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# Interpersonal Rituals in Marriage and Adult Friendship

Carol J.S. Bruess and Judy C. Pearson

*The purpose of this study was to examine inductively types of interpersonal rituals in marriages and adult friendship and assess ritual enactment among friendship types (males' and females' same-sex, cross-sex, and couple friendships). Twenty married couples were interviewed, and 79 couples completed open-ended questionnaires about both their marriage and friendship rituals. From their reports, a typology of seven marriage ritual types (two with subcategories including seven total subtypes) and a typology of six friendship ritual types (two with subcategories including seven total subtypes) were developed. The typology of marriage rituals with subtypes in parentheses include: Couple- Time Rituals (Enjoyable Activities, Togetherness Rituals, Escape Episodes), Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Rituals (Favorites, Private Codes, Play Rituals, and Celebration Rituals), Daily Routines and Tasks, Intimacy Expressions, Communication Rituals, Patterns/Habits/Mannerisms, and Spiritual Rituals. The typology of friendship rituals with subtypes in parentheses include: Social/Fellowship Rituals (Enjoyable Activities, Getting Together Rituals, Established Events, Escape Episodes), Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Rituals (Celebration Rituals, Play Rituals, Favorites), Communication Rituals, Share/Support/Vent Rituals, Tasks/Favors, and Patterns/Habits/Mannerisms. Analyses further suggest that certain types of ritual enactment occur more frequently in certain types of friendship. **Key words:** Interpersonal Rituals, Friendships, Marriage*

Rituals were originally the domain of anthropologists, particularly those interested in religious types (Durkheim, 1965). Ritual in this form connotes magic, myth, taboo, totemism, and other mystical practices (Bossard & Boll, 1950). However, rituals—stylized, repetitive, communicative enactments that pay homage to a valued object, person, or phenomenon—are common and occur routinely in relationships (Bossard & Boll, 1950; Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Rituals are significant in family functioning (Bossard & Boll, 1950; Cheal, 1988; Wolin & Bennett, 1984) and in the well-being of other personal and social relationships (Baxter, 1987; Oring, 1984). They are also important sites of cultural and relational understandings. The purpose of the research reported herein was to examine the forms and functions of rituals in two of our most salient personal relationships: marriage and adult friendship. In many ways, rituals are valuable dynamics in personal relationships and represent an important type of everyday communicative activity. Rituals are relational enactments, as they manage inherent dialectical tensions and represent a type of relational cultural expression. In these ways, they heighten our understanding of everyday, often mundane, communicative activities in personal relationships.

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## Form and Function of Interpersonal Rituals

Among scholars, the concept of "ritual" has been variously defined and understood. Wolin and Bennett (1984) note: "Ritual itself is an elusive concept, on the one hand transparent and conspicuous in its enactment, on the other, subtle and mysterious in its boundaries and effects on participants" (p. 401). Bossard and Boll (1950) view family rituals as prescribed and repetitive patterns of behavior occurring in the family setting and having an emotional impact on family members (e.g., the evening dinner ritual or the annual reading of a holiday story). Rituals continue to be defined in terms of their symbolic repetitive qualities that are jointly enacted and shared by relational members, hold special meaning among members (Allen, 1993; Meredith, 1985; Wolin & Bennett, 1984), and are directed toward people or phenomena that are highly valued (Cheal, 1988). For purposes of the present research, rituals were defined as repetitive, communicative enactments that pay homage to some sacred person or object (Goffman, 1967).

Interpersonal rituals are important sites of relational functioning. In families, rituals serve several functions. Bossard and Boll (1950) suggest: "Just as ritual has been identified as the core of the culture of a people, so it seems to us to be the hard core of family life" (p. 18). Rituals create intergenerational bonds and preserve a sense of meaningfulness (Schvaneveldt & Lee, 1983). They transmit family values, attitudes, and beliefs (Bossard & Boll, 1950), are related to family strength (Meredith, Abbott, Lamanna, & Sanders, 1989), provide members with a sense of belonging (Wolin, Bennett, Noonan, & Teitelbaum, 1980), serve to bond and promote closeness (Meredith, 1985), help families maintain and perpetuate a paradigm or shared belief systems (Reiss, 1982), create and maintain family cohesion (Wolin & Bennett, 1984), and provide means for maintaining family contact (Meredith, 1985). They even protect alcoholic families from the generational recurrence of alcoholism (Wolin, Bennett, Noonan, & Teitelbaum, 1980). Bossard and Boll (1950) perhaps best capture the importance of family rituals: "Just as those religions with the most elaborate and pervasive rituals best retain the allegiance of their members, so families that do things together prove to be the most stable ones" (foreword).

Rituals appear to serve important functions in other interpersonal relationships as well, although relevant research is scant. "Dyadic traditions" (Oring, 1984), playful rituals (Betcher, 1987; Lutz, 1982; Oring, 1984), and interaction routines in relationships (Baxter, 1987; Dindia & Baxter, 1987) have emerged. Oring (1984) provides insight into rituals suggesting that dyadic traditions, ritual being one type, facilitate members' shared understanding of immediate experiences, symbolize intimacy, and create an historically significant shared sense of the relationship. However, as Oring himself notes, these conclusions were derived solely from personal anecdotes. Baxter's (1987) examination of relational symbols revealed that jointly enacted activities and interaction routines—each a type of the relational symbol "Behavioral Action" and each a form of an interpersonal ritual—provided relational members with fun and stimulation, opportunities for sharing, and indications of intimacy. Berg-Cross, Daniels, and Carr (1992) offer some of the only direct, empirical insights into the importance of rituals in marriage. Their study of divorced and married women revealed that in successful marriages couples engage in a broad range of rituals.

## Theoretical Perspectives on Rituals

Central to this research were the theoretical perspectives frequently adopted by communication scholars in attempts to understand relational functioning and maintenance. Each of these perspectives—the dialectical perspective, relational cultural perspective, and Play Theory—provides a frame for exploring ritual as a significant everyday dynamic of relationships and their maintenance. As communication researchers have increasingly turned their attention to maintenance processes (e.g., see Dindia & Canary, 1993a, 1993b; Canary & Stafford, 1994), specific interest has been shown in the study of day-to-day, or less-than-strategic, aspects of relationships (Duck, 1990a; Hays, 1989). These mundane, routine, and recurring conversations and interactions provide a window through which to view maintenance processes as they unfold in real-life relationships (Duck, 1990a). Daily interactions are the substance of relationships (Duck, Rutt, Hoy-Hurst, & Strejc, 1991); everyday communication perpetuates their existence (Duck, 1990a). Berger and Kellner (1964) recognize that trivial rituals of conversation create and maintain the reality of the marital relationship. Common family rituals surround mundane interactions, such as children's homework and bedtime, mealtime, house cleaning, and bathroom routines (Bossard & Boll, 1950; Schvaneveldt & Lee, 1983). Everyday, ritualistic conversations serve as reality creation and maintenance in *all* types of relationships (Duck, 1994).

The dialectical tradition (Baxter, 1988, 1990a, 1990c, 1993, 1994; Montgomery, 1993) informs our understanding of ritual in relational maintenance. Dialectical relational tensions represent the pull of contradictory forces experienced by the parties to relationships (Baxter, 1988). While dialectical tensions are inherent in relating, managing them is crucial to maintenance (Hause, 1994). The multifaceted nature of rituals (Braithwaite & Baxter, 1995; Roberts, 1988) makes them particularly significant in the maintenance of relationships. Because of their “symbolic density,” rituals enable people to cope simultaneously with dialectical oppositions (Braithwaite & Baxter, 1995), such as novelty and predictability, openness and closedness, and distance and closeness (Baxter, 1988, 1990a). Wise (1986) and others (e.g., Boyce, Jensen, James, & Peacock, 1983; Wolin & Bennett, 1984) have long recognized that rituals and routines offer a sense of predictability and order in central aspects of life experience. Rituals can also provide novelty, as they are characteristically ephemeral, often playful, and adaptable (Betcher, 1987; Meredith et al., 1989; Oring, 1984). Rituals also function in the “autonomy-intimacy” struggle (Baxter, 1988, 1990a) by creating activities of intimacy, moments of autonomous expression, and an “openness-closedness” tension, as each party both reveals and conceals parts of him or herself and the relationship.

Marital and friendship relationships are viewed in this study as microcultures in which relational identities are products of symbolic enactments within the relationship (Baxter, 1987, 1990b, 1990c; McCall, 1988; Wood, 1982). A relational cultural perspective assumes that unique relational identities are constructed and maintained through the symbolic practices of the partners (Baxter, 1990c). Baxter (1987, 1992) and others (Bell & Healey, 1992; Bruess & Pearson, 1993; Hopper, Knapp, & Scott, 1981; Oring, 1984) have identified symbolic enactments, such as idiomatic expressions, playful interactions, traditions, and symbols, as manifestations of relational cultures. Ritual, a type of relational symbol (Baxter, 1987), is one manifestation of

unique communicative systems within relational cultures and emerges in such forms as play (Baxter, 1992; Betcher, 1987), idiomatic expressions (Baxter, 1992; Bell & Healey, 1992; Betcher, 1987; Bruess & Pearson, 1993), and others explored in the present research.

Bossard and Boll (1950) observed long ago the need to view families as cultures and the rituals they create as cultural enactments. They believe families have unique and distinctive ways of living that constitute the family culture and assert: "Ritual may be the one best starting point for the study of family culture . . . just as it has long been recognized as the best point from which to begin the study of religion" (p. 192). Recently, in their examination of the marriage renewal vow as a ritual event, Braithwaite and Baxter (1995) reveal how rituals function to maintain a unique and private relationship culture.

Rituals are dynamic social (re)enactments by which relational partners co-create the identity of their relationship, a shared history, and a pattern of everyday, mundane interactions. Rituals contribute to the viability of relationships by (re)presenting symbols—the inherent uniqueness—of the relationship, and by managing dialectical exigencies. Importantly, rituals provide researchers with a valuable resource for understanding the communication processes that embody relationships. "Studying ritual," Braithwaite (1995) observed, "allows us to focus on both the everyday and nonusual aspects of communication in relational life" (p. 2). To date, however, a complete understanding of ritual development and enactment beyond the family, and an understanding of relationships as unique communicative practices in general, is lacking. As Baxter (1990c) observed: "Our understanding of uniqueness has barely begun" (p. 9). For these reasons, the study reported below was undertaken.

### Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine the forms of rituals in the interpersonal relationships of friends and marital dyads and thereby possibly to extend our current understanding of interpersonal ritualizing. Of particular interest were rituals in adult friendships and marriages. Except for indirect glimpses, very little is known about what types of rituals are enacted in adult friendships and marriages. Researchers concerned with family rituals (e.g., Wolin & Bennett, 1984) suggest that they vary considerably in form and type. Because of the unique quality of rituals within dyadic relationships (Oring, 1984; Simmel, 1950), extant family literature offers few clues concerning rituals in other interpersonal, dyadic relationships of interest. Thus, the following research question was posed:

RQ: What are the types of interpersonal rituals reported in friendships and marital relationships?

Friendships and marital relationships have unique interactional characteristics and relational qualities (Fitzpatrick, 1988; Fitzpatrick & Badinski, 1985; Hays, 1988). However, as microcultures (Baxter, 1990c; Wood, 1982), both reflect considerable ritualized interactions.

#### *Friendship*

For purposes of this study, friendship was defined as a "voluntary, close, and . . . enduring social relationship" (Bell, 1981, p. 12). Friendships represent significant

relationships in the lives of both children and adults (Hays, 1988). Friendship in adulthood is a particularly unique type of social and personal relationship. The characteristics, importance, and functions of friendship in adulthood are different from those at other life stages (Dickens & Perlman, 1981). Friendships in adulthood are influenced by cognitive development, employment status, and major life events, such as marriage and parenthood (Dickens & Perlman, 1981). Overall, contact with friends declines during the adult stage of the life-cycle (Dickens & Perlman, 1981). The importance of friendship may decline after adolescence (McCandless, 1970) or may change in function and expectation (Reisman & Shorr, 1978), but most researchers agree that friendships remain significant relationships in adulthood even though they generally play less important roles and are less intense than other relationships and obligations (e.g., Bott, 1971; Reisman, 1981). Research, however, has focused almost exclusively on young adults, particularly college students and may not, therefore, apply to friendship in middle and later life (Aries & Johnson, 1983; Dickens & Perlman, 1981; Hays, 1988).

Gender is an important consideration when studying adult friendships. Some researchers suggest that the same-sex friendships of men and women may be qualitatively different (e.g., Bell, 1981; Booth, 1972; Booth & Hess, 1974; Caldwell & Peplau, 1982). As males and females define and enact intimacy differently (Wood & Inman, 1993), their interaction patterns with friends often vary (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982). Women's intimate bonds are characterized by talking, disclosing, and sharing (Aries & Johnson, 1983; Baxter & Wilmot, 1985a; Bell, 1981). Men's relationships are fundamentally located within shared activities and common interests (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985a; Bell, 1981; Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Rawlins, 1992; Weiss & Lowenthal, 1975; Wood & Inman, 1993). In light of these differences, it seems reasonable to presume that males and females also create and engage in different types of rituals with their same-sex friends.

Platonic, cross-sex friendships also have unique relationship characteristics (Hays, 1988; Hause, 1991). Although respondents in Davis and Todd's (1982) study reported their cross-sex friendships to be more valued and intimate than same-sex friendships, later research revealed the opposite (Rose, 1985); cross-sex friendships were valued less and provided fewer rewards according to both women and men. Similarly, Rubin (1983) found that cross-sex friendships often fail to meet expectations and may even be a threat to marriage.

Friendship among couples, or "couple friends," naturally develop as individuals' networks of relationships become shared (Milardo, 1982). Couple friends are defined as "people who [sic] the couple views as 'our friends' and with whom the couple socializes" (Bendtschneider, 1994, p. 5). The friends shared by a couple tend to be other couples, as opposed to single individuals (Babchuk, 1965; Bendtschneider & Duck, 1993), and to be more highly valued than are interactions with individual friends (Bendtschneider, 1994). Couple friendships are desirable because they reduce the threat of an individual friendship on a couple's relationship (Rubin, 1983). Shared friendships can assist in the maintenance of a couple's own relationship by providing dyadic support and opportunities for social comparison (Bott, 1971; Milardo, 1982). The conversations of couple friends are characteristically less intimate than those for other types of close friendships (Bendtschneider, 1994; Bendtschneider & Duck, 1993). However, both husbands and wives report high

degrees of satisfaction in their friendships with other couples (Bendtschneider, 1994). Couples maintain their friendships most frequently by sharing in "joint activities" (Bendtschneider, 1994) and by maintaining proximity. As Bendtschneider (1994) notes: "Couples appear to maintain their shared networks of friends by simply being together" (p. 85). As a result of general differences in the communicative behavior associated with the various categories of friendship mentioned above, the following research question was suggested:

RQ<sub>2</sub>: Are there differences in the types of interpersonal rituals reported in males' and females' same-sex friendships, cross-sex friendships, and in couple friendships?

### *Marriage*

Marriage has been studied since the 1930's (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989) and continues to be a fascinating context for communication scholars to investigate. As expressed by Fuchs (1983):

Marriage is one of the oldest, most universal, and most distinctive of human institutions. There is no record of any society, however simple its economic and political system, that does not have marriage as one of the key elements of its social structure. (p. 140)

Because marriage is a centerpiece in the lives of many individuals and society, understanding how to have a satisfying marriage—and maintain it—has been an important topic of investigation (e.g., Baxter & Dindia, 1990; Boland & Follingstad, 1987; Dindia & Baxter, 1987; Fitzgerald, McKellar, Lener, & Copans, 1985; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Pearson, 1992, 1993; Spanier & Lewis, 1980). Marriage is a private sphere, according to Berger and Kellner (1964), in which rituals serve to validate a shared system of meaning. Inasmuch as marriage and friendship are qualitatively different types of relationships and may be maintained in different ways (Wiseman, 1986; Davis & Todd, 1982), the following research question was posed:

RQ<sub>3</sub>: Are there different types of rituals reported within friendships and marital relationships?

## Method

### *Pilot Study*

Prior to undertaking the present investigation, a pilot study was conducted to determine whether interpersonal rituals are real phenomena to participants and to determine the best ways to solicit information about daily ritualistic patterns. The primary goals of the pilot study were to test and refine the interview schedule, acquire examples of rituals, and establish probe points for later interviews. The pilot study consisted of a total of five interviews with married couples. Four of the interviews were conducted face-to-face; one interview was conducted via telephone. In light of the success of the pilot interviews, the data and sample from the pilot were added to, and employed as, data in the actual study.

### *Participants*

Couples were obtained through a network sampling method (Granovetter, 1976). Undergraduate students in communication classes were asked both to solicit married couples of all ages as potential interviewees and to distribute questionnaires. They did this voluntarily and with prior approval of a Human Subjects Committee. Of the

330 questionnaires given to students for distribution, 79 completed surveys were returned for a return rate of 24%.

Students also provided the names of 39 potential interviewees. The 15 couples actually interviewed for this study (in addition to the five pilot interviews already completed) were randomly selected from the entire pool of potential interview candidates. In all, 20 married couples ( $n = 40$ ) participated in joint interviews with the researcher about their marriage and friendship rituals. Sixteen were face-to-face interviews; four interviews were conducted over the phone. Interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to 4 hours and averaged approximately one and one-half hours.

Participating couples were married an average of 19 years, with a range from 1 month to 53 years. Participants varied in age from 23 to 79. Wives were from 24 to 78, with an average age of 42. Husbands were from 23 to 79 and averaged approximately 50. Couples in these interviews had anywhere from zero to five children, with an average of two children per couple.

### *Data Collection Procedures*

*The interview.* The interview schedule included questions that probed the rituals couples enact currently or had enacted previously in their marriage and in their joint and/or individual friendships. Following a general introduction that included a large variety of ritual examples, interviewees were encouraged to think of any rituals enacted within their marriage and to describe each in as much detail as possible in respect to a variety of questions about its origin, length of existence, and function(s). This continued until they could not think of any other rituals. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher and constitute part of the data set for the study. Information from the anonymous questionnaires was coupled with interview data to form the complete data set.

*The survey.* The goal of the survey was to acquire a larger body of information about ritual types than could be obtained from interviews alone. The two separate questionnaires used in this study consisted of open-ended questions regarding the types of interpersonal rituals enacted in the participants' marriages and friendships. The marriage survey was as follows:

Below, please list and EXPLAIN in DETAIL all of the "routines" (or "rituals") that you and your spouse have developed either presently or have had in the past. Some of these routines might be very silly and trivial (such as regularly tugging on each other's ears to say "I love you") or they might involve elaborate planning (such as taking a "get away weekend" every fall).

We are interested in "routines" (or "rituals") that you and your spouse *repeatedly* do together, or for one another. For instance, other couples have reported that they regularly call each other during the day, go to particular restaurants or other favorite spots together, have a ritual of eating out on certain nights, take walks together at certain times, or regularly purchase a special treat for one another which has special meaning.

Another couple reported regularly playing cribbage and drinking a cocktail together which served as a prelude to love making. Another couple regularly planned "adult dinners" after the children were in bed; they explained that no food was on the floor, they ate slow, were able to talk with one another, and shared a glass of wine.

Please describe ANY routine (or "ritual") shared with your spouse no matter how small or large it is. After explaining each routine (or "ritual") completely, please respond to the questions which follow it.



*Routine #1:*

Please explain the routine/ritual in detail:

- a. How did it originate?
- b. How long did it last? Or if still happening, how long ago did it start?
- c. Has it had any effect on your relationship? Does it serve a purpose? Please explain.

The original survey included five additional spaces for reporting "routines" and additional space for reporting answers.

The survey for friendship differed from the one above in the ritual examples offered. Examples of those included were: Always sending the "silliest" cards, watching certain TV programs together, planning annual trips together, calling each other regularly, or exercising together. The survey also asked that respondents identify the type of friend with whom each ritual was enacted (same, opposite, or couple friend).

Questions similar to those asked in the interview were included on the surveys; however, to avoid confusing respondents and discouraging participation, the questionnaire was simplified as much as possible. Numerous examples were included in the instructions to assist couples in understanding the variety of forms of rituals and to help them think about the many different types of rituals they potentially enact in their relationships. Couples were encouraged to retain the questionnaires for a few days or a week as they observed the rituals in their relationships and were able to remember others.

Respondents returned the completed questionnaires using the pre-addressed, postage-paid envelopes provided by the researcher. Confidentiality was assured. Responses were identified by the identification number of the responsible student. Students did not receive extra-credit for their help.

*Data Analysis*

The first research question was answered by the development of two typologies of interpersonal rituals: one each for marital and friendship relationships. The two emergent typologies were not identical, which suggests that interpersonal rituals vary as a function of the type of relationship.

Development of the category schemes was based on Bulmer's (1979) two-stage process of analytic induction, which has been used successfully by relationship researchers who had as their goal the development of typologies for understanding relational schema (Baxter, 1987; Baxter, 1992; Baxter & Wilmot, 1985b). The process involves developing categories of phenomena based on a sub-sample of the data then tested against the remaining data set. Modifications are made as needed in the analytic categories.

*Coding Procedures and Reliability Analysis*

The principal researcher and one additional coder (a married layperson) used Bulmer's (1979) method to develop basic categories of ritual types from reports in the interviews and the questionnaires. For ease of grouping, each reported instance of a ritual from the pilot study and from interviews was typed on two sets of separate index cards. Those rituals reported in respondents' marriages were examined first.

In first-stage coding, the rituals reported by interviewees were sorted independently by the researcher and the coder on the basis of perceived similarities. After

independently completing initial categorization and assigning a temporary label to each category, the coder and the researcher met to review the outcome of the sorting procedure for the marriage rituals and discussed a tentative category scheme to be used in the next stage of coding. They then tested the tentative category scheme by sorting data from the survey respondents according to derived categories. After second-stage coding was completed independently by both the researcher and the coder, they met again and revised the scheme into its final form. The emergent typologies of marital and friendship rituals provided an answer to the first half of Research Question 1: What types of rituals are reported in marital relationships?

To answer the second half of the question, rituals reported in friendship, the coder and the researcher used the marriage category scheme to code all friendship rituals reported both in the interviews and on the questionnaires. Rituals that could not be adequately classified according to the existing marital ritual typology were assessed for their potential as types of interpersonal rituals unique to friendship relationships. Specifically, the decision to develop a new category was made when a significant number of rituals were "left-over." For example, the marital category "Spiritual Rituals" was not adequate to capture the types of rituals in the friendship ritual category eventually identified as "Share/Support/Vent," even though some of the rituals in this friendship category are indeed spiritual. The new categories agreed upon by both the researcher and the coder were considered interpersonal rituals exclusive to friendship. The reliability of the coding was assessed after first-stage coding of marital rituals. Intercoder agreement was at 82%, and Cohen's Kappa was  $K = .81$ .

## Results

The first part of Research Question 1 addresses ritual types in marriage. Seven major types of marital rituals (and seven total subtypes) were identified on the basis of responses of all 99 participating married couples. Of the 671 rituals reported by couples, 300 were reported by the 79 couples responding to the survey (an additional 14 of which were excluded because they were explicitly "family" rituals involving children). Another 371 rituals were reported by the 20 couples participating via interviews. The average number of rituals reported by survey participants was four per couple, compared with an average of 19 rituals per couple in interviews.

All 671 rituals were codable into seven emergent major ritual types or subtypes. The types, subtypes, and their frequencies are displayed in Table 1. Of the 671 rituals, the most frequently reported types of rituals represent the superordinate ritual category *Couple-Time Rituals*, or 39.6 percent (266) of all rituals, and is divided into three sub-categories: Enjoyable Activities, Togetherness Rituals, and Escape Episodes.

*Enjoyable Activities* accounted for almost 23 percent (154) of all marriage rituals (58 percent of all Couple-Time Rituals). Enjoyable Activities are rituals involving pastimes that relate to pleasure, leisure, and/or recreation. This type of ritual includes, most often, travel, sports, hobbies, games, movies, and socializing, although there are many others. Rituals of enjoyable activities are illustrated by a couple who reported "bowling together on Tuesday nights" and one reporting canoeing trips they enjoy taking during the summer months.

*Togetherness Rituals* accounted for 12.1 percent (81) of all reported marital rituals and 30 percent of the Couple-Time Ritual superordinate category. Togetherness

TABLE 1  
 FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGE OF MARITAL RITUAL TYPES

Marriage Ritual Type	Frequency	Percentage
Couple-Time Rituals	266	39.64%
Enjoyable Activities	(154)	(22.9%)
Togetherness Rituals	(81)	(12.1%)
Escape Episodes	(31)	(4.6%)
Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Rituals	129	19.2%
Favorites	(48)	(7.2%)
Private Codes	(41)	(6.1%)
Play	(27)	(4.0%)
Celebration Rituals	(13)	(1.9%)
Daily Routines and Tasks	88	13.1%
Intimacy Expressions	83	12.4%
Communication Rituals	50	7.5%
Patterns/Habits/Mannerisms	38	5.7%
Spiritual Rituals	17	2.5%
Total	671	

*Note.* Numbers in parentheses represent frequencies and percentages of the total number of reported marital rituals.

Rituals generally represent situations wherein couples simply spend time being with one another with little regard for the activity involved. Illustrative is the couple who developed a weekly togetherness ritual: "Sunday mornings [are] our special morning. I am up first, put on my favorite soft CD, make coffee, and we sit and read the paper together."

*Escape Episodes* are rituals specifically designed to satisfy couples' needs to be alone and to avoid others or external pressures. They represent 4.6 percent (31) of the marital rituals in this study, 11.7 percent of the Couple-Time Rituals. Similar to Togetherness Rituals in their ability to provide "alone time," "shared time," or couple relaxation, escape rituals are unique in their ability to provide couples with a means to get away (either briefly or for an extended period of time) from surrounding elements (e.g., children, family, friends, pressures, tasks, mundane routines, etc.). The nature of this ritual type is captured in this report: "Once a month we would go to a motel. If we could get away, that's what we would try to do. No particular place we'd go, we would just drive and pull off at any place; it didn't matter. We'd spend the weekend, call the kids, and let them know where we were. We had that time to ourselves."

*Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Rituals* represent the second most frequently reported general category in this study and consisted of four subcategories: Favorites, Private Codes, Play Rituals, and Celebration Rituals. Collectively, these subtypes account for 19.2 percent (129) of all marital rituals.

Accounting for 7.2 percent (48) of all marital ritual (37.2 percent of the Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Category of rituals), the ritual subtype *Favorites* includes couples' most preferred, often symbolic, places to go, things to eat, items to purchase or give, and activities. Couples report having favorite TV sitcoms they watch regularly, foods they most often eat, restaurants they routinely patronize, gifts they most often give one another, places they most often go or enjoy, and favorite days of the week they observe. Favorites frequently resemble relationship symbols (Baxter, 1987) and have an idiosyncratic quality; they also often represent some aspect of a couple's

relational history. For example, one woman explained a ritual involving her husband's favorite treat:

His favorite cake is wicky-wacky chocolate. It's a chocolate-out-of-scratch cake, an old family recipe. . . . So when I really, really, really, really, like him, and he's really, really, really, really, made me happy, I bake him a wicky-wacky cake. He knows I'm really happy with him when he gets a wicky-wacky cake.

Another couple revealed that they always "watch Star Trek together," their favorite television show since the day they were married 20 years ago.

*Private Code* rituals, constituting 6.1 percent (41) of all marital rituals (31.8 percent of the *Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Ritual* category), represent the repeated use of jointly developed words, symbols, means, or gestures for communicating that have a unique, private, and special meaning to the couple, including nicknames, symbolic phrases from shared experiences, and nonverbal symbols for communicating private meanings. Illustrative is the ritual of a couple who reported ritualistically saying to each other "Honey, you make me hotter than Georgia asphalt," a line from a movie they saw together. Another couple explains a ritual for indicating how they are feeling about one another on any given day:

Whoever goes in and brushes their teeth first always puts toothpaste on the other's toothbrush. . . . If we're upset with one another we might set the tube next to the brush, not put paste on it. This is sort of a sign of "how ya feeling today about one another?"

Play Rituals are also a part of the overarching category and accounted for four percent (27) of all marital rituals and approximately 21 percent of its major category. These are associated with intimate fun in the form of couples' kidding, teasing, silliness, and/or playful bantering. Included are the idiosyncratic ways couples play, share humor, and laugh with and at one another, such as:

I would check my husband's belly button for fuzz on a daily basis at bedtime. It originated when I noticed some blanket fuzz in his belly button one day and thought it was funny. . . . We both found it funny and teased often about the fuzz. If there wasn't any fuzz for a few days my husband would put some in his belly button for me to find. It's been happening for about 10 years now.

Games and contests are also represented among the Play Rituals, as in the example of one couple's game called the "Happy Anniversary Contest":

We were married on the 26th day of May. We have a monthly contest to see who says "Happy Anniversary" first on the 26th day of every month. Rules are: no waking spouse, said anytime after midnight, and must be person to person (in other words no written messages or answering machine messages). This originated the first month after we were married. It is on going since 1968 (305 months), we never missed a month, and we don't keep score.

The most infrequently reported of all marital ritual types was *Celebration Rituals*. These rituals account for 1.9 percent (13) of the 671 reported marital rituals, approximately 11 percent of the *Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Rituals* category. Celebration rituals relate to the shared means or idiosyncratic routines couples develop for acknowledging holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, or other special events. Most rituals of this type involve established rules or shared understandings of what is appropriate, expected, and practiced. For instance, one couple reported a ritual for celebrating their relationship by returning to the same restaurant where they had their first date.

The third most frequently reported general type of rituals was *Daily Routines and Tasks*. This accounted for approximately 13 percent (88) of all marital rituals identified. Rituals of this type most often involve accomplishment of everyday, mundane, activities. They are manifested in the demands and routines of shared chores, household management and maintenance, meals, and other shared daily patterns, such as preparing for work in the morning or for sleep in the evening. One couple explained that in their ritual, "usually one washes and one dries the dishes." Another couple reported a daily task ritual that lasted approximately 14 years: "We used to make four sack lunches together each night before a week day."

*Intimacy Expressions* were the next most frequently reported type of rituals and represented approximately 12 percent (83) of all reported spousal rituals. Included are rituals involving physical, symbolic, and verbal expressions of love, fondness, affection, or sexual attraction. These rituals often take the form of touching, kissing, snuggling, love making, and other nonverbal behavior as in the case of a wife who explains that her husband "insists on having a hug before I put my clothes on in the morning. . . . They're called 'bare-chested' hugs."

*Communication Rituals* have to do with couple talk time. These rituals were the fifth most common major type of marital ritual and comprised 7.5 percent (50) of reported rituals. Communication rituals include the specific times and means couples develop for talking, sharing, or getting in touch with each other. Although everyday talk is the essence of relationships (Duck, 1994) and, thus, occurs as a natural component in most all rituals, communication is the substance of this ritual category. Common were daily phone calls in which couples discuss tasks or manage their daily schedules; for instance, "Every morning at 8:30 he calls because it's before I leave for work. He calls just to see if any plans have changed, or see what's going on, and usually I remind him of anything that I've forgotten to tell him before he left for work." Also prevalent were moments that couples carved out of their days specifically for communicating with one another, such as the couple who reported: "At least a couple times a week we'll sit down and really have a heart-to-heart talk about what's going on. . . . And there's not necessarily a certain time, or day that we have . . . but we'll sit down and really discuss some of the things going on."

*Patterns/Habits/Mannerisms* represent a category of rituals accounting for 5.7 percent (38) of the marital rituals identified. This ritual type includes interactional, territorial, and/or situational patterns or habits couples develop. They involve, among other things, ritualistic seating arrangements and predictable interaction patterns, habits, mannerisms, or styles. Many are guided by implicit relational rules manifest in a couple's predictable patterns for activities, such as relating, accomplishing tasks, resolving conflict, or responding to situations. Examples included a couple who explained: "We have a habit while we are watching TV. We always sit in the same position. He's lying down, his feet are on my lap. He has the remote control. It's always this way." Another couple reported a ritualistic pattern for interacting: "She tends to exaggerate most things and I tend to diminish virtually everything. . . ."

The most infrequently reported type of rituals were *Spiritual Rituals*. They accounted for only 2.5 percent (17) of the marital rituals. These rituals serve couples' religious needs and include rituals of prayer, attending spiritual worship, or other forms of religious fulfillment or involvement, such as attending church together every Sunday or sharing in regular prayer or Bible study together. For instance,

TABLE 2  
 FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF REPORTED FRIENDSHIP RITUAL TYPES BY FRIENDSHIP TYPE

Ritual Type	Friendship Type				Totals
	Female-Female	Male-Male	Cross-Sex	Couple	
Social/Fellowship	113	109	20	67	309 (64.9%)
Enjoyable Activities	46	57	12	35	150 (31.5%)
Getting-Together	44	33	7	26	110 (23.1%)
Established Events	12	14	0	6	32 (6.7%)
Escape	11	5	1	0	17 (3.6%)
Idiomatic/Symbolic	27	11	2	5	45 (9.5%)
Celebration	17	2	0	3	22 (4.6%)
Play	8	6	1	1	16 (3.4%)
Favorites	2	3	1	1	07 (1.5%)
Communication	34	5	2	2	43 (9.0%)
Share/Support/Vent	25	7	5	3	40 (8.4%)
Tasks/Favors	15	12	5	1	33 (6.9%)
Patterns/Habits Mannerisms	4	2	0	0	06 (1.3%)
Total					476

couples reported such rituals as "Reading a biblical devotion after the evening meal" and "going to bed, holding hands, and praying out loud together."

For the second part of the research question, a typology consisting of six major friendship ritual types, two of which are subdivided into three and four ritual (seven total) subtypes, emerged from the 479 rituals reported. Of these, 168 rituals were reported by the 40 interviewees, and 311 were reported by the 130 survey respondents, for an average of 4.2 rituals per person in the interviews and 2.4 per person on the surveys.

According to interviewees in this study, couple friendships emerged as the most frequent type of friendship in which rituals are reportedly developed and enacted. Of the 168 rituals reported by interview participants, 55 involved couple friends, 52 were male/male rituals, 50 were female/female rituals, and only 11 were cross-sexed friendship rituals. Of the 311 rituals reported by survey respondents, 168 were female/female, 93 were male/male, 29 were cross-sexed, and only 21 were couple friendship rituals.

Of the total number of friendship rituals reported by participants, two were uncodable in terms of the existing six major ritual categories and seven subcategories, and one reported ritual was excluded because it represented a "family" ritual, including a spouse and children. Thus, 476 rituals were available and employed in typology development. The six-category friendship ritual scheme (and seven subtypes), including frequency of ritual type by each friendship type, is displayed in Table 2.

The first major category of friendship rituals, *Social/Fellowship Rituals*, accounted for 64.9 percent (309) of all reported friendship rituals and was divided into four categories: Enjoyable Activities, Getting-Together Rituals, Established Events, and Escape Episodes. Each of these subtypes defines a different aspect of friends' ritualistic social and fellowship activities.

The most frequent subtype in the *Social/Fellowship Ritual* category was *Enjoyable Activities*, which accounted for 31.5 percent (150) of all friendship rituals and 48.5 percent of its major category. The items in this subcategory are joint social or recreational activities or pastimes that have in common pleasurable, desirable,

and/or leisure qualities. These rituals include, but are not limited to, the activities of particular social groups or clubs, sports, hobbies, games, movies, and many other pastimes (e.g., shopping, fishing, and card playing). As with the corresponding marriage type, rituals in this category represent “doing together” something desirable/enjoyable, such as the couple who ritualistically “attends college football games” with another couple, or the female who meets with friends once a month for a “Stitch and Bitch Club” where they “learn crafts, work on some holiday gifts, visit, and have dessert.”

*Getting-Together Rituals* were the second most frequent friendship subtype. They accounted for 23.1 percent (110) of all reported friendship rituals and 35.6 percent of the general category. Getting-Together rituals involve times/ways/means for friends physically to get together and keep in touch, excluding telephone calls. The primary focus of the Getting-Together rituals is on simply spending time together, an important type of ritual for helping women, men, and couples maintain all types of friendships. Typical was this friend’s account of her friendship ritual: “My friend Jenny and I do ‘nothing’ together all the time. We get together to do something, but never do anything. We just go to one house or other, and just sit around and talk.” Getting-Together rituals also included rituals of eating lunch together daily, meeting on Saturday for coffee at a local restaurant, or as one male reported, “having a beer with my neighbor.”

The third most frequently reported Social/Fellowship ritual subtype was the *Established Event*. Accounting for 6.7 percent (32) of all friendship rituals (10.4% of the Social/Fellowship Rituals), these rituals have much in common with both the ritual types of Enjoyable Activities and Getting-Together, but have as their distinguishing quality a tendency to be special, highly planned, prized, and/or reserved events or activities, such as annual trips, outings, and vacations with friends; moreover, most have an established place in the history of the friendship. An illustration of the Established Event Ritual is this woman’s ritual shared with her female friends:

Every year on the day after Thanksgiving, my friends and I go shopping. Not that shopping is unusual for us, but the day after Thanksgiving is special. It’s an all day and night affair. It’s not considered a “success” unless you buy enough to warrant buying one of those shopping bags for .25 cents. This routine has created a “history” in our friendship. It is something we all cherish.

One man reported that he and his friends developed a ritualistic event they call “Tough-Guys’ Night Out.” Once a year during the Golden Gloves Boxing Match, the men in this group enjoy a steak dinner, cigars, and the Golden Gloves Boxing Match.

*Escape Episodes* comprised 3.6 percent (17) of all friendship rituals identified and accounted for 5.5 percent of the superordinate category. Escape Episodes are specifically designed for being away with friends from others, the routines of life, or external pressures. For example, a female reported that she and her friends share an escape ritual of going out for lunch once a month to have “free time” from their preschool-age children.

The second major category of rituals is the *Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Ritual* type, which includes 3 subcategories, accounted for 9.5 percent (45) of all reported friendship rituals. The ritual subtypes in this superordinate category were: Celebration Rituals, Play Rituals, and Favorites.

*Celebration Rituals* were the most frequent subtype (49 percent of the general category) and represented 4.6 percent (22) of all friendship rituals. Similar to the

marriage subtype Celebration Rituals, these rituals are particular means or routines for holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, or other special events. Again, many are guided by shared expectations based on the history of such celebrations in the friendship. Celebrations included an annual exchange of Christmas gifts and “treating each other to lunch” on birthdays—a ritual maintained between two women for 15 years.

Representing 3.4 percent (16) of all reported friendship rituals and 35.5 percent of the Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Ritual category were *Play Rituals*. These rituals take many forms, such as joking, kidding, teasing, playing pranks on one another, or being generally silly. Also included are all the ways friends share humor and laughter, including silly phrases and “inside jokes.” Illustrative is the ritual shared among couple friends in one neighborhood: “We have a collection of flamingo lawn art that we put in the neighbors’ yard when they least expect it. Then eventually the items return.”

The most infrequently reported ritual subtype category was the ritual subcategory *Favorites*, which accounted for only 1.5 percent (7) of all friendship rituals and approximately 16 percent of its major category. Identical to the marriage ritual type Favorites, this type includes the shared, often symbolic, places friends go, things they regularly eat, purchase, or give, and activities that are often idiosyncratic, always most preferred, among friends. For instance, one female reported that she and her male friend share a mutual love for a particular musician and will “telephone each other whenever one is aware of a TV show or radio special featuring” the artist. Another female reported that she and her friend always watched “Melrose Place,” their favorite show.

The third most frequently reported major ritual type, accounting for 9 percent (43) of all friendship rituals, was the *Communication Ritual*. These are rituals for simply keeping in touch with friends via cards and/or telephone calls. Regular phone calls were common among friends, as illustrated by a monthly calling ritual one woman reported she and her friend have maintained “for 21 years and over 5 continents.”

Accounting for 8.4 percent (40) of all reported friendship rituals, the category *Share/Support/Vent* includes rituals developed specifically for social, emotional, or spiritual sharing and support between friends. This type of ritual also represents the necessary release of frustrations between friends about issues related to, for example, family, marriage, work, and social pressures. Exemplars of this category are rituals involving two women, “Whenever one of us has a problem or issue in our marriages, or relationships, we call each other and vent,” and the male who reported that every Wednesday morning at 6:45 a.m. he attends a meeting with a group of 8–15 men to share prayer concerns, discuss problems, and vent frustrations.

*Tasks/Favors*, accounting for 6.9 percent (33) of the friendship rituals, involve doing something with and/or for a friend. For instance, many friends reported doing favors or performing tasks for one another. One woman said that for six years her friend has picked her up for work everyday because she does not drive. Two other friends noted regularly giving each other hair “perms.”

The most infrequently reported ritual category was *Patterns/Habits/Mannerisms* and comprised a mere 1.3 percent (6) of all friendship rituals. This ritual type is parallel with the marriage type Patterns/Habits/Mannerisms and similarly relates the interactional, territorial, and/or situational patterns and habits friends develop. The category is illustrated in the report of one male who noted that whenever he is at his



TABLE 3  
CHI-SQUARES FOR EACH RITUAL TYPE AMONG FRIENDSHIP TYPES

Ritual Type	Reported Frequencies				$\chi^2$
	F/F	M/M	Cross-Sex	Couple	
Social/Fellowship	113 (77.25)	109 (77.25)	20 (77.25)	67 (77.25)	73.38**
Enjoyable Activities	46 (37.5)	57 (37.5)	12 (37.5)	35 (37.5)	29.57**
Getting Together	44 (27.5)	33 (27.5)	7 (27.5)	26 (27.5)	26.36**
Events	12 (8.00)	14 (8.00)	0 (8.00)	6 (8.00)	15.00*
Escape	11 (4.25)	5 (4.25)	1 (4.25)	0 (4.25)	17.59#
Idiosyncratic/Symbolic	27 (11.25)	11 (11.25)	2 (11.25)	5 (11.25)	33.14**
Celebration	17 (5.50)	2 (5.50)	0 (5.50)	3 (5.50)	33.46**
Play	8 (4.00)	6 (4.00)	1 (4.00)	1 (4.00)	9.50#
Favorites	2 (1.75)	3 (1.75)	1 (1.75)	1 (1.75)	1.57#
Communication	34 (10.75)	5 (10.75)	2 (10.75)	2 (10.75)	67.60**
Share/Support/Vent	25 (10.00)	7 (10.00)	5 (10.00)	3 (10.00)	30.80**
Tasks	15 (8.25)	12 (8.25)	5 (8.25)	1 (8.25)	14.88*
Patterns/Habits Mannerisms	4 (1.50)	2 (1.50)	0 (1.50)	0 (1.50)	8.83#

Note. # The minimum expected cell counts for these ritual types were less than 5.0. When using chi-square, no cell should have an expected frequency of less than 5.0. Thus, although chi-square values are reported and were significant at  $p < .05$ , results cannot be meaningfully interpreted on these ritual types or subtypes (Healey, 1984). Numbers in parentheses reflect expected frequencies for each ritual type.  
\* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p < .001$ .

friend's apartment, he and his friends *always* sit in the same seats. A female reported how she and her friend ritualistically greet each other on the phone: "We'll both go 'Hey!' and she'll say 'Hey!!!' . . . We don't ever go 'hello'."

Research Question 2 focused on whether the reporting of ritual types is different among the different friendship types (male/male, female/female, cross-sex, and couple). Frequencies of reported ritual types and/or subtypes were calculated for each friendship type and chi-squares were computed. Where appropriate, chi-squares were performed on ritual subtypes as well as superordinate categories. Chi-square values for each ritual type/subtype among each relationship type are displayed in Table 3. For each test, the expected values for the four types of friendship categories were calculated as  $1/4$  of that category (row) total.

Chi-square tests indicated that many ritual types were significantly more or less likely to be observed than expected in certain types of friendship. Respondents in cross-sex friendships appeared significantly less likely than expected to report Social/Fellowship Rituals ( $\chi^2$  [df = 3] = 73.38,  $p < .001$ ), which was similar for two of the subtypes in this category: Enjoyable Activities ( $\chi^2$  [df = 3] = 29.57,  $p < .001$ ), and Getting Together Rituals ( $\chi^2$  [df = 3] = 26.36,  $p < .001$ ).

Celebration Rituals ( $\chi^2$  [df = 3] = 33.46,  $p < .001$ ) occurred significantly more

often than expected in female/female friendships, which also was the case for Communication Rituals ( $\chi^2$  [df = 3] = 67.60,  $p < .001$ ) and Share/Support/Vent Rituals ( $\chi^2$  [df = 3] = 30.80,  $p < .001$ ). Finally, the ritual subtype Established Events ( $\chi^2$  [df = 3] = 15.0,  $p < .01$ ) and the ritual type Tasks and Favors ( $\chi^2$  [df = 3] = 14.88,  $p < .01$ ) were observed significantly more frequently than expected in both of the same-sex friendship types.

Unfortunately, chi-squares for Escape Episodes, Play Rituals, Favorites, or on the Patterns/Habits/Mannerisms ritual type, because of low frequencies, do not allow for unequivocal interpretations of the relationships between friendship type and ritual type. However, analyses on the superordinate category of Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Rituals, which represents the ritual subtypes of Escape, Play, and Favorites, reveal that Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Rituals ( $\chi^2$  [df = 3] = 33.14,  $p < .001$ ) were observed significantly more frequently than expected in women's same-sex friendships.

Research Question 3 addressed the differences between ritual types in marriage and friendship relationship and was answered by comparing the two typologies as displayed in Tables 1 and 2. Although the typologies are similar, each relationship type has a number of unique ritual types and/or subtypes. Almost half of the marital ritual types/subtypes have no corresponding type in the friendship typology. The six ritual types and/or subtypes unique to marriage are: Couple-Time rituals, which includes one unique subtype, Togetherness; Spiritual Rituals; Private Code Rituals; Daily Routines/Tasks; and Intimacy Expressions. Unique to the friendship typology are the following five types and/or subtypes of rituals: Social/Fellowship Rituals, which includes the two unique subtypes: Getting-Together Rituals and Established Events; Share/Support/Vent Rituals; and Tasks/Favors.

Seven ritual types and/or subtypes are common to both the marital and friendship ritual typologies: Communication Rituals, Escape Episodes, Patterns/Habits/Mannerisms, Enjoyable Activities, and the subtypes of the Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Rituals—Celebration Rituals, Favorites, and Play Rituals. A chi-square was computed for the seven types/subtypes of rituals to assess if ritual frequency would be significantly different in friendship and marriage. Results indicate that the frequency of occurrence of the rituals is contingent upon relationship type ( $\chi^2$  [df = 6] = 46.77,  $p < .001$ ). Observed scores and percentages of column totals are displayed in Table 4.

## Discussion

Interpersonal ritualizing takes on a variety of forms in both marriages and friendships. Couples report developing rituals around many aspects of their daily married lives, from sharing romance to sharing household tasks. Couples also report the reality of ritualizing many of their friendship activities, everything from annual celebrations to daily phone calls. The results of this study suggest that rituals are prevalent forms of relational functioning and maintenance in two of our most intimate relationships.

The variety of ritual types represented in both the marriage and friendship typologies indicate that rituals are common, important, and pervasive in the everyday routines, and in the perpetuation, of both marriage and friendship. Ritual enactment is a taken-for-granted yet essential occurrence in relationships indicating both the uniqueness and distinctiveness of marriage and friendship. The similarities

TABLE 4  
RESULTS OF CHI-SQUARES FOR RITUAL TYPES AMONG BOTH FRIENDSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Ritual Type	Reported Frequencies		Total
	Marriage	Friendship	
Enjoyable Activities	154 (42.66)	150 (57.47)	304
Escape	31 (8.59)	17 (6.51)	48
Communication	50 (13.85)	43 (16.48)	93
Patterns/Habits/Mannerisms	38 (10.53)	6 (2.30)	44
Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Favorites	48 (13.30)	7 (2.68)	55
Play Rituals	27 (7.48)	16 (6.13)	43
Celebration	13 (3.60)	22 (8.43)	35
	<u>361</u>	<u>261</u>	<u>622</u>
			$\chi^2 = 46.77^{**}$

Note. Numbers in parentheses represent percentages of column totals.

\*\* $p < .001$ .

in the marriage and friendship ritual typologies indicate that certain aspects of relating are common elements in dyadic relationships. Differences in ritual types identify inherent uniquenesses in marriages and friendships. Based on participants' reports in this study, adult friendship relationships are characteristically less intimate, less intense, and require less frequent contact than marital relationships. The prevalent aspects of the marriage relationship, however, are reflected in the many rituals which pertain to the necessities of everyday life, and in the intensity that naturally arises out of a more intimate, physical, and exclusive relationship.

If intimacy is evaluated differently by men and women in their same-sex friendships (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982), the greater frequency of Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Rituals, specifically Celebration Rituals, observed in women's friendships is not surprising. Celebration Rituals represents a type of symbolic intimacy and sharing between women via the mutual acknowledgment of a special occasion or event. Given indications that men's and women's same-sex friendships are qualitatively different (Bell, 1981; Booth, 1972; Booth & Hess, 1974; Caldwell & Peplau, 1982), and that women and men often develop different ways of expressing themselves (Wood, 1994), it was not surprising that certain ritual types were significantly more likely in females' same sex friendships than in any other friendship types. Women often express closeness via feminine methods, or by "closeness in dialogue" (Wood, 1994), which is consistent with the significantly higher frequency of Communication and Share/Support/Vent Rituals reported in women's same sex friendships than in any other friendship type. These differences reflect that women, more than most men, are socialized to be attentive to relationships and relational issues (Tavris, 1992; Wood 1993, 1994). Ritualizing represents an important means for women's relational caretaking.

Overall, cross-sex friendships were the most infrequently reported type of friendship for ritualizing, consistent with past research indicating that cross-sex friends are

less common later in life, often perceived as a threat to marriage (Rubin, 1983). These might be the very reasons that Social/Fellowship rituals, Getting Together, and rituals of Enjoyable Activities were significantly less likely to be observed in cross-sex friendships than expected. Although periodically getting together or sharing activities with cross-sex friends might be tolerable in marriage, ritualizing with a cross-sex friend indicates repeated contact, a pattern of interaction probably perceived negatively by most spouses.

The emergence of Communication Rituals among both friends and spouses is consistent with Duck's (1990) contention that communication is the "adhesive" in all relationships and with Duck and Pond (1989), who suggest that not only is communication and everyday talk a medium for relating, it is actually "the crucible wherein relationships are conducted" (p. 25). Researchers studying mundane maintenance behaviors agree that everyday talk maintains and perpetuates relationships (Duck, 1990a; Duck et al., 1991) performing essential functions in constructing and enacting personal relationships (Goldsmith & Baxter, 1993). The fact that communication becomes ritualized further reinforces the symbiotic nature of talk and personal relationships.

Both in friendships and marriages, a unique culture is created by relationship members through symbolic enactments (Baxter, 1990c; Wood, 1982), in this case, ritual enactments. Idiosyncratic/Symbolic Rituals in both the marriage and friendship typologies are manifestations of relational cultures, created and maintained by friends and spouses to mark their relationship as unique. Such rituals enable couples and friends to share in a privately transacted system of meaning. Symbolic "Favorites," for instance, represent shared experiences and a history between spouses and friends, as do the idiomatic ways couples and friends play and celebrate. As one couple in our study explained: "I think they're unique to the two of us, so that in itself contributes a lot to our relationship." As a manifestation of the relationship culture, marriage rituals function to provide couples with a sense of "we-ness" (Betcher, 1987). In essence, the arena within which rituals occur are private spheres where couples feel "safe and secure" to enact jointly developed rituals for accomplishing tasks, communicating, building and nurturing the relationship and each other, playing, relieving stress, and just being together.

The significance of ritual enactment is tightly woven into the tapestry of everyday relational management; rituals are subtly pervasive. According to Duck (1992), "Taken-for-granted routines build in ways that we do not always realize until they are removed. Their loss takes away unspoken and unrealized parts of ourselves," (p. 86), and probably our relationships too. This study supports the proposition that rituals are not so much a "strategy" for maintenance, rather rituals, in their many forms, are important everyday dynamics of maintenance (Braithwaite & Baxter, 1995). The contribution of rituals to our personal lives, as well as our relationships, is significant.

Future researchers are faced with an exciting array of questions to pursue concerning rituals in relationships. First, study of ritual functions is warranted given the functional nature of the many rituals reported in this study. Inquiry into ritual functions will further clarify the symbolically dense nature, and central importance, of rituals as they contribute to relational and personal well-being. Second, the dialectic framework will provide researchers multiple opportunities for studying the rituals of personal relationships. Symbolically dense with meaning (Braithwaite &

Baxter, 1995), rituals speak simultaneously to both sides of dialectical tensions, both internal among members of the dyad and external between members and their social worlds. Analysis is needed to more completely understand the dialectical functioning capabilities of rituals, both public and private, both frequent and seldom. Emerging from the work of scholars who have recently produced some of the little work framing rituals in the dialectical perspective (i.e., Braithwaite & Baxter, 1995; Werner, Altman, Brown & Ginat, 1993; Werner & Baxter, 1994), are central issues for researchers studying ritual as dynamics of dialectical management in relationships. For instance, considering the way rituals reflect conventionalized social forms and/or represent the uniqueness of a private relational culture would further our understanding of ritual within the dialectical frame. Studying the artefacts and physical environments that give relationships context is also essential, for as Braithwaite and Baxter (1995) remind us "... memory is socially constructed through people's social practices and props," and thus as researchers we cannot ignore the "physical environments in which relationship parties are embedded" (p. 195). Clearly, follow-up work is necessary to explore the diversity of rituals, and their functions, which represent a unique, yet common, form of relating.

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