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As Time Goes By: Ritualized Remembering Through Wedding Photography

Abstract

The practice of remembering sometimes takes the form of ritual in order to enforce, embody and sustain social bonds and values. American wedding photography is a strong example of an instance in which remembering becomes a formalized symbolic performance through an intricate system of idealization as prescribed by various authorities. An examination of the production and exhibition practices constituting wedding photography (using various interview and observation methodologies) reveals a process through which participants solidify and maintain the social transformation marriage creates, communicate values to future generations, and cope with the implications of aging and death.

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Carolyn Marvin

AS TIME GOES BY:
RITUALIZED REMEMBERING THROUGH WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

Michele M. Strano

A DISSERTATION

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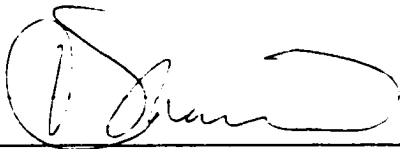
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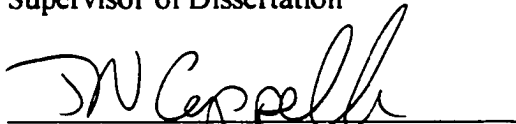
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ABSTRACT
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RITUALIZED REMEMBERING THROUGH WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

Michele M. Strano

Dr. Carolyn Marvin

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PREFACE

...And no matter what the progress
Or what may yet be proved
The simple facts of life are such
They cannot be removed

You must remember this
A kiss is still a kiss, a sigh is just a sigh
The fundamental things apply
As time goes by

And when two lovers woo
They still say, "I love you"
On that you can rely
No matter what the future brings
As time goes by

Moonlight and love songs
Never out of date
Hearts full of passion
Jealousy and hate
Woman needs man
And man must have his mate
That no one can deny
Well, it's still the same old story
A fight for love and glory
A case of do or die
The world will always welcome lovers
As time goes by...

"As Time Goes By..."
Lyrics and music by Herman Hupfeld.
Warner Bros. Music Corp., ASCAP, 1931.

Chapter One
Ritualized Remembering

There are two answers people consistently give me when asked why they chose to have photographs taken of their wedding. The first one is “that’s what you are supposed to do” ; the second is “to have memories.” In simplest terms, this project unpacks these two answers in order to explain how photography is used to communicate within a ritual and about a ritual. I will argue that photography has become a defining feature of American weddings by serving and extending the functions of the ritual. In addition, I will discuss how wedding photography prolongs the power of a wedding by ritualizing memories of the event.

The term “wedding photograph” is used in this study to refer to visual reproductions of a wedding ceremony or wedding reception produced using photographic technology. A wedding photograph, then, is a material object. In contrast, “wedding photography” is used to refer to the practices constituting the production and use of wedding photographs. A “practice” is seen as a performative activity that is repeated in a systematic fashion. In other words, wedding photographs are the material end-result of wedding photography. To separate the two concepts is a somewhat artificial construct since the material nature of a wedding photograph directly influences the practices surrounding it and vice versa. For example, one of the precursors to the modern photograph, the Daguerreotype, was printed on silver plates which had to be protected from the air in order to prevent tarnishing. This physical trait led to the social practice of

displaying Daguerreotypes in decorative protective cases. With the development of paper prints display practice shifted to accommodate the new material; paper prints were more easily displayed in decorative albums (Coe, 1977). The key point to keep in mind about the distinction made between wedding photographs and wedding photography is that this study is about social practice and not only a description of a material object or how it is made.

Previous Research on Wedding Photography

I have identified only two other scholars who have researched American wedding photography in depth. In a chapter of her (1982) doctoral dissertation on American weddings, Pamela Rae Frese discusses wedding photographs as symbols which “mirror” the important symbols of the wedding. She provides a detailed description of the types of photographs taken at American weddings of the late 1970s and early 1980s and demonstrates how these photographs “cluster around significant ritual expressions of the ritual symbols” (p. 107). Her descriptions of the typical practices constituting wedding photography are consistent for the most part with my data with the exception of a few stylistic changes in the types of photographs typically taken.¹ The focus of Frese’s study is primarily to decipher the symbols of the American wedding ritual as indicators of cultural ideology especially in reference to “male and female domains of power” (p. 196).

Although she makes frequent reference to “memory” throughout the study, Frese does not develop a theoretical concept of memory nor its connection to photography. For example.

¹ For example, images of the bride super-imposed on an image of the church ceremony that were popular during the 1970s are less common today.

in her conclusion, she sums up her allusions to memory throughout with the single sentence: "The ritual also reveals the movement of social time as memory is exercised by participants; memory that can be saved on film for the future" (p. 198). She asserts that photographs capture "forever a moment in time" (p. 106), "generate memories" and that "over time the ritual will melt (or blur) into memory and these photographs become the only 'accurate' memories" (p. 153). All of these statements rely on technological "container" analogies of both memory and photography that assume both are like boxes or computer databases that collect bits of data that can be taken out or retrieved at will in their original form. I will address the limitations of this analogy in a later discussion.

More recently, Charles Lewis (1997; 1998) has published two articles about wedding photography. He argues that wedding photography is an agent of ideological hegemony that perpetuates social constructs of consumerism and patriarchy. His references to wedding photography's relation to memory are limited to a few undeveloped statements about the ability of wedding photographs to "trigger memories" (1997, p. 3) and "make permanent the fantasy of wealth for the middle-class couple" (p. 4). Once again we see the use of technological metaphors to describe how memory functions.

In addition, although much of Lewis's data about the typical practices constituting wedding photography is consistent with my findings, there are a few key points that seem to be markedly different. For example, he reports that "most" couples have pictures taken with the bride and groom together before the ceremony, while I have found that few are willing to ignore the tradition of not seeing one another before the ceremony itself. I will

discuss this and other differences in our data throughout this paper, however, I would like to reflect here on a few potential reasons for this variation. Lewis conducted his study in Twin Cities, Minnesota while I collected my data in North Carolina. Geographic variation in wedding practices may account for why my data is more similar to Frese's research (conducted in Virginia) despite the difference in time periods between our studies.

However, I am not sure that geographic location alone can explain why my data is different than what Lewis reports, since I did interview couples from across the country. I think a key difference may be that, although both of us interviewed and observed both photographers and couples, Lewis spent more time with photographers and much less interviewing couples - he conducted only fifteen couple interviews (1998, p. 2) while I spoke to over fifty married, divorced and widowed informants. Lewis started with questions that addressed the photographers' influence and impact, while I started with a question about why people wanted wedding photographs and how they use them. I believe Lewis's approach would logically lead him to make the statement that "it is more or less the same fairy tale for each couple" (1998, p. 10) since photographers will often have this perspective after years of working weddings and developing work routines that make their jobs easier. In talking to couples, however, I find that wedding photographs elicit highly personal stories. For the couple, their wedding album is certainly not the "same" as everyone else's, although both they and I recognize the conventions and traditions that guide the production of wedding photographs. Finally, I question whether Lewis and I share the same perspective on interviewing techniques and what we consider

“proof.” He asserts that wedding photographs are “ideologically inscribed whether or not producers or consumers of wedding photography are consciously aware of the ideological forces at work” (1997, p. 1). This seems to me to be an unfalsifiable theory; it does not matter whether we talk to informants or not since what they say will not alter the theory. Also, consider the following quotes from photographers whom Lewis interviewed:

“It’s not something I would think of, unless you mention it...”

“I suppose we channel a man and a woman into a certain role and limit them to that role...” (1997, p.5)

Both of these suggest leading questions by Lewis directly prior to the answers given.

While this of course does not make the data useless, it does raise questions about the role the interviewer plays in the construction of data and what we can conclude about the relationship between what is said in an interview and what goes on when the researcher is not present. I will return to these concerns in the Chapter 2 discussion of the data in my study.

Both Frese and Lewis highlight important aspects of wedding photography.

However, I find their discussions fall short of explaining the specific role photography plays in relation to memory, aside from vague notions of “extending” or “preserving” aspects of the wedding ritual. My study is an attempt to understand how the use of wedding photography shapes the way we remember the wedding event and enables us to communicate about traditions, ideals and social boundaries.

Wedding photography is sometimes mentioned in studies about photography (e.g. Chalfen, Musello and Sontag). The excerpt below from Musello (1977, p. 252) is a

typical allusion to wedding photography in a study about broader photographic practices:

In wedding photographs, for example, the conventional sequence documented after the ceremonies includes: the entire wedding party (including friends in the roles of bridesmaids, ushers, best man, and maid of honor); bride and groom posed with each family individually; and bride and groom posed with the two families united. In each of these instances, the approach is to pose the bride and groom within a range of relationships, new and old, and the effect is to represent their association with the various family networks.

Although passing references like the one above (the only mention of wedding photography in Musello's study), do not attempt to address the intricacy of wedding photography, they serve as reinforcement that the patterns I identify throughout my study are prevalent enough to be acknowledged by other scholars of photographic practices.

There is little written about the history of wedding photography in the United States. Karen Ann Marling (1991) and Barbara Norfleet (1979) offer the only attempts I have found to trace wedding photography from its inception to the present. Based on their brief accounts, it seems that wedding photographs were first taken in the 1830's, although they remained rare until the 1870's despite the abundance of non-wedding portraits taken during this time period. From the 1870's through 1940, wedding photographs were common in the form of posed formal shots of the bride and groom alone and of entire wedding parties. It was in the 1940's and 1950's that candid photographic coverage of weddings began. Many of the wedding photography practices described in this study seem to have originated in the post-World War II era. Other practices have their roots in a movement towards photojournalism (discussed in more detail in a subsequent chapter) in the late 1980's.

Wedding photography is addressed briefly in the surprisingly few studies about twentieth century wedding customs (other than Frese's study, discussed above). Ruth and Larry Freeman (1954) use wedding photographs to trace changes in wedding customs from 1850-1950, but do not discuss photography practices directly, except to note that fewer wedding photographs were taken in the 1930's since people had less money to hire a photographer. Wedding photographer Abigail Heyman (1987) reports on her observations of American weddings, but says surprisingly little about the photography practices she herself employs. In most other instances (e.g. Seligson (1973), Greenblat and Cottle (1980), Baker (1977)), writers about wedding customs refer to photography as a means of "preserving memory", but do not elaborate on photography practices. I have used the brief observations of some of these authors in appropriate places in my analysis. In most studies of American wedding rituals, photography seems to be acknowledged as part of the wedding ritual, but the implications of its inclusion are not addressed.²

Susannah Driver's study (1998) of wedding etiquette manuals written between 1880-1930 makes no mention of photography. If wedding manuals of that period did not give advice about wedding photography, it may be seen as further evidence that wedding photography as we know it today was born in the 1940's as Marling and Norfleet suggest. In contrast, modern etiquette manuals and bridal magazines have much advice for the bride(and groom)-to-be on wedding photography (e.g. Barillo (1998), Post (1991), Stewart (1989), Cole (1993)). The practices described in wedding manuals, magazines

² Wedding photography is similarly addressed in studies of contemporary wedding customs in foreign countries. I have used those studies in my brief comments about foreign wedding photography.

and web sites often represent an idealized version of planning for wedding photography; few brides follow the suggestions made exactly. However, many participants reported having consulted wedding guides to some extent in the planning stage. I have used wedding guides and bridal magazines as an additional source of evidence throughout my efforts to identify and interpret wedding photography practices.

Photographer “how-to” manuals (and videos) also serve as a source of evidence confirming the practices I identify through other means (see methodological discussion in Chapter 2). However, photography manuals (e.g. Cantrell, 2000; Ferro, 2001; Hawkins, 2001; and Sint, 1998) are not representative of wedding photography as a whole. The practices manuals describe and the photographs they display represent a level of idealization that the average wedding photographer has neither the skill nor the resources to achieve. In part, this is because manuals are often written by highly recognized wedding photographers; in part, it is because authors choose outstanding, not average, photographs to include as examples of practices that should be emulated. Photography manuals increase our understanding of the ideals toward which photographers strive, rather than that which most photographers achieve.

Although wedding photography is mentioned in numerous works about wedding customs, wedding guides, and photography manuals, there has been little research done into the practices that constitute wedding photography, especially in relation to memory. Perhaps the lack of research in this area reflects an assumption that memories can be “captured” or “documented” by photography in simple terms. In the next section, I turn

to research about the nature of memory in order to dispel that assumption.

Approaches to Studying Memory

Communication technologies are often used as metaphors for the way we think and talk about human memory (Kotre, 1995, p. 14). This can easily be seen in common phrases such as “he has a verbatim memory”(orality), “the memory is imprinted in my mind”(print) and “she has a photographic memory”(photography). In a recent review of social memory studies, Jeffery K. Olick and Joyce Robbins (1998) also point out the use of technology as a metaphor for memory:

...changes in the twentieth century constituted another genuine revolution in memory, the most important element of which was the invention of electronic means of recording and transmitting information, which not only change the way we remember but provide new ways of conceptualizing memory. Not only computers but image processing ... now serve as basic models and metaphors for thinking about memory (p. 114).

This technological approach to memory, which seems to characterize much of the work in psychology and psychiatry, rests on an assumption that the human mind works like a tape recorder or a computer database that collects and stores bits of information — “memories” — for later retrieval. All of our experience is assumed to be stored somewhere in our brain, although we may not be able to retrieve those memories at will (our retrieval software is often not up to par). Those of us with “better” memories have better retrieval programs that allow us to access more information closer to its original form. Forgetting and the alteration of memories over time are seen as failures of our retrieval programs, a breakdown of the system. This assumption is apparent in a book entitled “Memory Distortions and Their Prevention” (1998) which, as the title suggests, is

a collection of research investigating the effects of different variables on recall, retention and the appearance of “false memories” (memories of things that never “really” happened). Although these studies give us useful information for situations where we strive to have our brain to act like a computer — for example in a courtroom or in an exam — they do not provide much explanation for how memory works in our day to day lives.

One of the biggest arguments against technological analogies is that they fail to address forgetting as part of the system of human memory. C.W. Kaha argues that this is the “fundamental characteristic that separates human memory from technological memory. Humans, of necessity, forget whereas computers do not” (1989, p. 122). In 1968, A.R. Luria published a study about a man with a highly accurate memory. In a sense, this man was the epitome of the technological model of memory for he forgot very little - he had near perfect retrieval software. The inability to forget, however, turned out to be a great difficulty for this man, making it almost impossible, for example, for him to understand a passage of text.

There were numerous details in the text, each of which gave rise to new images that led him far afield; further details produced still more details, until his mind was a virtual chaos. How could he avoid these images, prevent himself from seeing details which kept him from understanding a simple story? (Luria, 1968, p. 67)

Forgetting, then, is not a breakdown of the human memory system, but a necessary component that allows us to sort through our memories, making sense of their relevant importance. As John Kotre argues, “If you remembered all the trees in your life, you’d

never see the forest” (p. 65). As we will see, wedding photography allows us to sort through our muddled memories of a wedding in order to visually organize and display our remembrances in a manner that is symbolically significant.

Another peculiarity of human memory is that we often experience as memories events that did not happen or at which we were not present. Kotre makes this point in the following excerpt:

...it is possible to believe that a picture actually planted in your memory by a photograph, a film, or someone else’s words originated in a direct experience of your own. Nor can you tell if a memory has been cryptically implanted by the way it looks or feels. Unreal memories look and feel like real ones” (p. 36)

Kotre identifies a scientific term for this phenomenon: “cryptomnesia,” where one remembers what someone has told them, but forgets that they were told.³ The distinction between “real” and “unreal” memories is not a particularly useful one when studying social dimensions of memory. The distinction presumes a reality outside human perception which we as researchers can somehow know and to which we can compare accounts of memory. Even if such an objective reality exists, it is almost impossible in most cases to sort the “false” memories from the “true” ones. It is much more interesting to ask questions about how and why we construct memories the way that we do than to try to sort them according to some measure of objectivity. In addition, as we shall see in later analysis, wedding couples are often not concerned with whether or not their wedding photographs

³ Notice that even as Kotre presents an argument that contradicts the assumptions of a technological metaphor of memory, he uses the technological metaphor of photography, likening a memory to a “picture.” It is difficult to talk about memory with English language without using technology as a metaphor.

represent “real” memories. In fact, one of the cited benefits of wedding photographs is that they allow us to “remember” wedding events which we do not directly experience (for example, two guests laughing on the dance floor when the bride and groom are occupied with another aspect of the wedding reception).

The study of “social” memory or “collective” memory is an attempt in some respects to move away from technological metaphors towards something more reflective of human experience. As early as 1932, F.C. Bartlett argued for a theory of remembering that broke from traditional notions of memory as “innumerable fixed, lifeless and fragmentary traces” and focused on the way in which memory is “an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organized past reactions or experience” (p. 213). Bartlett was thus one of the first to write about memory as a social process, actively constructed in the present. Maurice Halbwachs expands upon this idea by arguing that memory is not only constructed in the present, but also constructed *with* others:

Most of the time, when I remember, it is others who spur me on; their memory comes to the aid of mine, and mine relies on theirs. There is nothing mysterious about recall of memories in these cases at least. There is no point in seeking where they are preserved in my brain or in some nook of my mind to which I alone have access: for they are recalled to me externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them. upon condition, to be sure, that I turn toward them and adopt, at least for the moment, their way of thinking (1992, p. 38; first published in 1941).

According to Halbwachs, remembering is not an individual activity, but a group practice shaped by present concerns. Where we are and to whom we are talking (among other

factors) determines the shape our memories will take. George Herbert Mead also asserts that memory is contextualized in *The Philosophy of the Present* (1932):

...our assurances concerning the past are never attained by a congruence between the constructed past and a real past independent of that construction, though we carry this attitude at the back of our heads, because we do bring our immediate hypothetical reconstructions to the test of the accepted past and adjudge them by their agreement with the accepted record; but this accepted past lies in a present and is subject, itself, to possible reconstruction. (p. 30)

The reconstruction of memories is the subject of much attention in social memory studies [see also Zelizer's (1995) and Olick and Robbins' (1998) reviews of the field of social memory]. The memories of others, as well as our personal interests in the present, influence our memories, although some argue that this process of reconstruction occurs within a system of cultural constraints and that the past can not be revamped completely at will (e.g. Schudson, 1989).

It should be noted that theories of social memory do not necessarily exclude technological metaphors. Often, theories of social memory coexist with more technologically based theories; few are willing to assert (although Halbwachs seems to), that ALL memory is collective. A typical definition of collective memory, offered here by Barbie Zelizer, reads:

Used intermittently with terms like "social memory," "popular memory," "public memory," and "cultural memory," collective memory refers to recollections that are instantiated beyond the individual by and for the collective. Unlike personal memory, which refers to an individual's ability to conserve information, the collective memory comprises recollections of the past that are determined and shaped by the group. (1995, p. 214)

In the above definition, collective memory is contrasted to personal memory (defined with

the technological analogy of “conserving information”), but does not replace it. It is often difficult to draw the line exactly where individual memory ends and collective memory starts. We often remember a wedding, for example, in a group, talking and laughing about the events that occurred. Our individual recollections of the wedding event are shaped by our remembering interactions with others. However, part of our memory is still based on a simple retrieval of the experience of being at the wedding. Distinguishing which parts are individual and which have been molded by the collective, however, is nearly impossible.

Another related branch of research on social memory investigates the relationship between memory and identity, both personal and group (see Olick and Robbins’ discussion, p. 121-125). John Kotre identifies “memories real interest” as “the creation of meaning about the self” (p. 87). Individuals and groups within a society compete for their version of the past to become the “accepted past” that Mead refers to above, although the notion of a single version of the past that is accepted by all is an unattainable ideal. As Zelizer argues, “by definition, collective memory...presumes activities of sharing, discussion, negotiation, and, often, contestation” (1995, p. 214). One interesting aspect of wedding photography is that, although there is much negotiation involved in taking, editing and displaying the photographs, eventually the printed image has the effect of making certain aspects of collective memory appear to stand still. For example, the photographs tend to act as factual evidence about who was at the wedding, what they wore, what events took place, etc.. However, things like the interpretation of the looks on

people's faces, for example, remain areas open to contestation.

The activities of sharing cited above often take place through various channels of mass media — television, news, movies, etc. How the nature of mass media institutions influences debates about memory is a natural site of inquiry for communication researchers. Two examples of this approach are Barbie Zelizer's study of how the collective memory of the Kennedy assassination (1992) was shaped and Michael Schudson's study of the collective memory of Watergate (1992).

In addition, some attention has been paid specifically to how the practices surrounding photography affect the way memory is shaped. In contrast to a simplistic view of photography as a medium that objectively "captures" or "documents" or "makes permanent" the past, Susan Sontag points out the subjectivity of photography's view of the past:

The photographer was thought to be an acute but non-interfering observer -- a scribe, not a poet. But as people quickly discovered that nobody takes the same picture of the same thing, the supposition that cameras furnish an impersonal, objective image yielded to the fact that photographs are evidence not only of what an individual sees, not just a record but an evaluation of the world. (Sontag, 1977, p. 88)

Professionals and "snapshotters" alike have developed photographic routines and conventions that shape the types of photographs that are taken and displayed. These routines may have been developed in order to facilitate the day to day operations of a lucrative photography studio (as Lewis argues, 1997, 1998); they may have developed to facilitate previously existing modes of communication (like ritual)⁴; or they may develop

⁴ Carolyn Marvin argues that all new technologies are understood in terms of existing technologies.

out of a combination of several influential cultural concerns.

Even though the subjective nature of photography is self-evident to any student of communication, there is still a sense among social actors that photographs somehow capture reality in an objective manner. Photographs serve as forms of evidence among individuals as to what “really happened.”

By means of a photograph, the subjective experience of each member of the family is objectified into common property. Hence, photographs constitute unmistakable evidence in the negotiation process of how their own past should be seen...By means of photographs people ensure for themselves a desired past in what would appear to be an objective manner.

(Boerdam and Martinius, 1980, p. 116)

Although it is tempting to dismiss claims of objectivity as naivité, the perception of the photograph as an objective document is a powerful cultural assumption that guides the use and impact of photography for social purposes. As I mentioned above, photography often has the effect of making certain aspects of memory become immune to contestation. I will return to this idea later in more detailed discussions of the particular data in this study.

In this review of some of the literature surrounding the study of memory, I have tried to highlight several aspects of memory that I find particularly relevant to the study of wedding photography. First, I have pointed to the shift within the social sciences from defining memory as an individual activity (relying heavily on technological metaphors for explanation) to a collective activity that involves discussion, negotiation and contestation. Secondly, I have discussed the perceived link between memory and identity, both group and individual. Thirdly, I have touched on the idea that the practices constituting photography affect the way in which we remember and pointed to the perception of

objectivity associated with photography as an important aspect to explore.

In thinking about the practice of remembering through photography, I began to see similarities between remembering and ritual performance. This seemed to make some intuitive sense as well since many of the life events we try to remember through photography are in themselves rituals (e.g. weddings, birthdays, graduations, etc.). In the next section, I will outline some of the important aspects of ritual as they might relate to wedding photography. Then, in the final section of this chapter, I will preview the way in which I will combine ritual and memory theory in my analysis of the data in this project.

Important Aspects of Ritual

Today we think of “ritual” as a complex sociocultural medium variously constructed of tradition, exigency, and self-expression; it is understood to play a wide variety of roles and to communicate a rich density of overdetermined messages and attitudes. For the most part, ritual is the medium chosen to invoke those ordered relationships that are thought to obtain between human beings in the here-and-now and non-immediate sources of power, authority, and value. Definitions of these relationships in terms of ritual’s vocabulary of gesture and word, in contrast to theological speculation or doctrinal formulation, suggest that the fundamental efficacy of ritual activity lies in its ability to have people embody assumptions about their place in a larger order of things.

(Catherine Bell, 1997, p. xi)

There is a rich tradition of cross-disciplinary studies that have attempted to define ritual and illuminate how it functions. I will not try here to trace the history of that debate nor offer my own all-encompassing definition of ritual. Both of these tasks have been attempted with varying degrees of success by others [see Bell, 1997 (quoted above) and Rothenbuhler, 1998 for example] and are not necessary for my present purposes. Instead,

I will discuss several aspects of ritual identified within the existing literature which will prove to be useful in understanding how remembering works in relation to wedding photography. To this end, I find Bell's above-quoted discussion a useful starting point. I am particularly drawn to her remarks because she so clearly emphasizes ritual's role in allowing individuals to communicate with something or someone beyond themselves. One of the most basic functions of ritual is to allow the individual to communicate with groups, gods, ideals and other intangible forms of social authority.

One frequently acknowledged aspect of ritual is formality, which might be defined as "the use of a more limited and rigidly organized set of expressions and gestures" (Bell, p. 139). Note that formality tends to be a relative term, defined in contrast to other activities which are "less formal" or "casual." Ritual formality presupposes rules, established by tradition, religion, law, or some other form of authority, that guide ritual word and gesture. Consequently, "[r]ituals tend to be stylized, repetitive, stereotyped, often but not always decorous, and they also tend to occur at special places and times fixed by the clock, calendar, or specified circumstances" (Rappaport, 1979, p. 175-176). I would like to emphasize that although rules exist that govern the idealized forms of ritual activity, those rules are not followed by all participants at all times. In fact, part of the effectiveness of ritual stems from the fact that the rules allow for a certain extent of variation, thus allowing the individual to align or distance him or herself from the ideal. The flexibility of rituals also preserves their effectiveness in the context of a reality in which mistakes happen, people forget, and plans go astray.

Knowledge that ritual is a formal activity has led us to jokingly use the term (perhaps to the detriment of a clear delineation of ritual) to describe things that might otherwise be dubbed “routines.” Thus we might joke about our morning “ritual” of drinking three glasses of black coffee while reading the paper. However, there is a clear sense of difference between ritual and routine in terms of their relative importance; indeed, the joke about one’s morning “ritual” stems from an understanding that drinking coffee could not, and should not, reach the level of importance reserved for formal ritual events. Despite this difference between ritual and routine, it must also be granted that routines and habits often anchor our lives in a way that resembles ritual activity. We mark the passing of time with ritual events that ground our lives in the people and values we hold important. Birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, marriages, and deaths are marked by ritual events that identify a particular time in our lives as one of change and transformation (Van Gennep, 1961). Similarly, we might start each day with a routine that ties us through its familiarity to the day before while simultaneously marking the start of a new cycle.

In the passage above, Bell identifies “gesture and word” as the key components in the vocabulary of ritual. The efficacy of ritual depends upon the human body doing and saying things; ritual is a performance for the benefit of oneself and those whom observe. The performative nature of ritual has many implications [see Bell’s discussion, pp. 160-161], however, at this point I want to emphasize simply that a reliance on the human body lends credibility to the distinctions ritual asserts and the reality it creates.

...performances communicate on multiple sensory levels, usually involving highly visual imagery, dramatic sounds, and sometimes even tactile, olfactory, and gustatory stimulation. By marching with a crowd, crying over a tragic drama, or applauding an unconvincing politician, even the less enthusiastic participants of the audience are cognitively and emotionally pulled into a complex sensory experience...the power of performance lies in great part in the effect of the heightened multisensory experience it affords: one is not being told or shown something so much as one is led to experience something. (Bell, p. 160)

When we observe bodies performing ritual acts or perform those acts ourselves (even more powerful), we tend to believe the reality that a ritual performance creates. For example, if we participate in a wedding ceremony - sing the hymns, eat the cake, throw the rice, etc. - it is unlikely that we will question that the couple is "married," regardless of our perceptions of the sincerity of the couple in reciting their vows. They said them, they are married.

Rituals also rely heavily on symbolism. Actions and artifacts signify abstract concepts, enabling us to visualize and manipulate ritual messages. Roy Rappaport claims that all rituals contain both indexical elements that carry information about the participants' current state and symbolic or iconic elements that are "concerned with enduring aspects of nature, society, or cosmos" (p. 182). Symbols, he argues (as per Peirce, 1960), are associated with that which they signify by law or convention only (p. 180), as opposed to icons which bear some resemblance to that which they signify. In either case, meaning is inscribed not by participants, but by whatever authoritative power(s) participants use to guide their ritual performance.

Wedding rituals are rich with symbols. Flowers are usually the primary element of

wedding decorations, representing the reproductive potential of the bride and groom's union. An unbroken band of gold is placed on the left hand (closest to the heart) of both bride and groom, symbolizing unending love. The bride and groom feed each other cake (often decorated with flowers), representing a commitment to nurture and sustain each other. There is a seemingly endless list of symbols used in a wedding ritual that varies by culture and historic period. In most cases, the symbols used in weddings stand for concepts of reproduction, love and family commitment. In later chapters, I will show how wedding photography both represents the traditional symbols of the wedding and creates unique symbolic representations.

Ritual communication uses formality, performance and symbols in order to differentiate ritual from everyday activity. Through ritual, we communicate to each other that the actions we are taking have important implications for our lives. In thinking about ritual, I have adopted Catherine Bell's perspective as stated below:

...some activities are performed in culturally relevant ways to generate the perception that these activities are both intrinsically different from other acts and privileged in their significance and ramifications. The framework proposed here focuses, therefore, on the generation of what we call ritual as a way of acting, namely, the ritualization of activity (p. 219).

Ritualized Memory

It is my contention that on some occasions memory becomes "ritualized." Remembering practices become more formalized, performative and symbolic in instances where we wish to distinguish particular remembrances from everyday memories. Through formalized remembering practices that are ruled by tradition and other types of authority.

certain memories are privileged and set apart from others. We create and communicate those events which we see as pivotal moments in our lives by ritualizing memory. A wedding is a pivotal moment in many peoples' lives; hence, remembering practices surrounding the wedding have become ritualized in the ways briefly outlined below.

1. Formal

There are patterned ways in which wedding photography is practiced. There is a "right" or "idealized" version of wedding photography. Participants will align or distance themselves from this ideal based on the values they wish to communicate. Wedding photography is governed by several types of authority. First, the officiant that performs the wedding ceremony will have influence on how photography is practiced. Secondly, tradition, as passed down primarily from female relatives of the bride, holds authority over the practice of wedding photography. Finally, the norms associated with professional photography have impact on the way wedding photography is practiced. We will look at the influence of each of these sources of authority on the formal patterns that exist in wedding photography.

2. Performative

Ritualized memories as practiced through wedding photography take the form of stories that are told with words and gestures and artifacts. The body is ever present in ritualized memory. Photography allows us to not only experience events through our bodies, but also allows the opportunity to later observe our bodily actions - much like a theatrical play. One friend remarked to me that she looks at her wedding photographs and

thinks, “Nice wedding. Oh! I’m in it!” We perform for the camera, which later translates into performing for ourselves. This leads to the experiential component of ritualized memory which leads people to often describe it as “reliving” the past.

3. Symbolic

Ritualized remembering, like other forms of ritual communication, utilizes artifacts to represent key social structures and values created and validated by the memory.

Obviously, photographs are the primary symbolic artifacts that I will discuss in this study, although I will suggest in the concluding chapter other mediums that might be used in ritualized remembering.

I will argue that through the use of formality, performance and symbolism, we communicate that some memories are more privileged than others. We distinguish (and communicate the distinction) between everyday memories and more meaningful memories by ritualizing the way in which we remember.

My argument is not that wedding photography itself is a ritual. Wedding photography is a set of social practices that contributes to two distinct, although intertwined, rituals: a wedding ritual and a remembering ritual. The contribution that wedding photography makes to each of these rituals as will be suggested by the data in this study is briefly foreshadowed below.

The Wedding Ritual

A wedding is a transformative ritual (see VanGennep, 1961) that alters the social order. Two socially unrelated people and their families become aligned through the words

and gestures performed on a wedding day; they become “family.” Wedding photography helps the wedding ritual achieve this end in part by requiring people to arrange themselves in patterns that demonstrate social alignment as they pose for the camera. One study of American wedding customs reports that:

[I]n the early days of photography...engaged couples were uneasy about being photographed together, lest they seem to anticipate the married state” (Baker, p. 61)

Being photographed together is part of making the transformation from “single life” to “married life.” As indicated by the apprehension cited above, this transformation needs to take place at the appropriate time in order for the power of the ritual (to transform social reality) to be preserved. The modern version of the concern expressed above is the debate over whether wedding pictures should be taken before the ceremony in order to save time later in the day. We will discuss this debate in more detail in a later chapter. Wedding photography also emphasizes important aspects of the wedding ritual by requiring more pictures of those events (such as the cake cutting and the first dance) and by institutionalizing more formal style requirements for pictures of key wedding ritual events.⁵ As the photographer and guests gather with their cameras around the couple as they cut the cake -- directing the gaze of the others by pointing their cameras in a particular direction, punctuating their actions with flash -- we are collectively communicating: “Stop, look, this is important.” One father of the bride (quoted in a study about engagement) describes how photography enhances the wedding in the following

⁵ As mentioned earlier, Pamela Rae Frese also observes that wedding photographs “cluster around significant ritual expressions” of the wedding (1982, p. 107).

way:

...having that photographer there, that signals that this was an important event. Because if you look in the world, if it's an important event, there's somebody with a movie camera, somebody with a television camera (Greenblat and Cottle, 1980, p. 158-159).

We will see then that photography helps the wedding ritual work during the planning and shooting stages by emphasizing and enacting the ways in which social reality will be transformed by the ritual activity and by emphasizing the pivotal events of the day.

Remembering Ritual

During the editing and exhibition phases of wedding photography, the focus shifts from the transformation of social reality (at that point the transformation has already taken place) and shifts to controlling the nature of our memories about the event and affording them a privileged position in the stories we tell within our family. In other words, wedding photography helps make ritualized remembering possible. The photographs still emphasize pivotal moments in the wedding ritual, however, as time passes, people talk less about the details of the event and more about “how young we looked” or “there is my mother a few months before she died.” Ritualized remembering brings into focus the power of the passage of time and the human inability to stop its passing. We recognize and communicate the untouchable, uncontrollable nature of time through the practices associated with ritualized remembering. In one sense, photography freezes a moment in time, but only to stand in sharp contrast to the context in which it will later be viewed.

This analysis begins, then, with the assertion that wedding photography contributes

to and bridges the gap between two intertwined rituals: a wedding ritual and a remembering ritual. I will further discuss the interaction between the two rituals in the final chapter, however, at this point I would like to suggest that all rituals have some type of memory ritual built into them. Without ritualized remembering, the power of ritual performance is lost with the passage of time. Ritualized remembering is not limited, however, to the memory of rituals. I will also discuss ways in which we might ritualize other types of remembrances in the final chapter.

Chapter Two **Studying Wedding Photography**

My analysis of wedding photography relies on data collected from the multiple sources described below over a five year period (1996-2001). Data was gathered in three cities in North Carolina: Chapel Hill (pop. 48,715); Durham (pop. 187,035); Raleigh (pop. 276,093)⁶. These locations were primarily chosen for my convenience; however, a particular advantage of the study region is that it is largely populated by “transplants” to the area. Therefore, although I interviewed and observed in a single geographical area, I was able to talk to people who were married in many parts of the country. This was important to me since I suspected that wedding photography practices might vary across the United States.

The methodological design of the study rests on the framework offered by Richard Chalfen in his work on “home mode” visual communication, i.e., amateur photography and film-making in the form of family “snapshots” and movies (1976; 1987; also used by Musello, 1977). Chalfen specifies five types of events involved in producing such forms of visual communication: (1)Planning Events, (2)On-camera shooting events, (3)Behind-camera shooting events, (4)Editing and (5)Exhibition. Planning events are those practices which occur before any film is exposed in anticipation of shooting events. On-camera shooting events are those patterned behaviors in which subjects engage while being

⁶ Population figures from the U.S. Census 2000 as reported on American Factfinder website, <http://factfinder.census.gov>, 8/24/01.

photographed. Behind-camera shooting events include the activities not only of the photographer, but also any observers of the shoot. Editing refers to the way in which developed photographs are sorted into different categories of display or non-display.⁷ Finally, exhibition is the on-going phase of viewing and sharing finished photographs. Although wedding photography differs in some ways from strictly “home mode” photography (especially in regard to the more highly developed planning and editing stages and the use of professional photographers), Chalfen’s framework offers a useful structure around which I have built my methodology and organized my analysis in subsequent chapters.

In recognition of the inherent biases associated with every method of data collection, I attempted to study wedding photography from many different vantage points, using several different tools. The list below summarizes the eleven major channels through which I gathered information. A discussion of each type of data follows. Charts summarizing the demographic characteristics of each sample and all interview questionnaires are included in the Appendix.

Types of Data Included in the Study:

1. Long Interviews
2. Short Interviews
3. Divorced or Widowed Interviews
4. Foreign Interviews
5. Engaged Interviews

⁷ I will also touch briefly on film development and printing in the first part of my analysis of the editing phase.

6. Pilot Interviews
7. Photographer Interviews
8. Wedding Observations
9. Participant Observation employed as a photographer's assistant.
10. Wedding guides, bridal magazines, and trade publications for wedding photographers.

1. Long Interviews

Talking to people about their wedding albums was an obvious approach to studying the way in which people use wedding photography. The Long Interviews were conducted with people who were married in the United States and lasted about an hour. I started each interview with questions about who took the couple's wedding pictures, when and where they usually look at it, and how they feel about the photographs in general (see Guide#1 displayed in the Appendix). The bulk of the interview consisted of a loosely structured discussion in which participants showed me their album. My intention was to approximate a common exhibition event in which a couple shows their album to a friend. Although my identity as a researcher is always apparent during an interview, I wanted to try to decrease the influence of that role on the answers participants might give me. To that end, I would often arrive at an interview with a dessert for us to share, or a plant as a token of friendliness. While looking at participants' albums, I would begin by trying to act as I would if they were friends of mine, complimenting the bride's dress, for example, or asking questions about their families. I tried to play "friend" instead of "researcher." This was often easy to do since many of the participants who agreed to give me an hour of

their time for little or no compensation (discussed shortly) were people I knew from other settings as either friends or acquaintances. The benefit I saw from this approach was that when I did ask more “researcher” type questions, for example, “Why is it special to you to have a picture of your deceased grandmother?” (No “friend” would ask this question - she would intuitively know or assume the answer), I got more relaxed, gut-reaction responses than I might have if I had played the removed researcher role from the beginning. Near the end of the interview, I would often try suggesting my interpretations to the participants and asking for their input, as in, for example, “Do you think this picture makes you feel sad because it symbolizes the end of childhood?” I was encouraged by the fact that respondents’ answers were as often “no” as “yes” to these types of questions; I saw this as a sign that participants were not trying to please me, but were answering frankly. I feel that my data gains relevance to how actors perceive their actions outside the world of academics through my efforts to stay grounded in my non-academic persona.

Kenneth Pike (1966) coined the terms “etic” and “emic” to describe the interplay between analysis based on an outside perspective (etic viewpoint) and analysis based on an insider’s perspective (emic viewpoint). Rappaport similarly points to the importance in ethnographic study of the integration of what he calls “cognized models”, i.e. “a description of a people’s knowledge of their environment and their beliefs concerning it” (p. 97), and “operational models”, defined as a description “in accordance with the assumptions and methods of the objective sciences” (p.97). A sound operational model must account for the effect of cognized models on the behavior of those being studied.

The difficulty in doing ethnography is ascertaining to what extent we are able to access the cognized model. Research participants are constantly reminded of the outsider status of the ethnographer by necessary but intrusive aspects of scientific research. I refer here not only to the "strange" questions asked by the researcher, but also the scientific practices of note-taking and audio and/or video recording that are utilized in order to document data for later analysis. I was often reminded of the role of the tape recorder I used to save the Long Interviews for later transcription. For example, in one interview, the husband made a comment about someone I knew. I inquired about how that person was handling a personal issue in their life. His wife replied, "I'll tell you later, but not on the tape." It is obvious from this exchange that there are things people may be willing to tell me as a friend which they will not tell me as an ethnographer with a tape recorder.

It is, of course, impossible to conduct research without having some impact on the data we collect. Although cognized models may be accessible to us as members of a particular social structure (when we study social systems in which we participate in our personal lives), it is more difficult to identify the emic perspective when we play the role of researcher since participants may be unwilling to share personal information or may tailor their answers to fit what they think we might want to know as "academics." I do not mean to suggest that the emic perspective is completely inaccessible to the ethnographer. Rather, I am advocating, and have tried to adopt in this study, a methodological approach that acknowledges the difficulties associated with the necessary "outsider" status of the ethnographer, trying to approximate an "insider" role when possible and discussing the

implications of being an outsider in the analysis of data.

I concentrated on recruiting interviewees who had been married under 10 years since I had found in my pilot study that this was the period of a marriage in which wedding photographs were viewed most often. However, I also tried to interview a handful of people who had been married longer as a basis of comparison and to enhance my understanding of the larger picture. At first, I tried to recruit people through photographers. I contacted people whose wedding I had attended with photographers (see later sections describing photographer interviews and wedding observations) via mail and asked them to let me interview them. I successfully recruited only one couple this way. Most of my participants were recruited through an ad in the newsletter of a married graduate students organization affiliated with a large university. Others were “friends of friends” that were referred to me. Others were friends of mine. I recruited people from an exercise class I attend via a poster and announcements in class by the instructor. Finally, I called an AME (African Methodist Episcopalian) church and asked them for names of people in their congregation who might be interested in participating (this was an effort to diversify the ethnicity of my sample.) I compensated some people for their participation by bringing them home-made desserts; I paid some money (\$7); some participated for free; and some got free passes to our exercise class.

The photographs and albums participants showed me during the long interviews were also sources of data independent of our conversation. I learned about display practices and to a certain extent on-camera shooting events simply from my own observation of the

finished products. Wedding photographs are usually copyrighted material, which limited my ability to reproduce images in this report. I obtained permission from one couple and their photographer to reproduce pictures from their wedding and have used these images to supplement my explanations in later chapters. Although drawn from a single wedding for practical purposes, the photographs included represent the patterns I identified in the many albums I observed.

2. Short Interviews

Although the long interviews described above yielded rich data, the sample was somewhat biased towards middle and upper class informants (see Data Chart #1 in Appendix). In an effort to diversify my sample according to SES variables and to quickly increase the number of people included in the study, I came up with a shortened version of my questionnaire (see Guide #2 in Appendix), camped outside a thrift shop one morning, and offered \$3 to anyone who was willing to participate. Obviously, I did not get to see any of their photographs, but I was able to gather some useful information about how they felt about their photographs and what they did with them. I spoke to nine currently married individuals as well as eight widowed or divorced individuals, and two foreigners. The widowed/divorced and foreign interviews are included in the samples described below. The married informants who completed the Short Interview had slightly lower education levels and less professional occupations than the average from the Long Interviews (see Data Chart #2 in Appendix).

3. Divorced or Widowed Interviews

In thinking about the relationship between wedding photographs and memory, it seemed important to know what happens to wedding photographs when a marriage ends. I developed a question guide for divorced and widowed participants (Guide #3 in Appendix). As mentioned above, I talked to eight divorced or widowed individuals outside the thrift shop when I was recruiting for my Short Interviews. I did one additional divorced interview with a woman who has been married three times and volunteered to talk to me about all of her albums (recruited from my Jazzercise class as described in the Long Interview section).

4. Foreign Interviews

Since several people who were married in foreign countries offered to show me their wedding photographs, I thought it might be interesting to get some sense of whether American wedding photography practices are different from those of other cultures. In total I completed seven interviews (either Long or Short) with informants who were married in India, Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico or Brazil (see Data Chart #4 in Appendix).

5. Engaged Interviews

Although I asked couples in the Long and Short Interviews about how they planned for their wedding photography, I also sought out two engaged couples in order to ensure that the answers people give after the wedding about aspects of the planning stage were

not radically different than the answers they might have given during the planning stage itself.

6. Pilot Interviews

I had completed four pilot interviews for my dissertation proposal. Some of the data collected in those interviews also proved useful in writing this final report. The first two pilot study interviews were conducted at a time when I planned to study both wedding photography and wedding video and compare the two media. The question guide for these interviews (see Guide #5 in Appendix) reflects this earlier approach.

7. Photographer Interviews

The above mentioned sources of data were chosen in order to better understand the practices comprising wedding photography from the perspective of wedded couples. The influence/control professional wedding photographers have over all phases of wedding photography made them an obvious second vantage point from which to gather data. Interviews with wedding photographers took 30 minutes to an hour each and were guided by the questionnaire (Guide #6) shown in the Appendix. I interviewed the first photographer based on her proximity to my house in order to test my questionnaire. The second photographer was recommended by a mutual friend - this photographer is the one I shadowed for most of my wedding observations (see next section) and is the photographer for whom I later worked as an assistant. The remaining photographers were selected

randomly. I compiled a numbered list of all the photography studios listed in the yellow pages for the three cities in this study (114 studios in all). I used a computer generated list of random numbers to select 16 photographers from the list (hoping to get about a 65% success rate, i.e., 10 interviews selected at random). I successfully interviewed 9 of those. Of the remaining 7, I got 2 refusals, 2 photographers did not do weddings, and 3 numbers were no longer in service or my messages were never returned. At this point I decided I was not getting much new information from each additional photographer interview and directed my efforts towards other forms of data collection (see descriptions below).

The photographers I spoke to came from studios that ranged in size from one to three photographers. In all cases I spoke with the photographer that owned the business. The average number of weddings a studio shot each year ranged from 8 to 70, with most studios shooting between 25 and 35 weddings per year. The sample was split between male and female studio owners (5 female and 6 male). Please see Data Chart #7 in the Appendix for a summary of this sample.

8. Wedding Observations

In order to observe first hand some of the practices which couples and photographers described to me, I attended seventeen weddings as a researcher, doubling as an unpaid photographer's assistant. I went to eleven weddings with the same photographer in order to see how the practices surrounding wedding photography might vary across weddings with the same photographer. For the remaining weddings, I asked every photographer I

interviewed if I might tag along to one wedding with them as an unpaid assistant (I carried bags, gathered people for photos - was generally an extra set of hands). Five additional photographers agreed to take me along to one wedding (one took me to two). I would observe at these weddings and then take notes when I got home about things I had seen. Some details about the weddings I observed are included in Data Chart #8 in the Appendix.

9. Participant Observation employed as a photographer's assistant.

In the summer of 1997, the photography whom I had observed at eleven weddings offered me a job as an office manager and an assistant wedding photographer. I accepted the job, recognizing that "insider" status would provide access to information that is inaccessible to a "researcher." I worked as an office manager for a year. In that capacity, I observed and participated in selling the studios services, billing clients, filling orders and assembling albums. During that time, and for two years after I left the office manager position, I also worked weddings as an assistant photographer. The studio owner trained me to take wedding photographs and I learned much about the importance of idealization in wedding photography (discussed in detail later) from perfecting my talents as a photographer.

There is no doubt that my employment impacted the way the studio conducted business in many small ways. The processes I put in place as the office manager certainly influenced the way the studio interacted with clients. To a certain extent, participant

observation includes the researcher herself in the data of the study. However, being part of the studio made me privy to conversations between photographers, clients and other wedding professionals that would otherwise have been hidden from me. While I would be reluctant to rely solely on participant observation for data, in this study it served as a valuable enrichment to the data I had already collected from a more removed vantage point.

10. Wedding guides, bridal magazines, and trade publications for wedding photographers.

As mentioned in the first chapter, much of what is written about wedding photography comes in the form of wedding guides, bridal magazines, and trade publications. I used these types of material (in an unsystematic fashion) to verify that what my informants told me was not unusual. In other words, guides for couples and photographers serve as further evidence that the patterns I observed are real and far reaching. Such guides also helped me identify the ideals towards which participants strove. I have quoted such publications whenever relevant throughout my analysis.

The Data Set as a Whole

In addition to the types of data described above I gathered various bits of information from unique other sources. For example, one photographer invited me to attend a slide presentation in which he showed some clients their wedding photographs for the first time.

This unusual viewing event allowed me to see the couple's first reactions to their photographs. Friends, family and even strangers offered me stories of their wedding photography experiences which I have used (and identified as coming from such sources) throughout.

All wedding couple participants were asked to fill out a demographic questionnaire. Data Chart #9 in the Appendix summarizes the data across some key demographic variables. I am satisfied with the variation across religion, which is important when you are studying a practice associated with a religious ritual. The variation across ethnic groups is acceptable when you look at percentages, although I would like to have bigger numbers in each category. Education and occupation are intended as indicators of social class. We can see that on the whole the sample is well-educated and more likely to have a professional job, however, there is variation. The sample is skewed towards higher SES groups, but I have managed to have a range of groups at least modestly represented.

The greatest strength of the data in this study is that it comes from so many sources. I have tried to look at wedding photography from as many vantage points as possible. I am also pleased with the level of consideration and insight reflected in the answers I have gotten from participants. The sample includes over 50 interviews of various kinds, 17 wedding observations and the other unique data described above. When looking at sheer volume, this seems like a reasonable amount of data from which to draw some conclusions.

In addition, every stage of the visual media production process as described by

Chalfen has been analyzed from several different angles:

▼ *Production Stages as Studied by Data Type*

| | | Data Type | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|------------|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Production Stage | Planning | X | X | | X | X | X | X | | X | X |
| | On-Camera | X | | | X | | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Off-Camera | X | | | X | | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Editing | X | X | | X | | X | X | | X | X |
| | Exhibition | X | X | X | X | | X | X | | X | X |

Types of Data Included in Study:

1. Long Interviews
2. Short Interviews
3. Divorced or Widowed Interviews
4. Foreign Interviews
5. Engaged Interviews
6. Pilot Interviews
7. Photographer Interviews
8. Wedding Observations
9. Participant Observation employed as a photographer's assistant.
10. Wedding guides, bridal magazines, and trade publications for wedding photographers.

As with any study, there are limitations to my data in terms of volume and representativeness, despite my obvious efforts to diversify the sample along key demographic variables. These limitations will, of course, impact the extent to which the conclusions I draw can be generalized to a larger population. Throughout my discussion, I will point to ways in which my findings may be particular to my data set.

Chapter Three **Planning Stage**

Wedding photography involves a more elaborate planning stage than is typically seen for photographs which will be exhibited primarily in the home. Most home photographs are taken by members of the family on the “spur of the moment” or at events that are consciously deemed “photoworthy” in advance such as birthdays and graduations. In some instances, a family may buy film in advance for a special party or other gathering that they anticipate wanting to photograph. Often a family just keeps a loaded camera ready to pick up and use when something “photographical” happens. In most instances of family photography, making sure we have film and a camera handy is the extent of the planning stage. We rarely plan what pictures will be taken in advance or outline a time schedule for taking those pictures.

In contrast, wedding photography is typically orchestrated in great detail. Traditionally, wedding plans — including photography — were made by the bride and perhaps her mother or other female relatives.⁸ In many instances this is still the case. For much of American culture, there is still a sense that a wedding is the bride's domain. As one husband pointed out, we have many “bridal” publications, but there are no “groom's magazines.” One bride astutely explains her feelings about having her fiancé involved in the planning process in the following way:

...[the groom] has really not been much of a participant in this whole planning process. Which in a way has been nice, and in a way I wish he were a little more involved. But I guess I wish he were involved in sort-of a “yes man” kind of way (laughs) . you know? I'd like him to be there for

⁸ I have also seen a couple instances in which the bride's mother planned the whole wedding. This seems to happen occasionally when the bride and groom both live somewhere other than where the wedding will take place.

all of these meetings...but I don't really want him to say "No, I really hate that – that's not an option.

This woman recognizes the irony of her possessiveness about the wedding plans in light of her attitudes towards gender equality in other aspects of her life. She explains that it has become a joke between her fiancé and his friends that she keeps bringing him along to planning meetings to "ask his advice and show him options," but that once there he is "neither asked nor shown."

However, in the Fall 2000 issue of *Elegant Bride*, Timothy Teague, a California-based wedding photographer, notes that grooms seem to be increasingly involved in planning their weddings. He reports that he was "just hired by a groom whose fiancée put him in charge because he had more time." (Gaylor, p. 96) In my research, there were many couples who reported having made decisions about wedding photography together. Whether "together" meant the husband participated in the "yes man" way described above is difficult to establish without having attended the planning meetings. In many instances, only the wife was willing to participate in the interview about her wedding photography. However, I was surprised on numerous occasions to find that husbands (who often appeared to have been dragged to the interview by their wives) had strong, articulate points of view to express about the importance and meaning of their wedding photographs. At the end of one interview, the wife stared at her husband in disbelief and said "Honey, you talked a lot!" This suggests that men may be emotionally invested in their wedding photographs even if they do not play an active role in planning for or exhibiting them.

The first step in the planning process would logically be the decision of whether or not to have wedding photographs taken at all. As it turns out, this is not really an issue

for most couples. There is usually no question that photographs will be taken at the wedding; photography has become one of the defining features of the event.

(Bride) ..honestly we never thought not to have photographs...(Groom)
I've never been to a wedding that didn't have a photographer - I think it's expected...

(Groom) I think it wasn't so much of a conscious thought - it was we're having a wedding, we have it in a church, that's an unconscious thought - we have a minister, that's an unconscious thought - I mean we could have done it so many different ways, but our family was just like church, minister, photographer, flowers, bride's dressed in white - and you know we could have done anything, but it was just like everyone has pictures at their wedding - it wasn't a conscious thought - it was a question of **who** would take pictures - not if we're going to take pictures.

[in response to question of why they had pictures taken at their wedding]
(Groom) Because you have to. (Bride) Don't you?

I did not speak to any couples who seriously considered not having pictures taken at their wedding. Not all couples cited convention as a reason they wanted photography — and the couples quoted above cited other reasons for wanting photographs as well — but there is a clear sense that having photographs taken at your wedding is the “traditional” thing to do. Even couples I talked to who had less “traditional” weddings (for example, elopements) still had pictures taken at their weddings. The woman with the most wedding photographs displayed in her home (I counted 15) eloped to Las Vegas!⁹ As with many aspects of ritual, wedding photography is so ingrained in tradition that it is not questioned. Interestingly, older elements of the wedding ritual — like the white dress and wedding

⁹ The planning stage for people who elope is predictably shorter - most reported grabbing their camera as they went out the door to the courthouse. The woman who got married in Las Vegas, however, had a professional photography session included in her “wedding package.”

cake of the Judeo-Christian traditions — may be questioned and discarded from the wedding activities more often than wedding photography. Perhaps this is because the photography also contributes to a memory ritual in a way that other wedding activities do not. In subsequent chapters, we will elaborate on why wedding photography is often considered indispensable.

Since most couples start the planning stage with the assumption that they will have pictures taken at their wedding, the first real decision is the choice of who will take the photographs. For many the answer is a professional photographer. In part, couples choose professional photographers because they want higher quality prints with good color saturation, clear focus and pleasing composition. Choosing a professional photographer, in general, increases the chance of getting photographs of higher technical quality. Poor technical quality was the criticism most often made by the couples who had non-professional friends take their wedding pictures (as opposed to unpleasant personality or lack of efficiency which are the most commonly cited complaints about professional photographers).

Another reason couples choose a professional wedding photographer is that they want someone who is very experienced with the traditions associated with wedding photography. Many couples seem to be looking for a professional photographer to take charge from the planning stage on. There is a sense that wedding photography is so important that you need a professional to make sure it is done “right.” Or, as one bride put it, she “definitely wanted someone professional so if it didn’t work out there was someone to blame.” In other words, she did not want to take responsibility herself for something that she would be very upset to not have or not have done “right.” Couples know to some extent that even professional photographers may make either technical (using the wrong type of film) or tactical (forgetting to take a picture of the bride and her

grandfather) mistakes, but they choose a professional in hopes of reducing these risks and in order to have someone to hold accountable if their photographs “don’t turn out.”

Although most choose to pay a professional wedding photographer, some couples have friends or family members take their wedding pictures. The reason most often cited for not choosing a professional photographer is budget. The average American wedding costs about \$18,000 and photography accounts for 10% of this amount, for an average of around \$1,800 for a typical wedding photography package (Warner, 1999; Parrish, 1999).

Since photographs can be taken by a friend for much less than this, many couples who are planning a low-budget wedding may choose to eliminate the expense of a professional photographer. For those who cited budget as the primary reason for not choosing a professional, there was usually a sense that they would have liked the work of a professional better, but that their photographs were “good enough.” In a few cases, the couple was unhappy with their pictures and lamented the choice to opt out of a professional for budgetary reasons.

In addition, some couples who choose to have a friend take their wedding pictures voice a preference for a “less formal” style of wedding photography. As one bride put it, she wanted something more photojournalistic “instead of the posed and things that didn’t look real.”¹⁰ One way to achieve a photographic style that is not governed by traditional wedding photography norms is to choose a friend who is less familiar with those norms than a professional. Another option is to provide disposable cameras (Kodak actually makes “wedding” versions of these cameras, see illustration below) and allow guests to pick them up and use them as they wish. Couples may use this approach to replace or to

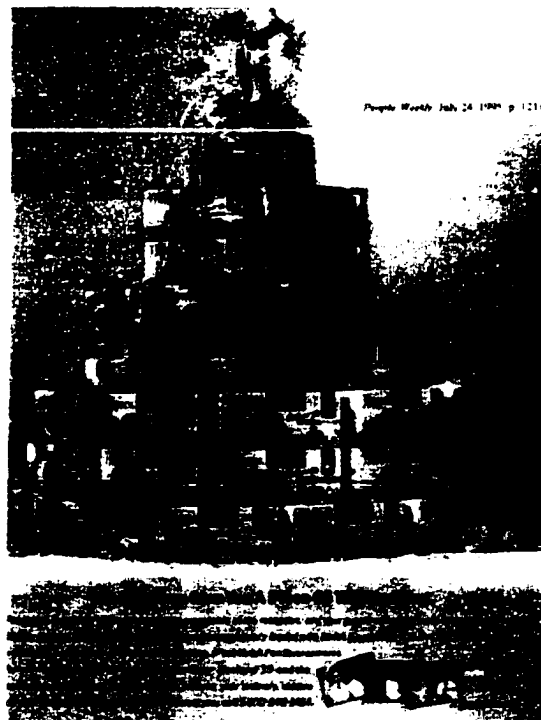
¹⁰ We will return to the question of what is real at a later point. For now, I am interpreting this bride’s remarks to mean that she does not want photographs with the typical poses and themes that are traditionally present in wedding photography.

supplement professional photography. Finally, guests often bring their own cameras to a wedding (unsolicited by the couple) and provide the bride and groom with copies of the photographs they take.¹¹

In short, there are four types of producers of wedding photographs: professionals, assigned friends, guests using disposable cameras, and guests using their own cameras. Every couple I interviewed had one of the following combinations of sources producing their wedding photographs:

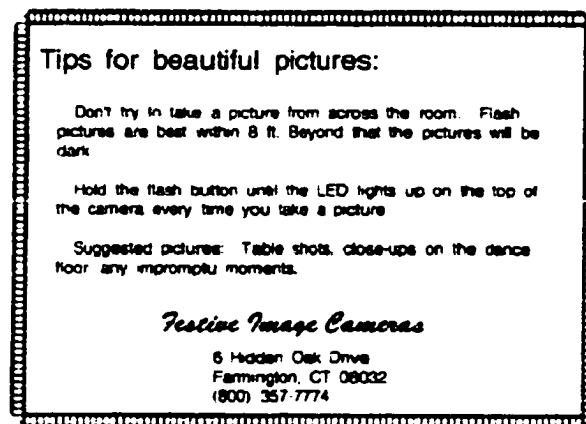
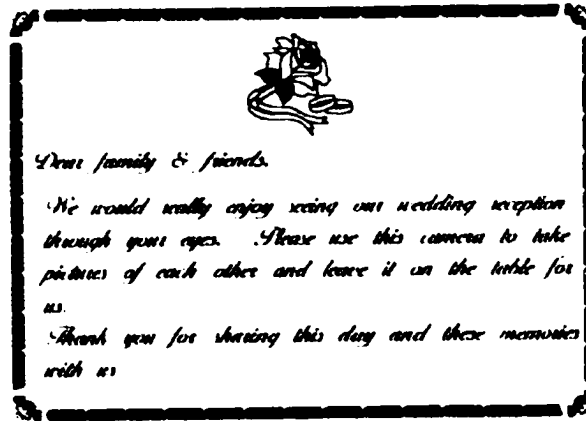
1. Professional + Guests
2. Professional + Disposable + Guests
3. Friend + Guests
4. Friend + Disposable + Guests
5. Disposable + Guests

► *Kodak Advertisement
for Wedding Cameras*



¹¹ See p. 47 for a card that was placed on the tables of one wedding that used disposable cameras in addition to a professional photographer. Notice that the card has two main messages: (1) The goal is to have the guests take pictures according to what they as non-professionals deem photoworthy (“through your eyes”) and (2) To give some basic picture-taking tips in order to reduce the occurrence of technical error.

► *Instruction
Card for Guests*



Factors in Choosing a Professional

When a couple chooses a friend or family member to take their wedding photographs, the choice is usually made based on availability and willingness of the friend to take the pictures. Sometimes the friend will offer to take the photographs when he or she hears that the couple is engaged. In other instances, the couple may seek out a friend with a photography hobby and ask him or her to take their wedding pictures. I did not

have anyone tell me that they had to choose between two friends; one friend offered or was asked and accepted the job.¹²

Once the couple agrees that the friend will take their wedding photographs, they usually discuss who will pay for the film, developing and /or camera rental. Often the photographer friend will donate all or a portion of the photography expenses as a wedding gift to the bride and groom. This may be all the planning that is done before the wedding when a friend is chosen to take the wedding pictures. In some instances, the couple may make a list of photographs to be taken or a photography time-line (as will be described below in relation to professional photographers). However, in most cases, the friend will simply take candid pictures of what happens and spontaneously gather groups of friends and relatives to be photographed at the wedding.

Choosing a professional wedding photographer can be a more elaborate process than choosing a friend as a photographer, although this is not always the case. In some instances, the family of the bride or groom may have a friend who is a professional photographer and the automatic choice for the job (especially if they get a discounted rate because of the established friendship).

Another common way to choose a wedding photographer is to ask married friends and relatives who took pictures at their wedding. Referrals are an important part of building a photography business. During my field work as an assistant photographer, I often saw former clients as guests at weddings. In addition, wedding guests often asked the photographer I worked with for a business card if they liked the way she conducted herself at a wedding. The studio may also become known through different types of photography jobs such as commercial photography, a business party or, as a bride I

¹² In elopements or simple ceremonies performed by a magistrate, one of the witnesses usually takes some snapshots of the ceremony and the couple afterwards, perhaps on the courthouse steps.

interviewed told me, through high school portraits. One photographer puts it succinctly: “We get a lot of referral business, just kind-of migrates around [business] offices and that kind of thing.”

Various wedding vendors will often recommend each other to prospective bridal couples as a service to the couple, a favor to each other (in hopes that the favor will be returned) and as a way to gain some control over who they work with at a wedding. There is much talk amongst wedding professionals about the directresses that are terrible to work with, or the caterers that are never on time, or the photographers that are too pushy. Vendors like to work with others who share their approach to organizing a wedding. Consequently, couples have told me that they located their wedding photographers through bridal dress shops, reception halls, flower shops, musicians booking agencies and even other photographers that were previously booked for the date of the couple’s wedding.

If a couple is not referred to a photographer through one of the channels above they will most likely look for a local photographer at a bridal fair, in a wedding planning magazine, on the Internet, or simply in the yellow pages of the phone book. How they go about choosing from the long list of possibilities (there are about 75 photographers listed in the 2000 Bell South Yellow Pages for Raleigh NC, for example) depends on their knowledge of photography and how important their wedding pictures are to them. In general, those with more knowledge and those who prioritize photography as compared to other elements of the wedding will take more time choosing a photographer. Those who know more about photography tend to see more distinctions between the work of different photographers, thus creating more options from which to choose. Couples who care a lot about their wedding photography tend to want to ensure they choose someone “good” according to the criteria that will be outlined shortly.

A typical approach is for a couple to select a handful of potential photographers from the phone book or magazine based on loosely defined criteria such as location, studio name or the appeal of the display ad. The couple then calls the photographers on the list and asks for information and prices. Some couples may only call one or two photographers; one woman reported that she requested information from nine photographers.

When a potential client calls, the photographer will most likely try to persuade the couple to come in for an appointment to see some sample work. Photographers often resist quoting prices over the phone because they believe they can sell their services for more if they first evoke an emotional response from the potential client by showing them some sample wedding photographs. One photographer reports that he would rather see the potential client in person rather than send them information in the mail because:

I have a mailer and it never works...all the mailer does is give a person a reason why not to hire you, because they are going to compare your price with somebody else's price. They can't see your pictures.

Many couples simply show up for their meeting with the photographer and listen to what he or she has to say. Others will prepare in advance a list of questions to ask the photographer at the meeting. Bridal magazines and wedding guides often publish lists of appropriate questions to ask a potential wedding photographer. Two examples of such lists are displayed below.

▼ *Things to Ask the Photographer – List 1*

Wooding, Jennifer. *The Beautiful Bride (wedding planner for Raleigh, NC area)*.
Triangle Reprographics, 1999, p. 26.

Questions to Ask Your Photographer

What experience do you have photographing weddings?
May I have a list of some of your customers?
Who will be taking the photos?
How many photos do you usually take? (See below)
What size film do you use? 35mm or larger?
What packages do you offer?
What will it cost me?
When will the photographs be delivered?
How long do you keep negatives?
How long are they able to produce quality pictures?
What do you need to make sure the photos are high quality?

▼ *Things to Ask the Photographer – List 2*

Gaylor, Ginny "Shooting Straight: Photographers Speak Out." *Elegant Bride*.
Fall 2000, v. 13, no. 3, p. 98.

Personality - Do I get along well with this person? Does he understand what I want? Will I enjoy having him around all day or all weekend?

References - Did someone you trust recommend the photographer? Will she provide you with references? Have you looked at other weddings she has photographed?

Service - What are you getting for your money? Is the photographer clear on what he is charging? Does he offer a detailed contract? Are albums and proofs included?

Equipment - Will she bring back-up equipment? Will there be more than one photographer? What are the assistant's duties?

Style - Does the photographer offer only a traditional style? Only photojournalistic? Does he provide a combination of the two?

Timing - When do you want the photographer to arrive? When do you want her to leave? How long will it take to get the proofs? Is the photographer available for questions, consultations?

Budget - How much do I want to spend? The recommended amount is 10% of the total wedding budget. Do I want to spend more or less than that? Never try and save money by hiring a non-professional to capture your wedding day.

The questions in the above lists are designed in large part to help the wedding couple assess the photographer according to the three most common criteria used to choose a wedding photographer: the sample photographs, the photographer's personality and the price. The impact of each of these criteria is discussed in the following sections.

Sample Photographs

The sample wedding photographs shown to potential clients have a large impact on whether the couple will choose a particular photographer. To some extent, the couple may be looking at the technical quality of sample photographs in terms of good focus, adequate lighting, centered subjects, and color saturation. However, the majority of professional photographers will produce photographs that meet a basic level of proficiency according to these variables. People untrained in photography will seldom notice fine differences in focus, color saturation or lighting. However, if one of the couple is an amateur photographer, they may use technical quality as a distinguishing variable between professional photographers and ask detailed questions about the equipment, film and developing choices made by the studio.

Most of the couples I interviewed cited two other variables that they used in choosing between the samples of photographers they would potentially hire. First, they were concerned with whether the photographs were formal or casual; and secondly, they considered whether they could envision themselves in the clothing and settings the photographs depicted.

In terms of choosing between formal and casual styles of sample photographs, couples seem to be referring to a distinction between the people in the photograph having an observable awareness that the camera is there and an illusion that they are unaware of

the camera as the picture is being taken. What my informants refer to as “formal” photographs will most likely have people standing or sitting in arrangements they would not assume if they were not being photographed. Everyone in the picture will be facing the camera and everyone will be smiling. Photographs that are deemed “casual” will most likely have people in positions they might assume if the camera were not there, all the subjects will not necessarily be looking directly at the camera, and the background may be cluttered. Photographers refer to this distinction as the difference between a traditional and a photojournalistic style of wedding photography. One photographer I interviewed described the difference between these two categories in the following way:

Traditional wedding photography - there's a lot of photographer involvement. He orchestrates a lot of the events, tells people where to stand, what they do once they get there. Just as simple things as cutting a cake or doing a traditional garter - you know taking off the garter - that photographer may well indeed orchestrate exactly how it's done. Where to me that takes away the spontaneity of the moment. If you are a good photojournalist then you should know where to be to be at the right angle and have the reflexes to capture proper and meaningful photographs without orchestrating.

So the difference between formal and casual (or traditional and photojournalistic) wedding photography has to do with not only the appearance of the resulting photographs, but the way in which the photographer behaves while at the wedding. As we will see in our discussion of shooting events associated with wedding photography, these distinctions are not uncomplicated. What appears to be a spontaneous shot may have been staged and the line between orchestration and observation is often unclear. Despite the complications involved in differentiating between these two categories, they remain driving concepts in how couples make choices about wedding photographers and how photographers attempt to distinguish themselves from their competitors. For example, one bride told me she decided against a photographer because his sample photographs were not “her” - she wanted something “casual.” Another bride elaborated on this concept:

I'm not real happy with a lot of the professional ones who do the jakey posed pictures and all of that...I just wanted something that reflected Michael's and mine personalities, and we're not real fancy kind of people.

This woman's explanation of why she wants casual photographs implies that there are not only formal and casual photographs, but formal and casual people. We will talk about this in more detail later when we discuss how wedding photographs are exhibited in order to communicate certain aspects of the couple's perception of themselves.

The second variable people consider when looking at sample wedding photographs is whether they can envision themselves in the clothing and settings the photographs depict. One bride told me that she did not choose one photographer, not only because of the photographs he showed her, but because of the people in the photographs. She said the people in the pictures had different taste in clothing, jewelry, flowers, etc. than she did and that made it difficult to envision herself in the photographs. Another bride articulated this idea even more pointedly in the following description of a photographer she decided against:

The pictures he chose to show me were...many of them were not as traditional...you know, the weddings weren't as traditional... It's a whole different clientele in rural Maryland than it is in Alexandria Virginia - and it was a lot of - this is going to sound awful - but it was a lot of very big brides in satin, satin, foofy, foofy dresses. I look at these pictures and they were attractive, but very sort-of "country" if you know what I mean. And I'm looking at these pictures thinking, "Oh my god, I'm going to look like this." It wasn't a conscious thing. It wasn't like I actually thought I would look like these women, but you know you see picture after picture after picture after picture and they're not pleasing to the eye ... so I sort-of walked away going "arghhhh" [nervous laughter throughout this]. Even though of course I wouldn't look like these women; I would look like me. But you know when you see all pictures of unattractive women in horrible settings - you know from what I would want - this is sounding very elitist, but I mean

...it was images I would run from in terms of how I want my wedding experience to look like and be like. I think if he had chosen his pictures more carefully, we probably would have gone with him, but you know I couldn't wait to get out of there at that point. I'm just like "these are horrible."

...I had arranged for us to go and meet with [the studio they have hired] and we went over there and we looked at the pictures. They were all beautiful. They were all very elegantly done. They were presented very well. It was over twice the cost, but we signed.

This woman is wealthier than the bride quoted earlier who did not want posed photographs. She wants her photographs to depict the style and taste of the upper class. Interestingly, I am not sure that this woman is solidly in the upper class according to her current income bracket (which perhaps explains her nervous laughter and concerns about seeming elitist), however, it is clear that she aspires to be part of the upper class. We will see in our discussion of exhibition events that sometimes the self-image we choose to portray in our wedding photographs has more to do with our goals and desires than our current everyday experiences.

One final attribute which couples may look for in the sample photographs is the inclusion of some black and white photographs. I did not talk to any couple who was married after 1950 that wanted exclusively black and white wedding photography, however, many couples wanted at least some black and white images. We will discuss black and white photography and how it is used in wedding photography in the chapter about exhibition events.

Personality

The second reason that couples cite as a reason for choosing a particular photographer is that they liked him or her as a person. There are several reasons why a friendly relationship with your photographer might be important. First of all, there is

presumably a correlation between the photographers personality and the type of pictures he or she takes. As one photographer explains:

Our typical wedding couple is professional in their late 20s early 30's - often that's still the first marriage...we are not wedding photographers for the ingénue brides, the 20 year olds...When you are photographing, the kind of pictures you choose to take and so forth are going to obviously be a reflection of your background and that's my background so we tend to gravitate to those people more. We have a more, I don't know, I started to say a more mature style. That is, we don't do silly things. We don't ask people to - we don't ask dad to pull out his pocket and pretend he is broke.

The assumption is that if you choose a photographer that has a similar personality to your own, your photographs will be in line with your taste. One couple said that one of the reasons they chose to have their friend take their wedding photographs was "the fact that they're our friend means that we think similar[ly]" which meant that the friend would take the kind of pictures the couple might take themselves.

The second reason why it might be important for the couple to like the personality of their photographer is because their expressions on film might be better if they like the person pointing the camera at them. One photographer elaborated on this point as follows:

That's something I tell brides when they come in and I talk with them...is that they need a photographer they are comfortable with...he may be the best in the world and the most expensive and he has some of the most beautiful photographs, but if you don't click with him on your wedding day, your photographs aren't going to click. You have to have a rapport with him. You have to like each other. They have to like you anyway, because my expression doesn't matter, but theirs does. So you want them to feel comfortable, make them feel relaxed.

If the photographer annoys the couple, the annoyance we often show up on the people's faces in the finished photographs and remind them of their negative feelings. Even when the couple likes their photographer they may get momentarily annoyed at them and that

will often be observable in their expressions. For example, while looking at the album of a couple who genuinely like their photographer (they continue to be friends today), there was a set a of pictures in which the photographer had the flower girls running around and around the couple. I had observed that they were slightly annoyed at the wedding itself at this point and saw it again on their faces in the photographs. When I asked them about this incident, they said that they had felt that the circling children was a bit much and went on a bit long.

Another reason that the photographer's personality is important to the couple is that they will spend a lot of time with this person on a very important day in their lives. If they want to have a good time on their wedding day, they need to enjoy the company of the photographer. One professional comments on this aspect of wedding photography in the excerpt below:

I'm pretty gregarious and you know I like things to be more spontaneous and the wilder the better. If someone is more just straight-line...they may like some spontaneity, but I may be too spontaneous for them and that's fine because if we don't mesh that way, I'll be bored to death at their wedding and they will be over-whelmed.

This is a photographer that once brought Rice-A-Roni to a wedding so the bride and groom could wave it out the side of the trolley they had hired to take them to their reception (imitating a popular advertising campaign from the 1970's). Another time she brought cow slippers for the bride (who was getting married at an Inn that raises cattle) to wear on the dance floor. Clearly, a couple will only enjoy their wedding day if they share the photographer's sense of humor. (I have only seen her do these kind of things with clients that she knew would appreciate it.)

The gender of the photographer may also have some impact on the couple's choice. Some brides report a preference for a female photographer. In part, this makes it

more appropriate for the photographer to take pictures during the preparation time before the wedding in the bride's room (see next chapter for more detail on this). There is also a sense, as I mentioned earlier, that a wedding is a "woman's thing" and, therefore, some brides feel more confident that a female photographer will better understand what they want to see in their pictures. As one bride explained:

I think what made me decide on her was that she said, "I'm not married so every wedding I do is one of my dreams" [she shared my view] "That [the wedding] is a fairytale that you are bringing to life and that you want to bring to the future - you want to keep the memories going.

In the past, most photographers were men (they are still in the majority), however, more women are successfully entering the industry, perhaps in part because of the view described by the bride above.

Another concern the couple may have about a potential photographer is their personal appearance at the wedding. Photographers (and especially videographers) seem to be notorious for dressing in a manner that offends the couple and their guests at weddings. One photographer expressed annoyance at this reputation and stated that she would never photograph a wedding wearing dress pants - only skirts and dresses were appropriate attire in her mind. One engaged woman told me that she had thought about attire when choosing a studio and felt confident that the photographer's appearance would be appropriate because she had seen her work at a friend's wedding. She expected the photographer to wear a skirt, although she said she did not expect her to wear heels, since she was going to be working. However, a photographer dressing too formally to shoot a wedding may also be seen as offensive. As the engaged woman just mentioned remarked, "I mean it also wouldn't be appropriate for her to show up in a beaded gown - she isn't a guest, she's the photographer."

This comment points to the fine line photographer's walk between friend and employee. As we have discussed above, a friendly relationship between the photographer and the wedding client will result in more relaxed expressions in the photographs and a more enjoyable day for the couple. I have seen many couples that maintain friendships with their photographer after the wedding and perhaps continue to use their services for family portraits, parties, etc. After eight hours of working someone's wedding I have had clients hug me goodbye. However, other clients and photographers balk at this type of familiarity, as does the photographer who told me he would never eat dinner at a client's wedding because he is not a guest, he is a photographer. "It is in poor taste." This is another reason why personality seems to be an important criterion to wedding couples: to ensure they choose someone who desires the same level of familiarity they do.

The final reason personality is important to clients in choosing their wedding photographer is related to the level of control the photographer will have over the wedding activities. I alluded to this criterion above in distinguishing between traditional and photojournalistic styles of wedding photography. Some photographers double as wedding directors, coordinating the day's activities, often down to minute details of where the couple should stand while cutting the cake, how they should hold the knife, and where they should look. Some couples do not like this level of orchestration and will purposefully seek out a photographer who will observe more than organize. This was the case with the groom below who chose his photographer in part because he had watched him work at his sister-in-law's wedding.

We liked the photographer because he wasn't intrusive, he wasn't like "Oh, you are dancing... why don't you come over here – now hold that pose" Just, you know, he was like, he took the good pictures but he wasn't underfoot and I liked that. I didn't want to be bothered.

The typical reason that couples object to photographer intervention is that they feel it takes away from the enjoyment or perhaps the meaningfulness of the day. As one groom put it, "the pictures weren't the important part - what we were doing was more important - we wanted the pictures to remember." so therefore it was critical that the photographer not interfere. Another couple commented on this aspect in the following manner:

Wife: "I think she kind-of bossed us around"

Husband: "That's what you do when you are a photographer and if you don't wonder why you are not doing it."

There is a level of truth to this husband's assertion. Personally, I have several times had the experience of waiting to shoot the bride and groom cutting the cake and had them look at me and ask, "Where do you want us? How do we do this?" Some people like the photographer to direct them; most people seem to like at least a little direction when they ask for it. We will return to the issue of photographer control when we discuss shooting events in the next chapter.

Price

The third criterion used by couples in choosing a wedding photographer is the very practical issue of price. There is a huge range of prices associated with wedding photography packages; one source estimates that a studio will charge between \$500 and \$5,000 (Ostroff, 2000). As reported above, the average price for a typical wedding photography package in the U.S. is around \$1,800 (Warner, 1999; Parrish, 1999).

Usually, price is the first criterion of elimination. Some people's budgets simply do not accommodate \$4,000 photography packages. Most people seem to narrow the

field to those photographers they can afford and then use the sample photograph and personality criteria discussed above to choose from the possibilities.

Most photography studios sell “packages” which include a certain amount of time, number of proofs to choose from and an album(s) with a set number of pages. For example, one photographer I interviewed had three different packages:

- Package I** Seven hours of wedding and reception coverage
\$3395
- One large 50 page Italian leather album for the bride and groom which holds one 8x10 or two 5x7 prints per page.
- Two smaller 30 page Italian leather albums - each of which holds 30 matted 3.5x5 prints - one per page.
- Package II** Five hours of wedding and reception coverage
\$2450
- One large 40 page leather album for the bride and groom, which holds either one 8x10 or two 5x7 prints per page.
- One smaller 20 page leather album which holds 20 matted 3.5x5 prints - one per page.
- Package III** Four hours of wedding and reception coverage.
\$1625
- One large 30 page leather-like album for the bride and groom, which holds one 8x10 or two 5x7 prints per page

With the above price scheme, the client could also add additional time to any package at \$150 per hour and could purchase additional proofs according to a separate price list. This is a typical package schema for a photography studio, although the prices vary greatly. Some studios may also include a bridal portrait or an enlargement (8x10, 11x14 or bigger) of the couple in some or all of their packages. Depending on the studio, the

couple may or may not keep the proofs¹³ from which they choose their album photographs. Allowing the clients to keep all the proofs tends to be a selling point for photographers.

Photographers seldom sell the negatives to their clients for two reasons. First, they make the most profit off reprints made from the negatives. Secondly, they want control over the quality of the prints that are produced from their negatives so that their work is represented well as the couple shows their pictures to their friends and family (this increases the chance of referral business). Some wedding couples will seek out a photographer that will let them purchase the negatives, because they want to save money on reprints and ensure that the negatives are kept safe in case anything happens to their album.

Although some clients like the package arrangement because it narrows their number of choices, many wedding couples are looking for more flexibility in time, album and reprint choices. In response, many photographers are switching to what some call an "open plan" in which time, proofs, albums, and reprints are all purchased à la carte. There will usually be a minimum dollar amount for the order which can be put together however the couple chooses.

It is difficult to characterize the packages offered by the photographers in this study, because they varied so greatly in composition and price. I have briefly summarized each plan in the chart below.

¹³ Proofs are 3.5x5 or 4x5 prints that basically allow the couple to see the images on the film. They are generally not of the same print quality as the finished prints that will go in an album. We will discuss proofbooks and albums in more detail in the editing and exhibition chapter.

▼ *Photographer Packages*

| Interview # | # of Packages | Price | Hours | Albums and Other Information |
|-------------|---------------|-----------------|----------|---|
| 1 | - | - | - | minimum order - no packages |
| 2 | 3 | \$1625-\$3395 | 4-7 | |
| 3 | 1 | \$475 min order | 4 | Sells extra time. most go over min order |
| 4 | - | - | 4-6 | sells units (pages in album) \$25-13/unit |
| 5 | 5 | \$480-3595 | 3 | Extra time and prints may be purchased |
| 6 | 3 | \$375-1395 | 2-unlim. | |
| 7 | 5 | \$1275-2100 | 4-8 | |
| 8 | 3 | \$995-1700 | 3-6 | |
| 9 | 1 | \$500 min order | 4 | Album additional (about \$25 per page) |
| 10 | 4 | \$1795-\$2895 | 3-5 | |
| 11 | 1 | \$525 | 3 | |

One marketing strategy that some photographers employ is that they offer discounts to couples who will sign a contract and leave a deposit at their first meeting. One woman told me she saw a photographer at a bridal show and signed up on the spot. Another woman and her mother went to an information session with three other brides and their mothers, signed the contract that night and got a special price. Some photographers, like the one quoted below, abhor this type of “hard sell.”

I would get up and walk out if someone tried hard-selling me...I just go over it and I tell them to take this information home, use it at your leisure...

Without price incentives, it seems to be rare that couples sign up with their photographer at the first meeting. As the photographer below reports:

Most people then leave and call you back. It's a rare case where somebody will decide on the spot. Some photographers have little incentive things to you know try to get you to do that - but we tend to be fairly low pressure... partly because my whole living is not dependent on this.

It may be that part-time wedding photographers (of which there are many) have less need for the hard-sell approach, but I tend to think it is more of a style issue. The photographer quoted above who so vehemently opposes hard sell is a full-time photographer who makes most of her income from the wedding portion of her business.

Planning after the Producer is Chosen

About a week before the wedding, most photographers will meet with their clients in order to get a list of important events and people to photograph at the wedding. Sometimes they provide the couple with a list (like the one displayed on p. 65), other times they ask the couple to come up with their own list. Notice that the list on p. 65 is divided into four main sections:

1. Before the Ceremony
2. At the Ceremony
3. After the Ceremony
4. At the Reception

These are the four categories of shooting events that we will discuss in the next chapter.¹⁴

We will go into more detail about the types of shots taken during each category at that time. For now, I simply want to make clear that these categories are used during the planning stage in order to reach an agreement between the couple and their photographer about which photographs will be taken.

¹⁴ The list on p. 65 also lists a brief "After the Reception" category. This is not a typical shooting event for wedding photography, so I have not included it as a primary category, although we will briefly discuss post-reception shots in the next chapter.

▼ *Desired Photographs List*

Emory, Martie H.. *North Carolina Elegant Bride Wedding Planner, 2000-2001, v. 6, p. 84.*

SCENES FROM THE WEDDING

YOUR WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY WILL SERVE AS THE everlasting remembrance of one of the happiest days of your lives together. And although the trend in wedding albums today features fewer posed shots and more spontaneous photographs, you'll want

your photographer to capture a variety of scenes throughout the celebration. As you discuss the style of wedding album you prefer, consider the views listed here that you don't want to miss. Note which will be posed shots and which will be candid.

BEFORE THE CEREMONY

Bride's makeup and hair
Bride in gown
Bride with mother
Bride with father
Bride with parents
Bride with honor attendant
Bride with maids
Bride with grandparents
Bride with child attendants
Bride leaving for ceremony
Bride arriving at ceremony
Groom dressing
Groom with mother
Groom with father
Groom with parents
Groom with best man
Groom with groomsmen
Groom arriving at ceremony

AT THE CEREMONY

Guests arriving
Ushers escorting guests
Musicians
Seating the grandparents
Seating the groom's mother
Seating the bride's mother
Groomsmen's processional
Maids' processional
Honor attendant
Child attendants
Bride and father
Giving-away ceremony
Groom meeting bride
Exchanging vows
Exchanging rings
First kiss
Newlyweds' recessional
Newlyweds leaving ceremony

AFTER THE CEREMONY

Newlyweds and bride's family
Newlyweds and groom's family
Newlyweds and grandparents
Newlyweds and honor attendants
Newlyweds and wedding party
Newlyweds and officiant

AT THE RECEPTION

Newlyweds' arrival
Receiving line
Place card table
Head table
Guest tables
Buffet tables
Friends serving punch
Cake table
Guest book table
Parents' tables
Best man's toast
Other toasts
Newlyweds dancing
Bride dancing with father
Groom dancing with mother
Parents dancing
Wedding party dancing
Musicians
Cake cutting
Bouquet tossing
Garter tossing
Bride and groom in going-away attire
Newlyweds thanking parents
Newlyweds departing reception amid a shower of confetti
Newlyweds in getaway vehicle
Guests waving good-bye

AFTER THE RECEPTION

Late supper at parents' home
Next-day brunch

Once filled out, the shooting list usually contains the specific names of the people involved, not the generic roles that are listed in the above illustration. Since the photographer will probably not know friends and family by name, they might ask for a contact person at the wedding (such as a close aunt) to help point them toward the people they need to photograph. Sometimes the bridal party and close family will be given a copy of the list at the rehearsal dinner so that they know when they are scheduled to be photographed. The finished list will also usually include timing for all of the wedding events, so the photographer knows when to be at various locations.¹⁵

The couple may also give the photographer special instructions during their last meeting prior to the wedding. These instructions may have to do with the personal appearance of the bridal couple, such as the bride that reported:

I told him you had to photograph me from one side only...because my eyes are funny. I have a lazy eye.

Similarly, I assisted at one wedding in which the bride asked us to take a lot of close-up shots in order to hide her wheelchair. These requests are clearly related to the desire to approximate an idealized image of beauty in one's wedding photographs. We will discuss this in more detail in a later chapter. Other special requests might include:

- Requests that certain family members are not photographed together, such as divorced parents.
- Explicit requests that the photographer not interrupt the ceremony or a relaying of a church's no-flash rule.
- Requests that candids be taken of special guests at the reception, such as someone who has been known a long time, someone who traveled from

¹⁵ One (and only one) photographer I spoke with says he asks for a list, but does not push the clients for it because then he can not be held responsible for missed shots.

far away to come to the wedding, a couple who has their anniversary on the day of the wedding, etc.

- Requests that many pictures be taken of elderly or ailing relatives.

All of these requests during the planning stage reflect functions the photographs will later serve in the exhibition stage, such as definition of family affiliation and a connection to a deceased relative. I will discuss these aspects in more detail in Chapter 5.

Lessons of the Planning Stage

We learn from the planning stage that wedding photography is relatively important as compared to other forms of family photography. This is evidenced by the amount of time, money, and effort that goes into the planning stage.

I have asserted that wedding photography contributes to two rituals: a wedding ritual and a memory ritual. Couples are clearly thinking of the role photography will play in remembering their wedding as they make choices during the planning stage about the albums they want, the style of pictures they prefer and who they want in the pictures. They may not think as explicitly in the planning stage about how photography contributes to the wedding ritual, but we do see them thinking about how the photographer's personality and working style will fit into the event. My sense is that they think about guarding against the photography detracting from the wedding ritual, but do not have a clear idea of how the planned shooting events may actually be part of the ritual, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter Four **Shooting Events**

This chapter focuses on the shooting events associated with wedding photography. Shooting events are those social practices in which someone opens the lens of the camera in order to transfer the image in front of the camera onto the film inside. Choices are made by the person operating the camera as to where to point the lens, when to press the shutter button and whether or not to shine additional light in the form of a flash on the photographic subjects. People who are within the photographed area may or may not be attending to the cameraperson's presence. If they are aware that their picture is being taken, they will also make choices about the position of their body and their facial expressions. In addition, there may be other people watching the shooting event that are not in the photograph themselves, talking to both the photographer and subjects, shaping the actions of each. The choices made by photographer, subjects and observers are influenced by the particular environment of the shooting event, however, they are also governed by a set of social traditions. Recognizing the patterns involved in shooting events gives us clues to the meaning associated with wedding photography. It is also during the shooting events that photography contributes to the wedding ritual itself, helping the couple to make the transformation from "single" to "married."

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the shooting events involved in wedding photography can be divided into four main stages:

1. Before the Ceremony
2. During the Ceremony
3. After the Ceremony
4. During the Reception

I will discuss the shooting events that comprise each of these stages in terms of the practices of the photographers, subjects and observers. This chapter focuses on the practices associated with shooting events without going into detail about the photographs that are produced. The interactions are the focus of the present part of the analysis; the photographs will be the focus of the next chapter.

Before the Ceremony

In many cases, the first shooting events associated with wedding photography begin about an hour or two before the ceremony on the day of the wedding. However, in some instances, a couple may hire their wedding photographer to take a bridal portrait or engagement photograph a month or more prior to the day of the ceremony. They may also choose to have their rehearsal dinner or bridal luncheon photographed professionally.

I start with a discussion of shooting events associated with portraits, engagement pictures and pre-wedding events and then describe the events that occur on the wedding day just before the ceremony.

Portraits

Some brides choose to have a bridal portrait session with their photographer about a month before the ceremony. This may be a practice associated with certain regions of the country. Several photographers told me that it was more popular in the south than the north, for example. Bridal portraits are taken in advance in order to accommodate several of the display practices we will discuss in the next chapter, including newspaper wedding announcements and the display of the bridal portrait at the wedding reception. Taking the bridal portrait before the wedding day may also have the advantage of giving the photographer more time to work with the bride during a time when she is less anxious than she may be on the wedding day.

The bridal portrait may be taken at the dress shop¹⁶, the photographer's studio, the bride's home or at an outside location. In the spring, it is not uncommon to see three or four brides and their photographers at a particularly well-groomed public garden in the locality where this study was conducted. Sometimes the shooting event includes just the bride and the photographer, but often the bride's mother, maid of honor, sister or other close friends or relatives will come along. It is unusual for a father or other male relative to come along and very rare for the groom to attend the bridal portrait shoot (in large part because of the tradition that dictates he can not see the dress before the wedding).

During the bridal portrait shoot, the bride is usually heavily directed by the photographer as to how to stand, where to look, how to tilt her head, where to hold her

¹⁶ The practice of having one's portrait taken at the dress shop is reported by Stewart (1989) and Post (1991). None of my informants told me they had their portrait taken at that location.

flowers, etc. The female observers will also often call out advice from the sidelines. (“Smile bigger!”) I have seen photographers adjust a stray strand of hair, arrange the train in a particular way, wait for the wind to blow the veil or the sun to reach just the right spot in the sky. The attention to detail paid during the bridal portrait shoot is more extreme than many of the shooting events that occur later in the wedding photography process. This is in part due to the purpose of the bridal portrait which is to display the beauty of the bride. We will talk about how the bridal portrait becomes idealized and reified in our discussion of exhibition practices, however, at this point it is important to recognize that there is some pressure involved with achieving an idealized image of the bride. Many brides report having planned their weddings since they were little girls. The bridal portrait is in some sense an attempt to recreate the image of herself as a bride that a woman may have imagined for years. Consequently, many of the practices that make up the bridal portrait shoot revolve around reassuring the bride that she is indeed achieving that image.

When the bride emerges dressed for the shoot, the photographer and the female observers will immediately compliment her appearance, usually with a lot of enthusiasm. The conversation usually turns first to the dress and then may move on to the hair, nails, make-up or flowers. Everyone talks about how beautiful the dress is and the bride may describe where she got it and why she chose this particular dress over others. If several brides are at the same outdoor location, they eye each other’s dresses as if mentally reassuring themselves that they made the best choice. One bride that I accompanied on

her bridal shoot made snide remarks about how ugly the other bride's dresses were. This is not to say that all brides – or even most brides – would voice nasty things about another bride's appearance. However, there is a sense amongst most brides that the bridal portrait shoot is an opportunity to show that they know how to play their role in the upcoming ritual; how to approximate the idealized beautiful bride. We will look at the bridal portrait itself in more detail when we discuss how it is displayed in the next chapter.

Engagement Pictures

I have never heard of a groom having their portrait taken before the wedding, but some couples reported having an engagement picture taken of both the bride and the groom in plain clothes a few months before the wedding. One woman said her photographer included a “Falling in Love” photo session two weeks before the wedding so they could become comfortable with having their pictures taken by the photographer. The bride said that the session helped them get to know the photographer by laughing with her while taking pictures at the beach and, consequently, they felt more comfortable in front of the camera on the day of the wedding. The engagement photograph may also be used in a display practice which we will discuss in the next chapter in which the photograph is enlarged, matted and displayed at the wedding reception.

Shots Before the Ceremony on the Wedding Day

If the bride and groom have not had a bridal portrait or engagement session prior to the wedding day, then shooting starts anywhere from 45 minutes to several hours before the ceremony starts. The photographer most commonly starts at the location

where the bride and, usually, her attendants are getting dressed for the ceremony.

Sometimes this is at her home or a relative's house¹⁷; sometimes it is in a room in the hotel where the reception will take place; and sometimes it is in a room in the church building, often called the "brides room" or the parlor.¹⁸

There are several types of photographs that will be taken during this pre-ceremony time. First, the photographer will often take candid shots of the women getting ready for the ceremony. The gender of the photographer may play into whether or not they are allowed in the dressing room. Female photographers are more likely to be invited into the dressing room. The atmosphere at this point is usually boisterous with a lot of laughing and last-minute details about the ceremony being worked out. The photographer often acts a bit like a wedding consultant, giving advice on how to secure the veil, hold the flowers, walk down the aisle, etc.

In some instances, the photographer may also act as a peacemaker or family counselor. For example, as the photographer's assistant at one wedding I was left alone in the room with the bride and her mother and grandmother. An argument soon erupted between the bride and her relatives that caused her to run crying to her room. The grandmother looked at me and said "I guess you see a lot of over-emotional brides." They then stood and looked at me, clearly not knowing what to do. I ended up going to talk to

¹⁷ If the bride is dressing at home, the photographer will sometimes wait for the bride and her attendants to arrive fully dressed at the ceremony location rather than going to the house.

¹⁸ All the non-Christian weddings I observed and heard about took place in a place other than a place of worship such as a hotel or at an outdoor location. Therefore, I am not sure if a synagogue, for example, might have a room set aside in which the bride can prepare for the ceremony.

the bride and smoothing over the disagreement.

Often the shots taken during this busy pre-ceremony period will focus on the attendants helping the bride get ready. For example, standard shots might include an attendant or a relative buttoning the bride's dress or putting on her veil. In general, the photographer will usually just snap pictures while the women bustle around. However, often they might ask participants to "hold the pose" or "look this way." For example, I have seen a photographer ask the mother of the bride to peek around the bride's head as she secured the veil.

Some brides will also pose for the photographer in their bridal lingerie in somewhat seductive poses. There is a lot of joking about sex during these shooting events. The attendants might tease the bride about the groom's reaction when he gets to see her in her lingerie on the wedding night. Although many brides balk at the idea of posing scantily dressed, I have observed this practice on several occasions (I took the pictures one time at the bride's request) and heard enough participants talk about these types of photographs to convince me that it is not completely uncommon. I have never seen a lingerie picture displayed in a wedding album. One woman hid a picture of herself in her bra behind another photograph in her album, claiming it was not "appropriate" to display. One bride told us she was going to slip the sexy photographs into her husband's suitcase when he was away on a trip.

The interesting thing about the practice of taking pictures of the bride in lingerie, is that it affords one of the only opportunities for the bride to express raw sexuality during

the wedding ritual. The lingerie photographs imitate the vision of female beauty depicted in visual erotica. The photographs taken are closer to the *Victoria's Secret Catalog* version of erotica than the *Penthouse* version, however, they are still a stark contrast to the virgin bride in the white dress image that the bride adopts minutes after the lingerie shoot ends. Although many brides today (and perhaps always?) are admittedly not virgins on their wedding day, the white dress is still a strong symbol for the bride's sexual inexperience prior to the wedding night. As Heyman (1987) observes:

In spite of radical change in sexual rules in the past half-century, there is a sense of what is sexually "allowed" before marriage that reappears on the wedding day, even for couples who have been sexually intimate for years (p. 16).

Other elements of the wedding ritual, such as the flowers used to decorate people and places at the wedding, clearly emphasize the fertility of the bride. One of the purposes of the wedding is to social legitimize the bride and groom as sexual partners whose offspring will be considered "legitimate."

The lingerie photographs provide some brides the opportunity to manipulate the vision of her sexuality, in part mocking, or rejecting the idea that women should be "fertile yet chaste." However, as noted above, any statement about female sexuality is one made in private for private consumption. The photographs that are shared with the larger social group reinforce the notion that the purpose of sex is to produce socially accepted offspring. Only a small private group (the bridesmaids, female relatives and photographer at the shoot and, later, the groom) communicate about sex as a pleasurable activity outside its role in reproduction. Sometimes a bride and groom act in a sexually explicit way in

other parts of the wedding. For example, they might open mouth kiss at the altar or suggestively lick icing off each other's faces after the exchange of wedding cake. These kind of public displays are usually met with disapproval by at least some of the guests. There is clearly an expectation that some aspects of sexuality should be kept private, as evidenced by the fact that the lingerie photographs never appear in the wedding album.

The two most significant moments in the bride's preparation are when she puts on her dress and when she puts on her veil. Symbolically, this is when the woman becomes the bride. Often, the female attendants will surround the bride and watch as she steps into the dress and the photographer snaps pictures (in most cases once the bride is basically covered by the dress). The photographer may or may not ask the bride to pause and look up or otherwise direct the action. Then someone (usually the mother of the bride or the maid of honor) helps the bride put on her veil. Again the photographer may direct some of the action here. The bride usually asks a lot of questions about her appearance during these shooting events, such as:

“Does my hair look OK?”

“Is my makeup still on?”

“Can you see my bra?”

Her friends and family will reassure her that she looks beautiful or fix whatever is not perfect. The onlookers and the photographer will also praise the bride's appearance unsolicited by the bride's questions.

Once the women are all dressed for the ceremony, the photographer will often take

some group shots of the bride, her family and her attendants. These pictures may be taken in a garden outside the church or reception site. Sometimes, if it is a church wedding, these shots are taken on the altar before the guests arrive. If the bride did not have a formal portrait taken before the wedding day, the photographer may take a portrait of the bride alone at this point.



◀ *A bride getting into her gown while bridesmaids and relatives adjust the crinoline. (© Marthanna Yater)*



▲ *Bridal Portrait taken before ceremony. (© Marthanna Yater)*



◀ *Bridal portrait on altar. (© Marthanna Yater)*

Another traditional photograph taken at this point is one of the reflection of the bride and her mother looking in the mirror together. As Pamela Rae Frese points out, “Mirrors have the ability to represent eternity and mortality in the same instant.” (p. 111) Mirror photographs focus the viewers attention on comparing the features of mother and bride, recognizing resemblance between generations (a symbol of immortality) and the aging process through comparison of young and old (a symbol of mortality). Photographs that do not use a mirror may also have a similar effect. Brides or photographers may purposefully take shots that emphasize the change and continuation between generations of women. I observed one family that requested a photograph of bride, mother and grandmother – all of whom shared the same first name. Another family made sure they got a shot of five generations of women, from great grandmother to the newborn infant of the bride’s sister.

During these pre-ceremony group shooting events, family dynamics are clearly enacted. The bride is usually photographed with her mother and father, both separately and alone. As the parent and child stand close together for the photograph, the onlookers may comment on the resemblance between the two. Both mother and daughter may tear up, hug and tell each other how much they love each other. Or, a mother and daughter that have a strained relationship may bicker and pick at each other as they pose for the photograph. Similarly, the daughter and father may gaze at each other lovingly during the photograph or pose stiffly side by side. Siblings may be asked to join in the picture and the full family dynamics come to life, either positive or negative. The act of having their

picture taken forces people to reflect on their connections and allows them to communicate their love or aversion for each other.

In addition to the photographer directing some of the action during the preparation stage, the bride, attendants and family will often direct the photographer. For example, they might request pictures of different groups, or point out a “great shot” the photographer might get of the flower girl playing.

After the photographer has spent some time with the bride, he or she will find the groom and his family and attendants (or send an assistant to photograph the men). The men may also be photographed during their preparation, but usually in the final stages when they are tying their bowties or getting their boutonnières pinned on (a task which may also be relegated to the photographer). I have never seen or heard of the groom posing in photographs parallel to the bride’s lingerie shots.

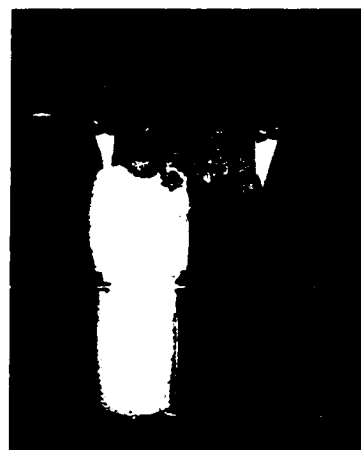
The groom may also be photographed with his attendants and family. There is a similar enactment of family dynamics in these pictures. There is also some focus on the appearance of the groom, however, it usually manifests itself in a different form of communication. For example, the groom’s friends might tease him about being in a “monkey suit” or make comments like “You don’t clean up half bad.” The good-natured jokes are intended to let the groom know he looks good, but the communication is completely different than the parallel female shooting events. Even when the men communicate more directly to each other about the groom’s appearance, “You look sharp, man,” the communication is brief and only repeated once. As we discussed earlier, the

female attendants tend to continuously tell the bride she looks good during the photography shoot. The difference in communication patterns may reflect a variation in assumptions we have about the importance of physical appearance for women versus men, or they may reflect a difference in the way men and women communicate support. The greater focus on the appearance of the bride over the groom also reinforces my observation in the previous chapter that brides are still seen as the center of the wedding ritual.



◀ *Portrait of groom taken before ceremony.*
(© Marthanna Yater)

▶ *Groom's family shot.*
(© Marthanna Yater)



Assumptions about gender roles also play a part in various “gag” photographs the photographer might stage, such as the groom looking at his watch as he pretends to rush into the ceremony location or the groomsmen dragging the groom back as he pretends to escape. In the following example, a husband and wife discuss the implications of one of these gag pictures:

Wife: ...*[indicating a photograph in her album]* And that's Barry and Jon - pretending to be late for the wedding.

Husband: Bad acting! (laughter) It's hard to act when you're like ready to throw up!

Michele: OK, why the picture of pretending to be late?

Wife: That was the photographer's idea, wasn't it?

Husband: Yeah. I think it's kind-of a traditional thing too. The late for the wedding kind of thing, you know.

Wife: Men being late for a wedding.

Husband: Men being late.

Michele: Why do you think that is, like why that tradition?

Husband: That's what you have a best man for. it's his job to get you there on time.

Wife: Right!

Husband: It's probably a humorous thing. I think it helps break - 'cause at this point before the wedding when they're taking pictures. I mean you could ask anyone that was there- I feel sorry for anyone that was in the room with me. 'Cause...I'm...I get nervous, but not like BAD nervous, but I get over-anxious and I was climbing walls. And in the hotel there's like three stations. there's nothing on TV. This kind-of helps, you know, to go down and to be doing something, it broke it up, kind-of, some.

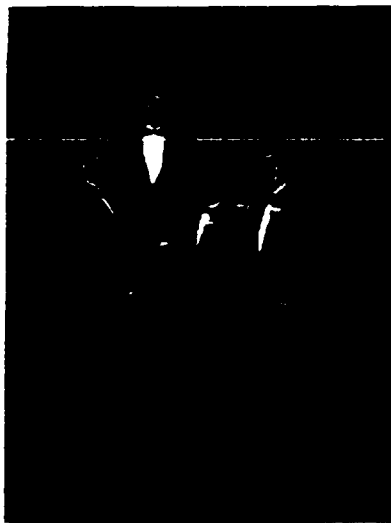
Wife: I wasn't nervous, though.

Husband: That's because you knew you wanted to get married since you were about three years old.

This particular couple are personal friends of mine, so I know that Jon would have never been late for his wedding. However, they were willing to play along with the illusion that he was late as a way of simultaneously enacting and mocking ("it's a humorous thing") a traditional gender stereotype that says men are less excited to get married than women.

As gender stereotypes shift and change, the gag photographs that enact an unwillingness of men to get married are becoming less popular among many couples. Several indicated a dislike for these types of photographs because they are inconsistent with their values.

In the exchange above, Jon indicates that taking the gag photographs helped him calm his nerves because he had something to do other than wait for the ceremony to start. I have seen both men and women use the photography session as a way to fill the time and keep them calm before the ceremony. In the photograph below, the photographer has the groomsmen fooling around in the church, thereby relieving some tension before the ceremony.



◀ *Groomsmen Gag Photograph*
(© Marthanna Yater)

According to tradition, the bride and groom should not see each other before the ceremony on the day of the wedding. In recent years, some couples and their photographers opt to take family pictures with both bride and groom before the wedding. The reasoning behind taking family pictures before the wedding is that it reduces the

amount of time needed for photography between the ceremony and the reception, thus allowing the bride and groom to join their guests at the reception more quickly. As I mentioned in Chapter One, Charles Lewis (1998) reports that taking photographs of the bride and groom before the ceremony was the norm among his informants. My research has indicated that it is the exception for the bride and groom to see each other – for photography or otherwise – before the ceremony on the day of the wedding. Most photographers that I spoke to would not suggest taking photographs of the bride and groom together before the ceremony (although they would probably agree to do it if the bride and groom requested it), because it interferes with the flow of the wedding ritual. As one groom describes in the following excerpt from an article in the New York Times, taking photographs before the ceremony diminishes the power of the ritual in the mind of some participants.

"I thought the whole idea was you don't see your bride for a day and then you see her coming down the aisle." Mr. Barber said. "If you've chitchatted and had a beer and taken photos together beforehand, it ruins it. Otherwise, the ceremony is just to make it legal versus a magical ceremony." (Brady, 1994, p. 49)

The practice of separate photography shoots for bride and groom before the ceremony, followed by family shots with them together after the ceremony, reflects and reinforces the power of the wedding ritual to rearrange social order and group affiliation. Those that were once in two different photographs are now in one photograph. If the bride and groom are photographed before the ceremony in wedding garb it is as if the

transformation has already taken place.¹⁹

The pre-ceremony photography shooting events contribute to the wedding by ritualizing the starting point for the ceremony, namely the lives of the bride and groom before their union in marriage. The bride is often “given away” during the ceremony itself, which enacts the separation from her former life. However, there is no other part of the wedding ritual, besides the photography session before the ceremony, that allows participants to enact and acknowledge the pre-wedding bonds of family and friendship through a formalized, performative and symbolic set of practices (i.e., ritual practice). Dramatizing existing social bonds intensifies the perception of change after the wedding ceremony transforms that social order.

The shooting events before the ceremony also allow the bride and groom to enact, reflect on and comment about the gender role they are expected to play in a wedding ritual and, to some extent, in a heterosexual relationship. Women may use photography to draw attention to the bride’s identity as a sexual partner as well as a prospective mother. Men may pose for photographs that enact a presumption that men are fearful of committing to one sexual partner. Although it is easy to conclude that participation in shooting events that depict gender stereotypes indicates a blind acceptance of those stereotypes, the comments of the men and women I spoke with show a greater level of sophistication and contemplation. Often couples seem to use photography practices to reflect on

¹⁹ I observed one bride who requested a picture of herself and her groom on either sides of a wall, holding hands around the wall, but unable to see each other. We had to be very careful in taking that shot to organize it so that the bride and groom did not see each other.

assumptions about gender roles, like the couple quoted above discussing the gag photographs of the groom. I do not mean to assert that the enactment of stereotypes has no effect on how individuals view themselves as gendered participants in a wedding ritual (and in the relationship it creates), but rather wish to establish that the significance of engaging in gendered photography practices is not unidimensional. Gender stereotypes in wedding photographs was not a particular focus of this study, so I am not sure my data gives clear answers to questions about the effects of such stereotypes. I will comment on what data I have about how participants seem to view gender roles in relation to their wedding photographs and suggest the topic for further study by another investigator.

During the Ceremony

The wedding ceremony is the focus of the wedding ritual. Although the preparation for the ceremony and the celebration at the reception following arguably contribute to the transformation of single individuals to a married couple, the ceremony is the truly magical part of the day and technically the only part necessary in order to call oneself “married.” As such, the wedding ceremony is a time highly governed by rules to make sure it is done “right.”²⁰

At one time it was common to have photographers stand in the middle of the aisle as the bride walked down the aisle, or to approach the altar and take a flash picture as the

²⁰ In order to be legally married in American society, a blood test and an oath in front of a magistrate is all that is required. However, the couples I have spoken to that opted for a private secular ceremony or an elopement, all reported pressure from family and friends to have some sort of reception or party to celebrate their union after the fact. Although the ceremony is the core of the wedding ritual, the reception clearly plays an important role in making the transition complete and accepted by the society.

bride and groom kissed for the first time. Many people object to this kind of photography during the ceremony because it distracts the ritual participants from the ceremony, thus reducing the power of the ritual. In part, I think the perceived problem with flash photography during the ceremony is that it reminds the participants that there is an existence outside of the ritual. Arnold Van Gennep describes a liminal phase of *rites de passage* in which participants have separated from their old social affiliations and have not yet been aggregated into their new position in the social order. Victor Turner refers to this liminal state as a “moment in and out of time” (1969, p. 96) in which time seems to almost stand still. The actions performed during the liminal period of a ritual take on an eternal quality. The flash of a camera stands in jarring contrast to the liminal phase because it reminds us that the moment will not last. Having our photograph taken reminds us that time moves forward, people and affiliations shift, being married can be hard work and someday we may need to look back at this picture in order to reconnect with the magic the ritual performed.

Most churches now have rules against flash photography during the ceremony. I have also seen some churches that forbid photography completely during the ceremony. However, as we acknowledged above, the ceremony is considered to be the most important phase of the ritual and, as such, often the part the couple most wants to remember through their photographs. As one photographer remarked to me in exasperation as she stood outside the sanctuary of a church that forbids photography, “But this is the whole point of the day!”

The challenge becomes to get photographs of the ceremony without distracting the participants. One solution is to re-enact the ceremony after the fact, asking the bride and groom to pretend they are exchanging rings, saying their vows, or “kissing the bride” immediately after the ceremony before the group shots are taken. My own wedding photographer had us do this at our wedding (even though he was able to take photographs during the ceremony itself) and I witnessed first-hand why this is not a popular option. We felt silly pretending to do what we had just done for real and this discomfort shows on our faces in the photographs. The photographs displayed on the next page demonstrate the difference between posed and “real” photographs of a wedding ceremony.

The top photograph shows me saying my vows to my husband. The tension on my face is apparent, the grasp of our hands is tight, the female pastor is looking at me intently and the male pastor is looking down at his notes in preparation for the next part of the ceremony. The bottom photograph is a re-enactment of me saying my vows as staged by the photographer afterwards. I am giggling, our hands are held loosely and casually, the pastors have closed their books and the male pastor is looking straight at the camera, indicating an acute awareness of the photographer's presence. The top photograph captures the intensity of the moment when a bride says her vows; the bottom photograph is stiff and lifeless in comparison. I spoke to very few couples and photographers that re-enacted parts of the ceremony.

Photograph of actual vows:



Re-Enactment of Vows:



The most popular solution to integrating photography into the ceremony is to take no-flash timed exposures from the back of the room or the balcony of the church. With a zoom lens and fast film, the photographer can take pictures of the actual ceremony without drawing attention. Typically, the photographer will take a flash photograph of the bride starting down the aisle and then switch to the fast film camera. Flash photography usually resumes as the bride and groom walk back down the aisle at the end of the ceremony.



◀ *Ceremony Photograph - taken from back of church with fast film and zoom lens.*
(© Marthanna Yater)

Usually, guests will bring cameras to the ceremony and snap pictures of the bride walking down the aisle. Often the wedding program will print a request that no flash photographs be taken during the ceremony (or sometimes the officiant will make an announcement). Several photographers expressed annoyance at guests that violate the no-flash rule because most people will assume it is the photographer that is violating the rule.

During the wedding ceremony, photography does not contribute to the wedding

ritual, i.e., it does not help the participants achieve the transformation from a single to married state. The concern is that photography not distract from the wedding as photographs are taken that will be necessary later when the couple ritualizes their memory of the event. Another way to talk about what is happening during the ceremony is that the Wedding Ritual and the Remembering Ritual are in competition for limited resources and human attention.

After the Ceremony

The wedding ceremony contains ritual activities that enact a social transformation of the bride and groom from single to married status. Although friends and family also participate in this ritual by standing beside the couple as attendants, reading poetry or scripture, singing, lighting candles, etc., there are no elements of the ceremony that explicitly enact the joining of the two families through the couple's union (although such a joining is implied.) The photography session immediately following the ceremony has become the ritual enactment of the new family boundaries that a marriage creates.

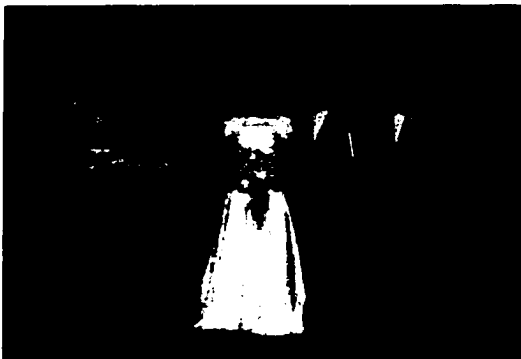
The photographs that are taken immediately following the ceremony are generally called the "formal shots." Although participants are often unable to explain what exactly they mean by "formal shots," it seems that the photographs taken at this point in the day are considered "formal" in part because the shots taken are determined in large part by tradition and also because they are photographs in which everyone is arranged specifically by the photographer to be looking directly at the camera. The photographs taken during this time period are very similar from wedding to wedding in content and form. The after-

ceremony photography shoot most often takes place on the altar of the church, in an outdoor garden at the place where the ceremony or reception occurs, at a public park or square, or in an attractive room at the reception and/or ceremony location.

Although the order of the photographs taken after the ceremony varies, there are certain shots that are usually included somewhere in the shoot. Each of these “typical” pictures and the shooting practices that produce them are described below.

Bride and Groom with Wedding Party

In this photograph, the bride, groom, their attendants (and sometimes the officiant) are photographed in a group facing the camera. The bride and groom usually stand in the middle of the shot, with the bridesmaids trailing off to the side of the bride and the groomsmen lined up on the other side. The best man and maid/matron of honor are usually closest to the bride and groom, symbolically indicating their special and exalted relationship with the bride and groom. Often, the party is arranged on steps of some sort, which allows for the bride and groom to be higher than everyone else. If the officiant is in the picture, he or she is usually positioned a step behind the bride and groom, peering out between them. This arrangement symbolically represents the role of a higher authority in joining the couple in matrimony. Flower girls and ring bearers usually stand in front of the bride and groom. One variation on the traditional arrangement of the bridal party is to have male and female attendants mixed together on either side of the bridal couple, perhaps with the women sitting in chairs in front of the men. Sometimes a separate shot may be taken with just the bridal couple, the maid of honor and the best man.



◀ *Bride, Groom, Best Man and Matrons of Honor (2 in this wedding). Note traditional arrangement with women on left and men on right.*
(© Marthanna Yater)

▶ *Wedding Party Shot with less traditional arrangement of men and women mixed together.*
(© Marthanna Yater)



Bride and Groom with Parents and Immediate Family

Photographs are typically taken with the bride and groom with their parents and siblings. These pictures symbolize the new addition into the family. For example, as we discussed earlier, a photograph may be taken before the ceremony with the bride and her parents. After the ceremony, the bride will be photographed with her parents and the groom. When the photographs are displayed in the wedding album (which we will discuss in more detail in the next chapter) the two photographs together visually enact the expansion of the bride's family. There are various versions of the immediate family photographs taken after the ceremony. Some of the possibilities include:

Bride and Groom (B and G) with both sets of parents

B and G with each set of parents separately

Band G with one set of parents and siblings from that family

B and G with one set of parents and siblings with spouses and children of siblings.

When one or both sets of parents are divorced, this can become an awkward time for the bride and groom. An engaged woman told me:

We'll have some pictures of my parents and me. I mean they are my parents (awkward laugh). They may not like it, but the picture is for me so I'm sure they will do it. I don't have any question they'll do whatever I ask. It wouldn't be a picture that I would give them.

The issue here is that the daughter and her biological parents have different ideas of the boundaries of their family. For the bride, her parents are both part of her family, but the parents no longer consider each other to be part of the same family unit, although they maintain the connection with their daughter. To deal with this situation, some couples choose to have pictures taken with their biological parents together, some opt for separate photographs with each parent and step-parents.

Divorced parents may also be a difficult situation for a photographer to organize.

For example, one photographer related the following story:

There was a step mother who has brought this boy up and the boy calls her mom. And there is a biological mother who loves this boy, and the boy calls her mom. And both were at the wedding; both played the mothers role. And the moment I said "parents," I saw 3 mothers and 2 fathers... I went ahead and did my thing, then I used my human relations and human factor. I put Johnny there with Johnny's wife, and I took a picture. And then I went to hold the hand of Johnny's mother. I stuck her in there, and I held the hand of Johnny's father. I stuck him in there, and I took my picture. And then I pulled Johnny's mother out and put Johnny's

stepmother in, and I took the picture. I didn't call "mother" anymore.

At one wedding I observed, the photographer unknowingly put the bride's divorced parents next to each other in a photograph with the bride and her sister. There was an awkward pause until the sister said "Hey Dad, why don't you come stand next to me," smoothing over the moment.

Divorce is not the only form of family dispute that may affect wedding photography practices. There are many different kinds of family arguments and alliances. In recognition of this fact, some photographers try to not arrange people too much even in the after-ceremony photographs. One photographer explains below:

I don't care where anybody stands, because it disrupts the family chemistry. You don't know all these people. You are not a member of the family. You never know whether that woman there doesn't want to talk to that woman there...When I'm putting them there, I'm calling them to stand, I don't tell them where to stand. You let the chemistry take care of itself. Brothers who love to be near their sisters or cousins who love to be near their cousins. Sometimes you put a brother - sibling rivalry - brother and sister here and they are literally getting on one another's throat. They do that as a joke or seriously. You don't do that - leave them to stand. People want to see arrangements, to see patterns. and directors will come and help me by rearranging the people - I don't care - I will stand and wait for them to rearrange - once I get my group all I'm looking at is the frame - I'm calling here everybody look into my lens and on the count of three if you want to say cheese smile whatever - chop it goes - that is my approach of photography - so it do it kind of wherever you stand - I don't move them around

The pictures of the immediate family seem to be an important enactment of family boundaries. Usually, awkward moments are handled calmly by the family, but occasionally they can be points of real tension and hurt for years after the wedding.

Bride and Groom with Extended Families

After the pictures with parents and immediate family, the bride and groom will often take photographs with their extended families including aunt, uncles, and cousins. Often the bride and groom's side of the family will be photographed separately, but sometimes the entire extended family on both sides will be photographed all together. One bride and groom reported that, although they had an adult-only wedding, they had their nephew brought to the after-ceremony photography session so that he could be included in the pictures because, according to the groom, "it's family. It is the *whole* family. It's your next of kin."

One sticking point during these photographs may be whether to include the girlfriends and boyfriends of family members in these photographs. Unmarried relationships are usually viewed as less stable (although this is often not necessarily true) and, therefore, the bride and groom may be concerned that they will end up with the "ex-boyfriend" in their wedding photographs. As we will see, the purpose of these photographs in the album is to visually establish the boundaries of the family. Having extraneous people (in the form of ex-spouses and ex-partners of other forms) tends to cause some angst when viewed down the road. We will return to the reactions of viewers to "extra" people in the photographs in the next chapter. At this point, however, we will recognize that the inclusion or exclusion of various significant others in the family photographs may cause some awkwardness during the shoot. To include the boyfriend or girlfriend may be risky in terms of the accuracy of the photograph in the future, but to

exclude them send a message that the family does not consider the relationship to be serious, thus offending the couple in question. For example, I remember attending the wedding of my husband's cousin before we were engaged. I did not get up for the extended family photograph, but the bride and groom insisted that I join the photograph in an effort to express their acceptance of me. I remember feeling very awkward and laughing to myself that now I HAD to marry him. A bride at one wedding (where I was the assistant photographer) came up to me and whispered into my ear, "Make sure you get at least one shot without my sister's boyfriend." Often photographers will help solve the awkwardness of this moment by taking one photograph with the boyfriend or girlfriend and one without.

Bride and Groom with Friends

The bride and groom may take photographs at this time with groups of friends from different periods or areas of their life. For example, they may take a photograph with everyone that went to college with them or everyone that works with the bride or groom. One bride reported that she and her two college roommates took the same picture at all of their weddings with the bride in the center and the other two on the sides. Often these types of photographs will be taken later on at the reception, but sometimes they are taken immediately following the ceremony. These shots visually establish the social groups to which the bride and groom belong.

Bride and Groom Alone

Finally, after all the group shots have been taken, the photographer will often ask

everyone else to move on to the reception and take some pictures with the bride and groom alone. Usually, at least some of the photographs taken of the bride and groom will be formal shots of the couple (on the altar if it is a church wedding) both looking straight at the camera. The photograph below is a typical example of a formal portrait of the bride and groom. The bride is in a pose that is almost identical to the one she assumed in the formal portrait of her alone (shown above). In both the portrait above and the couple photograph below, the wedding dress is prominently displayed. There is usually much fussing about getting the train to look exactly right and the angle of the bouquet is adjusted and re-adjusted by the photographer. Even in the couple portrait, the bride and her dress remain the focus of the shot. Notice how the bride is almost centered in the photograph; if the groom were erased, the photograph would be a perfect portrait of the bride. Visually, the groom appears as the claimant of a prize; he accents the bride's desirability.



◀ *Formal Couple Portrait*
(© Marthanna Yater)

In addition to formal portraits, the bride and groom will usually pose for more casual shots in which bride and groom are both the visual focus. The photographs below show the same bride and groom posing for more casual shots. Notice how the couple is now centered as opposed to the bride. Both bride and groom share the spotlight in these photographs. The flowers as the symbol of fertility, are still visually prominent in these photographs.



▲ *Casual Couple Shots* ►
(© Marthanna Yater)



The presence of the two different types of couple portraits seems to indicate some negotiation between older ideas of marriage in which a woman might be considered a prize (valuable, but owned) and a more modern vision of marriage in which husband and wife are equal partners.

The after the ceremony photographs can conceivably take a long time, depending on the size of the bride and groom's family. In fact, the most common complaint about the performance of wedding photographers is that they took too long to take the after-ceremony shots, causing a delay in the reception. As we discussed in the planning stage

chapter, most photographers insist on a list for this stage of the day in order to move quickly through the shots that need to be taken and to ensure that no one is left out. The photographer is usually held responsible for making the session go smoothly, which often involves some well-developed people skills in order to get all the participants to cooperate.

I'll give you an example of a group who was more of a nuisance than any of this - I set them up to take their picture - and by the time I get back to my position - I mean setting up people I don't go posing people but the bride's gown needs a little bit - by the time I get back the groom has left the place shaking hands on the side - that drives me crazy - drives me crazy then I have to tell him sir would you please get back into the picture.

Usually the photographer will call different groups up to be photographed and then arrange them on either side of the bride and groom in a symmetrical pattern. They will then make sure everyone is facing the camera, not blocked by anyone, and smiling. Sometimes the photographer may ask everyone who is wearing glasses to either remove the glasses or turn their heads slightly to reduce the glare of the flash on the glass. As mentioned above, some photographers take a looser approach and let people arrange themselves. However, even in these cases, those being photographed will specifically ask the photographer how to hold their hands, where they should stand or some other detail. The participants expect a certain degree of direction from the photographer.

There is a lot of emphasis put on people smiling during all of the after-ceremony (and pre-ceremony) photography shooting events. A smile is a symbolic gesture of happiness and approval and, as such, is one of the most important symbols of ritualized remembering (as we will see when we discuss display practices.) Often the bride and

groom joke about their faces hurting from all of the smiling by the end of the after-ceremony photographs. If children are part of the after-ceremony photographs, the shot usually ends up revolving around getting the children to look at the camera and smile. Sometimes, if the photographer does not specifically explain to the rest of the people in the photograph what to do, the picture will end up having a beautifully smiling child surrounded by a group of anxious adults looking at the child waiting for him or her to smile. In these instances, the photographer needs to instruct the adults to look at the camera the whole time while the photographer works at getting the child to smile. The resulting photograph hides the process by which it was made, although people will often tell me how difficult it was to get the children to smile when they look at the photograph. In the few years immediately following the ceremony, the photographs remind participants of the shooting event as well as the family bonds they depict. However, as time passes, people often forget the details of the shoot (which are ideally not captured on the film) and are reminded only of the family relationships. Musello similarly reports that people become more satisfied with their photographs over time, when the differences between reality and the photograph become less salient (1977, p. 223). That which is visually depicted in the photograph becomes the substance of the memory.

During the after-ceremony photographs, family members and other guests may stand behind the photographer and take shots with their own cameras of the poses the photographer has arranged. This is a source of annoyance to many photographers because it slows the process of getting the photographs taken (for which the photographer will

ultimately be blamed) and some claim the flashes of the other cameras will interfere with the quality of their photographs. One photographer told me the following story of a particularly tenacious family member who was taking her own pictures:

One time this woman was a terrible nuisance ... if I moved to go up there to straighten the bride's dress, she stands there and when I come back she expects that I set the people up and she's standing where I am to take a picture. I put my folding stool there to stand on and I come back - she's standing on the stool... I couldn't believe it ... I'm not going to let one person set me off for me to get angry when there are many people watching you at work - you are selling yourself. So I was patient and I waited and asked her to take her picture. And then I asked her, may I? And then she stepped down.

This story shows not only how disruptive family snapshotters can be during the after-ceremony shoot, but also how the photographer is juggling trying to get the job done quickly while maintaining his or her composure around guest who are potential future clients. Often photographers put a clause in their contract stipulating that no one else may take photographs during the after-ceremony shoot.

In addition to the disruption caused by family members taking snapshots, there is also an underlying economic issue to some photographers who claim that if family members take pictures of the poses they arrange with their own cameras, they will be less likely to order copies from the photographer afterwards. At least one photographer I interviewed, however, disagrees with this assumption, saying that his photographs will always be of much better quality because of the equipment he uses and therefore family snapshots have no impact on his sales.

Other photographers may object to family snapshotters on the grounds of artistic

ownership. A woman at a bridal shower I attended years ago told me a story about her wedding photographer who, after he posed a formal shot, he would not let anyone else (friends, relatives, parents) take a snapshot when he was through. He said that the poses "belonged to him" and that no one else could have them.²¹ There was a short discussion among the bridal shower guests about how rude this was, and then one guest said she could perhaps see the photographer's point, likening the photograph to a painting and taking a snapshot to forgery. She suggested that this was the photographer's art and maybe he had a right to protect it. This comment was followed by a brief uncomfortable silence as everyone contemplated her analogy. At that point I suggested, "Yes, but I think maybe that's not what wedding photographs are for." The room erupted in agreement, with the woman who had been the bride at the wedding in question exclaiming, "Yes! I couldn't think how to say it, but that's it exactly!" The point here is not to determine whether or not wedding photography should be considered "art", but rather to recognize that photographers and participants may have different assumptions about photography. Professional photographers may see photography as an art form and an owned commodity, although most of the professionals I spoke to (in contrast to the man in the story above) said that wedding photography was not the most artistic thing they do.

During the Reception

Many of the photographs taken at the reception tend to focus on the important

²¹ Many photographers put a clause in their contracts that not only explicitly states their retention of copyright to the negatives and images they produce, but forbids guests to take photographs while they are shooting. The studio may also have the bride and groom sign a model release so the photographer can reproduce images from the wedding in promotional materials or photography publications.

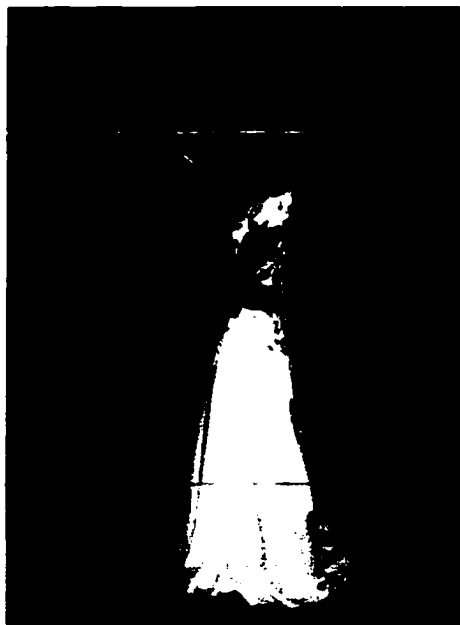
ritual events such as the couple's first dance, the cake cutting, and the bouquet toss.

Often, the photographer ends up orchestrating many of these events.



◀ *The Cake Cutting and Feeding.*

(© Marthanna Yater)



◀ *The First Dance.*

(© Marthanna Yater)

Between the highlight events of the reception, the photographer will generally wander throughout the reception location and take snapshots of people interacting with

one another. Often, the subjects of the photograph will be unaware that their photograph is being taken. Other times they will pause and pose for the camera, or specifically ask for the photographer to take a picture of them.



◀ *Posed Reception Photo.*
(© Marthanna Yater)



◀ *Unposed Reception Photo.*
(© Marthanna Yater)

Also during the reception, additional group photographs may be taken of friends and extended family that were not taken directly after the ceremony. A traditional approach is to have the photographer take a photograph of each table of people (who are already grouped by some pre-existing connection). Photographers generally hate to do

this because it ends up being difficult to get everyone at the table at the same time and is such an interruption to guests as they are trying to eat. Another approach that is generally used for very large groups (like the one depicted in the photograph below) is to announce that all guests of a certain category (e.g. "College Friends") report to the dance floor for a photograph.



◀ *College Friends.*
(© Marthanna Yater)



◀ *Table Shot.*
(© Marthanna Yater)

There are usually a handful of guests taking photographs at the reception.

Although the photographer may still ask for these guest to step out of the way during the photographs of the events like the cake cutting and the first dance, there is usually more

acceptance and less friction between amateurs and professionals during the reception. In fact, some photographers even provide an option in their package for disposable table cameras the guests may use to take photographs of each other. Most photographers think this is a waste of money because you end up with a lot of duplicate photographs (seven pictures of the cake cutting for example) of poor quality. However, guests and bridal couples seem to like the idea, so they provide the option and make some money from the arrangement. Many couples also provide this option independently of the photographer. Interestingly, one of the favorite photographs for a guest to take is a shot of the photographer. The irony that makes this photograph a joke to take stems from an understanding that the photographer has so much control over the way the wedding event will be remembered and a picture of the photographer turns the table on that arrangement. These photographs seldom make it into the wedding album since they reveal too much of the process of production, drawing attention away from important messages of the wedding and remembering rituals (that we will discuss in later chapters).

A final category of reception photographs is still life photographs that depict aesthetic elements of the wedding. The reception site (and, earlier, the ceremony site), cake, table decorations and flower arrangements may be photographed by themselves in order to provide evidence of the bride's good taste and successful planning of the wedding ritual. Although there are proportionately more photographs of people in most wedding albums, some still life images usually appear in a typical wedding album.

► *Still-life of Table Decorations.*
(© Marthanna Yater)



Reception photographs generally show people having a good time. The photographer usually captures people smiling, hugging, dancing and displaying joy in other fashions. The purpose of the reception photographs is to show the acceptance of the surrounding community of the couple's marriage as well as to provide evidence that the couple completed the wedding ritual successfully. Although the photographer will often help organize some of the activities that occur, the activity for the most part is not instigated by the need for photography, as it is in pre-ceremony and post-ceremony photography where people gather and pose specifically for photographs. At the reception, photography plays less of a role in the ritual itself and focuses instead on framing different images that will help create a memory after the fact.

Other Shooting Events

Usually the photographer's contract ends when the bride and groom leave the reception (and in some instances before the couple departs.) Occasionally, they will be contracted to take photographs of post-ceremony events such as a brunch the day after the wedding. One couple I observed asked the photographer to come back to their house and take a photograph of the groom throwing the bride on the bed. This atypical photograph

unmasks one of the main points of the wedding ritual: to make a couple socially legitimate sexual partners.

The Role of Photography During Shooting Events

Throughout the shooting events, wedding photography helps the couple and their families enact the social transformations that a marriage creates. During the ceremony and parts of the reception, photography is on the sideline of the ritual activity, capturing images to be manipulated in the forthcoming remembering ritual. In the pre- and post-ceremony photography shoots, however, photography IS the activity. The purpose of the social practices constituting wedding photography at these points is arguably to capture images in anticipation of the remembering ritual. In addition to this purpose, however, the social practices of gathering, posing and observing the photography shoot have become ritualized themselves. Photography practices allow the couple's families to enact the transformation of their social order that a marriage of two people creates. The shooting stage of wedding photography contributes directly to the wedding ritual while gathering symbolic tools to be used in the upcoming remembering ritual.

Chapter Five **Editing and Exhibition Events**

In the previous chapter I discussed how the practices that create photographic images, i.e. “taking pictures,” contribute to the wedding ritual and help participants enact a transformation of social order. This chapter discusses how photographs - the products of photography shooting practices – are edited and organized into displays.

Editing

After the shooting events at the wedding, the film is usually taken by the professional photographer and sent out to a lab for developing. Sometimes, if a friend shot the film or the couple has a special arrangement with the professional, the bride and groom will take the film to a lab to be developed. In rare cases the photographer may develop their own black and white film in a darkroom at their studio, but I have never heard of a photographer developing their own color film. This is mostly because the equipment necessary to develop color film is too expensive to make it cost-effective for the photographer.

Within the industry there are many horror stories about photographers sending all the film to be developed in one batch and the UPS truck exploding or the lab destroying a whole batch of film, resulting in a wedding couple losing all of their wedding pictures. How often these types of catastrophic events take place is unclear, but many photographers use such a story as an explanation for why they send the film out in several different batches. I believe that stories about wedding film being destroyed are one way of

communicating the value of wedding photography. There is an acknowledgment by photographers and couples alike that the film is irreplaceable. If wedding film is destroyed, a photographer may try to reconvene key participants in order to stage some group shots, but (as was demonstrated in the previous chapter with staged photographs of the wedding ceremony) the photographs will not have the same quality as those taken on the actual wedding day. The value placed on wedding photographs may, in part, come from the simple economic principle that scarcity increases the perceived value of goods. However, horror stories of lost film also seem to be analogies for a rarely spoken, but very real, fear that the union created by the magic of a wedding is itself as fragile as the film used to commemorate the event. By taking precautions to protect our wedding film from destruction, we are also communicating that we hold our marriage dear and recognize its fragility.

Despite the danger perceived by some, many photographers do send the film out all at once. One photographer told me she sends the film as one batch so the film emulsions match, i.e., the color balance is the same on all the prints. I do not interpret this explanation as a dismissal of how bad it would be if the film got destroyed, since the photographer indicated to me that she did not think there was any danger in the film being damaged (and told me she had never had any such incident occur.) Rather, I see her choice as the prioritization of the principle of idealization which we will see guides many decisions made in the editing and exhibition phases. If the grass or the shade of the carpet in the reception hall is different in each photograph, an observer's attention may be drawn

to the mistake in the processing and away from how expertly other aspects of the ritual were performed. I will further discuss the influence of idealization on choices made during the editing and exhibition phases shortly.

The first phase of editing is usually done by the photographer when the film comes back from the lab. In the studio where I worked during my research, we eliminated the inevitable photographs in which a photographer's mistake or equipment malfunction caused technical flaws (poor focus, inadequate lighting) and photographs which did not show the participants in an attractive way (eyes shut or funny faces). Group shots in which some of the people's faces can not be seen because they turned away or ducked behind someone else are also eliminated at this stage. This phase of the editing process is focused on not showing the client the mistakes that the photographer may have made and not showing them images that might make them feel bad about the way they looked on their wedding day. Customers were not always aware that we "weeded out" bad shots -- although we would answer truthfully if they asked, we did not offer the information. Since photographers use some of the same criteria couples use during the editing process (described in more detail below), clients seem to easily accept the photographer's role as the first editor. For example, photographers assume their customers do not want an unfocused picture -- and customers do not. In fact, in rare cases when an unfocused photograph was passed along to the client, the client would bring the mistake to our attention and weed out the picture themselves.

After the initial editing phase, the photographer gives the proofs to the bride and

groom to review. They usually receive a stack of over 200 (3.5 x 5) or (4x5) prints or a proof book with the proofs in plastic sleeves. From these proofs, the bride and groom will select which photographs to exhibit in their album, in their homes, in the newspaper or in one of the other ways discussed in the next section of this chapter. In some instances the bride made these decisions herself, but in most instances the couple reported that it was a joint project. The wedding album is probably the most prevalent and important way to display wedding photographs, so many of the comments in this discussion of editing practices focus on choosing photographs for the album.

Several couples told me the way they began the process of narrowing down which photographs to use for exhibition was by having each of them look at the proofs by themselves and make a list of photographs they liked. They then compared lists and sorted the proofs into pictures they “definitely” wanted (ones they both picked), pictures they “might” want (ones only one of them picked) and pictures they did not want (neither of them picked them). Next, they verbally negotiated the “might” photographs, agreeing on which ones to choose. Finally they sorted through the photographs they had chosen and made decisions about size and order in the album. Not every couple followed exactly this process – some, for example, did not start by making separate lists and others began by eliminating ones they definitely did not want – but all of the couples described some sort of narrowing down process like the one detailed above. Usually this editing process takes place during several sessions over the course of weeks or, often, months. The attempts at fairness, compromise and co-operation apparent in the process by which

couples edit their wedding photographs seem to model modern expectations for a successful marriage. Although, as noted earlier, many decisions about the wedding are made by the bride alone, the great majority my informants made editing choices about the wedding photographs as a team – even if the groom had little to do with photography up until that point.

The first criterion by which couples eliminate photographs from the possible stack is technical quality. This includes things like clear focus, good lighting, and symmetrical composition. Since, as mentioned above, most professionals will eliminate shots that are particularly poor technically, the couple usually does not eliminate many shots based solely on technical merit (unless their photographs were taken by a non-professional).

Although couples *eliminate* photographs because of technical quality, they rarely seem to *choose* pictures based solely on technical quality. Usually one of the other criteria discussed below is cited as the reason why the photograph was chosen for display. Technical aspects like “look at how beautifully the light is captured here” may be mentioned as an afterthought, but are not the driving criteria for most couple’s choices. In fact, technically sub-par photographs may be included in a wedding album if they are the only shot that meets some other criteria. For example, one bride said the poor lighting that resulted in darkness on the faces of the subject did not really bother her because the “mood is more important than really clear pictures.” Another bride commented on how she did not like the composition of a picture depicting a wedding tradition in which charms that are baked into the cake with attached strings are pulled out by the bride’s female

friends. She says that others always comment on how you can not see anyone's face and the cake is blocking the bride. However, she chose to put it in her album anyway because it was the only one they had of an important tradition. One husband describes his favorite wedding picture to me in the following way:

OK this sounds weird now. I got one that was took by - who took that one - I think my sister took that with a camera...it's got my wife and I's head chopped off right at the top. I don't know why it is, but it's got a nice picture of us kissing but the head's chopped off right there... Well, I just like it I mean...cause it's got a real close up of us kissing - and it sets apart from - I mean I got some coming down the aisle and stuff like that but...it's kind-of spur of the moment cause I give her a big hug and tell her how much I love her.

His initial comment that "this sounds weird" indicates that he recognizes a social expectation that favorite wedding pictures are not technically flawed, but the symbolic value of the photograph outweighs that criteria for him.

Technical quality of the photograph may also be more important for some types of photographs and display practices than others. For example, one bride was bothered by a formal portrait that was not quite centered, but did not care about centering in candid shots of the reception. Portraits, which are often enlarged, framed and displayed on the wall (as a painting or print might be), are more likely to be judged in terms of the technical skill of the artist, one of the primary criteria by which "art" is evaluated (Gross, 1973). Technical skill is also important when professionals enter wedding photographs in industry competitions. However, in typical wedding photographs, the three most prevalent criteria by which wedding photographs are evaluated are personal appearance, the depiction of social groups and the documentation of wedding ritual details. Each of these criteria are

discussed separately in the sections below. These are also the aspects that are most often remarked upon during exhibition events, as I will further explain later in this chapter.

Personal Appearance

One bride and groom told me that the first criterion in choosing their wedding pictures was that neither of them look “goofy.” Another couple pointed out that when they discussed why, out of four similar poses, the bride picked one shot and the groom picked another, it usually came down to the fact that the person who was choosing looked “better” in the picture. Although “looking good” means something a little different to everyone, it is apparent that people choose to display wedding photographs that make them feel positive about their appearance. Erving Goffman (1959) argues that:

...when the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behavior as a whole. (p. 35)

Beauty is valued in our assessment of a marrying couple because, as I asserted earlier, one of the most compelling reasons to marry is to legitimize the couple for sexual relations and procreation. Thus, at the marriage of an attractive couple, guests comment on how beautiful the couple’s children will be. Attractiveness is a basis on which our society judges the choice each partner has made in a sexual partner and potential parent. Couples, therefore, present an idealized version of themselves in their wedding photographs as a means of persuading others that they are acceptable marriage partners.

As was mentioned earlier in my discussion of the planning stage, couples

sometimes make requests of the photographer in advance in order to hide things about their appearance which they deem “flaws.” For example, I recounted the stories about the woman who only wanted to be photographed from one side and the bride that asked us to take close-ups to hide her wheelchair.

After the wedding, blemishes or other skin imperfections may be airbrushed out of final wedding prints, especially portraits. In the studio in which I did my participant research, we routinely checked the final prints and touched up blemishes and shiny foreheads from perspiration, as well as any printing flaws that may have come back from the lab (such as tiny marks caused by dust flecks stuck to a negative that was not properly cleaned before printing.) We did not usually tell clients that we went through this process. Sometimes clients would request such touch-ups when they ordered their prints from the proofs.

Interestingly, couples rarely mentioned touch ups to me when they showed me their wedding pictures. Although we clearly engage in an elaborate process of idealization in producing the images we present in our wedding photographs, in the end we communicate about those images as if they were objective representations of the nature of the subject. In this way, the photographs become a means to engender the idealized images they portray. I will return to the use of photography as an objective document at the end of this chapter.

The couple will also choose flattering pictures of their friends and family. One couple explained that it would be embarrassing to them if their friends put unflattering

pictures of them in their wedding album, so they extended the same courtesy. The care couples show in protecting their friends' images is in part insurance that their friends will likewise protect them.

Although standards of beauty are subjective and culturally specific, there are two things about personal appearance that we can predict a wedding couple will almost always prefer in their wedding photographs: open eyes and smiles. Almost every couple I spoke to said they eliminated in their first round of editing photographs where people's eyes were closed, someone was not facing the camera or the subject was making a "strange face." One bride claimed: "I mean there were at least a hundred that were obvious we weren't going to use - somebody's eyes were closed, someone wasn't looking the right direction...." Part of the reasoning behind this practice seems to be a result of cultural expectations about photographs in general; photographic subjects are expected to look at the camera and smile. Even amateur photographers often ask their subjects to "look this way," "smile" or "say cheese." In the previous chapter, I discussed how much effort was put into having children smile in group wedding shots. Open eyes and smiles seem to signify happiness, alertness and perhaps acceptance of the wedding ritual to the viewer of wedding photographs. Likewise, Pierre Bourdieu (1990) argues that "frontality" in photographs is linked to cultural values that expect individuals to face one another in order to communicate respect for ourselves and for those to whom we present ourselves (p. 82-83). It is also important that people face the camera so that they are recognizable, since, as detailed in the next chapter, one of the primary functions of wedding photographs

is to initiate new members and children into the family by helping them learn the names and faces of family members.

Some evidence that open eyes and smiles are very important criteria for wedding photographs lies in the disappointment people show when their photographs do not meet these criteria. I had the opportunity to attend a session in which the bride and her family viewed the wedding proofs (made into slides) for the first time. The bride's sister, who had a tendency to blink when the camera flash went off (resulting in her eyes being shut in a lot of the pictures), kept apologizing to the bride for ruining the photographs. Another bride told me a story about how her younger sister had braces at the time of the wedding and, therefore, refused to smile for any of the pictures because she was embarrassed by her appearance. She happily pointed out the shot the photographer had finally gotten of her sister smiling.

Depiction of Social Groups

Another important criterion in editing wedding photographs is the inclusion of groups of people. As it was important in the shooting events to include all family members in the formal group shots in order to avoid hurt feelings, it is also important that all family members be included in the exhibition phase. Couples said they wanted to display photos that included *all* of their family and friends, both for their own sake (in order to best define the social group to which they belong) and for the sake of communicating to others the importance of their relationships (and so that feelings would not be hurt).

One thing that several couples mentioned was the importance of having roughly an even number of photographs of the bride's "side" and the groom's "side." They said this was important because it reflected the "balance they try to have in their lives" and indicated that they wanted to be fair and equal since this was a special day for both of them. I find these comments interesting because they are somewhat contradictory to the traditional idea that the wedding is the "bride's day." I did have a few people tell me that wedding photographs were a "girl's thing" as reflected in the following man's comments:

I think wedding pictures are more of a girl's thing, that she would like sit down and look – you know and talk about her dress and her – all that stuff.

However, as stated earlier, the great majority of the couples interviewed for this study went through the editing process as a team, regardless of the groom's involvement in other aspects of the wedding. Wedding photography editing and display practices enable couples to symbolically affirm a balance of power within the relationship (or to re-establish a balance that was temporarily upset by the bride's command of the wedding activities) through both the joint editing process and the display of equal numbers of prints depicting each side of the family.

In determining which friends should be included in the wedding album, couples take into account factors such as how many years they have known those friends, the frequency of their visits, and the distance the friends traveled in order to come to the wedding. In part, couples look for people who are more likely to be long-term fixtures in their lives. When the couple looks at the album later in their marriage they find it sad to see the faces of people with whom they are no longer friends; it seems to evoke feelings of

loss. One measure of whether a friendship will last for a long time might be the distance a friend travels to come to the wedding. If someone travels from overseas, for example, to attend a wedding, that is taken as an indication that the friendship will withstand the inconveniences of external circumstances. Couples often talk about how much it meant to them that someone put out the effort to travel from far away and their desire to recognize that as a sign of strong friendship by including that person in the album. In addition, couples seem to put some thought into who might see the wedding album and be hurt if they were excluded. One couple, for example, said that they would be “showing the album to people later and don’t want to hurt others’ feelings.” In this way, wedding photographs play a part in an ongoing system of complex social relationships by visually depicting rules by which family and friends interact with one another.

Wedding Ritual Details

Perhaps the most compelling criterion that couples identified as driving their choices in the editing stage was whether the images selected captured elements of the wedding ritual as executed at their particular wedding. It is important to couples to visually depict ways in which their wedding is like other weddings (ways in which it adheres to tradition) as well as ways in which it differs from others (ways in which it diverged from tradition either intentionally or by accident). They look for images that show elements such as location and aesthetic details.

Photographs which show the location where the wedding took place (or as one bride put it, the “backdrop of where we got married”) seem to be shots that couples often

choose to display. In fact, in describing to me why their favorite wedding picture was their favorite, the following two brides cited the fact that the location is depicted as one of the primary reasons they liked the photograph:

I think just because the expressions on our face and the fact that it incorporates where the wedding happened with it. It's not just of us it's also kind-of a little historical bit about where we did it and everything.

My favorite picture is one of my husband and me at the riverfront in Wilmington with the downtown scene behind us and it was at sunset and it's just beautiful - and I like it because it shows the city where we got married.

Couples often have an emotional attachment to the place where they got married and purposefully choose pictures to display details about the setting that they find particularly meaningful. For example, several couples mentioned that they really liked a photograph because it showed the beauty of the church in which they were married. Often their comments focused on specific elements of the scene that they love such as an impressive organ behind the altar or, as in the excerpt below, the church's cross:

That looks like it's out of focus but it was actually supposed to be...he had planned it like that - and also because of the flash situation that he wasn't allowed [to take flash pictures]. But it's my favorite church. This cross is just, oh, has so much meaning to me. Our minister just recently over the Christmas holiday took the docile curtain and covered the cross because he said, you know, that Christ hadn't come yet. It was Christmas and Christ had not been born yet. And of course Easter hadn't occurred so there was no cross and I pitched a fit because that is my cross. You know I want my cross exposed. Yeah, the church is very lovely and we dearly love the pastor.

Notice that, as was pointed out earlier, the technical quality of the photograph is not as important in some instances as what the photograph depicts. In this case, the bride

clearly loves the church in which she got married and especially wanted to see the cross in her wedding photographs.

Weddings, as with all rituals, are ruled by tradition. There is a “right way” to get married. However, there is a certain amount of flexibility in those rules, i.e., there are socially accepted ways in which some of the rules can be broken. In part, this flexibility exists so that the ritual can actually be performed by real people in a real environment, both of which are full of mistakes and idiosyncrasies. If ritual rules did not bend to a certain extent, no ritual would ever be valid. Ritual also usually allows for participants to personalize the activities in some way (for example through aesthetic details) in order to make the ritual specifically apply to them.

Which ritual rules are flexible is often a matter of debate among participants. For example, a couple who eloped told me they were surprised to find that their families were so upset. In the couple’s mind, they had followed the rules that were important, namely, getting the license, going to city hall and making their union legal. Their families, however, were having difficulty accepting that all the other aspects of a wedding ritual could be discarded. This is, of course, a more extreme example of tradition being broken. Most instances of friction about how a wedding should be done are over much smaller details. For example, at one wedding I observed an intense argument between the bride, her mother and her grandmother over how the bride’s parents would answer the minister when he asked “Who gives this bride in marriage.” The bride wanted them to say in unison “We do.” The bride’s mother and grandmother insisted that the proper response

was for the father of the bride to say “Her mother and I.” The bride ended up rushing out of the room crying. After my own wedding, in which, among other breaks from tradition, both my husband and I walked down the aisle alone and the “who gives the bride” question was not asked, my great aunt told me she thought it was a beautiful wedding, but the one thing she missed was hearing the “Here Comes the Bride” wedding march; *that* was the one change *she* could not accept.

The choices couples make about which wedding photographs to display often revolve around demonstrating how their wedding followed tradition (thus making it legitimate) and how it deviated from tradition (thus making it their own). They may also, as demonstrated below, choose photographs in order to purposefully hide mistakes that might have occurred.

In *Cosmos and History*, Mircea Eliade argues that all rituals imitate a divine archetype (1959, p. 21). The couples in this study (and perhaps brides in particular) have an ideal vision about what a wedding should look like. The existence of such a model becomes apparent in comments like the one below from a bride commenting on one of her favorite wedding pictures:

This is ritualistic to me, simply because you can almost take this not knowing who the parties are and just use it as a traditional wedding picture. You don't have a whole lot of stuff in it. And it shows, as we said, the beauty of the church and the fact that it played a big part.

For this bride, as with the one quoted earlier, the beauty of her church is important to her. She also articulates quite clearly that part of what she likes about the photograph is that it takes attention away from her personally and focuses on the ritual itself. In other words, it

celebrates the traditions of the ritual.

Wedding ritual traditions are, of course, culture-specific. Often, couples choose photographs that demonstrate their adherence to the specific wedding customs associated with their religious or ethnic background, as articulated in this exchange between a married couple:

Husband: And I think it's interesting how you can see - I like this picture because you can see the ring on the index finger.

Wife: Yeah. In the Jewish ceremony you put the ring on the index finger, not on the ring finger.

Husband: Not on the ring finger - so I like that picture, because that's something that unless I saw this picture, I would probably forget.

Wife: Can I tell you, I have never noticed that in that picture before.

Husband: I did.

Wife: I never noticed that.

Husband: Those are things - I look for things that are a little different. You know that you can see it. Because I think if you look through here I believe this is the only picture that you can see it. And that's something that you know it's tradition and if somebody asked "What's the ring ceremony traditionally..." How many times does that get asked? I would remember, but otherwise I'd probably forget that we actually did that.

The husband in this exchange clearly chose the photograph in part because it reminded him of a social group to which he belongs and demonstrates that he followed the rules of the culture associated with that group. He specifically appreciates the inclusion of the detail because it reminds him to tell others about a tradition that distinguishes his religion

from others. Similarly, a Catholic bride told me she really said liked one photograph because it showed them kneeling. To her it represented the solemn nature of the Catholic wedding mass and reminded her that they were kneeling the whole time. Interestingly, the wife in the exchange above had not noticed the fact that the photograph showed the finger the ring was on until her husband pointed it out. She repeated that she hadn't noticed that detail a couple times. From her tone of voice as she repeated it, I got the sense that she was surprised and perhaps a little embarrassed that her husband had noticed it and she had not. I think this reflects again an expectation that women will know more about wedding traditions than the men. She seemed pleased that the detail was included and happy that her husband cared about its inclusion.

Different couples place different value on how much their wedding adhered to tradition. Some couples purposefully choose photographs that demonstrate their distance from an idealized version of the wedding ritual. For example, one bride told me she liked a picture of herself in bridal attire holding a beer can, precisely because it was not the typical image of the formal bride. The photograph made a statement that she repeated throughout our interview, that she and her husband were not "formal" people; they are laid back and fun-loving. She saw herself as a rule-breaker and celebrated that characteristic. Another bride told me she chose a "trick" photograph of herself and her husband in a champagne glass because it was different and:

I've strived my whole life to be different from my sisters, so that was just one way I could be different from my sisters.

Clearly, our life experiences have an influence on how important being "different" is to

each one of us. Another bride that highly values her own uniqueness told me that some pictures were not very important to her because they were “like any other wedding.” She placed more value on photographs that showed something unusual about her wedding such as what happened with their “first kiss:”

He said “you can kiss the bride” and then somebody said “Yeah you can stop kissing here now.” You know, it’s like a big joke. And then someone said “OK, you can kiss her again, which he did. It was like funny. So that’s ok. But that one? Eh, big deal. This one doesn’t mean anything. [because it is a typical shot]

Although she expresses a verbal disdain for things that are “just traditional,” the same bride explains the inclusion of a picture of her wedding cake in the following way:

Don’t ask me why I have a picture of the cake, but I always wanted a cake like this. He [the groom] wanted like something different. He wanted a style like this way or this way. I wanted a traditional wedding cake. One thing had to be traditional. I don’t know. It’s like seeing things in movies. You know, you see cakes like this in movies. I wanted that cake. I was like that has to be wedding-like.

The photograph of the cake seems to indicate to this woman that, although her wedding was different from the traditions of her culture in other ways, it still had recognizable and important (to her) ritual elements.

Many couples talked about liking photographs because they showed that they were both traditional (had a connection with the past and with a particular social group) and because they were different in some way, thus celebrating their perceived uniqueness. For example, one couple started their album with a picture of the two of them hugging on the church altar. They said they chose it because it was “traditional but a little different.”

They agreed with my suggestion that the picture was an analogy for how they want to live their life.

In every wedding, mistakes happen. In some instances, couples might purposefully try to cover up mistakes in their wedding pictures. For example, one bride told me she chose a close-up shot of her and her husband dancing their first dance because she was trying to hide that they did not know how to dance. One groom told me they took out pictures of people who looked really drunk because “you don’t want your kids looking at your friends acting like a bunch of lushes.”

However, as long as the mistake is little, most couples seem to purposefully choose pictures that depict the mistakes that were made. One bride was 25 minutes late to her own wedding because her mother and sisters took so long at the hairdressers getting ready. She told me she purposefully included a “non-traditional” photograph of her bridal party rushing into the church looking frantic because it told the story. Another woman talks about a picture of her and her husband’s hands resting on top of an arrangement of flowers:

Wife: Well, see this is one in terms of being unique. I was very upset because my middle finger nail was broken that day, but I thought it was unique in that he was able to put the flowers (this is part of our altar, the part we use for communion). And I just thought it was neat that he put the, you know, put the hands together there. And considering I was a nail biter when I was a kid, that was important to me that I now had finger nails.

(Me): So do you think of that every time you look at that picture? You think of that finger nail?

Wife: Yup. I remember it distinctly.

In retelling the stories of mistakes that happen at the wedding, there is a sense that couples are in part celebrating that nothing went drastically wrong. If the worst thing that happens is the bride is late or her fingernail is broken (in violation of her idealized image of herself), the wedding ritual as a whole is successful. The ability to laugh at the little mistakes reinforces the fact that the important things went right.

Other Editing Processes

The process described above is the one typically followed by couples who have a professional take their wedding photographs. One variation that I have occasionally seen is the photographer or an assistant may choose the photographs and put together the album for the couple. Couples returning from their honeymoon are presented with the album completed by the studio and allowed to see the proofs of the photographs that were not chosen for inclusion. The photographer allows the couple to change the order of the photographs in the album or add and/or delete pictures if they so choose. One photographer told me he followed this practice and one woman had hired a photographer in another city that also did things this way. The woman said she had thought that this was a strange practice at first, but then was surprised that she did not make any changes to the album the photographer presented. The photographer said that couples usually make very few changes to what he puts together. I see this as evidence that the criteria by which couples choose photographs are so consistent from one couple to the next that an experienced photographer can often successfully predict which pictures will be chosen.

Couples who do not have a professional take their wedding photographs often do very little in terms of editing the resulting photographs. Usually they report having taken out very technically flawed shots (bad focus or lighting), but then simply put all of the pictures in an album. This is consistent with the editing process Christopher Musello (1977) identified with most family snapshots.

The above discussion has illustrated that during the editing phase couples make decisions that reflect the balance of power and co-operative communication that is expected of modern marriages. The choices they make about which wedding photographs they will display are guided by three main criteria: personal appearance, the depiction of groups and the inclusion of wedding ritual details. Now my analysis turns to the exhibition of the photographs the couple has chosen.

Exhibition

Wedding photographs are exhibited at the wedding itself, in the newspaper, in frames at home and in albums. Each of these different categories of display practices are discussed individually below.

At the Wedding

A few of the brides I spoke with had a formal bridal portrait taken before the wedding day (the rest had portraits taken as part of the pre-ceremony shoot). If taken before the wedding day, the portrait is usually displayed at the wedding reception. This is a custom that is more common in the southern region of the United States where this

study was conducted than in other regions of the country.²² The portrait of the bride is usually enlarged to a size larger than 11x14 and displayed near the entrance to the reception hall, surrounded by flowers (a common symbol of fertility). The result is a display which reminds one of a shrine in honor of a fertility goddess. Guests often gather around the photograph and admire the beauty of the bride. The portrait is later displayed in the home of the bride or her parents.

One variation to this custom that seems to be more popular with modern brides is to display several smaller photographs (5x7 and 8x10) from her bridal portrait shoot on a table with the guestbook. Sometimes, instead of a wedding portrait, the couple might display an engagement photograph of both of them or, sometimes, an album with pictures of the bride and groom from childhood up through their courtship. One increasingly popular option (that is not unique to the south) is to have a large, matted photograph of the couple displayed without a frame. Guests are then asked to sign the mat around the photograph, offering their good wishes. This photograph is then framed and displayed in the couple's home.

In part, the practice of displaying the bride's photograph at the wedding is another way to idealize her image. As mentioned earlier, portraits are usually re-touched to perfection. Surrounding this perfect visual image of the bride with flowers – traditional symbols of fertility -- draws attention to the importance of marriage as a means by which to legitimize (i.e. make acceptable to the social group) sexual relations and reproduction.

²² In her wedding guide for African American couples, Harriette Cole (1993) refers to the practice of displaying a portrait at the wedding reception under the heading of "The Southern Way" (p. 166).

The modern variations of this tradition described above include the groom more explicitly in themes of the cycle of reproduction by showing the couple's progression from childhood to adulthood, thus suggesting the expectation of children to come that will repeat the process of maturation. Finally, signing around photographs of the couple makes explicit, through the literate tradition of signing consent, the group's acceptance of the couple as a social unit.

Newspaper

Another use for the pre-wedding bridal portrait (or a portrait taken before the ceremony on the day of the wedding) is to send it to the newspaper to be displayed with a wedding announcement. Traditionally, the announcement is accompanied by a picture of the bride alone, however, some couples include a picture of both of them. Wedding announcements usually include the names of the bride and groom, their parents, the wedding party and other wedding participants such as vocalists and readers. The educational background and job position of bride and groom, honeymoon plans and place of residence are also included. Sample wedding announcements from the newspapers in the three cities where this study was conducted are displayed below.

Wedding Announcements

WEDDINGS



**Wharric Lynne Evans
Randy Alvin Beland**

Wharric Lynne Evans and Randy Alvin Beland were married May 5 at 3 p.m. at Sandy Plains United Methodist Church in Marvin. The Rev. Earl Bradshaw of Marvin and the Rev. Curtis L. Beland of San Antonio,

Texas, acted as the groom, conducted the double-ring ceremony.

The bride is the daughter of Warren J. and Kathryn P. Evans of Wadesboro. She is a graduate of Anna Senior High School in Wadesboro and received a bachelor's degree in nursing from UNC. She is a registered nurse in Nursing Staffing Systems at UNC Hospitals.

The groom is the son of Raymond A. Beland and the late Judy F. Beland of Killdeer, Texas, and is a graduate of Hamstead High School in St. Louis, Mo. He received a bachelor's degree in history from Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, and a master's degree in education from University of Mary Hardin-Baylor University in Belton, Texas. He is a training manager for Sodexo Marriott at UNC Hospitals.

The bride was given in marriage by her parents.

Maid of honor was Beth M. Cummings of Wadesboro. The bridesmaids were Michelle L. Hogg of Concord, Lara P. Antry of Apex and Anne Kuhl of Thomas City, Mo.

The flower girl was Alyson

Ross Burns of Wadesboro.

Best man was John T. Whitaker of Hillsborough. The ushers were Joe P. Judges of Charlotte and Joseph W. Hogg of Concord.

The groomsmen were Robert P. Shaver of Chapel Hill, James D. Easton of Sevon, Texas, and Brian P. Smith of Durham.

Music was by pianist Helene B. Johnson and pianist Danny DeMaggio, who sang "Surely the Presence of the Lord, It is in this Place," "What a Beautiful Name" and "The Wedding Procession."

A reception, hosted by the parents of the bride, was held following the ceremony at the Fellowship Hall in Sandy Plains United Methodist Church.

A honeymoon trip was planned for Disney World, Fla.

The couple will reside in Chapel Hill.



Laws-Everette

Sonya A. Laws and Arthur S. Everette, Jr. were married at one 2 o'clock in the afternoon on June 29, 2001 at a private ceremony in Durham, NC.

The Rev. Kenneth Ray Hammond of Union Baptist Church in Durham, NC officiated.

The bride is the daughter of James W. Laws of Durham, NC and Atsue B. Laws, also of Durham, NC.

The bridegroom is the son of Arthur S. Everette, Sr. of Albany, NY and Carolyn R. Sampson of Cary, NC.

The bride graduated from North Carolina Central University and Colorado State University. She is employed by North Carolina Central University as a counselor.

The bridegroom graduated from Needham Broughton High School in Raleigh, NC. He is employed by North Carolina Central University Ticket Office and he is an accomplished musician.

The newlyweds honeymooned in Atlanta, Georgia and will reside in Durham, NC.

▲(The Chapel Hill News, Sunday, July 8, 2001, p. A6)

Hautop-Young

Erin Young and Brett Hautop, both of Raleigh, were married July 14, 2001 at Hayes Barton United Methodist Church. Following the ceremony a dinner and dance reception was held at the Sheraton Capital Centre.

The bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Young of Raleigh. He is the son of Mrs. Randy Weaver of Raleigh.

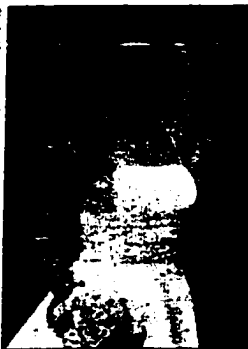
Allison Young, sister of the bride, served as maid of honor. Bridesmaids were Kate Hautop, sister of the groom, and Laurie Cox, both of Raleigh; Lacey Hawthorne, Amy Joyce, and Jamie Lynch, all of Arlington, Virginia; Erin Norris of Winston-Salem; and Stephanie Burns of North Wilkesboro.

Doug Hautop, brother of the bride, served as best man. Groomsmen were Taddy Bohale of Charlotte, Wayne Butler of Clinton, Mississippi, Brad Jones of Mr. Hautop Wilmington, Jesus Rodriguez, and Chad Smith, both of Raleigh, Mr. Macie of Chicago, Illinois, and Greg Zeitz of Santa Barbara, California.

The bride is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and is a member of Zeta Tau Alpha Sorority. She is employed as a Client Manager with Cerner Corporation.

The groom is a graduate of the School of Design at North Carolina State University. He is employed as an Intern Architect with the Frelson Group.

After a honeymoon trip to Maui, Hawaii, the couple will live in Raleigh.



▲(The Herald Sun, Durham, N.C., Sunday, July 15, 2001, p. E2)

◀(The Raleigh News and Observer, Sunday, July 15, 2001, p. 9D)

The couples in my data set seemed to put very little emphasis on the placement of the wedding photograph in the newspaper. The majority of my informants reported that

they did not place a wedding announcement at all. A few reported that their parents (usually their mother) insisted that an announcement be placed in a home town newspaper or placed the announcement themselves. A few women who were married over twenty years ago had their wedding announcements clipped out and stuck into the back of their wedding album. Others that did place a wedding announcement had them in a scrap book with wedding cards and other memorabilia (see description of these albums below) or were unable to remember where they had put the clipping.

I do not have enough data to make any definitive conclusions about the placement of wedding photographs in newspapers, however, I will speculate on a few trends I observed. First, newspaper wedding announcements seemed to be more important to couples thirty years ago than they are today. In part, this may be a result of the increased mobility of modern couples. It was more common twenty years ago for a couple to marry right out of high school in the town in which they grew up. In that case, a wedding announcement seemed important because the couple had strong ties to the same community. The few women who had their wedding announcements stuck in the back of their albums were in this category. Most of the couples I spoke with, however, had left home for college or work and met their spouse in another town. In addition, most of the people I interviewed had not grown up in just one place. When friends and acquaintances are spread out around the country (and the world) publishing an announcement in any one town seems inconsequential.

My second observation is that wedding announcements, if important at all, are

often more important to the parents of the couple than the couple themselves. Wedding announcements read like resumes or “brag” sheets about the couple. The announcements may be a way for parents to communicate to their wider social group (all of which may not have attended the couple’s wedding) that they succeeded as parents in raising a successful and desirable (for marriage) child.

Thirdly, the practice of displaying wedding photographs in the newspaper differs across various sub-cultures. For example, one groom told me that “apparently the middle to upper class in New Orleans only do engagement pictures whereas the lower class do the wedding pictures [in the newspaper].” In these cases, wedding announcements are markers (and creators) of social class.

My final observation is that wedding announcements do not seem to be an important tool of ritualized memory. No one pulls out their wedding announcement alone in order to communicate to themselves or others what their wedding was like. In part this may be due to the poor resolution of newspaper photographs and in part it may be due to the limited details they include. For some, wedding photographs included with newspaper announcements function to expand the social group that witnesses the wedding. After publication, they may become part of a peripheral memory scrapbook, but they are not particularly important to most modern couples.

Home Display

Most couples reported displaying wedding photographs in their home. Several

couples told me that they did not put much thought into why they were displaying wedding pictures. The practice was usually initiated in those cases by the fact that the couple received frames as wedding presents, so they chose wedding photographs to put in them. Others, like the two brides quoted below, had very clearly defined reasons why they display wedding photographs in their home.

I think because most people think their home is a reflection of who they are and you want to have something that's important to you reflected in your home. So, not only for yourself - mainly for yourself because you live in the house - but also when other people come that says something about you. It tells people that the union between these two folks is important to them and they care to show that.

I just think pictures are so important and you can just tell who you are you know when people come to your house they can see you are truly family oriented and held together - you really can.

So wedding photographs are displayed in the home, both for the couple themselves and for the benefit of visitors. One woman told me that family photographs like wedding pictures add a feeling of "warmth and history to a room." One of the brides quoted above elaborated on the value of having photographs displayed in her home for her own sake:

The one thing I know that I want to have when we have a house is I want my hallway to be nothing but photographs - you know like back in the 70s - remember how it used to be? Because that is just such a homey thing ... because you just feel like you are surrounded by those that you love. And, you know, a hallway is somewhere that you always go. Even though over time you might not even consciously realize what it means to you, but unconsciously, I'm sure that it does.

Often wedding photographs may be displayed in private parts of the home, such as the bedroom. In those instances, the couple is focusing on the value of the photographs being displayed for themselves. However, usually, wedding photographs are displayed in more

“public” areas of the house or apartment where guests are likely to see them, such as the living room or a main hallway. Some people have a place set aside in their house where they display not only their own wedding photographs, but pictures of the weddings of family and friends as well.

Several couples reported that they pay attention to how others displayed photographs in their homes in order to get a sense of how important they are to those friends or family members.

(Groom) I mean my parents have the table very much like ours – probably bigger - with just the kids. Its like the “kids photos.” My sister and her fiance, and me and Sarah. And there’s pictures in there, so it’s just like a homage to us. It’s a shrine. And I go home and count how many pictures I have to make sure. [that he has as many as the other children]

(Bride) I think you can find out a lot about a person and a family by what they have displayed. You know, like if I go to my dad’s house, if I go to my stepmom’s house...I watch where she displays stuff. Because she’s my stepmom and she’s got a daughter of her own and then I’m her stepdaughter and I watch where she puts stuff. You know, if she’s got my step sister somewhere where she doesn’t have me I think “hmm.” You know, it’s weird but you can really tell how people feel by where they put their pictures. You know, if she’s got hers on the top shelf and mine on the middle shelf stuck behind something, you’re like “hmm.” ...

Clearly, people use wedding photographs and other family pictures to communicate to each other how much they care about each other and to define the family boundaries.

Couples may also display a photograph of their spouse on their desk at work. One bride reported joking with her husband: “how come you don’t have a picture of me at work are you ashamed of me?” In part, the practice of displaying a wedding photographs at work seems to be a gesture to show the spouse how important they are. It also is a way

of letting others at work know the importance one's spouse. Finally, it may also just be a way to feel more connected to your spouse while you are separated for the day. As the bride who joked with her husband about being ashamed explained, she really just wanted him to see her at work "looking her best."

Several couples reported an expectation that over time the wedding photographs they displayed would be replaced by pictures of their children. Couples who had been married for a longer period of time and had children, reported that this was indeed what had happened. As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, this practice is probably related to the fact that a wedding is in part a ritual that makes a couple socially acceptable for procreation.

Wedding photographs are not only displayed in the home of the bride and groom. Friends and family members may also display wedding photographs, perhaps in one of the "shrine-like" areas described above. Many couples reported that their parents had a "wedding wall." One bride told me about how her parents had redecorated their dining room and installed two spot lights in which to display the bridal portraits of each of their daughters. As with the newspaper announcements, wedding portraits are tools which some parents use to boast about their daughters. Many parents will also have a small professional album (usually 5x7 size) or an album of snapshots from friends on a table in a public area of the home, usually the living room. "Parent albums" are often included in the photographer's package.

Many couples send a wallet-size photograph of the two of them in their wedding

gift thank you notes. (Couples may also display a copy of this photo in their own wallets.)

Another variation of this may be to get doubles of the prints from the disposable table cameras and put the best picture of someone in with their thank-you note. It is also common practice to give the members of the bridal party a photograph of the whole group (usually 5x7 size). A few people reported having sent pictures to friends via e-mail. Some photographers use internet services to display wedding proofs to family and friends, who may then order hard copies directly from the photographer (Weisman, 1998).²³ Sending pictures to others is also a way to, as one bride put it “share the event with people that weren’t there.”

Displaying photographs in the home, office, and wallet communicates the couple’s commitment to their marriage. The exhibition of wedding photographs is more important in the beginning of a marriage, when the union is newly formed. Over time, wedding photographs may be replaced with photographs of children, another symbol that the marriage achieved one of its main goals (i.e. procreation). In contrast to the wedding album, which, as we will see, is only viewed occasionally, prints displayed in the home are daily reminders that the wedding ritual took place and that the social order it created is real and ongoing.

²³ I have not observed that electronic means of distributing photographs is replacing hard copies as of yet. Couples are still sending the same number of hard copies. However, they are using computer technology to share additional images with additional people. It will be interesting to see if computerized images eventually replace hard copies as digital technology becomes better able to approximate the quality of hard copies created from film.

Albums

The most elaborate way of exhibiting wedding photographs is in wedding albums. In fact, couples often have several wedding albums including a large album done by the professional photographer and then smaller albums of the proofs, the disposable table camera shots and pictures that friends have sent them. They also may have snapshots of the rehearsal dinner, bridal luncheon and other preparatory activities that are grouped with wedding pictures in smaller albums. Although the professional wedding album was important to most couples, they also expressed a feeling that the album did not capture everything that went into the wedding (especially the planning and after-celebrations). As one bride put it:

Wedding albums are just this little snapshot in time when in reality there is so much else going on. It [her "extra" album] sort-of makes it more real.

Wedding albums do not traditionally show things like the preparations for the wedding or cleaning up afterwards. In part this is a standard that is preset by tradition, but couples seem comfortable with the album excluding those types of things. As one bride put it, she wanted her "formal album to still be formal" or to capture things "in the best light that you can and being tasteful." Couples do not seem to want to add the preparation photographs to the "formal" album, however, they do want to have access to those images in another place. Goffman comments on this tendency for individuals to hide the production process in the following statement:

...in those interactions where the individual presents a product to others, he will tend to show them only the end product, and they will be led into

judging him on the basis of something that has been finished, polished and packaged. (p. 44)

Hiding the processes through which the ritual and the album were created is part of the process of idealization discussed earlier in which the image presented tends to attempt an approximation of the ritual archetype. Predictably, when guests come over, couples tend to show them the professional album and only show the other albums to people who ask or who might have been involved in a lot of the wedding preparations. However, when they look at the photographs themselves, they tend to look at all of the albums.

The professional wedding album is usually identified by the couple as the most important. I believe this is because the professional album is the best tool for ritualizing memory. In the first chapter of this paper I argued that ritualized memory is formalized, performative and symbolic in nature. The creation and use of professional wedding albums are largely influenced by tradition and the norms of the photography industry. This leads to a certain degree of consistency between the albums of different couples, causing them to be referred to as the “formal” album. As I will detail shortly, display practices imitate the experience of watching a play or listening to a storyteller in which the photographs represent the bodies of the main players. Finally, the photographs are used as symbols that represent the important values of the couple in relation to their social group. In the next section, I discuss some of the attributes of wedding albums and how they are used in the ritualization of memory. Specifically, I look at the physical attributes of wedding albums, the order of the photographs displayed, the size of the photographs, where

the album is kept, and when people look at their albums.

Physical Attributes

Professional wedding albums are usually large (about 14" square) and covered with real or synthetic leather. The covers come in several different colors. The most popular are white, black, blue, dark green and burgundy. Although white is the most traditional color, most albums that I have seen from the past ten years are one of the darker colors. One husband cited the more practical nature of darker colors as one reason for this choice (white gets dirty easily). His wife expressed her desire to reflect the colors she used at her wedding for bridesmaids dresses and table linens. In general, couples did not seem to put much thought into the choice of color for the album color nor place much significance on that choice.

The cover of the album may be plain or it may be embossed (usually in gold or silver) with the couple's names. Some albums have a cut-out frame in which a picture of the couple can be displayed on the cover. Some albums may have the words "Our Wedding" embossed in gold on the front. The first page of the album is usually a parchment-like page with places for the bride and groom's name, wedding date and bridal party to be written (usually in calligraphy). Ironically, most couples I interviewed had never filled out that page in their album. They cited reasons like they hated their handwriting and were afraid it would turn out bad. One bride joked that they want the page to look so perfect and pretty that they never do it. In other words, couples fear being judged according to an ideal model which they do not have the skill to achieve since

calligraphy is no longer a widely taught form of writing.

The pages of professional wedding albums are thick, matted and usually tipped with brass or some type of metal in order to protect the pages from damage. The photographs slide behind the mats. Pages may display one 8x10 photograph, 2 (5x7) shots or 4 (3 ½ x 5 or 4x5) pictures. Mats may be square, oval, round or, occasionally, octagons. The number of pages in an album ranges from 10 (20 sides) up to 30 pages or more. Most albums include both color and black and white photographs. Some couples (usually higher SES groups) may choose a few hand-tinted black and white photographs as well.

One wedding guide (Barillo, 1998) identifies the following trends in wedding albums, all of which I observed in my independent research as well:

- Black-and-white photography for a dreamy nostalgic look.
- Photos tinted with pastel colors.
- Albums combining both candid and portraits.
- Background matting in different shapes and sizes.
- Multiple images on each page of varying sizes, rather than one photo per page.
- Albums including unusual momentos – lace from the bride's wedding gown, a copy of the wedding program or invitation, or dried petals from the bride's bouquet and bridegroom's boutonniere.

In brief, professional wedding albums are large and bulky physical objects that are designed to last for many generations. Gold and silver embossing, parchment and calligraphy are ways of marking the importance and timelessness of the wedding album. The use of age-old literate forms (that are rarely used elsewhere) contributes to the perception that the album transcends time and ties generations together. I will discuss this function of wedding photography in more detail in the final chapter.

Order of Photographs

The overall organization of the photographs in a wedding album is usually chronological. Pictures are arranged according to the order in which the events depicted in the photographs happened on the day of the wedding. However, there are exceptions to this rule, because sometimes the grouping of people together takes precedence over strict chronological order. One groom, whose album was arranged in a typical way, describes the order of the photographs:

It is mostly in chronological order, but if you look there are some that stick out. Like we told you that's [a picture of] Randy and I. You know, that's traditional (I think in almost any wedding) is that the husband doesn't see the bride like twenty-four hours before they get married. The day of the wedding until she actually comes down the aisle. But if you look, here's the whole picture of us together [at the beginning of the album]. You know, like here's the before. Here's everybody together, but obviously this is after. But then it goes back to the before pictures again, so it's not necessarily...I mean, first location, then there's the bride ...and her bridesmaids. So it's like two people getting married and then the most important people and then it's like the whole group. And then the group split up, then from there it kind-of goes into you know more family pictures and stuff. But it kind-of makes sense, it kind-of looks like just showing everybody off and then going to the actual wedding ceremony. Actually from the point of the wedding where we showed you the picture of the actual ceremony, from there forward I think everything pretty much is in chronological order. Except for the "good-bye" picture. That was [taken by the photographer] somewhere like right after the cocktail hour...we put that one in chronological order in the book. 'Cause it makes sense - it wouldn't make sense to have the good-bye picture in the middle of the book.

It is typical for the ceremony photographs to be in a strict chronological order. However, group shots are often placed out of order. As was discussed in the previous chapter, group shots are generally taken after the ceremony and before the reception. Often this

shooting event is seen as a necessary but slightly unpleasant interruption to the day.

Consequently, when a couple puts their album together, those group shots will not always be displayed directly after the ceremony shots (although many people do put them in that order). The groom quoted above describes how they used some of the group shots before the ceremony shots in order to “set the stage” or show the key participants in the ritual. Others may choose to put the group pictures at the end of the album. As another groom put it:

We didn't want to put them [the group shots] in chronological order because they were in the way chronologically. So we moved them. In the book they don't interfere with the flow of the day.

Another consideration in choosing the order of photographs is depicting the balance between the bride and groom's sides that was mentioned earlier. For example, one couple explained the order of the pictures in their album by pointing out that if there was a solo picture of the bride, then they needed to show a solo picture of the groom on the opposing page in order to achieve balance. As with other aspects of the editing process, the organization of photographs allows couples to symbolically represent the balance of power within their relationship.

Picture size

Traditionally, wedding albums had all 8x10 photographs in them; one picture per page. Albums made over the last 10-15 years, however, have started incorporating photographs of various sizes. Couples need to decide not only which photographs to put in and what order they should go in, but also whether each photograph should be an 8x10.

5x7, 4x5 (or 3 ½ x 5)²⁴, or even a panoramic shot that covers two facing pages of the album. Smaller pictures are often used in order to allow the couple to get more pictures into an album with less pages, thus cutting down on the bulk and cost of the album, as well as giving the couple more visual tools with which to tell their story. Likewise, some people choose not to do a panoramic picture simply because it takes up too much space, thus limiting the number of photographs that can be included. Often couples choose to make shots of large groups of people larger so that the faces can be seen and recognized. In addition, the size of the photographs depends on the importance of the event depicted by the photograph. People tend to make pivotal events of the ritual larger in their album. Ceremony shots are often 8x10 for example, while pictures of guests dancing at the reception are usually smaller.

The use of varying sizes of photographs within the album allows couples to communicate the varying importance of different aspects of the wedding ritual. As I will argue in the final chapter, the manipulation of such details allows the couple to control the way in which their wedding is ultimately remembered.

Where the album is kept

Since wedding albums are usually large, the first criteria in deciding where to keep the album seems to be where it will fit. One couple, for example, told me they keep theirs in the entertainment center because it is the only place big enough. Another woman said she keeps it in a closet because “the shelf fit.” Protecting the album may also be a factor

²⁴ Medium format film yields a smaller size print of 4x5 while 35mm film results in 3 ½ x 5 small prints.

for some. Several people told me they did not want to keep it out on a table because they did not want the album to get damaged. Most people, however, at least during the early years of their marriage, reported keeping their album out in a public area of the house so that it was accessible for guests to flip through. Some participants describe their reasoning below:

(Groom): You know, it's one of those things that it sits on the table and it's kind-of like a conversation piece.

(Bride of a different couple): It's easily accessible. You don't have to go hunting for it and yet it's suggestive if somebody wants to look at it when they are waiting for us to finish getting ready or something. They can just flip through it. It's fast, it's visual. And some of the people who would be over would be people who were there [at the wedding] and so they'd be in photographs.

(Another Bride): Just so it's available so if people come over we can just pull it out .

The wedding album, especially early in the marriage, is an object of pride for the couple.

One bride describes her feelings about it in the following way:

The first year you basically begged people to come and look at it. They wanted to, but you ask everyone. It's more important that first year. You're still excited and can't believe you could be photographed so well. This was my day and I want to share it with everybody. It's ok to be proud about wedding pictures. You are allowed a little conceit.

Another couple was concerned about showing too much conceit after seeing the wedding album of a friend displayed on a music stand in her parent's living room.

I always thought that was pretentious. It's almost like saying "look how well we did." I want it to be accessible, but not out there like "hey look we did a great wedding."

Over time, the wedding album may be moved into a less public area of the house.

or perhaps put in a closet with other family photo albums. For some people this may be when their children are born and they want to move it out of the way of messy little hands.

For others, it may stay on the coffee table for years. One woman with grown children reported that she had just recently moved it from the coffee table in the family room after 25 years. One husband and wife had an interesting disagreement during our interview about how long the album would stay out in the public part of the house. He wanted to always leave it on a table in the living room, she wanted to eventually move it to a shelf in the bedroom:

Wife: I think with newlyweds -- people want to see the pictures and it's more like a special thing. But as you get older and it's not like you're newlyweds and it's not a new thing, kids might become your focus where this would become a more private thing that you would have for yourself. [She also thinks that the things displayed in one's house should change over time]

Husband: I take pride in it and I'd like to prominently display it. And it's also, this is clearly, taking out our personal rationale on this, it's how our parents did it. My parents had it displayed, your parents had it in the bedroom.

This exchange reiterates the fact that wedding photography practices vary from family to family and sub-culture to sub-culture. Choices about where to keep the album also reflect a couple's expectations of how the album will be used. Clearly, the bride above anticipates sharing her album with friends more at the beginning of her marriage and viewing it in private more as time passes. Her ideas about where the album should be kept -- in a public place early on and in a private place later -- reflect her expectations about exhibition events.

When the album is looked at

Wedding albums are most often looked at with guests, at least in the beginning of the marriage. Visitors either see the album out and start looking through it or they might ask a newly-married couple if they could look at it. Also, newlyweds might take the album to friends and family when they go visiting. Over time, when the wedding album is often moved to a more remote place, it is looked at less often. One bride puzzles over this:

I don't look at it that much. I did look at it at first. It was in living room at first and we showed to people the first five months. Then I put it away. I keep it in a box in our bedroom. It's weird. If I took pictures to kind of like have them and remember and I never look at them, it's like "Huh - that was worth it or not?"

This is a typical reaction when I ask people how often they look at their wedding albums. They tell me they are important to them, and then sheepishly admit that they do not really look at them that much after the first year of marriage. Some report that the weddings of friends may prompt them to bring out the album and take a look. Wedding anniversaries are sometimes an occasion when the couple may look at their album together. It is often pulled out to show younger family members or new family spouses the faces of extended family members (as will be discussed more in the next chapter). Many people told me they look at them when they pack to move or happen to come upon the album while they are doing something else.

If I come upon them I look upon them, but I don't go looking for them unless somebody wants to see them.

Mostly when I'm down there doing something else and I come across them

and I think “ooh that’s cool, let’s look at those again”

When the album is shared with others, a lot of the conversation revolves around the bride and groom identifying the people in the photographs for the viewer. The couple may also explain the way in which they executed the wedding ritual, either citing sub-culture tradition or defending personal choices for things that may be different about their wedding from the viewer’s perspective. The person who is looking at the album generally asks who people are in the photographs or compliments the aesthetic choices of the bride and groom. Negative reactions are rare. During these exhibition events, the editing choices of the couple are seldom verbally acknowledged. A viewer may occasionally say “Oh, that’s a nice shot!” or comment on an unusual arrangement of photographs in the album, however, for the most part, the conversation revolves around the events depicted, not the way in which they are depicted. Larry Gross (1985) observes a similar tendency for viewers to interpret documentary film as if it were an objective account rather than a symbolic interpretation. Bourdieu (1990) argues that photography is always evaluated in these terms:

The value of a photograph is measured above all by the clarity and the interest of the information that it is capable of communicating as a symbol, or, preferably, as an allegory. The popular reading of photography establishes a transcendent relationship between signifier and signified, meaning being related to form without being completely involved in it. (p. 92)

Wedding photography, as with all family photography, is judged in terms of the values it represents and the functions it serves, rather than the skill displayed by the

photographer or editor (as it would be if it were in the realm of “art”). I will elaborate on the values associated with wedding photography and the functions it serves in my analysis in the final chapter.

Other Album Practices

The albums of couples who did not have a professional wedding photographer are usually significantly different than what I have described above. In these cases, the couple usually puts all of the pictures taken into a simple plastic-page album that one might buy for any occasion at Walmart or a pharmacy. Sometimes these albums are decorated with cloth and lace (handmade albums like this are typical bridal shower gifts). Sometimes the photographs may just be put in the middle of an existing family album. For the most part, couples choose this option out of consideration for both financial reasons and to represent their lifestyle, as the bride below describes:

You know we just put the pictures in as we got them. We didn't have a fancy album made up. My mom had this one.

(Michele): And how come?

Um, I don't know I guess I'm just bad about those things, you know. I mean we didn't you know pay a whole lot of money to the photographer. He kind-of did it partly professional, partly as a friend and mom just took this album which she had and took out the pictures that she had in it and put these in. (laughs) Otherwise it may never have gotten done!...It's not fancy like some other people's weddings...I guess sometimes I look at other people's wedding albums and I think "Oh, that's so nice, I want mine like that." You know? But it sort-of fits my fast food lifestyle, so... (laughs)

It is interesting to me that although this bride clearly made a reasonable choice about how

to display her wedding photographs, she is a little embarrassed by that choice as evidenced by her laughter and comment that she is “bad about these things.” I see this is an indication of the strong influence of professional wedding photography traditions and how apparent it is to participants when the “rules” have been broken. Of course, the embarrassment of the bride above is probably in part a reaction to my presence as a researcher studying wedding photography and, thus, a viewer who might be more aware and (in her mind) critical about how her album differs from others. However, she does indicate that looking at the albums of others prompts her to question her own choices outside the realm of the interview.

Editing and Exhibition

During the editing and exhibition phase of wedding photography, couples make choices that allow them to idealize the visual presentation of their wedding. Wedding photographs are offered as proof that the wedding ritual was performed correctly and, thus, was successful in rearranging social order. Couples carefully choose and arrange photographs in order to mark the boundaries of social groups. Finally, husbands and wives reflect and create a sense of balance in their relationship through photography practices in the editing and exhibition phases.

Chapter Six
From Ritual to Ritualized Remembering

Throughout this paper I have argued that wedding photography is a tool used by participants to successfully complete the wedding ritual and to ritualize their memories of the wedding event. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, some shooting events at the wedding are ritual activities themselves that enact the transformation of the social bonds among the families of the bride and groom. The display of the bridal portrait at the wedding reception enhances the effectiveness of the ritual by idealizing the image of the bride in a way that a live bride can not achieve. A couple may get married without taking photographs (or without a cake, or in a non-white dress, etc.), but the vast majority of people choose to have photographs taken at their wedding. The fact that photography practices enhance the ritual at some points – by allowing family members to enact broader social rearrangements during post-ceremony group shots, for example – helps ground the technology in the ritual activity, thus bridging the gap between the ritual event and the memory of that event. In other words, we remember taking photographs as part of what we did on our wedding day. Thus, our memories of the event become fused with our memories of creating images to use in remembering.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the two other scholars who conducted research about wedding photography (Lewis and Frese) identified the importance of wedding photography (i.e. the reason *why* it is necessary) to be its influence on memory; however,

the mechanisms of memory were not the focus of either of their studies. My intended contribution to wedding photography research has been to explain *why* and *how* photography is used in the process of memory. To this end, I found that ritual theory offered the most useful conceptual tools.

Based on my findings, I have concluded that the primary function of wedding photography is to enable participants to ritualize their memories of the wedding event. In developing the concept of “ritualized memory,” I have identified three characteristics of ritual form –formality, performance and symbolism – and shown how wedding photography helps memory take this shape. In this chapter, I deal with the question of why it matters if memory is ritualized, i.e., why does it matter if memory is formal, performative and symbolic? What social work is achieved through memory taking a ritualized form? In order to address this question, I have analyzed what my informants told me about why they chose to have photographs taken of their wedding and why those photographs are important to them. Their answers fall into four broad categories:

1. Fulfilling Tradition
2. Maintenance of Social Transformation
3. Idealization
4. Dealing with Aging and Death

I elaborate on each of these categories of response in the sections below.

Fulfilling Tradition

As reported in an earlier discussion about the planning stage, often the first reason

people give me is simply “that’s what you do.” Custom dictates that wedding photography is an accepted component of the wedding ritual. The fact that photography has been so completely adopted into well-established wedding rituals, indicates to me that it is playing a role that aids the intent of the ritual itself. The purpose of wedding rituals is to transform two individuals into a social unit. Once transformed from single to “married” status, the couple will, among other things, be legally bound to share financial responsibility for themselves and any children they may have. Another focus of the wedding ritual is to make the couple socially recognized sexual partners with the blessing of a surrounding community to have children.²⁵ I have already discussed how shooting events aid the ritual transformation of social order and how the display of the bridal portrait enhances the acceptance of the bride as an acceptable and fertile marriage partner.

The fact that having wedding photography fulfills a sense of tradition is further evidence that the process has indeed become formalized. There are accepted ways of doing wedding photography as governed by social custom and wedding professionals. I will specifically address the authoritative role wedding photographers play shortly.

Maintenance of Social Transformation

As I discussed earlier, ritual depends heavily for success on its performative nature. We experience ritual in a bodily manner with a strong emotional component. Many couples said their wedding photographs were important to them because the images they

²⁵ Of course, many individuals have sex and children outside of a marriage. Personally, I am in no way critical of that choice. The point that I am making is simply that having “legitimate” children is a commonly cited reason for marrying.

depicted helped them feel again what they felt during the ritual. The following quotes from various brides and grooms articulate this point:

(Groom A) I think the picture helps you relive that too and get in touch again with the emotion – particularly a happy event like that and I think that helps bring the experience back.

(Bride B) I'll see a picture and it will remind me how I felt at that moment and that's important to me.

(Groom C) I think what happens is ... I forget the sceneries and the atmosphere a little bit and it sort of brings back. I mean I know the place and I can remember what you were wearing and what I was wearing, but I think you just sort-of forget a little bit of the atmosphere and the feelings.

(Bride C) Yes and the look on your face and when we were kissing and even having the pictures of the you know maid of honor and the best man. I mean it just , you forget the actual, to see the happiness, to see... it brings you back to that day. You still have the memories, but they're just...when you see a picture it's like you know it just brings you back a lot more than maybe your memory.

Seeing our bodies perform a ritual allows us to approximate the feelings we experienced during the ritual. Re-experiencing those emotions helps reinforce the transformation that took place that day. This can be an important part of maintaining that transformation as described by the wife below:

You know marriages go through hard times and there are gonna be times when we're gonna question our relationship. I mean that just happens with everybody. And then you pull something out like this and you think "God we really were happy. We really were in love." I mean it's just something that you can always kind-of go back to and get a grip on your relationship with that. You can't really do without memories like that. Well we have memories, but a lot of times you lose them. But when you can *see* it brings a lot of things back.

Performance is a temporal component of ritual; with the passage of time, the words and

gestures of ritual can lose some of their power. Photographs help us recreate the feelings associated with ritual performance, thus helping us to maintain our belief in the social transformation they create. Hannah Arendt argues that:

The whole factual world of human affairs depends for its reality and its continued existence, first, upon the presence of others who have seen and heard and will remember, and, second, on the transformation of the intangible into the tangibility of things. (1958, p. 95)

The reality created by the wedding ritual depends on the existence of witnesses to the actions performed and the symbolic tangibility of the social transformation.

Wedding photography helps us achieve both of these requirements.

Especially in the early stages of marriage, couples use photographs not only to remember the magic of the ritual for themselves, but to prove to others that the ritual did in fact take place and was performed correctly. As I discussed earlier, one of the most frequent uses of the wedding album is to show it to others who may or may not have been present at the ritual. They use the album to help demonstrate to others the details of how they executed the wedding ritual, how they got the details right. If they depict mistakes in their wedding albums, they will most likely be small mistakes like the bride having shiny skin or her brother forgetting to wear a tie (two examples from one bride's album). The inclusion of small mistakes reinforces that the big things were done correctly.

In addition to showing that the ritual was performed correctly, the album is also used to show the care that went into the ritual. Photographs can be used to communicate that the bride and groom took the ritual seriously. A groom explained to me why he liked a picture that showed his wife's French manicure in the following way:

(Groom) I think a wedding is special because you put so much time into it. Because like they say, people actually are married the moment you sign the paper. The moment you get the paper back from the government and sign it, long before you ever go into the ceremony, you're officially married. So you don't really need to go through all this rigamarole. So if you're going to have a wedding album, and you're going to put forth the effort, see the effort that you put into it, like that you did your finger nails special, 'cause you could just take the head shots, but you'd never see that. So why not remember? Why not when you are eighty years old be able to say, "Look at, look at what we did. The dress, you know got the dress, had the hair cut", you know and all that stuff. It's special.

Even couples who have less elaborate weddings may want their photographs to convey a certain level of care that was put into making the transformation to marriage. For example, one couple who eloped to city hall explained why they dressed up for the ceremony and the snapshots they took afterwards:

(Bride)It was like, well, maybe we should get dressed up cause this is our wedding day. And you've got to treat it like it's important...I was thinking well if (laughs) - well if I look horrible I won't feel as good. And then looking back at it I'll always regret not dressing up ...

(Groom): If you don't - you know how people always retrospectively evaluate something. Its like "oh, we didn't dress up so that doomed the relationship - just like little stupid -

(Bride): Even though it won't happen - but yeah I'll always wonder "maybe we should have dressed up" [end part in unison].

This couple jokes about how silly it is to think about "jinxing" their relationship by not dressing up -- but they did dress up, just in case. Mary Douglas argues:

We should recognise that the possibility of magic intervention is always present in the mind of believers, that it is human and natural to hope for material benefits from the enactment of cosmic symbols. But it is wrong to treat primitive ritual as primarily concerned with producing magical effects. (1966. p. 60)

The possibility of magical consequences (“jinxing”) from not following ritual rules is present in the minds of participants, even if such magic is not their primary concern. Even in the simplest of wedding photographs I have seen, there has been some effort to communicate on film that the couple did treat the ritual seriously and followed the rules enough to make the magic work, i.e., to make them truly “married.”

As I discussed earlier, weddings not only create a social bond between the bride and the groom. They also reconfigure the boundaries of two extended families. People use wedding albums to show that this transformation took place and communicate the boundaries of social groups to others, especially new members of the family. For example, one woman told me she had pulled out her wedding album to show her future sister-in-law members of the extended family.

Children are the most frequent new family members to be initiated using the wedding album. Many couples told me that the album was in many ways “for the kids.” Children look at their parents albums and learn the names of members of their family. One mother says her son “likes the pictures and he likes naming them.” Parents and children use the album as a learning tool which reinforces family boundaries. Wedding photographs also seem to make children feel comfortable about their parent’s relationship and their place as a product of that union. The daughter of lesbian friends of mine (who have no photographs of their commitment ceremony) has designated a photograph of her parents at another family wedding as “her moms’ wedding picture.” This indicates to me that children learn that wedding photographs are often considered social proof that a

relationship is legitimate.

The comments above show that the first function wedding photographs serve is to reinforce and maintain the transformative power of the wedding ritual. Through photographs, participants re-experience the emotions of the day, prove that they take the ritual seriously and executed it correctly, and communicate the boundaries of the social groups that resulted from their marriage.

In addition, wedding photography may be a means of enacting new social roles. Sandra L. Titus (1976) found that baby pictures serve a similar function for new parents. Parents had more pictures of themselves acting as caretakers (for example holding or feeding the baby) for their first child than for the most recent child. Titus explains her findings by positing that photography is part of a role playing ritual in which couples learn and adopt new patterns of behavior that are associated with the parenting role. Thus, the need for such photographic role playing will be greater for first children. Wedding photography provides newly married couples an opportunity to enact their relationship, as in the ways in which power is balanced through editing and exhibition practices, for example.

When a marriage ends through divorce, the existence of wedding photography may become problematic since the photographs can be seen to perpetuate a transformation that participants have declared invalid or, at least, undone. I did not have the opportunity to interview many divorced people. Most of those with whom I did speak kept their wedding albums after the divorce. It seems that the wife usually keeps the album after the

divorce, although the husband may keep a few pictures. A couple of women who had particularly bad marriages told me they actually burned their wedding pictures after they got divorced, as if to ritually undo the transformation the photographs reinforced.

I also had the opportunity to speak with a few people who had been married several times about their various wedding photographs. One woman, who is presently in her third marriage, shared all three of her wedding albums with me. In addition to comments about differences in her albums that reflected the change in stylistic customs over the years, this woman explained the lack of a “good-bye” photograph in her third album in the following way:

I think that whereas when I first got married at the age of twenty three I thought “Oh, well, this is the way that you do it,” now it’s more of a focus of the joyousness of the occasion and not worrying as much about how it turns out. So it doesn’t matter if the album ends in a typical shot.

To me, this comment reflects an understandable reduction in faith of the power of the ritual to permanently transform reality, based on this woman’s personal experience. Interestingly, this woman also told me “you must think, well, she was married three times, she must not have very stable relationships” and argued against this perception by citing the length of each of her relationships. Throughout my interview with this informant, it was apparent that over time she has adapted her opinion of how to measure a successful marriage. Her ideas about wedding photography reflect this change. While in her first wedding album she focused more on showing that the ritual was done correctly (and thus the transformation complete), in her later albums, the focus shifted to showing the joy she and her family felt at the event. Interestingly, the first wedding album was the one that

evoked the strongest outward emotional response during our interview (in the form of tears). Perhaps this is due to the fact that the first album represents an archetype of marriage in which it lasts indefinitely. The interviewee also said that the album from her second marriage does not evoke the same sense of loss because she still has a friendship with her second husband (also the father of her children). Thus the ending of the relationship does not seem as complete as it does with her first husband with whom she is no longer in contact.

The idea that wedding photographs may become less formal in subsequent marriages is supported by the remarks of the following woman about one of her favorite wedding pictures from her second marriage:

[I like it] because it's not a formal - we didn't obviously sit for it and it seems very clear that it's a second marriage for both of us. That it's - um - but why does that picture really connote that?... Something about the light. It's a afternoon light. There's something about it that really does speak to that it's not - we're not in our twenties and it's not our first marriage and it's kind-of the fall of the year and it's a new - it's a second try. And it's a whole different posture than when you do it the first time, in the white dress...

In this case, the informant's favorite photograph is not one that pretends this is her first marriage, as one might expect from the way in which the photographs of first weddings are idealized. Rather, she prefers the photograph that acknowledges and symbolically represents through its depiction of light and season her evolving vision of the nature of marriage.

Clearly, I do not have enough data to make any strong conclusions about how participants deal with the wedding photographs from a marriage that has ended or how the

photography from second, third, etc. marriages might differ from the photography of a first marriage. In light of the role photography plays in maintaining the transformation a wedding creates, I believe these would be interesting questions for further study.

Idealization

Throughout my discussion I have pointed to ways in which participants attempt to idealize the depiction of their wedding experience. I have argued that idealization is particularly important because it allows us to better communicate that which we value. Wedding photography is a particularly useful tool in the process of idealization because the built-in limitations of the technology (two dimensions, limited frame) drawing attention to certain experiences while minimizing or eliminating other experiences. For example, after looking at one wedding album, the groom remarked:

“We didn’t tell the Bill XXX [one of their friends at the wedding] story.”

To which the bride replied:

“It’s not in the book.”

As it turns out, the “Bill Story” (abridged version) is about a friend that got so drunk at a late-night gathering after their wedding that he got a DUI on his way home. Upon his arrival at home, he decided the only way his girlfriend would forgive his behavior was if he got down on his knees and proposed to her. This story is not depicted in the album, because it did not occur during the time period in which the photographer was employed. Even if it did happen during the time when the photographer was present, it is unlikely it would have made it into the album since extreme intoxication (although common at

wedding receptions) is rarely depicted in the idealized version of the album. As this couple recognizes, things that are not depicted in the wedding photographs may not be talked about.

Part of the usefulness of photography as a tool in ritualizing memory is that it allows us to edit reality. One bride and groom laugh that a picture of them going out the door, waving “goodbye” was taken hours before they left the reception:

Groom: ...he took us out by the door like we were waving goodbye - even though we weren't going anywhere yet, but...

Bride: (laughs) It was like three hours before the end.

Groom: Yeah. But with pictures you can put them in the book so they lie, so it looks like we were leaving.

Although the couple obviously knows when the good-bye photo was taken and relates this fact to me (the wedding photography researcher), this is probably not a detail they would relate to friends or family members when they were looking at the album. For most viewers, the photograph creates a reality that was not experienced by the participants. Eventually, they may not remember that the good-bye picture was taken in the middle of the reception. I have observed numerous weddings where an elaborate “farewell” scene is staged with all the guests gathered around throwing rose petals or blowing bubbles as the couple runs for the car. This often happens at the end of the photographer’s contracted time. Afterwards, the couple returns to their reception.

In the above examples, photography allowed couples to edit the memory of the event to give it a dramatic ending. Photography can also be used to edit out

unpleasantness that might happen at a wedding. A bride-to-be elaborates on how she expects the photographer not to take pictures of certain things at her wedding:

If it's just something miserable going on in my wedding, if I don't know about it going on, it's not going to bother me, you know? And if later I see pictures and think, "Oh, god, mom was so upset, I had no idea, I feel terrible now that I didn't know. I feel terrible that I wasn't supportive and over there when this was going on." ... Pictures can create memories that you don't have. So why would I want a nasty memory put in with my great ones?

In addition to allowing us to edit the messy disorder of reality, wedding photography allows us to see our wedding from many different perspectives at once. One couple told me that once they saw their wedding photographs they "realized things we didn't realize happened at the wedding." They said the photographs allowed them to mesh everyone else's memories into their own. Another groom said that the pictures allowed him to see things that happened in the periphery of the main event. He compared the process of looking at his wedding album to his parents showing him photographs and telling him a story until "eventually you remember things that you were not present at." Ultimately, it is not important that wedding photographs be *real* - only that they be *right*, i.e., they depict an event that approximates an ideal.

Interestingly, although participants are very aware of the way in which photography can be used to edit reality, there is still a sense among most that photographs are somewhat objective. For example, one woman quoted an author (whose name she could not remember) as saying "most of what is in my memory never really happened." One of the benefits of wedding photographs to her was that the pictures were "accurate"

and “real.” She added that she liked to collect tangible memories rather than just have them in their head. In my opinion, the tangibility of photographs really gets to the heart of our sense that they are “objective.” The fact that, once printed, photographs are unchanging in their essential meaning (they may fade in color with time, but they still convey basically the same message) allows us to control how the story about an event will be told. Photographs shape the way in which we talk about the memory, which details get retold and which are left out. This standardization gives an illusion of objectivity that allows us to ignore the initial editing that was done in order to create the images. In addition, the measure of objectivity for wedding photographs seems to be the degree to which they accurately depict the wedding and marriage archetype embraced by the couple. In other words, the photographs may be considered “real” because they communicate “real” values, not because they depict “real” events.

Although most participants seemed comfortable with using photographs to shape their memories, a few expressed some objections to the effect photographs had on their memories. For example, one bride said she did not want photographs taken of her vows because:

To me that’s the most emotional thing about the whole ceremony and I don’t want to remember it from someone else’s eyes. I want to remember it from my eyes.

A groom told me he was not very interested in his wedding photographs because “if you focus on just the pictures it’s an artificially small view of a really large event.” The following excerpt is an elaboration on this idea by another groom:

It doesn't capture the emotions , it doesn't capture the triumphs, it doesn't capture the failures, in fact it tends to reify certain things that are most accessible to that kind of empirical understanding of reality that may not really have been central. ...I mean part of the problem is that, I mean, I think our culture is so bought in to the fact that reality equals the photograph that it's an offense and that's why I don't put up any resistance, ah you know, to it because I mean you know I'm already on the lunatic fringe on a lot of issues, butI think there's a real deep kind of communal spiritual philosophy or something like that that seems somehow violated by bringing in something that reifies it and then just kind-of puts it in two dimensions and then is available for any voyeur who cares to look at it without having a real commitment or understanding of all that is involved with it.

No one else in this study expressed as strong a level of dislike for their wedding photographs as the man above, however, all those that did express some level of discomfort with them cited the fact that the photographs did not capture enough – or the appropriate – aspects of the event.

Through the process of idealization, couples demonstrate that the wedding ritual was performed successfully, i.e., it approximated the wedding ritual archetype. Although this archetype varies among sub-cultures, historical periods and individuals, there is a certain level of consistency between individual archetypes that allows us to recognize and accept the ritual as a “wedding.” Future research might explore which elements of a wedding are considered indispensable and how the boundaries of a wedding are contested among individuals and groups. Although it was not the intent of this study to collect data that might answer questions about how wedding archetypes are created, maintained and changed, I will speculate briefly on channels through which idealized models of wedding might be passed down through generations.

Wedding photographers play a significant role in maintaining the boundaries of a wedding. In addition to the photographer's obvious influence over the images used to remember the wedding, my participant observation and interviews confirm Lewis's (1998) findings that photographers often take on the role of "wedding director" as well as photographer. The following are some tasks which I have observed wedding photographers perform (and performed myself during participant observation) in addition to "taking pictures:"

- Advising the bride while she is dressing. Providing bobby pins and safety pins – and, for female photographers, often securing headpieces and pinning bra straps out of sight themselves.
- Pinning boutonnieres on the groomsmen.
- Directing the couple as to how to cut the cake.
- Suggesting when events such as the cake cutting and first dance should occur.

Photographers act as carriers of wedding tradition. Couples often turn to the photographer when a question arises about how the ritual should be carried out. Before I understood my role as a photographer, I remember one couple looking at me expectantly while I waited for them to cut the cake. Finally they asked me "What should we do?" and I hastened to show them where to stand, how to hold the knife, where the cake should be cut and how to carry out the process of feeding each other. One photographer explained his familiarity with wedding rituals in the following way:

I've been to hundreds of weddings. Hundreds of them. And it's just kind of an interesting thing because the photographer is the only guy that goes to all these weddings. The cake baker is not there. The florist is not there.

The people that do the clothing – all these other people in the wedding industry never go to weddings. They give them [the couple] all kinds of advice, but they've never been to weddings. They don't know. They do all their stuff ahead of time and the photographer is the only guy that's been there over and over and over again.

Although several of my photographer informants told me of how their expertise in wedding custom allowed them to stand in as a wedding director when needed, current wedding photography manuals do not acknowledge this role explicitly. They do not advise photographers to learn about wedding rituals in order to become better photographers. In fact, most manual writers preach the message of photojournalism, advocating that the good wedding photographer “quietly observe and quickly document without manipulating the scene or subject” (Reggie, 2000, p. 7). In spite of this popular rhetoric, my interview and observation data indicates that wedding photographers often provide advice about executing various aspects of the wedding ritual and sometimes blatantly direct the activity. This is true even for those photographers who call themselves “photojournalists” (although they clearly engage in less blatant direction than other wedding photographers).

As might be expected, professional photographers develop certain work routines that aid them in producing images that the couple will buy and with which they will be sufficiently satisfied (so they recommend the photographer to other potential clients). When the requirements of wedding photography seek to change other aspects of the wedding ritual, conflict will arise. In some instances, photography takes control. For example, the cake cutting is part of the wedding that seems to have been given over

almost completely to the creation of photographs. The photographer usually stands right in front of the couple, blocking the view for the rest of the guests. The couple is usually arranged by the photographer so that the background is pleasing for the photograph. For example, I was taught to make sure there were no red electric “exit” signs (common in hotel reception halls) or wiring for the band behind the bride and groom. I have seen a photographer have the cake table moved to achieve an uncluttered backdrop. Another example of photography determining the event is the staging of a “good-bye” picture (as mentioned above) in order to accommodate the schedule of the photographer.

In other instances, however, older aspects of the ritual win out. As mentioned earlier, some photographers suggest that the bride and groom be photographed together before the ceremony because it makes their job easier by eliminating the frantic, time-pressured environment of the after-ceremony group shots. Although Lewis (1998) claims this is common practice, I spoke to only one couple who agreed to see each other before the ceremony at the photographer’s request. I also worked one wedding in which we photographed the bride and groom before the ceremony, but at the couple’s request, not the photographer’s suggestion. As mentioned earlier, another part of the wedding ritual in which the photographer relinquishes authority is the religious ceremony. Priests, Ministers, Rabbis and other ceremony officiates usually spell out to photographers what they can and can not do during the ceremony.

I offer a final anecdote as evidence that professional photographers, although carriers of many wedding norms, are limited in their ability to change certain aspects of the

wedding ritual: I assisted at one wedding where the bride was very extraverted and joked loudly with the female photographer through much of the wedding. The two women were on very good terms. However, at one point, the photographer suggested that the bride pose somewhat flirtatiously on the altar of the church. The bride (who later agreed to wear cow slippers and be photographed on the dance floor) said to the photographer “I think the Lord has a little more authority than you do here.”

Although some aspects of wedding archetypes may be passed along by photographers, other channels are also important. Religion is an obvious channel for the transfer of ritual archetype. Traditions are also passed verbally among family members and friends, and through direct observation when couples attend the weddings of others. The wedding albums of parents and friends also influence the way we envision the ideal wedding. Finally, the mass media affect the creation, maintenance and changing of wedding archetypes through the depiction of fictional and non-fictional weddings on television and in film. Recall the bride described in the previous chapter who wanted the wedding cake that looked like the ones she saw in the movies. Another bride told me she liked one of her photographs because her husband looked like a movie star getting out of the limo. Advertising also might play a role, as evidenced by the two brides that laughingly told me they liked particular shots because they looked like tuxedo ads in a magazine. Although this study does not track all the channels through which people develop idealized models of weddings, it does provide evidence that people use wedding photography in a way that reflects, creates and reinforces such archetypes.

Dealing with Aging and Death

It was not intuitive to me that wedding photography would be a means through which people dealt with aging and death. However, a clear pattern emerged in my interviews in which informants consistently talked about how things have changed since their wedding day. Their comments often focused on how they had physically changed through the process of aging. As one bride put it “no one is as skinny as they were that day - even the big people - they’re even bigger!” One groom told me he does not like to look at his wedding pictures anymore because it focuses his attention on how much weight he has gained since then. Most people, however, seem to welcome the opportunity to think about how they have changed in various ways:

(Bride) Well, just looking at them the other night it’s interesting to see how we physically changed over past 5 ½ years. It’s mostly that it’s a reality where you have been and where you are going.

(Groom) I looked at them when I had hair - and after I been married, my hair started receding and I was going like “god I’m getting old, my hair’s leaving” I’m not handsome like I was. And I just looked at the years going and how old I was getting and how things were changing.

[A bride wants wedding pictures] so we can look at them in fifty years and say “look at us when we were like that”

[A bride commenting on how the clothes she wore seem funny now] My daughter, I guess being so much into fashion...and she laughs at the styles too and I say you just wait you’re going to laugh at the day when you used to roll your blue jeans up on the bottoms too...

Couples seem to look wistfully back at their wedding photos as they compare the way they look physically now with the way they looked then. They also look at their adult and child wedding guests and marvel at how they aged. For children, the opportunity to see

their parents young often makes them feel closer to their parents as the following participants describe:

(Bride) It was just strange seeing them young and looking different than the way I knew them as parents. And there was just a kind of – I guess I could identify with the younger version better than the older one – because I still liked doing it as a teenager, I liked looking at those pictures.

(Bride) I remember the fascination of looking at my own parents' albums and being like "wow they were that young" ...and it's a connection between generation and generation, I think.

(Bride) When I look at my family's pictures, I love looking at their wedding pictures, cause you see them when you never really knew them. ... I mean you look at them in a different way. Like I have a picture of my grandparents...one of their wedding pictures in there on that end table, and I look at that picture and it's like they're different people than they are because that was just way back before I ever knew them and they just look completely different. And when you see people at a different age and you see people in that kind of setting you just ... it just brings up things - feelings and stuff and emotions that you don't always get in, you know, just everyday snapshot pictures.

[A bride talking about a wedding portrait of her mom] I always thought it was just incredible. She is just so beautiful in it. And she looks like an angel. And it's a real dark background with her in a real chic-like dress with the train flowing off the waist and you just think "Oh my!" ...and well it's probably it's looking at something that's not even real - it's hard to even put the two of them together [mom and the picture].

When children look at wedding photographs they see a younger, idealized version of the people they know. As one groom said "my parent's pictures don't look like my parents." Participants reported feeling closer to their parents after viewing them in their wedding photographs, because it allowed them to see a side of them they would otherwise have missed. Applying Goffman's ideas about the presentation of self, wedding photographs allow us to see our parents as they would like to be seen. These idealized images highlight

important values that we share with our parents in a way that may not be possible through everyday experience.

The ultimate end of human aging is, of course, death. I was surprised by how much people talked about their grief over the loss of loved ones as they showed me their wedding albums. One woman recounted the following story when I asked her why a picture of her dead grandmother was so special to her. I have left the entire excerpt in order to emphasize the details about her grandmother's death that are evoked from a picture of her at a completely removed event.

Not his particular picture, but in general just pictures of my grandmother. And this because it's a large one of her and she was celebrating something very special. When my grandmother died she had fallen and had a stroke and she was paralyzed on one side of her. I said my good-byes to her when she was in the intensive care unit - and she couldn't talk to me but she could squeeze my hand to say yes or no. A couple of days after she had had the fall, they put her in a private room because she was completely paralyzed then. So she really had no way of communicating whatsoever, but I told her I didn't want her to die by herself. And a very strange thing occurred in that I was teaching at a community college at the time and I didn't have an afternoon class. So I stopped by the hospital to see her and my mother was there who was supposed to have been at work. And as it turned out they said that my grandmother they didn't think was going to make it. So they had called my mother in. I took my mother down, because she had been there a long time. I took her down to get just something to drink, something to eat and had this urge that I needed to get back to my grandmother, having no idea as to why. But as it turned out the minute that we walked back into the room, my grandmother opened her eyes - and she hadn't opened them for several days - and she opened up her eyes, looked over at both my mother and I, took a deep breath like "Oh I'm so glad you are finally here - now I can go." Took this deep breath let it out and she was gone. So my grandmother is very very special to me - I'm very close to her and just being there when she needed me. I told her I didn't want you to die by yourself and I was there. And so that's why that [the picture] is so special. It's just her and I [in the picture].

A photograph of a wedding, then, may prompt stories about the death of loved ones depicted in the photos. As the bride above says, this may happen with any photograph of her grandmother, but participants seem to find wedding photographs with dead relatives to be particularly important because they usually show people looking their best and feeling happy. Often, when a relative dies, people will search out their wedding album in order to look at pictures of the deceased person. The following quotes emphasize this point:

(Bride) A lot of my aunts and uncles and father are dead and that's what I have left. You know, pictures of my wedding with my family in them. So I wanted to be sure to commemorate the occasion. It wasn't, you know, to put it on the piano and show it off or anything. It was just I wanted pictures of my family having a good time.

(Bride) I just remember looking at my parents album when I was little. I didn't look at it very often but when they brought it down, most of those pictures were dead [people] and I never got to meet them, but they were captured. And I could see them and that was really important to me.

(Bride) I think because the deceased person, because they are no longer a part of your life and you are making no new memories with them, that those times that were in the past where you did share something – that they were part of a big moment in my life - I think is really important. So I think of grandpa and I think it is important to me to have that picture of he and I and Ken and grandma on the day we were married...it's nice to know that, okay he's gone, but we had something really big that we shared.

(Bride) Some of these people are no longer living. I can look back and say - "Oh yeah, they came" ...you've captured them when they were very very much alive and you want to remember them that way.

The function of assisting people in thinking and talking about aging and death is part of all photography. However, wedding photography is an opportunity to ritualize that process. The idealized depiction of our family members in wedding photographs draws attention to

the values we share.

Eliade claims that “human marriage reproduces the hierogamy, more especially the union of heaven and earth” (1959, p. 23). Although the comments of my informants do not support quite so dramatic a claim, my data does suggest that wedding photography is a tool through which participants look back to their familial beginnings. Family resemblance is often the topic of discussion as couples look at their wedding albums. By acknowledging that the bride, for example, looks like her mother – and often depicting that resemblance succinctly in the photographs of the bride and her mother in front of a mirror – a connection is made between the past and the present. In effect, the passage of time is de-emphasized. Eliade further argues that:

...the imitation of an archetypal model is a reactualization of the moment when the archetype was revealed for the first time. Consequently, these ceremonies too...suspend the flow of profane time, of duration, and project the celebrant into a mythical time... (p. 76)

Weddings are patterned after weddings of the past. Traditional vows, costumes, and other elements of the ritual are similar, if not identical, to elements included in weddings of long ago, which shared (and originated) the same archetypal model. Participants often make the connection to the weddings of their ancestors even more salient by using wedding artifacts that have been passed down for generations such as wedding dresses, jewelry, cake ornaments, champagne glasses, etc.. Photography continues the theme of replication even after the event. Every time the photographs are viewed and shared, emphasis is placed on the archetype the ritual reveals.

Another consequence of ritual’s ability to alter our perception of time is that social

bonds are suspended momentarily in order to emerge from the ritual in altered form. Turner refers to this aspect of ritual as “liminality,” in which participants perceive themselves to be in:

...a “moment in and out of time,” and in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties. (1969, p. 96)

Prior to the wedding the bride and groom belong to separate family groups. As the wedding ceremony begins (in many wedding traditions) the bride is “given away” by her family. For the duration of the ceremony, the bride remains separated from her old social bonds, and yet not officially connected to a new social order that integrates her into her husband's family and re-establishes a connection with her own family. The lighting of candles is a popular modern practice that symbolically includes the groom in the rearrangement of social groups. In this practice, the mother of the bride and the mother of the groom each light a candle at the beginning of the ceremony representing the existing social ties of the bride and groom. At a later point in the ceremony, the bride and groom each light a long match from their respective candles and together light a third candle, which represents the social ties they will share as a married couple (the officiant usually explains the symbolism of this practice explicitly in the ceremony). During the ceremony, both bride and groom (and those connected to them) are briefly in a “moment in and out of time” in which social ties are stripped clean in order to be rearranged and emphasized by the magic of the ritual activity.

By drawing attention away from the temporal aspects of existence, we are better able to focus on the bond between generations. Through the images presented in our wedding albums, we revisit our family beginnings. On one level, as the couple shares their wedding album, they return to the conception of their marriage (in effect, the creation of their world as a couple) and reaffirm the bond between them. As the woman quoted earlier asserted, "you can always kind-of go back to and get a grip on your relationship." On another level, the album brings into focus connections with broader social groups: family, friends, religious and ethnic groups. The photographs visually "prove" that our bodies performed ritual actions in accordance with rules set by mystical authorities of long ago. Seeing ourselves (through the means of idealized photographs) perform those actions while surrounded by older family members makes our connection with past generations real and tangible. Underlying this perception is our knowledge that our parents and grandparents performed these same actions, as we witnessed in our childhood through their wedding photographs. Carolyn Marvin explains the power of such sympathetic magic in the passage below:

The power of sympathetic magic resides in mimesis....Sympathetic ritual gestures make time connected and continuous. They re-create the present in images of the past so life does not lose its moorings. Ritual power thus flows from the transformation and replication of bodies at key moments in the birth and death of the group. (1999, p. 130)

The wedding ritual itself represents one stage of replication; the wedding photographs represent another. The power of ritualized memory is that it allows sympathetic magic to occur in the absence of the performance of real bodies. The photographs mimic bodies in

performance, thus recreating a version of ritual magic. In one sense, the magic of ritualized memory is less powerful than the magic of live performance. Two dimensions can never precisely recreate the intensity of actual experience. In another sense, the magic of ritualized memory is more intensified than that of live performance, because it edits the performance into an idealized version that sharpens our awareness of the important elements. Although those in the photographs may have aged or died, the social connections remain real and alive through the magic of ritual memory. *“The fundamental things apply. As time goes by.”*

The physical endurance of the album itself reinforces the endurance of the connections it represents and recreates. Value is placed on the physical nature of the wedding album. As one groom told me, there was something special about touching the pages of the album, hearing the crinkle of the pages as they turned and smelling the leather of the cover. Others commented on the value of the album as a beautiful object. One photography manual refers to the wedding album as the “couple’s very first heirloom” (Cantrell and Cohen, 2000, p. 12).

Although most participants admitted that they do not look at their wedding albums often after the first year of marriage, they also reported that the possession of this physical object is very important to them. Here are some of the responses to my inquiries about how participants might feel if they lost their wedding album:

(Bride A) Well, I’ve got the negatives down in the safe deposit book...because you can’t recreate all these dead people- you can’t go back and fix it if something happened to them [the pictures].

(Groom B) I would probably try to have it replaced. I would, you know, does the photographer still have the negatives? I would probably want it replaced. That's why I didn't realize, I mentioned before a lot of the family heirlooms that we have, we have them locked in a fire box, so if there's a fire in the house or anything like that, it's not going to get to them so that they are preserved. You know it would be kind-of silly to lock your [album] - part of the reason you get it is so that people can look at it, so it would be kind-of stupid to lock it up. But I would hope that I could get it replaced.

(Bride C) It would be very devastating because - you know you're married and all that - it's just a little something that you like to have - a reminder.

(Groom D) If I had more money I'd put copies in a bank deposit box - or fire proof box... I love history so that's kind of why I'm interested in having these and looking and "Wow I can't believe I was this young" - you know even that kind of thing. So, I'd be really pissed of if lost them now - can't imagine in the future.

(Bride E) I'd probably cry for 20 years! (Laughs) They're very important to me. I could have had the little snapshots - it just wouldn't have been as meaningful. They wouldn't have been the quality - they wouldn't have been preserved as well...if I were to lose these now I would be pretty destroyed. I'd be very distraught over it. I've had a friend who lost her wedding pictures and several very old quilts - she lost them in a fire - and to watch the devastation she went through not just with the fire - and the personal belongings didn't matter - it was the memories and these are memories - you can't replace them.

(Bride F) I would be devastated. Although there are negatives - these are what we consider ours.

(Groom F) If there were no negatives, I would be very very upset. Although [the album] is not something that affects me on a daily basis, when you do pull it out it's something special and something you would want to keep.

(Bride G) That's why I am questioning purchasing those negatives. They are very important - very important. We've got like two weeks left to decide what we want - and we're probably going to buy them.

As evidenced above, many participants responded to my question of how they would feel

if their albums got destroyed by assuring me that they had safeguarded against losing all their pictures. Wedding albums are treated as relics, the bones of those who have died. As the first woman quoted above succinctly puts it: “you can’t recreate all these dead people.” Wedding photographs serve as evidence that the dead did once live and, more importantly, that the living shared, and continue to share, a bond with dead ancestors.

Ritualized Remembering

In the first chapter of this dissertation, ritual was shown to distinguish some acts of communication by enabling people to understand and embody their place in a social or ideological order in a way that everyday communication does not. Participants achieve such ritual magic through the performance of symbolic actions that are predetermined by authoritative powers. When the act of remembering takes the form of other ritual practice, it too functions to highlight and strengthen social bonds and values. Remembering through wedding photography imitates a sympathetic ritual in that the images in the album derive meaning and power from the fact that they replicate the actions of the bride and groom on their wedding day. Because of the formalized, idealized way in which they are created and arranged, wedding photographs structure the act of remembering so that it performs the same social work as ritual events.

Although this study deals primarily with American data, I consulted several wedding studies conducted in other countries and interviewed seven people/couples who were married abroad (India, Canada, Puerto Rico, Mexico and Brazil) in an effort to get

some insight into whether the practices I observed were particular to the United States. Although specifics about how many pictures are taken, shooting locations and timing vary somewhat between cultures, the basic themes of idealization and familial connection remain the same. A particularly strong example of idealization comes from Great Britain where Prince William's frowning head was replaced with a digital image of him smiling in the wedding portrait of Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones, according to an article in the *South China Morning Post* (June 23, 1999). A Mexican informant said she wanted to have wedding photographs so she could look back in twenty years and ask herself "was I so slim?" A Scottish researcher comments on how it is not the "actual" signing of the marriage documents or the wedding cake that photography captures, but "a posed representation" (Charsley, 1991, p. 144).

Evidence that familial connection is important in the wedding photographs of other cultures comes from Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni who reports that, in rare cases in Japan, a photograph of a deceased relative may be held up by another family member during group shots in order to include that person in the formal representation of the family (1997, p. 21). An Indian informant told me the pictures of her dead relatives in her wedding album were important because they helped her "maintain a connection with them[those relatives]." A Puerto Rican woman commented on how much her children liked looking at her album and identifying family members. Diana Leonard (1980) observes in her British study that the group photographs taken outside the church after the ceremony have the advantage of allowing the couple:

...publicly to stand together in their new statuses (with the ego support of knowing that the photographer is posing them so that they look at their best), and for the various collectivities ('bridal party', 'groom's side', 'friends of bride and groom', etc.) to come and stand together for a brief time; and for that moment of time, and that statement of group identity, and that visual experience to be 'frozen' and preserved so that it can be shown to others. (p. 178)

Photography serves as a particularly good tool in ritualizing memory. Photographs allow us to draw clear boundaries around visual images and freeze gestures at their most significant moments. When photography is compared to videotape (another medium often used to "record" a wedding), it is apparent that photography allows participants much more editing control. Wedding videos are usually only moderately edited and produced, so they include many details of preparation and peripheral activities which photography hides. I heard a story about one bride who was rather annoyed at her husband after viewing the wedding video and hearing him comment to an usher that she was in an unreasonable mood. This type of detail is seldom captured in wedding photography. Most people I interviewed had either chosen not to have a video at all or reported that they rarely looked at the video. In general, photography serves as a better tool for idealization.

The differences between wedding video and wedding photography seem to be differences in the way the social uses of the two media developed, rather than an intrinsic difference in the technologies. It is certainly possible to edit video to create a more idealized vision. Interestingly, the man who was the biggest advocate of his wedding video over his album, also had a very produced video. It was highly edited and included

freeze-frame shots that resembled wedding portraits. He also pointed out that he could get photographs printed from his video. The reasons he cites for liking his video are characteristics that make it more like a wedding album.

Some people also had wedding scrapbooks in which they put their wedding invitation, cards they received, magazine pictures of the dress, brochures from the reception site, etc.. Although I was not able to analyze these memory artifacts in detail, I was able to determine that they played a secondary role to wedding photography and were not viewed or shared as often.

Storytelling is also an intrinsic part of ritualized memory. As I reported earlier, wedding albums are usually looked at with others. The bride and groom talk about their wedding as they and others look through the album. The photographs structure the story they tell. One woman talks about liking her wedding album better than her video because the album invites more storytelling:

...when you have the photo album you know you can tell the story. You can talk about what happened before and what was happening behind the scenes other than just this embarrassing sound [on the video]...I do feel kind-of silenced. I mean usually, when we watch the video. When we have watched it those few times, you know pretty much we've watched it or we've watched or we've laughed about sort-of embarrassing things or maybe we said "oh wow that was a good point" or "oh I can't hear" you know you talk about the technical quality of it. But you don't talk so much about what led up to the wedding and what came afterwards and all that.

In a social setting, photographs demand an explanation. The bride and groom are expected to verbally explain and defend the choices they made in executing the wedding ritual. In contrast, video demands relative silence during the viewing event. As in a movie

theater, there is a social expectation that participants remain quiet so as not to interrupt the film. I suspect ritualized memory depends on the verbal performance of the participants. Visual media, such as photography, video, sculpture (as in monuments), and literate artifacts (cards, notes, etc.), are tools which help ground memory and recreate gestures performed in the past. However, storytelling gives ritualized memory life in the present.

My intent in this study has been to show that in certain instances remembering takes the form of ritual in order to enforce, embody and sustain social bonds and values. Wedding photography is a strong example of an instance in which remembering becomes a formalized symbolic performance through an intricate system of idealization as prescribed by various authorities. Future research might explore other instances of ritualized memory and the use of other technologies in achieving such ritualization.

APPENDIX

Interview Guides

and

Data Charts

Guide #1: Long Interviews

*****Do not ask questions in bold if the couple was interviewed before the wedding.*****

1.
 - a. **Who took your wedding pictures?**
 - b. **How did you locate him or her?**
 - c. **Why did you choose them?**
 - d. **What type of package did you choose and why?**
 - e. **Did you give the photographer any specific instructions?**
 - f. **Did they make any suggestions or requests about how the ceremony or reception activities be carried out?**
 - g. **Were you happy with the performance of the photographer? Why or why not?**

2.
 - a. **Why did you decide to have photographs taken at your wedding?**
 - b. **Why are they important to you?**

3.
 - a. When did you last look at your wedding album?
 - b. Were you alone?
 - c. Where were you?
 - d. When do you usually look at the album?
 - e. Where do you keep it? Why?
 - f. Where else do you display your wedding photographs?

4. How did you decide which photographs to put in the album?

5. Look at album together - let interviewees set the agenda here.

6. How would you compare your wedding photographs to a piece of art, say like a painting? Are they similar in any way? How are they different?

7. How important are your wedding photographs to you? How would you feel if they got destroyed?

Guide #2: Short Interviews

1. Did you have pictures taken at your wedding? Why or why not?
(If no skip to # 6)
2. Who took your wedding pictures? Why did you choose him or her?
3. Where do you keep your wedding pictures?
4. When do you look at your wedding pictures?
5. Describe one or two of your favorite wedding pictures to me and tell me why you like them.
6. How long have you been married?
7. City and state where wedding took place?
8. Estimated cost of wedding?
9. What religion are you? Your spouse?
10. How old are you? Your spouse?
11. What is your occupation? Your spouse's?
12. Highest level of education you have completed? Your spouse?
13. What ethnicity do you consider yourself to be? Your spouse?

Guide #3: Divorced/Widowed Interviews

1. Where are your wedding pictures now?
2. Do you recall any discussions you had about who would keep your wedding photographs after you got divorced? How did you decide who would keep the photos? (If they don't have any wedding photographs, ask if they would like to have them.)
3. Do you ever look at your wedding pictures? When?
4. What kinds of things do you think about or feel when you see your wedding pictures? (If they have photos with them, look at them and ask them to tell you about them)
5. What religion are you?
6. How old are you?
7. What is your occupation?
8. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
9. What ethnicity do you consider yourself to be?
10. How long were you married?
11. How long have you been widowed/divorced?

Guide #4: Engaged Interviews

1.
 - a. Who will take your wedding pictures?
 - b. How did you locate him or her?
 - c. Why have you chosen them?
 - d. What type of package have you chosen and why?
 - e. Have you given the photographer any specific instructions?
 - f. Have they made any suggestions or requests about how the ceremony or reception activities be carried out?
 - g. Are there any aspects of the wedding you would consider inappropriate for the photographer to record?

2. Why do you want to have photographs taken at your wedding?

Guide #5: Pilot Study Interviews

1. Why did you decide to have pictures (a video) taken at your wedding?
2. Who took your wedding pictures (video)?
Why did you choose them?
Did you give them any specific instructions?
Did they make any suggestions or requests about how the ceremony or reception activities be carried out?
3. When did you last look at your wedding album (video)?
Were you alone?
Where were you?
When do you usually look at the album (video)?
Where do you keep it? Why?
4. Ask them to show you the album (video - or some of it - let them show you what they want and fast forward if they choose). Let them say whatever they want.
5. If you had to give up either your album or your video, which would you chose and why?

Guide #6: Photographer Interviews

Interview # _____

Number of years photographing weddings: _____

Number of photographers who work for studio: _____

Number of assistants: _____

Average number of weddings shot per year: _____

1. Explain to me the normal procedure you go through with a client in order to produce their wedding photographs.
2. What do you consider, in terms of angles, poses or lighting when taking a wedding photograph?
3. What do you think is the importance of wedding photographs?
4. What makes a good wedding photograph?
5. Do you consider yourself an artist? Why or why not?
6. Do you find wedding couples difficult or easy to work with? Describe to me the best and worst experiences you have ever had photographing a wedding.
7. Do you think a non-professional can adequately photograph a wedding? Why or why not?
8. Are there typical points of conflict that often have to be negotiated between clients and photographers? What are the most common points of stress?
9. What kinds of restrictions do clients most often wish to place on photography?

Data Chart #1: Long Interviews

| | Interview # | Wife | Husband | Years Married | Wedding Location | Wife's Religion | Husband's Religion | Wife's Age | Husband's Age | Wife's Ethnicity | Husband's Ethnicity | Estimated Wedding Cost | Wife's Occupation | Husband's Occupation | Wife's Education | Husband's Education |
|----|-------------|---------|-------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------|---------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 6 | Nina | Denis | <1 | NC | N | C | 30 | 38 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$12,000 | Daycare Director | Waiter | 4y | 4y |
| 2 | 7 | Maria | Michael | 5 | TN | P | P | 33 | 34 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$3,000 | Commercial Artist | HVAC Trainee | 4y | 4y |
| 3 | 9 | Judy | Ken | 10 | OH | P | P | 32 | 32 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$3,000 | Homemaker | MBA Student | GD | SG |
| 4 | 11 | Maureen | James | 5 | MA | C | E | 29 | 30 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$15,000 | Account Executive | MBA Student | 4y | SG |
| 5 | 12 | Sarah | Jeff | 1 | LA | J | J | 23 | 26 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$25-\$30,000 | Manager Daycare | MBA Student | 4y | SG |
| 6 | 14 | Ximena | not present | 3 | NC | C | C | 23 | 31 | Hispanic | Hispanic | \$10-\$15,000 | Housewife | MBA Student | HS | 4y |
| 7 | 16 | Valerie | Stephen | 11 | CO | C | E | 34 | 34 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$8,000 | Admin. Assistant | Teacher/Student | 4y | GD |
| 8 | 17 | Mary | Victor | <1 | NC | C | GO | 28 | 30 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$35 | Marketing Assistant | Grad Student | 4y | SG |
| 9 | 18 | Jackie | Andy | 2 | NC | G | E | 27 | 30 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$25,000 | Teacher | Computer Consultant | GD | 4y |
| 10 | 19 | Kim | not present | <1 | NV | B | B | 28 | 28 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$2,000 | Advert. Account Exec | Insurance Sales | GD | 4y |
| 11 | 20 | Emily | Michael | 2 | NC | E | N | 27 | 28 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$16-\$17,000 | Manager | Computer Consultant | 4y | GD |
| 12 | 22 | Holly | Steve | 2 | PA | E | C | 29 | 30 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$10-\$12,000 | Management Assist. | Software Developer | 4y | SG |
| 13 | 23 | Valerie | Eric | 5 | TX | L | G | 46 | 38 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$4,500 | Dentist | Med Research Asst. | GD | 4y |
| 14 | 24 | Alwina | Wade | 3 | AL | B | M | 32 | 28 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$6,000 | Student | Computer Scientist | GD | GD |
| 15 | 25 | Jane | John | <1 | NC | N | N | 25 | 25 | Indian | Indian | 7000 | Marketing Acct. Mng. | VP - Tech (Mat. Sci.) | GD | GD |
| 16 | 26 | Sharon | not present | 29 | NY | E/P | G | 51 | 51 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | <\$500 | Admin. Assistant | Assoc. VP Finance | 4y | GD |
| 17 | 27 | Kara | Ray | <1 | NC | N | N | 30 | 31 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$50 | Post-Doc Fellow | Grad Student | GD | GD |
| 18 | 28 | Kay | not present | 26 | MD | M | M | 45 | 45 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$500 | Management Analyst | Construction Manag. | HS | HS |
| 19 | 29 | Dorothy | Thomas | 3 | NC | M | M | 46 | 45 | Afric Amer | Afric Amer | \$9,000 | College Administrator | H.R. Manager | 4y | GD |
| 20 | 31 | Robin | not present | 2 | NC | AME | E | 34 | 34 | Afric Amer | Afric Amer | \$12,000 | Sales | Non-Profit | GD | SG |
| 21 | 32 | Robyn | not present | <1 | NC | JW | N | 32 | 48 | Afric Amer | Cauc Amer | \$8,500 | Student | Clinical Prog. Head | 2y | GD |

Data Chart #2: *Short Interviews*

| Interview # | Wife or Husband? | Years Married | Wedding Location | Wife's Religion | Husband's Religion | Wife's Age | Husband's Age | Wife's Ethnicity | Husband's Ethnicity | Estimated Wedding Cost | Wife's Occupation | Husband's Occupation | Wife's Education | Husband's Education |
|-------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------|---------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1-C1 | H | 20 | NC | G | A | 51 | 45 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$100 | Massage Therapist | Toxicologist | 4y | GD |
| 2-C4 | W | 1 | NC | C | C | 30 | 26 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$6,000 | Grad Student | Grad Student | GD | SG |
| 3-C5 | W | 7 (2nd) | NC | E | E | 47 | 51 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$2,000 | University Administrator | University Administrator | 4y | GD |
| 4-C7 | W | 2 | NC | L | G | 37 | 47 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$1,000 | HS Teacher | Television Producer | GD | 4y |
| 5-C9 | W | 3 | NC | N | N | 32 | 26 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | <\$5,000 | Clerical | Grad Student | 4y | SG |
| 6-C13 | W | 33 | NJ | J | J | 54 | 55 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$3,000 | Teacher | Market Research Manager | GD | GD |
| 7-C14 | H | 19 | NC | B | B | 36 | 44 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | <\$1,000 | Bank Loan Processor | Electrician | HS | HS |
| 8-C15 | W | 13 (1st) 6 (2nd) | NC | M | M | 42 | 40 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$1,500 | Lab Technician Support | Machinist | HS | HS |
| 9-C17 | W | 8 | NY | U | N | 50 | 42 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$3,000 | Temporary Office Worker | Computer Programmer/Accountant | 4y | 4y |

Data Chart #3: *Divorced or Widowed Interviews*

| Interview Number | Gender | Religion | Age | Occupation | Education | Ethnicity | Years Married | Years Widowed or Divorced |
|---|--------|----------|-----|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1-C2 | M | M | 38 | Unemployed | HS | Afric Amer | 13 | Separated 2 |
| 2-C3 | F | CS | 68 | Director Meals on Wheels | 2y | Cauc Amer | 44 | 4 (widow) |
| 3-C6 | F | CH | 42 | Transcriptionist | 2y | Cauc Amer | 2 | 19 (divorced) |
| 4-C8 | M | B | 44 | Construction | LHS | Cauc Amer | 14 | 16 (divorced) |
| 5-C10 | F | M | 44 | Teacher | GD | Cauc Amer | 4 | 11 (divorced) |
| 6-C11 | M | CH | 43 | General Repair | HS | Afric Amer | 17 | 4 (divorced) |
| 7-C5** | F | E | 47 | University Administrator | 4y | Cauc Amer | ? | ? |
| 8-C15** | F | M | 42 | Lab Technician Support | HS | Cauc Amer | 13 | ? |
| 9-23* | F | L | 46 | Dentist | GD | Cauc Amer | 5 - 1st Marriage 11 - 2nd Marriage | 20 - 1st 10 - 2nd |
| *Indicates also did Long Interview about current marriage wedding photographs | | | | | | | | |
| **Indicates also did Short Interview about current marriage wedding photographs | | | | | | | | |

Data Chart #4: Foreign Interviews

| Interview # | Wife | Husband | Years Married | Wedding Location | Wife's Religion | Husband's Religion | Wife's Age | Husband's Age | Wife's Ethnicity | Husband's Ethnicity | Estimated Wedding Cost (In American Dollars) | Wife's Occupation | Husband's Occupation | Wife's Education | Husband's Education |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|---|------------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1-5 | Deepa | not present | 4 | India | H | H | 27 | 31 | Indian | Indian | Above Average | Software Consultant | Grad Student | 4y | SG |
| 2-8 | Andy | Boyd | 3 | Canada | A | A | 30 | 33 | Indian- Canadian | Cauc American | \$4,500- \$6,000 | Physical Therapist | House Husband | 4y | GD |
| 3-13 | Mana | not present | <1 | Mexico | C | C | 24 | 27 | Mexican | Mexican | Above Average | Economist | Civil Engineer | 4y | GD |
| 4-15 | Susan | Rene | 8 | Puerto Rico | C | C | 31 | 31 | Hispanic | Hispanic | \$8,000 | Teacher | Banker | GD | GD |
| 5-21 | Enka | not present | <1 | Brazil | C | C | 27 | 27 | Cauc Brazilian | Cauc Brazilian | \$10,000- \$12,000 | Architect | Grad Student | 4y | GD |
| 6-C12* | not present | Joe | 10 | Mexico | C | C | 29 | 33 | Mexican | Mexican | \$100- \$300 | Housewife | Operator | HS | HS |
| 7-C16* | not present | Jack | 16 | India | H | H | 36 | 42 | Indian | Indian | \$300- \$500 | Lecturer | Grad Student | GD | GD |

* Indicates completed Short Interview - all others completed Long Interview

Data Chart #5: *Engaged Interviews*

| Interview # | Wife | Husband | Wedding Location | Wife's Religion | Husband's Religion | Wife's Age | Husband's Age | Wife's Ethnicity | Husband's Ethnicity | Estimated Wedding Cost | Wife's Occupation | Husband's Occupation | Wife's Education | Husband's Education |
|-------------|---------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------|---------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1-10 | Heather | Not Present | VA | E | C | 28 | 31 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$19,000 | MBA Student | Capital Hill Chief of Staff | SG | SG |
| 2-30 | Lisa | David | NC | EC | N | 27 | 30 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | \$4,000 | Public Health Nutritionist | Architect | GD | GD |

Data Chart #6: *Pilot Interviews*

| Interview # | Wife | Husband | Years Married | Wedding Location | Wife's Religion | Husband's Religion | Wife's Age | Husband's Age | Wife's Ethnicity | Husband's Ethnicity | Wife's Occupation | Husband's Occupation | Wife's Education | Husband's Education |
|-------------|-----------|----------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------|---------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1-A | Randy | Jon | 4 | NJ | J | J | unknown | unknown | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | Nutritionist | BioLab Technician | 4y | 4y |
| 2-A | Briquette | Vance | 4 | DC | C | O | unknown | unknown | Afric Amer | Cauc Amer | Grad Student | Grad Student | GD | GD |
| 3-A | Elizabeth | Joe | 58 | NJ | C | C | 78 | 81 | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | Homemaker | Retired | <HS | <HS |
| 4-A | Barbara | deceased | widowed | NJ | M | C | 51 | n/a | Cauc Amer | Cauc Amer | Nurse | n/a | 2y | n/a |

Data Chart #7: *Photographer Interviews*

| Ref # | Gender | Years in Business | # Photographers in Studio | # Assistants | Ave # Weddings Per Year |
|--------------|---------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1-4 | Female | 7 | 3 | 3 | 65 |
| 2-10 | Female | 12 | 2 | 0 | 26 |
| 3-1NR | Female | 20 | 2 | 2 | 40 - 50 |
| 4-5 | Male | 10 | 1 full - 1 p/t | 0 | 8 |
| 5-6 | Male | 12 | 1 | 1 | 25 - 30 |
| 6-3 | Male | 20 | 1 | 0 | 35 - 40 |
| 7-11 | Female | 12 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| 8-2NR | Female | 8 | 2 full - 1 p/t | 2 full - 1 p/t | 25 |
| 9-9 | Male | 10 | 1 full - 2 p/t | 2 p/t | 30 - 35 |
| 10-8 | Male | 17 | 2 | 4 p/t | 13 |
| 11-7 | Male | 7 | 2 | 1 | 60 - 70 |

Data Chart #8: *Wedding Observations*

| Reference # | Photographer # | Date | Officiating Religion | Description |
|-------------|----------------|----------|----------------------|---|
| 1 | 8-2NR | 8/17/96 | Christian | Church wedding, hotel reception - 4pm to midnight |
| 2 | 8-2NR | 9/26/96 | Non-Religious | Full Lunar Eclipse, outside ceremony and reception - 9pm to midnight |
| 3 | 8-2NR | 9/28/96 | Methodist | Church ceremony, Country Club reception, Iranian/american couple - 6pm to 9pm |
| 4 | 8-2NR | 10/19/96 | Methodist | Just pics outside before the wedding - Methodist church - 1:30 to 3:30 pm |
| 5 | 8-2NR | 10/19/96 | Methodist | Church ceremony, inn reception, 5pm to 11pm |
| 6 | 8-2NR | 10/26/96 | Christian | Church ceremony, inn reception, 3pm to 9:30pm |
| 7 | 6-3 | 9/14/96 | Christian | Outdoor garden ceremony and reception - afternoon |
| 8 | 1-4 | 11/23/96 | Christian | Church ceremony, club reception, Noon to 3 pm |
| 9 | 4-5 | 3/1/96 | Methodist | Small church ceremony, hotel reception, 11:30 am |
| 10 | 4-5 | 11/22/96 | Christian | Ceremony - small church - African Methodist Episcopalian - 7 pm (did not attend hotel reception the next day) |
| 11 | 8-2NR | 8/23/97 | Christian | Ceremony and reception at hotel - 6 pm |
| 12 | 11-7 | 9/27/97 | Catholic | Catholic Church ceremony, hotel reception, 2pm to 7 pm |
| 13 | 9-9 | 10/11/97 | Christian | Ceremony outside, inn reception, mixed ethnicity couple, Noon - 4 pm |
| 14 | 8-2NR | 10/17/97 | Catholic | Catholic church, inn reception, 4pm to 10:30pm |
| 15 | 8-2NR | 10/19/97 | Christian | 15-20 people at wedding, small garden house ceremony and reception, 2:30pm to 5:30pm |
| 16 | 8-2NR | 1/3/98 | Christian | Ceremony and reception at restaurant, bride in wheelchair, 9:30am to 1pm |
| 17 | 8-2NR | 1/3/98 | Presbyterian | Church ceremony, military, club reception, 4pm to 10 pm |

Data Chart #9 - Totals Across Key Demographic Variables

| | Long Interviews | Photographer Interviews | Wedding Observation | Short Interviews | Engaged Interviews | Widowed or Divorced |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Total | 21 | 11 | 17 | 9 | 2 | 9 |
| Caucasian Amer | 16 (~76%) | 10 (~91%) | 14 (~82%) | 9 | 2 | 7 (~78%) |
| African Amer | 2 (~9.5%) | 1 (~9%) | 1 (~6%) | 0 | 0 | 2 (~22%) |
| Hispanic | 1 (~4.8%) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Indian | 1 (~4.8%) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed Couple | 1 (~4.8%) | | 2 (~12%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Catholic*** | 7 (~16.7%) | | 2 (~11.8%) | 2 (~11.1%) | 1 (25%) | 0 |
| Methodist | 5 (~11.9%) | | 4 (~23.5%) | 2 (~11.1%) | 0 | 3 (~33.3%) |
| Presbyterian | 4 (~9.5%) | | 1 (~5.9%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Baptist | 3 (~7.1%) | | 0 | 2 (~11.1%) | 0 | 1 (~11.1%) |
| Episcopalian | 6 (~14%) | | 0 | 2 (~11.1%) | 1 (25%) | 1 (~11.1%) |
| Other Christian | 5 (~12%) | | 9 (~52.9%) | 1 (~5.55%) | 0 | 4 (~44.5%) |
| Jewish | 2 (~4.7%) | | 0 | 2 (~11.1%) | 0 | 0 |
| Other Religion | 0 | | 0 | 1 (~5.55%) | 1 (25%) | 0 |
| Atheist/Agnostic | 3 (~7.1%) | | 0 | 3 (~16.7%) | 0 | 0 |
| No Affiliation | 7 (~17%) | | 1 (~5.9%) | 3 (~16.7%) | 1 (25%) | 0 |

| | Long Interviews | Photographer Interviews | Wedding Observation | Short Interviews | Engaged Interviews | Widowed or Divorced |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Married < 10yrs | 17 (~81%) | | | 6 (~67%) | | |
| Married 10-19 | 2 (~9.5%) | | | 1 (~11%) | | |
| Married 20+ yrs | 2 (~9.5%) | | | 2 (~22%) | | |
| Male | 0 | 6 (~55%) | | 2 (~22%) | 0 | 3 (~33%) |
| Female | 6 (~29%) | 5 (~45%) | | 7 (~78%) | 1 (50%) | 6 (~67%) |
| Both | 15 (~71%) | | | 0 | 1 (50%) | 0 |

***Totals in the religion section equal twice the sample size for Long, Short and Engaged Interviews because the religion of both husband and wife are recorded (even if only one spouse was interviewed).

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