals contributing to their marital satisfaction were, "regular talk time", and "eating meals together." For the women, "cooking meals together" did not seem important to their marital satisfaction.

Overall marital satisfaction of the couples was calculated from their answers on the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) created by Schumm, Jurich, and Bollman in 1986. This is a three-question measure answered on a seven point Likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 7 (extremely satisfied). When examining the means from the husband and wife (Table 10), both reported being very satisfied in their marriage. The small standard deviations show that answers were consistently high on the Likert scale from all participants. These numbers reflect a ceiling effect, or very high reported levels of marital satisfaction.

Table 10

_Husbands' and Wives' Scores on the KMSS_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KMSS questions</th>
<th>Husband response</th>
<th>Wife response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>M</em></td>
<td><em>SD</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with your marriage?</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with your husband or wife as a spouse?</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband or wife?</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The researchers used a correlation to study the relationship between the frequency of rituals and marital satisfaction, as measured by the KMSS. The goal of this statistical test was to examine whether the amount of rituals completed by the couple was associated with greater marital satisfaction. At the conclusion of the test, the researchers found no relationship between husbands' marital satisfaction and the number of rituals used; however, they did find a small, albeit insignificant, relationship between these two variables for the wives (see Table II).

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Table II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Husbands' rituals</th>
<th>Wives' rituals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husbands' KMSS Score</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives' KMSS Score</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This research question aimed to find rituals that were important to couples' marital satisfaction. The analysis not only listed the connection rituals that were most important to the couple’s marital satisfaction but also gave a correlation between the number of rituals completed and the husbands’ and wives’ scores on the KMSS. Therefore, conclusions can be drawn as to which rituals may be most important to newlywed couples and the correlation it may have on their marital satisfaction.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The focus of this section is to explain the results of the study. Each research question will be discussed in connection with the literature review. Implications, suggestions for marriage and family therapists, and limitations of the study will also be provided.

An explanation of the sample will help put the results of this study into perspective. This homogenous sample consisted of newlywed couples that had been married between six and twenty months, were in their first marriage, and were childless. The average age of the sample was 24 for the husbands and 22 for the wives. This is consistent with state census data where the average age of first marriage in Utah is 23 for the men and 22 for the women (Simmons & Dye, 2004). However, these ages are lower than the national average of first marriages, which is 27 for men and 25 for women (Simmons & Dye). Therefore, replicating this study outside of Utah, where the average age is higher for first marriages may yield different results.

Research Question 1

The first research question examined whether the husband, wife, or both initiated rituals in their relationship at greater frequencies. It was also aimed at learning what processes newlywed couples use when creating and negotiating these rituals.
Leon and Jacobvitz (2003) have stated that men are less likely to initiate and help out with rituals. Conversely, women are more likely to start rituals and continue them (Fiese et al., 1993). The descriptive data gathered from this study, though not statistically significant, showed that the wife is most likely to initiate rituals in the marriage. This is parallel to the literature, where wives have been found to initiate more rituals than husbands (Fiese et al.). However, it must be noted that means comparing husbands’ and wives’ initiation were very close on both the husbands’ and wives’ report. This may mean that while wives are initiating more, the husbands are not far behind.

One reason for the close answers between husbands and wives responses may be their length of marriage. Newlyweds tend to be more ritualistic than couples married for numerous years (Oggins et al., 1993). This may be an outcome of couples who are trying hard to impress their new husband or wife and thus initiate more rituals in the early stages of marriage than they would later on in the relationship. Young couples may also start traditions or rituals early on so they can continue them throughout their marriage.

Another reason for the similar answers of husband and wife may be a result of their culture. Members of the LDS faith have been known to be ritualized in their daily living. For example, leaders in the LDS church have emphasized the gathering of families and couples daily to eat meals together, pray, and study the scriptures (Ludlow, 1992). Therefore, couples that were sampled in this study may perform more rituals than couples who are not members of a highly ritualized culture.
In regards to the process of negotiation new couples engage in, both husbands and wives reported that verbal communication, was the main tool they used. Many of the couples used verbal communication but then reported additional details such as listing pros and cons and listening to both sides equally. The majority of couples stressed that this verbal communication was vital to their negotiation processes. Scanzoni and Polonko (1980) have asserted that communication is extremely important in negotiation and “...good communication...will increase mutual understanding and good will [in a marriage]” (p. 36). Likewise, Laird and Hartman (1998) have stated that as families communicate and create rituals, these strategies strengthen them to accept change with greater ease than other families. Newlywed couples who are able to communicate and negotiate rituals into their marriage may consequently have an easier time when changes occur during transitions through the family life cycle.

Other responses concerning the process of negotiation centered on religious practices. Four husbands and two wives stated that prayer was a process they did together in order to make decisions about their relationship and negotiate potential changes. There were also references to reading the scriptures as a couple and counseling together with extended family for advice. Reasons for responses such as this may be linked to the religious preference of the sample. While not asked, many of the husbands indicated they had been missionaries for the LDS church. While serving this church, missionaries are taught to pray and read scriptures daily. Additionally, young women and men are taught at an early age to pray daily and once married to pray with their family and/or spouse (Ludlow, 1992). This may be one
reason for the emphasis the couples placed on using religious practices to help in
their negotiation and decision making process.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was designed to look at the percentage of rituals
established from the wives’ and husbands’ family of origin. Carter and McGoldrick
(2005), authors of an authoritative work on the family life cycle, emphasize that
marriage is a big step in starting a new stage of life. They stress the importance of
negotiation and mutual understanding of new ideas between the couple. Wolin and
Bennet (1984) have explained that young couples often rely on their family of origin
in creating and implementing rituals into their marriage. The study found that
husbands and wives agreed that the couple took on more rituals of the wives’ family
of origin than the husbands.’ This is consistent with literature that reveals a
generational recursion of rituals passed down through the kin keepers, which in most
cases are the women in the family (Rosenthal & Marshall, 1988).

Individuals who just entered a new marriage may feel a sense of responsibility
to continue rituals seen from their family of origin. At times individuals may feel
pressure to carry on rituals from spouse’s family of origin. This can be a stressful
time as couples negotiate what they will and will not take from their family of origin
(Carter & McGoldrick, 2005). This study found that husbands and wives mutually
identified the greatest number of rituals were interpreted at being from both of their
families. This indicates the same level of differentiation between the husband and
wife. Differentiation is the “capacity to think and reflect, to not respond automatically
to emotional pressures, internal or external. It is the ability to be flexible and act wisely" (Nichols & Schwartz, 2004, p. 121). In other words, the couple is able to be flexible in the creation of rituals and not respond to pressures given by family members or each other.

Research Question 3

The data for Research Question 3 (Are women in fact the kin keepers in their family/relationships?) while not significant, indicated that both husbands and wives agreed that the wife initiates more rituals. Multiple studies have shown that women tend to begin and maintain rituals in their family and marriage, but have never been studied in the realm of newlywed couples (Fiese & Tomcho, 2001; Pett et al., 1992). This study, then, is the first to empirically show that newlywed women also tend to introduce rituals into their marriage. Since rituals have been shown to pass through kin keepers and stay in the family for generations (Rosenthal & Marshall, 1988), the rituals these newlyweds are negotiating now could be passed on for years to come.

Researchers speculate that rituals help create a social meaning which in turn helps families and individuals create an identity for themselves (Berg-Cross et al., 1992; Laird, 1984; Schuck & Bucy, 1997). Consequently, newlyweds who are implementing connection rituals into their marriage are creating an identity for themselves as a couple and individually. According to the family life cycle, transitions into the stage of marriage can be easier if the couple is able to create a shared meaning and identity together. As a result, this process of exploring an identity
both as a couple and individually is very important (McGoldrick, 2005). In experiencing this transition, the majority of women in traditional marriages, may make more identity changes than the men (Berg-Cross, et al.). One example includes a woman giving up her the maiden name and taking on the husband’s appellation. Since the women make more changes during this life transition, they may be more apt to initiate change or suggest new rituals in their marriage. Perhaps this adaptability accounts for the slightly higher scores of women initiating rituals than the men.

Research Question 4

Data gathered about Research Question 4 points our certain factors that newlywed couples take into consideration when negotiating. Statistical tests found no significant difference in a comparison of means. Reasons for this lack of significance could be a result of the questionnaire. Problems with the questionnaire could include poor instructions such that the participants did not understand the questions or how to answer. It may have also been a problem with the model taken from the literature. While Scanzoni and Polonko (1980) completed a search of the literature their model may not be complete in terms of what types of negotiation are specific to newlyweds.

Results on this question are contradictory to the literature given on this subject. Scanzoni and Polonko (1980) were the only researchers that identified factors that effect negotiation, specific to marriage. These researchers, after an extensive literature review, found 12 factors that were most likely to influence how a married couple negotiates. However, this study found that newlywed couples do not often take these 12 items into consideration when negotiating. Wives reported only
one factor while the husbands reported 2 of the 12 factors were considered on a
frequent basis during negotiation.

Although tests ran on these data did not reveal significant differences, mean
scores between husbands and wives provided a ranking order of factors considered
and not considered when negotiating. The factor both husbands and wives reported
the most significant was "importance of the issue to you." Other scores from both the
husbands and wives note that "past bargaining efforts," "your self esteem," and "self-
esteeom of spouse" were also factors taken into consideration. Scanzoni and Polonko
(1980) stated that "[negotiation] is most likely to occur when both parties have
equivalent self-esteem levels, when both ascribe to the same degree of salience to the
issue, and when both have comparable stakes in the outcome" (p. 36). The data seem
to support this research; for participants, self-esteem and the importance of the matter
were paramount to couples' negotiation.

The t tests run on these data found no statistical significance. Husbands and
wives answered very similarly on factors they do and do not take into consideration
when negotiating; the couples individually use the same information, such as the
importance of the issue, and self-esteem of the spouse. Perhaps it is these factors that
help their negotiation since they are considering the same factors in addition to the
issues being negotiated. If the test was significant it would mean different averages;
thus, the couple could not be using the same factors when negotiating. Considering
different factors may or may not be a positive aspect for these couples when
negotiating. Since neither the questionnaire nor the analysis measured whether
thinking about the same factors was positive or negative, conclusions cannot be
drawn to define its importance.

Knowing the factors that are most likely to contribute successfully to
newlyweds' negotiations would benefit many people. Young couples who are
learning how to negotiate with each other may find it easier to communicate once
they address negotiation factors and realize how they affect reasoning skills.
Premarital or marriage counselors can also help couples discover different factors that
may help or hinder negotiation within each couple. Knowing how one spouse views
the other would be a helpful tool for a professional trying to assist a couple in trying
to communicate or negotiate better on any subject. These factors can aid that
discussion in counseling or at home about how the couple negotiates on an individual
basis. Once the couples understand how their spouse negotiates, and the factors that
are taken into consideration, they can work on negotiating better as a couple.

Effective negotiation between couples can have a strong impact on their lives.
Research has found that effective negotiation skills increase marital satisfaction and
stability (Utne, Hatfield, & Traupmann, 1984). Therefore, talking about the process of
negotiation within a marriage can be beneficial in increasing marital satisfaction and
stability.

Research Question 5

Research Question 5 aimed to look at which connection rituals were most
important to marital satisfaction. Doherty (2001) affirms that connection rituals are
significant to marital satisfaction as a time when the couple can relate to issues not
dealing with work, friends, family etc. Data collected showed that the rituals most important to the husbands' satisfaction included spending time together, daily greetings, regular talk time, and eating meals together. Wives' satisfaction was centered on rituals such as regular talk time, eating meals together, and daily goodbyes. Wives' also reported that going out on regular dates influenced their satisfaction.

Doherty (2001) stated that participating in daily connection rituals can lead to marital satisfaction and stability. Participants in this study were asked about rituals that were important to their marital satisfaction. According to the questionnaire there were many connection rituals that were important to husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction. Couples listed only connection rituals found on the survey. Therefore, while the sample reported connection as rituals important to their marital satisfaction, they may not have listed other rituals that were important as well.

In analyzing data collected for this question, the sample itself must be mentioned. As stated before, 100% of the sample belongs to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The culture of this church is considered to be a highly ritualized. Members of this church have been counseled by their leaders to participate in rituals such as talk time and dinner time on a daily basis (Ludlow, 1992). So while the couples in this sample tended to participate in a great many rituals other couples may not do so with the same frequency.

Upon inspecting the data, it is clear to see that for women more rituals were associated with higher marital satisfaction. The wives listed 61 rituals on this section of the questionnaire to only 39 noted by the husbands. This finding supports the
literature which implies women are kin keepers because they create and maintain rituals in their relationships. The couples may also be participating in other rituals that increase their marital satisfaction but did not report them on this questionnaire. This question was not answered by all husbands who participated in this study. Therefore, the results may be skewed from a lack of response.

A correlation was drawn to study and compare the number of rituals initiated by husbands and wives and then correlate that with their report of marital satisfaction. Scores given on the KMSS ranged from 5 (Somewhat satisfied) to a 7 (extremely satisfied) with the majority answering closer to 7. This created a ceiling effect, or kurtosis, where the data is skewed heavily towards the top end of the scale (Howell, 2002). Therefore, when the correlation was completed it showed no significant association because of high scores on the KMSS.

One reason for the high scores on the KMSS may be a result of the couple’s length of marriage. Vangelesti (1991) found that newlywed couples report more satisfaction in the first months of marriage than they do after only two years of marriage. Since couples in the study were married less than two years, marital satisfaction was expected to be quite high. Some couples may have also been answering in the socially expected way in that all newlywed couples are happy (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1984). Therefore, the data may not be completely accurate or representational of all newlyweds.

These findings on marital satisfaction and rituals have implications on education for couples who are having difficulty in their marriage. For example, the correlation showed a relationship between the number of rituals initiated by the
husbands and an increase in the wives marital satisfaction. In fact 20% of the variance was explained by the number of rituals the husband initiates. In other words, the more rituals a husband initiates the more likely his wife’s marital satisfaction will increase. Couples who are struggling with satisfaction in their marriage may find this information useful as they search for ideas to better their relationship. This may also help therapists who are suggesting ideas each spouse can do in order increase satisfaction.

Implications for Marriage and Family Therapy

Families and couples come into therapy for many reasons. A consistent concern for many people entering therapy is the lack of flexibility of their rituals throughout the family life cycle (Schuck & Bucy, 1997). Therapy is often sought when people in transition find that previous rituals are no longer working and their satisfaction levels have decreased (Pett et al., 1992). These traditions or rituals become either under-ritualized or over-ritualized (Bossard & Boll, 1950; Schuck & Bucy; Hecker & Schindler, 1994).

Another issue is the fact that family life cycle rituals marking major points in life are becoming trivialized (Imber-Black & Roberts, 1992). Therefore, couples and families are not receiving the support through life cycle transitions as those who continue to use strength-based rituals, such as spending time together as a family on a regular basis. Joan Laird (1984) also stated family rituals formerly used as a strengthening factor for families are becoming more passive. For example, families today are more likely to watch television rather than playing family games together.
This lack of interaction during family rituals can have an effect on the family's sense of identity and togetherness (Wolin & Bennet, 1984).

Therapists can have a strong influence on clients regarding their concerns about rituals. In fact, Laird and Hartman (1988) found that rituals were a strong conduit for change in therapy. They said “in many cases the [therapist] may help the family design new rituals that give form to a more adaptive structure than existed previously in the family’s paradigm and clarify roles and relationships” (p. 164). When new rituals are tailored specifically to the family dimension and carried out well they can be a helpful intervention for the family (Palazzoli et al., 1977; Radha, 1999). If the family already has healthy rituals in place, the therapist should learn about them and adapt the intervention to help that family through use of rituals (Fiese & Kline, 1993). This exploration into their rituals can be a key to the family’s developmental, existential and interactional issues (Imber-Black, 2005b).

As previous research has shown, women are the kin keepers in the family, but at times feel burdened from this role (Fiese & Tomcho, 2001). This study supports the idea that women are kin keepers in initiating and maintaining rituals, a key piece of knowledge for clinicians helping couples and families. This research shows that this role may accrue to newlywed women rather quickly, at least in the LDS culture. Clinicians working with newlywed couples who are struggling in their marriage can educate the couple about this subject and work on equalizing the role of initiator.

This study did not show a positive relationship between the number of rituals and marital satisfaction. However, the couples were able to identify which rituals helped increase their marital satisfaction. Therefore, communication about these
rituals may be an effective tool for clinicians in helping strengthen troubled relationships (Stahman & Hiebert, 1984). If clinicians can help couples determine what rituals increase their marital satisfaction and communicate those in an effective way, clients may see an increase of trust and stability in their marriage (Utne et al., 1984).

Finally, there were ideas on negotiation presented from this study that could be useful for clinicians and/or premarital therapists. This study showed that not only were couples more likely to use verbal communication when negotiating, but also that their behaviors were consistent with their reported religious beliefs. Therefore, using the client’s religiosity may be helpful when counseling them on ritual creation. If a client is already participating in religious rituals they may be more likely to create rituals dealing with their marriage and family (Fiese & Tomcho, 2001). Clinicians can also use the factors of negotiation found in this study to help newlywed couples recognize how they communicate individually so they can negotiate better as a couple.

This research can be incorporated into many marriage and family therapy models and ideas. Some examples would include behavioral marital therapy (BMT), premarital education plan (PREP), and experiential therapy. All of these approaches stress the importance of communication between couples. It is through this communication that couples learn to resolve conflicts, modify negative behavior, and communicate effectively (Becvar & Becvar, 2003; Gottman & Notarius; 2002; Nichols & Schwartz, 2004). These resources can help therapists not only assess clients, but can guide creating treatment plans.
John Gottman stated that clinicians dealing with marriage should look at the processes the couple goes through when making decisions, and when resolving conflicts. He suggests that the process each couple goes through is essential to learn to help couples with their communication skills (Gottman & Notarius, 2002). This study introduced ideas into the process newlywed couples experience while negotiating. Using Gottman's ideas, a therapist could learn this process from their client and help the couple with their communication. Therefore, talking about the process of negotiation would guide not only assessment but future treatment goals and intervention ideas for the therapist. The communication process could also help the couples be clearer about when and how they negotiate.

Boundaries, as defined in the marriage and family therapy field, are the rules that define who we are as a person (Nichols & Schwartz, 2004). Each person who has created an individual identity has the ability to create boundaries for themselves. A problem may arise in the early stages of marriage as two people are trying to create a new identity as a couple. Rituals have been known to help families create identity and married couples to create an identity or shared meaning (McGoldrick, 2005; Wolin & Bennet, 1984). Therefore, as couples create a shared meaning they are also creating boundaries, or defining who they are, as an individual as well as a couple. Rituals have the ability to clarify roles within a relationship and therefore can help with the creation of boundaries for the couple (Imber-Black, 2005a). Couples who have created a shared identity and boundaries may utilize the skills used in their early marriage to guide them through future life cycle transitions.
Limitations

Limitations of this study include the small sample size, which was too small to generalize findings to a larger population. Additionally, because the number of couples only equaled twenty, it was difficult to accurately perform statistical tests that might show significance between variables. Therefore, a lack of statistical significance existed for the tests run in the study. Problems with coding also created a problem as the small amount of data could not be changed in order to run certain statistical tests, namely an ANOVA.

Another limiting factor was the homogenous sample (all LDS, all but 2 Caucasian). While these demographics are somewhat normal for Northern Utah, they render findings from the study ungeneralizable to the larger public. Results are ungeneralizable to the public as samples from other areas may not have such a highly religious population. Since religious people have been shown to be more ritualistic, areas that are not highly concentrated with religious people may yield different results.

Another possible limitation is the environment where the participants completed the questionnaire. While the informed consent explicitly stated that each spouse was to take it independently of each other since the questionnaires were completed at home, no conclusions can be drawn as to if this rule was followed. The very close numbers may indicate high levels of marital satisfaction, or that they conversed with each other as they filled out the questionnaire.
Future Research

The current research raised a number of issues that could inform future research. These include methodological issues such as sample, measurement, and design possibilities.

Conducting research specific to gender in terms of negotiation would allow a more in-depth analysis of whether or not newlywed husbands and wives fall into the same gender roles as found by past research. For example, research has shown that in terms of negotiation women demand and the husband withdraws (Kurdek, 1995). This research would need to include a more varied population in terms of ethnicity, and religious preference to allow for generalizability.

Past research has shown that effective communication can be a contributor to greater marital stability and satisfaction. Although this study did not find a positive correlation between negotiation and marital satisfaction, more research should be conducted to verify the strength of the association. Research in this area may be another field of importance to clinicians who work with couples struggling with conflict resolutions or negotiation problems.

This study presented the idea of women as kin keepers in their families and showed that newlywed women are playing the role of kin keeper of rituals in their relationships. Past research has studied women ranging from their middle age to women who have “seasoned marriages” and has shown that they are the kin keepers as well. However, no research has been done on the gap between newlywed couples and middle aged women. A longitudinal study looking at women starting in the early
stages of their marriage and following them until they reached their mid-thirties could tell us a great deal more about rituals and the part women play in creating and maintaining them.

The study specifically asked the couples if they were satisfied with their marriage. However, they were not asked about their satisfaction with their negotiation process and ideas they and their spouse had about negotiation. Future research should examine the correlation between couples satisfaction with their process of negotiation and their marital satisfaction.

Finally, this study would be interesting to replicate, but change the mode of data gathering. For example, instead of a pencil and paper questionnaire an interview complete with follow up questions would allow a more in depth look at the process of negotiation. Also, if the couples were to keep a log or journal daily on rituals initiated by themselves or spouse would allow for more accurate numbers in terms of who initiates rituals on a more frequent basis.

Conclusion

Rituals have been shown to be a strengthening factor to families and marriages in creating identity, and increasing marital and family satisfaction (Berg-Cross et al., 1992; Bossard & Boll, 1950; Fiese et al., 1993). The more ritualized the marriage, research poses, the higher the marital satisfaction (Berg-Cross et al.). Although this study did not find a positive correlation between the number of rituals and marital satisfaction there is a possibility of future research discovering much more.
Although not all of the research questions were supported by significant analyses, some useful information was found. Newly married couples are in a transition period from leaving their family of origin and creating a new identity with their spouse (McGoldrick, 2005). Couples in this stage often create rituals based on their family of origin. This study has shown that couples take the majority of their rituals from the women’s family of origin.

Other findings include that women in newlywed couples, as seen in other research, initiate rituals more than men. In addition, likely factors of negotiation and the process of negotiation that newlywed couples go through were discussed. These ideas can aid marriage and family therapists as they counsel newly married or premarital couples in order to increase communication and awareness of these subjects. Rituals can also be an avenue for change for families and couples in therapy. More research is needed to find the direct correlation between connection rituals, marital satisfaction, and the strengthening effect it can have on couples in therapy.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Appendix A: Informed Consent for Participants
Marriage and Therapy Program  
Utah State University  

INFORMED CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION  

Thank you for your consideration in participating in this research project. The purpose of this study is to examine how newlyweds negotiate rituals into their marriage. This study will be looking at a specific type of rituals called connection rituals. These rituals are times during the day when spouses spend time and pay attention to each other. Some examples include greeting and goodbyes between spouses or times when the couple sits and talks with each other regularly. Our study aims to examine these rituals, how couples negotiate these rituals, and if these rituals have an affect on marital satisfaction. Research has never looked specifically at connection rituals in newlywed marriages, therefore this study is groundbreaking in what we are trying to accomplish.  

By participating in this study you understand that there are potential risks involved. You will be asked to fill out a questionnaire dealing with relationship, psychological, and/or emotional issues that may be distressing to you. However, the benefits of participation include learning about marital satisfaction and connection rituals you and your partner take part in.  

You will be asked to fill out a questionnaire that may take anywhere from fifteen to thirty minutes. There are two questionnaires, one for each spouse. Please fill these out separate from one another and without discussing while you complete them. An addressed and stamped envelope is provided. When you are done with the questionnaires please send both of them in the same envelope.  

Please understand that your participation is completely voluntary. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with material presented you can withdraw without any negative consequences.  

Any information regarding the questionnaire will be kept confidential from anyone not involved in the research project. All questionnaires will be kept in a locked file cabinet at the Family Life Center and no names will be used in the analysis of the data. When the study is complete all materials will be destroyed.  

To thank you for helping in this study all participants’ names will be put in a raffle for a fifty-dollar gift certificate to Hastings. In order for you to be eligible for this raffle we will need some identifiable information. In addition to signing the informed consent you will be asked to provide an email address or phone number where you can be reached. This information will be used only if your name is drawn in the raffle. This information will in no way be a part of the analysis of your questionnaire to maintain confidentiality and will be destroyed after the study is completed. If you are not interested in being a part of the raffle you may send your questionnaires in without contact information.  

By returning a completed survey you:  
1) Understand what has been presented in this informed consent in terms of possible risks and benefits of participating in this research study  
2) Give consent for your questionnaire to be used in data analysis.  

Please contact Scot Allgood (435-797-7433) or Rachel Davis (435-797-7430) if you have any questions.
Appendix B: Questionnaire and Demographics Form
Connection Rituals

Instructions: Please identify how *many times* a day these various types of connection rituals are initiated by the husband, by the wife, or by both of you. If you and your spouse do not participate in some of these rituals leave the space blank.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connection Ritual</th>
<th>Initiated by Husband</th>
<th>Initiated by Wife</th>
<th>Initiated by both of you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Daily greeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Daily goodbyes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Morning routines (before getting up)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Morning routines (to get ready for work)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Bedtime routines (before going to sleep)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Bedtime routines (to get ready for bed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Regular talk time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Cooking meals together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Eating meals together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Spending time together daily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Leaving notes for each other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) Going out on regular dates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13) Not all rituals are equal in promoting marital happiness. Please list the specific daily connection rituals that are *most* important to your marital happiness.
14) In thinking about the rituals that are most important to your marital happiness, what percentage was copied:

- From the wife's family of origin _____ %
- From the husband's family of origin _____ %
- Combination from both spouses family of origin _____ %

**Marital Satisfaction**

**Instructions:** Please read over the following questions on marital satisfaction and check the box that best fits your response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Extremely Satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15) How satisfied are you with your marriage?  
[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ] 6 [ ] 7

16) How satisfied are you with your husband or wife as a spouse?  
[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ] 6 [ ] 7

17) How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband or wife?  
[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ] 6 [ ] 7
Negotiation

To what extent do the factors listed below influence “who gets their way more often” when you and your spouse are negotiating. Please read over each item and circle the number (1-5) that best reflects your response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor of Negotiation</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18) Spouse’s age</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19) Spouse’s race</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20) Length of marriage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21) Spouse’s education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22) Spouse’s job status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23) Spouse’s income</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24) Spouse’s hours worked per week</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25) Spouse’s weeks worked per year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26) Self esteem of your spouse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27) Your self esteem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28) Importance of the issue to you</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29) Past negotiation efforts/bargains</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30) Briefly describe how you and your spouse negotiate connection rituals into your marriage. (Continue on the back of this page if you need more space.)
Demographics

Instructions: Please complete the following about you as a person.

31) Gender
   □ Male
   □ Female

32) Age _____ years

33) Length of marriage _______ (months)

34) Length of courtship (dating to marriage) _______ (months)

35) What is the highest level of education you have completed? _____ (years)
   (12=high school)

36) How do you describe yourself?
   □ African American/black
   □ Asian/Pacific Islander
   □ Hispanic/Latino
   □ Native American/Eskimo/Aleut
   □ Caucasian/White
   □ Other (Please Specify) _______________________

37) What is your religious affiliation?
   □ Mormon
   □ Protestant
   □ Catholic
   □ None
   □ Other (Please Specify) _______________________

38) How often do you attend religious services?
   □ Never, or almost never
   □ Occasionally
   □ One to three time per month
   □ One or more times per week
   □ Don’t know

39) How religious would you say you are?
   □ Not at all religious
   □ Slightly religious
   □ Moderately religious
   □ Very religious