

Will she say yes? A content analysis of accepted and rejected marriage proposals

by

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B.A., University of Manitoba, 2009

M.Sc., University of Victoria, 2012

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Abstract

Proposing marriage is one of the few rituals that many people engage in world-wide, and yet many aspects remain a mystery. For example, there is currently no research on rejected marriage proposals, despite their potential impact on the self and well-being. The purpose of the present research was to compare and contrast rejected and accepted marriage proposals. Because the traditional proposal script is well known in Western society, I hypothesized that all proposals would be high rather than low in traditionalism. But, men whose proposal is rejected may not know that women prefer private proposals (Hoplock, 2015), and so I hypothesized that rejected proposals would be more likely to occur in public compared to accepted proposals. Additionally, I hypothesized that couples would distance themselves from each other during rejected proposals. I also predicted that couples would remain close to each other during accepted proposals compared to during rejected proposals. Finally, I hypothesized that couples experiencing rejected proposals would be less likely to talk about marriage in advance than couples experiencing accepted proposals. I tested these hypotheses in two studies. I conducted a content analysis of 285 marriage proposal videos (36 rejected proposals, 249 accepted proposals; Study 1), and of 374 first-person written accounts of marriage proposals (180 rejected proposals, 194 accepted proposals; Study 2). Trained coders rated the proposals for traditionalism (e.g.,

offering a ring), the presence of others, and couple members' approach and avoidance goals. I also used inductive coding to derive themes from the data. Additionally, in Study 2, trained coders noted men's motivation for proposing and women's reasons for their response, the relationship status before and after the proposal, and whether couples discussed marriage in advance of the proposal. In Study 1 but not Study 2, proposals were high rather than low in traditionalism. In both studies, rejected proposals were less traditional than accepted proposals. Some traditional behaviors were particularly strong as distinguishing between proposals: The odds of a proposal being accepted were 8 – 20 times higher if the proposer presented a ring. Expectedly, rejected proposals were more likely to occur in public than accepted proposals. Moreover, women were particularly affected by the proposal, distancing themselves from their partner during rejected proposals and drawing close to their partner during accepted proposals. Providing insight into the proposers' motivations, men often proposed for reasons such as a desire to commit to their partner, but, unlike men whose proposal was accepted, men whose proposal was rejected were also likely to propose out of desperation. Furthermore, women most commonly declined a proposal because they thought they were too young or not ready to get engaged. Unfortunately, some of the heartache of rejected proposals may have been avoided if the couple members had discussed marriage in advance: Only 29% of couples experiencing rejected proposals discussed marriage in advance, compared to 100% of couples experiencing accepted proposals. The rich nature of this data brings to life the proposal experience and highlights many potential directions for future research.

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Will she say “yes”? A content analysis of accepted and rejected marriage proposals

Imagine sitting in an elegant restaurant, looking over at the next table, and seeing a couple in the process of getting engaged. The man is kneeling on one knee beside the woman, offering her a ring and the woman joyfully says “yes!” Other patrons notice and clap and cheer. An older couple buys them champagne and there are smiles all around. Now imagine that instead of saying “yes,” the woman says “no,” gets up, and walks away. Other patrons notice and murmur quietly. An older couple buys the man a drink and there are sympathetic looks all around. How did the accepted and rejected proposals differ?

The extant close relationships literature cannot answer this and many other important questions about marriage proposals because there is very little research on the subject, and there is almost no research on the topic within the field of psychology. A few sociological and communication studies have described proposal behaviour (e.g., Hunter, 2012; Schweingruber, Anahita, & Berns, 2004; Vannini, 2008), but this descriptive research has only focused on accepted proposals. Research to date has overlooked rejected proposals. There are some valid explanations for this lack of research. Marriage proposals might occupy a blind spot in relationship science because they are an over-learned ritual (Schweingruber et al., 2004), and thus it may seem like we know all there is to know about them when really we do not. Moreover, it is hard to study a marriage proposal in the moment it occurs. Proposals often occur in private, and technology has not always been available to document them and facilitate their study by researchers. With the ubiquity of smart phones that can record proposals and the rise in popularity of websites where people can post such videos for public viewing, documenting and analyzing marriage proposals is easier than ever before. I will take advantage of this new

technology to gain a better understanding of this important, but understudied, cultural ritual. By qualitatively and quantitatively examining documented accounts of accepted and rejected marriage proposals in social media, I will be able to further the knowledge of an important cultural ritual signifying the formal transition to marriage.

This research has the potential to make a number of important theoretical and practical contributions. Understanding the social psychology of marriage proposals could shed light on the trajectory of romantic relationship quality. Researchers have identified a number of predictors of the trajectory of marital happiness and success, such as being responsive to one's partner's needs (e.g., Reis, Clark, & Holmes, 2004) and viewing one's partner and relationship events in a positive light (e.g., Holmes, 2000). It is possible that some of these relationship qualities can be identified in people's behaviour and motivation at the time of the proposal, like being responsive to one's partner. These predictors might also reveal themselves in how people tell the story of their proposal. For example, if the proposer or proposee talks about the experience in positive terms, that may indicate high relationship quality, whereas negative terms may indicate low relationship quality. Or if a proposee has an idealized proposal in mind and their¹ partner meets that expectation, then they might believe that their partner values them. But if their partner fails to meet their expectations, then the proposee might believe that their partner does not value them, feelings that are associated with unhappy marriages and divorce (Derrick, Leonard, & Homish, 2012). Thus, research on marriage proposals may help to predict relationship outcomes. Understanding the social psychology of marriage proposals could also help to scientifically inform the 55-billion-dollar marriage industry.² The marriage industry benefits from surveys, such as those conducted by The Knot research group, that often cover topics like ring cost and traditionalism within proposals. However, this industry would also benefit from an in-depth

analysis of the content that people post online to determine what makes for a viral proposal (i.e., a popular proposal that is viewed by many people). The greater the audience, the greater the awareness of the company, and the greater the number of people who might use their services (especially their proposal planning services). The industry would also benefit from knowing the characteristics that make up, and differentiate, accepted and rejected proposals. Such data may help businesses to orchestrate a happily memorable proposal and avoid an unhappily memorable proposal. Satisfied customers may recommend their business and generate revenue for the company. Lay people would also benefit in knowing these characteristics so that they can know what to do and what to avoid, and how to explain the behaviours of others. For example, my preliminary research reveals that people prefer to have a private proposal (Hoplock, 2015). Knowing this might lead potential proposers to discuss the marriage proposal in advance to ensure that they meet their partner's needs. Moreover, knowing the characteristics of accepted and rejected proposals would help researchers make predictions, generate theory, and explain behaviour. In sum, there are diverse groups of people who would benefit from understanding more about marriage proposals.

What Do We Already Know About Proposals?

Research on marriage between men and women in Western cultures like the United States and Canada has revealed a variety of facts about marriage and the engagement process. These facts provide a background to the study of marriage proposals. They include how people propose, who gets married, why they get married, and when they get married. For example, we know that proposals sometimes take place in public settings like sporting events, but often take place in private with just the couple present (Moore, Kienzle, & Flood Grady, 2015; Ponzetti, 2005). We know that people choose to wait to get married if they have not found "Mr. or Mrs.

Right” or if they do not have the money for their ideal wedding, and we know that people often get engaged because they are in love (Harris & Parisi, 2008; Wiik, Bernhardt, & Novack, 2010). Moreover, we know that young adults’ ideal age of engagement is younger than their parents would prefer (Willoughby, Olson, Carroll, Nelson, & Miller, 2012). We also know that young adults today are getting married at older ages than previous generations (Milan, 2013). Additionally, we know that war is associated with an increase in marriage rates (Howard, 2003). Researchers have also documented the elements of the *proposal ritual* in great detail, and it is this body of literature that I turn to next.

The proposal ritual. One of the best frameworks for understanding and studying marriage proposals is to consider how the act might fit into the broader context of social rituals. Rituals are intentional and often formal behaviours that communicate social information (Rossano, 2012). Rituals help perpetuate and encourage socially agreed upon ways of behaving, providing a script for the behaviour of those involved in the ritual. Research on widely-performed rituals indicates that they tend to signal change and transition (Norton & Gino, 2014), and that they carry some cost or are difficult to engage in and thus carry great significance (e.g., Rossano, 2012). For example, participating in fraternity hazing publicly signals wanting to join the group and can sometimes involve deadly activities. Few rituals remain in modern Western culture.³ Those that do remain frequently involve the beginning and ending of close relationships, such as marriage, birth, and death. For example, Western mourning rituals usually involve intentionally dressing in black to signal bereavement and holding a formal ceremony, followed by a social gathering where people bond over the deceased (Lobar, Youngblut, & Brooten, 2006). At the formal ceremony, there is often a written program detailing the order of ceremonial events, those closest to the deceased often sit at the front of the room, several

speeches and poems are often read, and songs are often sung. It is quite socially acceptable to cry, speak softly, and give condolences to those closest to the deceased either at the formal ceremony or afterwards at the social event. Refreshments are often provided at the social event and memories are often shared. Engaging in mourning rituals such as these help people to reduce their grief (Fristad, Cerel, Goldman, Weller, & Weller, 2000) and feel in control (Norton & Gino, 2014). Engaging in rituals not only provides people with a sense of control because they provide a script for important life events, but rituals also communicate one's values and are a way to bond with others (Rossano, 2014).

Studying cultural rituals is important because it provides insight into the values that particular groups of people hold and allows researchers to understand how these values may change over time. In addition, rituals indicate how people connect with each other, particularly at important junctions in their lives. For example, when researchers studied the mourning ritual in Western culture, they learned which grieving and remembrance techniques were most helpful when grieving for a loved one (e.g., Vale-Taylor, 2009). Descriptive and empirical research on rituals has provided insight into everything from what motivates some people to put the needs of others above themselves (Ruffle & Sosis, 2007) to why people follow social norms (Rossano, 2012). Evidently, studying rituals can be important for furthering theory and empirical research and is a worthy area of study.

One incredibly common yet little understood ritual in Western society is the marriage proposal. The marriage proposal ritual guides the couple members' behaviour and tells others what is taking place. The traditional main elements of the proposal ritual are that the proposer asks the father of the proposee for permission, the proposer kneels on one knee when proposing, the proposer presents a ring to the proposee, and the proposer asks "Will you marry me?" (e.g.,

Schweingruber et al., 2004). Traditionally, the proposal is a surprise to the proposee, either being a “shock” surprise that comes out of the blue (e.g., a proposal that is written in the sky), or a “climax” surprise involving a slow buildup to the proposal over the course of the evening (e.g., the couple goes out for a nice dinner, then a carriage ride, then the proposal occurs; Vannini, 2004). The story of the proposal is something that the couple constructs together and shares repeatedly (Schweingruber et al., 2004), and becomes a cornerstone of the stories they will tell about their family in the future (Ponzetti, 2005). Because of cultural expectations and knowledge of the event’s significance, proposals can be quite romantic and explicitly designed to make for a good story (Vannini, 2004). If any of the ritualistic elements are lacking, especially if there is no ring, then the proposal is often seen as illegitimate by the couple’s social circle; although not necessarily by the couple themselves (Schweingruber, Cast, & Anahita, 2008). In other words, outsiders do not think the relationship is as strong if the couple does not follow the traditional proposal ritual, including following gender norms concerning the proposal ritual.

Traditional gender roles and norms strongly influence engagement and marriage rituals (e.g., Howard, 2003; Hunter, 2012; Pepin, Schindler Zimmerman, Fruhauf, & Banning, 2008; Robnett & Leaper, 2013). Most research concerning gender and the marriage proposal appears to examine norms within male-female couples that are presumed to be heterosexual (see Glass, 2014; Lucca & Bala, 2013 and Suter & Daas, 2007, for the exceptions). That is, while some researchers measure sexual orientation (e.g., Robnett & Leaper, 2013), it is unclear in other studies whether sexual orientation is measured or assumed based on the gender of the couple members (e.g., Hunter, 2012; Schweingruber et al., 2004). Therefore, I will refer to male-female couples throughout this review without assuming the sexual orientation of couple members.

In such couples, gender roles are often salient for men (Schweingruber et al., 2004). Men think about the meaning behind the proposal and what society says they ought to do (Hunter, 2012). Gender roles are often salient for women as well. Even though men are usually the first to say “I love you” (Ackerman, Griskevicius, & Li, 2011), women are often ready to get married first (e.g., Hunter, 2012; Parkin, 2012). Women indicate their readiness to their partner, then wait for him to be ready to propose because society says that men should propose not women. This period of waiting can be quite frustrating for many women, who may seek support from other women in the same situation. If a woman is ready to be married but her partner has not yet proposed, she may identify as a “lady-in-waiting.” Many popular online forums related to marriage, such as the diamond-buying forum PriceScope (*Ladies in Waiting*, n.d.) and the wedding planning forum Weddingbee (*Waiting*, n.d.) include sub-forums devoted to ladies-in-waiting where they can express their frustrations and offer social support to one another as they wait for their partner to be ready for marriage and to propose. Men are usually ready to propose within about six months of receiving hints or discussing it with their partner (Hunter, 2012). Women often play a role in planning the proposal by helping to choose the ring, for example, but the time when it actually occurs is usually kept a surprise (e.g., Schweingruber et al., 2004).

If the woman proposes, then it is often viewed as illegitimate (or a joke) by the partner and others, because it goes against tradition (e.g., Hunter, 2012). For example, in an episode of the television show *Friends*, basketball fans booed Phoebe when she proposed to her boyfriend at a basketball game and her boyfriend appeared embarrassed about the whole affair. At the start of the previous century, it was so unconventional for women to propose that a tradition was developed where it was acceptable for a woman to propose on leap year and on Sadie Hawkins Day (Parkin, 2012). This tradition is not followed as much presently, but between 1900 and

1970, February 29th was deemed an acceptable time for a woman to propose to a man (Parkin, 2012). However, the attitude towards female proposers was still ambivalent in this period: Media such as advertisements, postcards, and valentines often made fun of the convention, portraying the women who proposed as desperate and the men as eager to escape the situation (Parkin, 2012). These gender stereotypes – that women are desperate to marry and men do not want to be tied down – are still evident today. Social reinforcement helps perpetuate the script, so it may not be too surprising that many young men and women in this day and age still often hold traditional views of proposals and encourage traditionalism (i.e., following the script; Robnett & Leaper, 2013), regardless of social class (Hunter, 2012).⁴

Talking about marriage prior to the proposal seems to be an important, if stressful, part of the proposal ritual. Loving and colleagues (2009) found that discussing marriage for the first time is associated with elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol in both partners. However, couples who have previously discussed marriage are less physiologically aroused than couples discussing it for the first time. Therefore, talking about marriage more than once reduces the novelty and stress response, and may pave the way for the actual proposal by reducing fear and anxiety. Talking about marriage reduces ambiguity for the proposer because it gives the proposer a good idea of what their partner's response will be (Hunter, 2012). In fact, lay people often advise potential proposers to be 99% sure of their partner's response before proposing (e.g., idk2013, 2014).

Yet people who are unsure about committing to their partner long-term often avoid discussing relationship topics (Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004). Indeed, discussing the state or future of a romantic relationship is taboo for most couples (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004). The most commonly reported reason for this taboo is the

belief that such talks could hurt the relationship by highlighting partner-discrepancies in commitment. For example, it could be a sour note if one member wants to get married and the other does not. Partners may also avoid such “state of the union” conversations because they fear that their feelings could get hurt, because they think that it is not an efficient use of time and resources, because they believe that relationship outcomes are out of their control, and because they believe that such conversations will result in miscommunication (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985). Talking about where the relationship is going might give one’s partner the wrong impression about how close one wants to be and might lead one’s partner to think that one wants to change the state of the relationship. However, not talking about the state of the relationship also comes with its own costs, such as miscommunication due to different expectations between couple members. Thus, couple members must navigate diverse goals when it comes to discussing their relationship. Social-psychological perspectives may help to illuminate these goal processes.

A Social-Psychological Perspective on Marriage Proposals

Various academic disciplines study relationships and communication, and one such discipline is social psychology. The social-psychological perspective on these phenomena is different from other perspectives because it focuses on the bi-directional relation between an individual’s thoughts, feelings, goals, and behavior, and the broader social context in which the individual exists. Most research to date has been conducted by researchers in academic disciplines such as economics, law, and sociology and has examined how broad societal structures influence marriage proposals. For example, previous research on marriage proposals has focused on the laws around engagement and the engagement ring (e.g., Tushnet, 1998). To my knowledge, Robnett and Leaper (2012) are the only psychologists who have studied marriage proposals. Their research focused on how benevolent sexism (i.e., “the belief that women,

especially those who conform to traditional gender roles, should be protected and cherished by men” p.8) relates to preferences for traditionalism within proposals. They found that people who believed that men should put women on a pedestal preferred a more traditional marriage proposal. These results highlight how personal beliefs can influence desire for adherence to traditionalism within the ritual. However, there is still much to learn about the intrapersonal and interpersonal processes that characterize marriage proposals. The present dissertation will fill a gap in the literature by seeking to identify people’s interpersonal goals, thoughts, feelings, and behaviour during marriage proposals. I will also identify how these factors vary between accepted and rejected proposals, and between proposers and proposees. In regards to people’s goals, there are two kinds of goals that I believe are particularly relevant to marriage proposals.

Approach and avoidance goals. Goals are ideas or states of being that people strive to attain and motivation is what drives people to attain them (Elliot & Niesta, 2009). Goals influence behaviour (e.g., Gable, 2006). For example, someone could have the goal to get better sleep and so with this goal in mind, the person turns off electronic devices (e.g., laptops) two hours before bedtime. The idea or state of being that the person is striving towards is getting better sleep, and the behaviour affected is the use of electronic devices.

Although people can have myriad goals that range from immediate specific goals (e.g., “I want to end this conversation.”) to the long-term and general (e.g., “I want to have a happy life.”), psychologists have also identified two fundamental goal dimensions that can be used to organize and understand most goals: *approach* and *avoidance*. All life forms possess some sort of biological approach/avoidance mechanism, even amoeba (Elliot, 2008; Elliot & Niesta, 2009). This mechanism aids survival by motivating species to move towards, seek, or approach, stimuli that encourage survival and move away from, or avoid, stimuli that impede survival. For

instance, human infants (Bowlby, 1969) and macaque baby monkeys (Harlow, 1958) automatically seek proximity to caregivers when distressed. In other words, they approach caregivers when in need. Additionally, people automatically pull their hand away when they touch something hot. Thus, people pull away to avoid further pain.

In modern humans, the approach and avoidance mechanisms occupy distinct brain regions (Balconi, Falbo, & Conte, 2012). As such, approach and avoidance goals activate different parts of the human brain, and their function has evolved beyond mere survival (Elliot, 2008). For example, unlike infants who rely on their parents for survival, distressed adults do not need to seek physical proximity to caregivers for survival. However, adults still seek psychological and physical proximity with their attachment figures – the adult version of a “caregiver” – when they are upset (see Fraley & Shaver, 1998; Mikulincer, Birnbaum, Woddis, & Nachmias, 2000; Robinson, Hoplock, & Cameron, 2015 for examples). Seeking proximity to an attachment figure when one is a distressed adult may not be necessary for survival, but it is necessary for satisfying the fundamental need to belong, the satisfaction of which allows people to focus on other, higher-order goals. Thus, in modern humans the approach-avoidance system not only facilitates basic survival by helping people to approach physical safety and avoid physical threats, but it also helps to optimize human well-being by helping people to approach psychological safety and avoid psychological threats.

I suggest that these two goal dimensions can be applied to understand the social-psychology of marriage proposals. Approach and avoidance goals are affectively based (Elliot, Gable, & Mapes, 2006). Generally, people tend to be motivated to approach stimuli that they find enjoyable and avoid stimuli that they find aversive (Elliot, 2008). Because marriage proposals can be enjoyable or aversive, depending on whether the proposal is desired or not, it is

possible that approach and avoidance goals will be evident in people's behaviour during marriage proposals. What one person might find enjoyable (e.g., being proposed to in front of others) another person might find aversive, and so it is likely that people exhibit a range of approach and avoidance behaviours during marriage proposals. For example, a proposee who wants to get married may seek closeness with their partner after a proposal, and rush in for a hug or a kiss. In contrast, a proposee who does not want to get married may back away from their partner after a proposal. Situations involving relationships frequently include conflict between approach and avoidance goals (Cavallo, Murray, & Holmes, 2014). For example, a person who rejects a proposal might be motivated to approach their partner to console them, but might also be motivated to escape the situation. I will examine whether couple members' approach and avoidance goals vary according to whether the proposal is accepted or rejected (i.e., the *proposal outcome*). Taken together, the current research will capitalize on the social psychological literature to provide a new perspective on marriage proposals.

Research Overview

The present research will be guided by the literatures on marriage proposals, and approach and avoidance goals. My overarching goal with this project is to determine the characteristics of accepted and rejected marriage proposals, and what distinguishes the two. My goal is quite broad because I want to be open to the discovery of new information and ideas. I will address my research goal with confirmatory and exploratory hypotheses (see Table 1). For my confirmatory hypotheses (the Hs in Table 1), I have a pre-existing idea of what I will find based on extant literature. Therefore, I will use the literature to specify particular characteristics of marriage proposals or differences between proposal outcomes that I expect to observe. In contrast, for my exploratory hypotheses (EHs in Table 1), I do not have a pre-existing idea of what I will find based on literature and so my predictions are unspecific. My aim with the exploratory hypotheses is to *understand* the characteristics of marriage proposals or differences between proposal outcomes.

Table 1. *Summary of Hypotheses*

Exploratory and confirmatory hypotheses
<i>Couple characteristics</i>
EH1. Certain couple characteristics (e.g., age of couple members, relationship length) are associated with the proposal outcome (i.e., whether the proposal is accepted or rejected).
<i>Traditionalism and the presence of others</i>
H1. There will be many (i.e., 3-4) rather than few (i.e., 0-2) traditional behaviours performed regardless of proposal outcome.
EH2. Certain behaviours involved in a traditional marriage proposal (e.g., offering a ring, kneeling on one knee) are associated with the proposal outcome.
H2. There will be more people present during rejected than accepted proposals.
EH3. There is a relationship between audience type (i.e., who is present at the proposal- e.g., strangers, friends) and the proposal outcome.
<i>Approach and avoidance goals</i>
H3. Approach goals will decrease from pre- to post-proposal for both couple members during rejected proposals.
H4. Avoidance goals will increase from pre- to post-proposal for both couple members during rejected proposals.
H5. There will be higher approach goals at both time points for both couple members during accepted proposals compared to during rejected proposals.
H6. There will be lower avoidance goals at both time points for both couple members in accepted proposals compared to during rejected proposals.
EH4. Goal conflict between approach and avoidance goals is related to the proposal outcome.
<i>Talk in advance</i>
H7. Couples experiencing rejected proposals will be less likely to discuss marriage in advance of the proposal than couples experiencing accepted proposals.*

Note. * Introduced in Study 2.

I want to know if particular couple characteristics (e.g., age of couple members, relationship length) are associated with the proposal outcome (EH1). For example, people are getting married later in life than before (Milan, 2013) and worry about marrying too young (Sassler, 2004), and so perhaps people are less likely to accept a proposal when young.

Recall that there are four main ritualistic behaviours that the proposer engages in: Asking permission from the proposee's parent, kneeling, offering a ring, and asking "will you marry me?" Because traditional marriage proposal behaviours are important in Western society, I predict that there will be many (i.e., 3-4) rather than few (i.e., 0-2) traditional behaviours performed regardless of proposal outcome (H1). Additionally, I want to know whether certain behaviours involved in a traditional marriage proposal are particularly associated with the proposal outcome (EH2). According to Schweingruber and colleagues' research (e.g., 2004), the ring appears to be important to the ritual, because it demonstrates that the proposal is genuine. Therefore, it is possible that certain behaviours, such as offering a ring, are especially linked to the proposal outcome.

In addition, I predict that there will be differences across proposal outcomes in terms of who is present at the proposal. Proposals sometimes occur in public settings like sporting events, but often occur in private with just the couple present (Moore et al., 2015; Ponzetti, 2005). In fact, people generally prefer for proposals to occur in private (Hoplock, 2015). Because people who are unsure about committing to their partner long-term often avoid discussing relationship topics (Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004), like proposal preferences, and people may be unaware that private proposals are usually preferred, I hypothesize that there will be more people present during rejected than accepted proposals (H2). Additionally, I want to know whether there is a relationship between the audience type (i.e., who is present at the proposal- e.g., strangers, friends) and the proposal outcome (EH3). Friends and family are a source of support and their involvement in a proposal, whether it be by being there or by helping with preparation, may be linked to whether the proposal is accepted or rejected.

My hypotheses concerning approach and avoidance goals were mostly confirmatory. Although common sense suggests this might be obvious, it is still useful to empirically validate common sense. I predict that couples experiencing rejected proposals will display different levels of approach and avoidance behaviour than couples experiencing accepted proposals. Specifically, for rejected proposals, I predict that approach goals will decrease from pre- to post-proposal for both couple members (H3). For example, for rejected proposals, I might observe that couple members hug and kiss each other before the proposal, but then do not show affection for each other after the proposal. I also predict that avoidance goals will increase from pre- to post-proposal for both couple members (H4). For example, I might observe that couple members do not pull away from each others' touch before the proposal, but do pull away from each other after the proposal. For accepted proposals, I predict that there will be higher approach goals and lower avoidance goals at both time points for both couple members in comparison to couple members experiencing rejected proposals (H5 and H6). For example, I might observe that couple members experiencing accepted proposals hug and kiss each other before and after the proposal much more than couple members experiencing rejected proposals. I might also observe no pulling away from each others' touch before and after the proposal in comparison to couple members experiencing rejected proposals.

Additionally, it is possible that people experience high approach and high avoidance goals simultaneously within marriage proposals. For instance, a proposee who rejects their partner may waver between consoling their partner and escaping the situation. I want to know if this goal conflict varies between proposal outcomes (EH4). For example, proposees who reject a proposal may experience greater goal conflict after the proposal than proposees who accept a proposal, because proposees who reject a proposal may be uncertain of what to do in the

situation (approach or avoid their partner), whereas proposees who accept a proposal may be certain of what to do (approach their partner). Rejecting a proposal is not part of the proposal script. Thus, couples experiencing a rejected proposal may experience greater goal conflict than couples experiencing an accepted proposal.

Overview of Research Methods

To test these hypotheses, I conducted a content analysis of marriage proposal videos and first-person written accounts found online. As the name implies, content analysis involves systematically examining the content of stimuli for whatever is of interest to the researcher (e.g., Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). For example, a researcher could examine the content of narratives, fictional novels, and movies for themes, language use, and structure. It all depends on the research question. Stimuli like movies are also cultural products, which are products that people create that are influenced by their culture (Cross & Markus, 1999). Content analysis of cultural products like proposal videos or written accounts is important because it provides a snapshot of what life is like in a particular culture at a particular point in time.

Previous research on marriage proposals has used interviews with couple members (e.g., Hunter, 2012; Schweingruber et al., 2004) and has analyzed online written accounts of proposals (Vannini, 2004), but has yet to analyze video. A strength of analyzing marriage proposal videos is that they provide a rich sense of what occurs within the ritual. For example, who is present, how people behave, and often even the time of year can be judged quickly based on video. Marriage proposal videos provide objective insight into how proposals are performed without the pitfalls of biases in memory and perception that accompany other methods of recalling proposals, but lack insight into the couples' thoughts and motivations. Written accounts may be subjective and inaccurate, but provide insight into thoughts and motivation. Thus, the video and text

formats that I will use in Study 1 and 2 respectively complement each other by providing different windows into behaviour. Using multiple methods to understand marriage proposals is a strength of this dissertation.

In brief, with the help of trained research assistants, I will code videos from YouTube.com and written accounts from the sites Reddit.com and WeddingBee.com. People often post videos of marriage proposals on YouTube. On the written forums, people often pose questions like “have you ever turned down a proposal?” or “what was your proposal like?” To code the stimuli, I will use both a deductive method where I use existing theory and assumptions to create and test the a-priori hypotheses outlined in Table 1, as well as an inductive method where I will explore the data and use the data to generate a picture of what is occurring. Using both methods will allow me to provide a detailed picture of the similarities and differences between accepted and rejected proposals.

For the deductive method, I will use coding scales that I have constructed as well as scales that have been used in prior research to test my hypotheses and answer my research question. The results of this coding will allow me to determine the mathematical relationships between concepts, which is a strength to this method. A limitation to this method is that it is constraining. I will use an inductive method to capture insights that I might miss with the deductive method. For the inductive method, I will use Corbin and Strauss’ (2008) comparative coding method to derive themes from the data. Comparative coding involves looking for themes in the data and making sense of the data by creating categories, comparing and contrasting categories to each other and to the data, and condensing the categories into meaningful themes. For example, Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe a study of theirs where they examined the accounts of war veterans, created categories such as “the war experience,” compared the

categories within and across accounts, and condensed them to create overarching themes such as the “evolving meaning of war.” This method is frequently used by researchers looking to use inductive methods (Charmaz & Henwood, 2010) and can be used by those who are not classically trained in qualitative research. A limitation to using a qualitative method is that the method is flexible and so the researcher can become overwhelmed by the data (e.g., Corbin & Strauss, 2008). However, choosing a specific method, such as the comparative coding method, helps to provide structure and make analysis seem more manageable. Combining various methods will provide me with new insight into marriage proposals.

Potential Contributions of This Research

The present dissertation has the potential to fill multiple gaps in knowledge. Primarily, it will illuminate the characteristics of rejected proposals and the relationships in which rejected proposals occur. Currently no literature on rejected proposals exists, despite their potential commonness and despite their potential impact on the self and well-being. Additionally, we know from the marriage literature that people decide to marry for diverse reasons, such as being in love (e.g., Wiik et al., 2010). However, we do not know if motivations behind proposing differ between men whose proposal is rejected compared to accepted. Understanding motivations behind proposing will help researchers to create theory, predict behaviour, and develop interventions aimed at improving relationships. Studying rejected proposals is also important because knowing how couples navigate rejection, particularly in terms of whether or not they stay together, will help researchers to better understand and predict behaviour. Thus, the present dissertation is an important first step towards understanding the nature and circumstances involved in rejected proposals. Combined with the theoretical and practical benefits of this research that I described previously, including identifying characteristics that might be associated

with relationship success and proposal outcomes, the present dissertation has the potential to make a positive impact on the state of knowledge within relationship science, the wedding industry, and the general public.

Study 1

Study 1 tests my hypotheses outlined previously regarding traditionalism, the presence of other people at the proposal, and couple members' approach and avoidance goals within the proposal (see Table 1). Specifically, I will test the confirmatory hypotheses that there will be many rather than few traditional behaviours performed regardless of proposal outcome (H1) and that there will be more people present during rejected proposals than accepted proposals (H2). I will also test the confirmatory hypotheses that during rejected proposals, couple members' approach goals will decrease and their avoidance goals will increase across time (H3 and H4); and that couple members will have higher approach goals and lower avoidance goals across time during accepted proposals compared to during rejected proposals (H5 and H6). Moreover, I will test exploratory hypotheses relating couple characteristics (EH1), traditionalism (EH2), the audience type (EH3), and couple members' goal conflict (EH4) to the proposal outcome. To address these research goals, I will analyze marriage proposal videos. This study will be a methodological contribution to the literature, because researchers have yet to use marriage proposal videos as a way of understanding proposals. As mentioned previously, analyzing proposal videos will allow me to get an objective view of proposals that is not biased by an account writer's memory, perspective, or motivation.

Methods

Data Collection

To gather my stimuli for coding, two research assistants and I searched YouTube.com for search terms such as “marriage proposal” and “proposal rejected.” We semi-randomly selected videos to code from the search results and from the recommended videos tied to the search results. Other researchers have selected every fourth or fifth YouTube video (e.g., Lange, Daniel, Homer, Reed, & Clapp, 2010). Therefore, we aimed to select every third video that met the criteria while ensuring that we included videos from the full range of possibilities, including the less viewed/lower rated videos. Sometimes people upload videos of fake proposals to YouTube. Any videos that were found to be fake (e.g., by examining a sports company’s website if the proposal took place at a sports game) were excluded from the sample. Unfortunately, the number of legitimate rejected videos was much lower than expected given the number of results returned in the searches, thus every seemingly-legitimate rejected proposal video found was included in the sample. Because people upload new videos daily, we, like other researchers (e.g., Gao Hamzah, Yiu, McGrath, & King, 2013; Weaver, Zelenkauskaitė, & Samson, 2012; Yoo & Kim, 2012), limited the video search to a limited time frame (August 22 – September 7, 2014). We used certain selection criteria borrowed from other studies involving YouTube to narrow down the focus (e.g., Gao et al., 2013). The selection criteria included excluding duplicate videos, videos with poor quality, videos from a movie or scripted TV (although proposals that were covered on the news were retained), videos that contained only the perspectives of professionals, videos that were not in English, videos that did not involve a marriage proposal (i.e., were irrelevant, like a “prom proposal”), and videos that involved people who appeared to be over the

age of 50. People over the age of 50 could potentially be different than those who are younger, and we were unlikely to get a large enough sample of them to test for differences.

I focused my attention on couples who appeared to be composed of men and women, because there were more proposal videos on YouTube featuring these couples than other types of couples. In fact, I did not find any rejected proposal videos involving same-gender couples. We coded gender based on couple members' masculine or feminine physical appearance (e.g., facial features, clothing style), pronoun usage, and vocal characteristics, although this is admittedly an imperfect method because gender and gender-presentation are not synonymous (Lenning, 2009). I discuss this methodological limitation in the General Discussion section.

To achieve adequate statistical power, I aimed to have at least 20 videos per item coded for each video, comprising 10 videos involving accepted proposals and 10 videos involving rejected proposals. Ideally one should have at least 10 participants, or in this case, videos, per item when conducting factor analyses, which I describe shortly (A. Piccinin, personal communication, 2011). Additionally, a-priori sample size calculations for the mixed-model ANOVAs that I conducted indicated that to detect a medium-sized Cohen's f^2 of 0.15 with a desired statistical power level of 0.80 and a probability level of 0.05, I would need a minimum sample size of 56 videos in total (Soper, n.d.). There were 19 items to be coded for each video at the time that I was estimating my required sample size. Therefore, I aimed to collect a sample size of 400 videos (i.e., 10 videos per item to be coded X 20 items to be coded X 2 proposal outcomes [accepted vs. rejected proposals] = 400 videos).⁵ I also aimed to oversample rejected proposals, because I believed them to be more rare than accepted proposals and oversampling would facilitate examination of the avoidance processes that would probably be more likely to occur during rejected proposals than accepted proposals.

Unfortunately, I was only able to obtain a sample of 40 seemingly legitimate rejected videos. Many of the rejected videos on YouTube consist of pranks or advertising stunts. Therefore, the statistical analyses reported involving rejected proposals should be interpreted with caution. Fortunately, I was able to gather extra videos of accepted proposals to make up for the lack of rejected proposal videos and increase the power of my research. I gathered 252 videos of accepted proposals. I assigned the videos an ID so that they would not be associated with a username. The total sample consisted of 292 videos.

Coding the Proposal Videos

One element that needed consideration was whether to code the behaviour of the proposer, the proposee, or both couple members. Previous literature has focused on both couple members (e.g., Hunter, 2012), and because the interactions are between two people and not one-sided, I decided that it would be important to also focus on both couple members. I also needed to decide whether instances of behaviours would be timed, counted, and/or rated on a Likert-type scale (Baesler & Burgoon, 1987; Scherer & Eckman, 1982). Timing and counting behaviours are often seen as more objective and can lead to higher reliability than Likert scale ratings, however they can miss out on the humanistic aspect of the data (Baesler & Burgoon, 1987). Keeping this in mind, I noted how others coded the behaviours and decided to follow the recommendations from Baesler and Burgoon (1987) to do a combination of the above. Thus, some behaviours were rated and others were counted.

All coding was conducted with the sound on. Coders other than myself were unaware of the study's hypotheses. I had five teams of coders (see Appendix A for a summary table of coding information). The number of people on each team varied depending on coder availability for training and ranged from 3-8 coders. To ensure good inter-rater reliability, coders were

trained using a few example videos. The example videos were from the sample, included accepted and rejected proposals, and were chosen because they illustrated various levels of the coding scales. All coders on a particular team were trained together so that everyone heard the same information. Example behaviours were pointed out and discussed. Coders were encouraged to use the full range of the scale and to make their ratings independently. If it was unclear whether or not the item was present, then the item was left blank on the coding sheet and treated as missing in the data file.

Coders completed the coding on their own time. They were instructed to limit potential distractions when coding (e.g., to not have the television playing) and to code when they were not extremely tired. They were also instructed to limit the coding to four hours maximum to avoid coder fatigue. Coders were provided access to the videos after training (i.e., they were sent a link to the depository that held the videos) and were allowed to view the videos as many times as needed to make their ratings. Teams 2 – 4 were instructed to send me their first 40 ratings by a certain date and not proceed with coding until I checked the team's interrater reliability. If reliability was low, then the team met for another training session and discussion. This training session included seven new coding videos of accepted proposals from YouTube.com that were not included in the sample and one video of an accepted proposal that was included in the sample but had not yet been coded (I did not realize that the video was part of the sample when I retrieved it online and used it during training). Coding schemes were adjusted at this point if necessary. Teams that needed additional training re-coded the initial 40 videos and were again instructed to send me their next 40 ratings (i.e., the ratings for the first 80 videos) by a certain date and not proceed with coding until I checked the team's interrater reliability. No teams needed additional training after this point.

Basic coding. The two research assistants who helped collect the videos also helped with the basic coding. We conducted this coding to get a sense of the sample and to address EH1. Following previous research (e.g., Thorson et al., 2013; Yoo & Kim, 2012), we first noted how many views each video had at the time of data collection, the country of origin, when the video was posted, the length of the video, the number of times the video was rated, and the number of “thumbs up” and “thumbs down” the video received (see Appendix B for coding schemes). We also subtracted the number of “thumbs down” from the number of “thumbs up” to get a total rating score. Furthermore, we noted the location of the proposal (e.g., whether it took place in a shopping mall), the proposer’s gender, the approximate ages of each couple member, and I noted the approximate relationship length if mentioned.

Coding traditionalism and the presence of others. To address H1-2 and EH2-3, I coded the videos for traditionalism and the presence of others (see Appendix C for coding schemes). I coded the variables described in this section for the complete set of sampled videos (my ratings are used in the reported results). The other three members of Team 1 coded the first 60 accepted videos and all of the rejected videos (34% of the sample) as a reliability check. Krippendorff’s alpha was calculated to determine reliability between myself and the other coders for all ratings in this section. Two advantages of Krippendorff’s alpha are that it can be used when there is missing data and it can be used with an unlimited number of observers (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). One of the coders did not complete all 60 of the ratings for accepted proposals and results of the reliability analyses were improved when this person was excluded. Therefore, this person’s ratings were excluded from the reported alphas.

For the present research, *traditionalism* was operationalized as the proposer engaging in the specific proposal ritual behaviours. Therefore, Team 1 coders noted whether the proposer

knelt on one knee, presented a ring to the proposee, indicated that they asked the father or parents of the proposee for permission, and/or asked “will you marry me?” (Schweingruber et al., 2004). These behaviours were dummy-coded to indicate the absence of the item (0) or the presence of the item (1). Traditionalism items were then summed to create a total *traditionalism* score ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 0.60$; $ICC = .88$; Feng, 2015). Higher numbers indicate that the proposal was more traditional.

Who was present at the proposal and the approximate number of others present were noted, when possible. The audience type (i.e., people in general, friend, family member, stranger) was dummy coded such that the absence of the specific person(s) was coded with a zero (0) and their presence was coded with a one (1).⁶ The approximate *number of others present* was rated on a scale (1 = 0 others present, 7 = 101 or more others present) and scored so that higher ratings indicated a greater number of people present at the proposal. Krippendorff’s alphas ranged from .17 to .92 (asking “will you marry me?” had the lowest reliability; all of the rest were .52 or higher).⁷

Coding approach and avoidance goals. Teams 2 – 4 rated the videos on characteristics that reflect approach and avoidance goals to address H3-6 and EH4 (see Table 2 for variable names and example items; see Appendix C for coding schemes). Albeit imperfect (as will be described shortly), the characteristics were chosen based on the goal literature as reflecting approach and avoidance (e.g., Elliot & Niesta, 2009). Impressions can be formed in a very short period of time (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). Therefore, to ease coder fatigue and reduce variability due to video length, Teams 2 – 4 based their coding on the 30 seconds leading up to the proposal (i.e., the proposer saying or showing “Will you marry me?”) and the 30 seconds after the proposal. Videos were edited to make coding easier and consistent across teams. Thus,

each proposal video was split into two videos: one that contained the 30 seconds leading up to the proposal and one that contained the 30 seconds after the proposal. If the proposer did not say the words or there was no written indicator (e.g., the question was not written in the sky), the point at which the proposer engaged in any other component of the ritual (e.g., knelt on one knee) acted as the cut point. Proposal ritual components make for good cut points because traditional behaviour is often present during Western proposals (e.g., Schweingruber et al., 2004).

Table 2. *Coding Teams, Variable Names, Sample Items, and Scales for Approach and Avoidance Goals in Study 1*

Coding team	Goal	Variable name	Sample item	Scale
2	Approach	Positive affect	Smiling, laughing	(1 = <i>never</i> , 4 = <i>sometimes</i> , 7 = <i>always</i>)
	Avoidance	Negative affect	Harsh tone or facial expression	(1 = <i>never</i> , 4 = <i>sometimes</i> , 7 = <i>always</i>)
	Unsure	Nervousness	Fidgeting	(1 = <i>never</i> , 4 = <i>sometimes</i> , 7 = <i>always</i>)
	Approach	Positive reciprocity	Overall positivity and warmth in the couple	(1 = <i>never</i> , 4 = <i>sometimes</i> , 7 = <i>always</i>)
	Avoidance	Negative reciprocity	Criticism towards each other	(1 = <i>never</i> , 4 = <i>sometimes</i> , 7 = <i>always</i>)
3	Approach	Touch	Do the proposer and proposee touch?	(0 = <i>no</i> , 1 = <i>yes</i>)
	Approach	Seek touch	Does the Proposer seek touch?	(1 = <i>never</i> , 4 = <i>sometimes</i> , 7 = <i>always</i>)
	Approach	Touch intimacy	How intimate is the touching of the Proposer?	(1 = <i>not at all intimate</i> , 4 = <i>somewhat intimate</i> , 7 = <i>extremely intimate</i>)
	Avoidance	Pull away	Does the Proposer pull away when touched?	(1 = <i>never</i> , 4 = <i>sometimes</i> , 7 = <i>always</i>)
	Approach and Avoidance goal conflict	Distance variation	Does the Proposer vary in distance in relation to their partner throughout the interaction?	(1 = <i>no variability</i> , 4 = <i>some variability</i> , 7 = <i>a lot of variability</i>)
4	Approach	Body openness	How open is the Proposer's body posture?	(1 = <i>closed</i> , 4 = <i>somewhat open</i> , 7 = <i>open</i>)

Team 2 had eight coders; therefore, four coders rated the proposer and the other four coders rated the proposee. To tap into the affective component of approach and avoidance goals, Team 2 used a modified version of the Brief Romantic Relationship Interaction Coding Scheme (Humbad, Donnellan, Klump, & Burt, 2011). This coding scheme examines global positive and negative affect exhibited by both members of a dyad as well as the overall positive and negative reciprocity within the dyad. I modified the scheme to include mention of non-verbal affection and to give nervousness its own category, because couple members are likely nervous during proposals. Average intraclass correlations (ICCs; Feng, 2015) ranged from .83 to .97.

Because of their smaller numbers, all members of Teams 3 (five coders) and 4 (three coders) rated both couple members. Teams 3 and 4 first watched all of the videos and rated the proposer, then they re-watched the videos while rating the proposee. Teams 3 and 4 rated a variety of behaviours tapping into the behavioural component of approach and avoidance goals. For example, *seek touch* represents an approach goal and *pull away* represents an avoidance goal. *Distance variation* represents conflict between approach and avoidance goals. All items were rated on 7-point Likert-type scales except for Team 3's dichotomous rating of whether or not couple members touched. I used the mode to combine coders' responses into a *touch* variable for before the proposal (56.6% couples touched) and after the proposal (92.1% couples touched). I used the average to combine coders' other responses. ICCs ranged from .74 to .93.⁸

Factor analyses for approach and avoidance goals. Using the program AMOS, I conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Maximum Likelihood on the behaviours that I believe reflect approach and avoidance goals (see Figure 1). Research indicates that approach and avoidance goals are uncorrelated (Gable, 2006). Thus, I specified a multidimensional model with uncorrelated factors. Results indicated a poor fit, $\chi^2(20) =$

1236.87, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .46, CFI = .70. Therefore, I examined the modification indices (Furr & Bacharach, 2013). These indicated that model fit would be improved if the approach and avoidance factors were allowed to be correlated. To explore the relationship between variables further, I conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

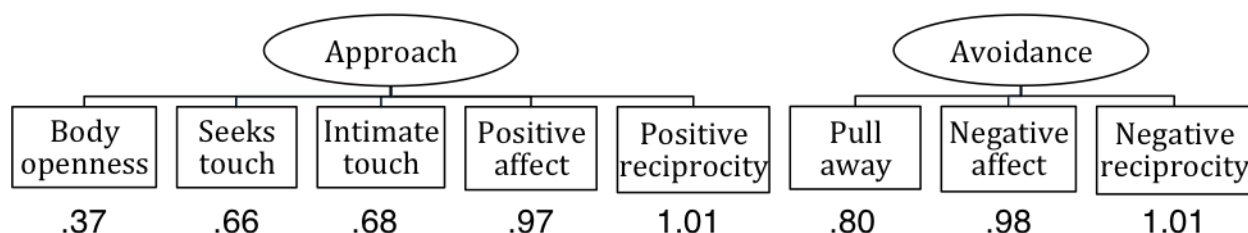


Figure 1. Multidimensional model with uncorrelated dimensions depicting relation of approach and avoidance goals to items in the coding scheme.

Note. Numbers are standardized regression weights, all significant at $p < .001$.

I also ran the EFA to determine whether the nervousness and distance variation items should be included in the measure. Nervousness, distance variation, pull away, negative affect, and negative reciprocity were reverse-scored to make all correlations positive (see Russell, 2002 for similar). Following Furr and Bacharach (2013), I chose the unrotated Principal Axis Factoring extraction method and identified the number of factors by looking for the largest drop off and leveling off on the scree plot, and for the highest percentage of variance explained. There was one main factor that explained 60% of the variance, instead of the two hypothesized factors.

Conceptually, approach and avoidance motives are separate concepts (e.g., Elliot, 2008). However, it is difficult to distinguish the two when coding behaviour, because two people can

engage in the same behaviour (e.g., seeking another's touch) for different reasons. For example, one person could seek touch because they have an approach goal and want to experience a reward, like connection to their partner, and another person could seek touch because they have an avoidance goal and want to avoid a cost, like their partner's potential negative affect. Indeed, examining the factor loadings of the EFA indicated that all items loaded onto the one factor above the recommended cutoff of .30 (e.g., Costello & Osborne, 2005), except for distance variation (see Table 3). As mentioned previously, I think that distance variation best represents conflict between approach and avoidance goals; therefore it makes sense that it did not load highly onto the single factor. Leaving distance variation on its own, I combined the remaining approach and (reverse-scored) avoidance items into one measure.

Table 3. *Unrotated Factor Loadings of Approach and Avoidance Goal Items From Principal Axis Factoring Analysis in Study 1*

Variable	Factor loading
Body openness	.47
Seeks touch	.72
Intimate touch	.75
Positive affect	.94
Positive reciprocity	.97
Pull away-reverse-scored	.77
Distance variation-reverse-scored	.17
Negative affect-reverse-scored	.95
Negative reciprocity-reverse-scored	.95
Nervousness-reverse-scored	.52

The resultant measure included body openness, seeks touch, intimate touch, positive affect, positive reciprocity, reverse-scored pull away, reverse-scored negative affect, reverse-scored negative reciprocity, and reverse-scored nervousness ($M_{\text{women}} = 5.19$, $SD = .88$; $M_{\text{men}} = 5.25$, $SD = .67$; $\alpha = .92$). I called this *connection motivation*. *Connection motivation* is the motivation to be close with a partner, and is evidenced by either high levels of connecting behaviours or low levels of avoidance behaviours (Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). In light of the new measure, I revised H3 and H5, and dropped H4 and H6. Instead, I predicted that connection motivation would decrease from pre- to post-proposal for couple members during rejected proposals (revised H3), and would be higher across time for couple members during accepted proposals compared to during rejected proposals (revised H5).

Thematic coding. In addition to coding traditionalism and the presence of others, Team 1 also conducted thematic coding. Our goal was to determine the characteristics of rejected and accepted proposals. We did so by watching 40 full-length videos of rejected proposals and 40 full-length videos of accepted proposals. Using Corbin and Strauss' (2008) constant comparative technique, the coders and I independently watched the videos, noted themes that arose, and categorized them. For example, strong displays of emotion were categorized under Emotion and shaking hands were categorized under Adrenaline. We analyzed rejected and accepted proposals separately to ensure that we did not overlook anything unique to either proposal outcome. We then met, discussed our categorizations, and refined them. We then coded 20 more videos of accepted proposals (because there were no more videos of rejected proposals) and further refined the categorizations by creating overarching themes. To add some quantitative insight into this qualitative approach, I then quantified the presence of some categories. The results of this coding informed the themes presented at the end of the results section.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Video characteristics. The ranges and standard deviations for how many people viewed the videos, rated them, and how they were rated were wide (see Table 4). Thus, the videos included in the sample were not just limited to those that had the most views or were the highest rated.

Table 4. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Range of Video Characteristics in Study 1*

Variable	n	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Number of people who viewed the video	292	4	30618152	608526.61	2181270.10
Video length in minutes	292	0.12	11.67	3.79	2.23
Ratings score	290	-50	200216	2465.78	12716.79
Thumbs up	288	0	204799	2583.03	13085.62
Thumbs down	287	0	4583	103.36	360.69
Number of times video was rated	291	0	209382	2657.98	13346.76
Approximate age of proposer	291	19	50	27.59	3.30
Approximate age of proposee	292	19	50	26.74	3.41
Relationship length	63	0.04	8.00	3.49	2.03

In this study, the participants are the people who appear in the proposal videos. It was not possible or appropriate for outside observers to determine the participants' race/ethnicity based only on their appearance in the videos. However, I do know that 96% of the proposals took place in Canada or the United States, and the remaining proposals most often occurred in the United Kingdom or Australia, because this information was available on the website. Addressing EH1, a t-test indicated that proposers whose proposal was rejected appeared to be similar in age ($M_{\text{rejected}} = 27.22$ years, $SD_{\text{rejected}} = 5.51$, $n = 40$) to proposers whose proposal was accepted ($M_{\text{accepted}} =$

27.65 years, $SD_{\text{accepted}} = 2.81$, $n = 251$), $M_{\text{diff}} = -0.42$, 95% CI [-2.22, 1.37], $t(42.28) = -0.48$, $p = .636$, $d = .10$. Similarly, proposees who rejected a proposal appeared to be similar in age ($M_{\text{rejected}} = 25.93$ years, $SD_{\text{rejected}} = 5.57$, $n = 40$) to proposees who accepted a proposal ($M_{\text{accepted}} = 26.87$ years, $SD_{\text{accepted}} = 2.93$, $n = 252$), $M_{\text{diff}} = -0.94$, 95% CI [-2.76, 0.88], $t(42.48) = -1.04$, $p = .302$, $d = .21$. As noted previously, gender was coded based on the social presentation of the person. The majority of proposers appeared to be men (97.6%), and the majority of proposees appeared to be women (97.6%; recall that we selected what appeared to be couples comprised of men and women). The proposers who appeared to be women were evenly distributed between rejected ($n = 4$) and accepted ($n = 3$) proposals. Most couples did not mention how long they were dating in the videos. However, for those couples who did describe relationship length, there were couples who had dated for a very short period of time (the shortest times mentioned in the videos were two weeks for rejected and five months for accepted) and there were couples who had dated for a very long period of time (the longest times mentioned were five years for rejected and eight years for accepted). Because only 11 couples mentioned their relationship length in the rejected videos, I could not test whether relationship length varied by proposal outcome.

Only seven proposals involved women proposing to their partner. This demonstrates how important the “man is the proposer” component of the ritual can be for couples who post their videos online. Women proposing might mean something different to the couple because it subverts tradition. Including couples where the woman proposes in the sample might obfuscate their unique experiences, but there were not enough couples where the woman proposed to be able to get a sense (statistically and qualitatively) of what differences may exist. Therefore, the results presented below exclude proposals where women proposed. I return to this issue in the General Discussion. Given that men were always the proposer and women always the proposee

in the analyses that follow, I will refer to men's and women's behaviour in place of the terms 'proposer' and 'proposee' to facilitate reader comprehension.

Traditionalism and the presence of others. The descriptive statistics for the traditionalism and presence of others items are in Tables 5, 6, and 7. Mirroring Schweingruber and colleagues (2004), most men knelt on one knee, presented a ring, and asked the question, however few mentioned whether the woman's parent was asked for permission. Additionally, people were often present during the proposals. Readers might assume that marriage proposal videos posted on YouTube are all extremely public. Yet there were 21 proposals where only the couple members were present and there were just 59 proposals where there appeared to be more than 101 people present. These findings suggest that many different types of proposals are posted on YouTube and thus the results to follow can potentially be generalized to many different types of proposals.

Table 5. *Frequency of Traditionalism by Proposal Outcome in Study 1*

Proposal outcome	Traditionalism			
	Bend on one knee	Offer ring	Asked for permission	Asked question
Rejected proposal	30 (83.3%)	27 (75%)	0 (0%)	30 (83.3%)
Accepted proposal	229 (92%)	245 (98.4%)	14 (5.6%)	228 (91.6%)

Note. Percentage of sample within the proposal outcome is presented in parentheses.

Table 6. *Frequency of the Presence of Others by Proposal Outcome in Study 1*

Proposal outcome	Presence of others			
	Presence of others in general	Strangers present	Family present	Friends present
Rejected proposal	34 (94.4%)	26 (72.2%)	2 (5.6%)	13 (36.1%)
Accepted proposal	229 (92.3%)	118 (47.6%)	88 (35.5%)	87 (35.1%)

Note. Percentage of sample within the proposal outcome is presented in parentheses.

Table 7. *Frequency of the Approximate Number of Others Present Besides the Couple Members in Study 1*

	0	2 or less	5 or less	10 or less	50 or less	100 or less	101 or more
Frequency	21	12	13	31	77	35	59
(% of sample)	(8.5%)	(4.8%)	(5.2%)	(12.5%)	(31%)	(14.1%)	(23.8%)

Using Field's (2013) recommendations, I conducted Pearson chi-square analyses to assess the relationships between the total traditionalism score and each audience type (i.e., who was present at the proposal), as well as each traditional behaviour and each audience type. I report the Fisher's exact test results whenever the expected frequency of a category is below 5, which can happen when sample size is small. This test gives the exact chi-square probability for a small sample size (Field, 2013). The total traditionalism score was unrelated to the presence of others in general and to the audience type. When looking at each traditional behaviour, kneeling on one knee was the only variable that was associated with any audience type. Kneeling on one knee was associated with the presence of others in general, $\chi^2(1) = 11.04, p = .006$, Cramer's $V = .20, p = .006$, Fisher's exact $p = .006$. The odds of the man kneeling were 5.14 times higher if the proposal was in public compared to private. Kneeling on one knee is an obvious signal of the intention to propose and I noticed that the audience encouraged it.

Main Analyses

Traditionalism and the presence of others. I tested the hypothesis that there would be many (i.e., 3-4) rather than few (i.e., 0-2) traditional behaviours performed regardless of proposal outcome (H1) using chi-square analyses. Recall that the traditional behaviours coded included kneeling on one knee, offering a ring, asking the woman's parent for permission, and asking "will you marry me?". I examined the relationship between the total traditionalism score and proposal outcome. Supporting H1, 53% of men whose proposal was rejected and 80% of men whose proposal was accepted performed three out of these four traditional behaviours. To ease calculation of the odds of performing many vs. few traditional behaviours, I ran a chi-square analysis with traditionalism split into many (3-4 behaviours) vs. few (0-2 behaviours) traditional

behaviours performed. The odds of performing many vs. few traditional behaviours for rejected proposals were 1.12, and for accepted proposals the odds were 5.73.

To help answer my research question, I returned to the analysis involving the total traditionalism score and looked at whether traditionalism varied by proposal outcome. Men whose proposal was rejected performed fewer traditional behaviours than men whose proposal was accepted, $\chi^2(3) = 23.03, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .28, p < .001$, Fisher's exact $p < .001$. Thus, while proposals were all traditional, accepted proposals were more traditional than rejected proposals. Furthermore, when testing whether certain behaviours were particularly associated with the proposal outcome (EH2), I found that the behaviour that matters most is offering a ring, $\chi^2(1) = 39.54, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .37, p < .001$, Fisher's exact $p < .001$. The odds of being accepted were 20.42 times higher if the man offered a ring compared to if he did not offer a ring. The high rates of men in both proposal outcomes who offered a ring (see Table 5), demonstrate that the ring is an integral component to the proposal ritual, so much so that the very success of the proposal depends on the presence of the ring.

I next tested the hypothesis that there would be more people present at rejected proposals than accepted proposals (H2). Proposal outcome was unrelated to the presence of others in general, $\chi^2(1) = 0.20, p = .754$, Cramer's $V = .03, p = .754$, Fisher's exact $p = 1.000$. The percentages of proposals that had other people present were above 90% for both proposal outcomes (see Table 6). However, as expected, the approximate number of people present differed by proposal outcome, $\chi^2(6) = 16.67, p = .012$, Cramer's $V = .26, p = .012$, Fisher's exact $p = .007$ (see Figure 2). Indeed, almost half (46.9%) of rejected proposals had 101 or more people present, compared to just one fifth (20.4%) of accepted proposals, $M_{diff} = 0.27$, 95% CI [0.08, 0.45], $t(37.05) = 2.83, p = .008, d = 0.59$. Moreover, addressing EH3 regarding audience

type, strangers were more likely to be present during rejected proposals than during accepted proposals, $\chi^2(1) = 7.64, p = .007$, Cramer's $V = .16, p = .007$, and the odds of being rejected were 2.86 times higher if the proposal was in front of strangers. In contrast, accepted proposals were more likely to take place in the presence of family than rejected proposals, $\chi^2(1) = 13.01, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .21, p < .001$, and the odds of being accepted were 9.35 higher if the proposal was in front of family. Thus, although both rejected and accepted proposals on YouTube took place in front of other people, the rejected proposals took place in front of large groups of strangers, whereas accepted proposals took place in front of small groups of family. Taken together, these results paint a vivid picture of an important difference between rejected and accepted proposals that are posted on YouTube.

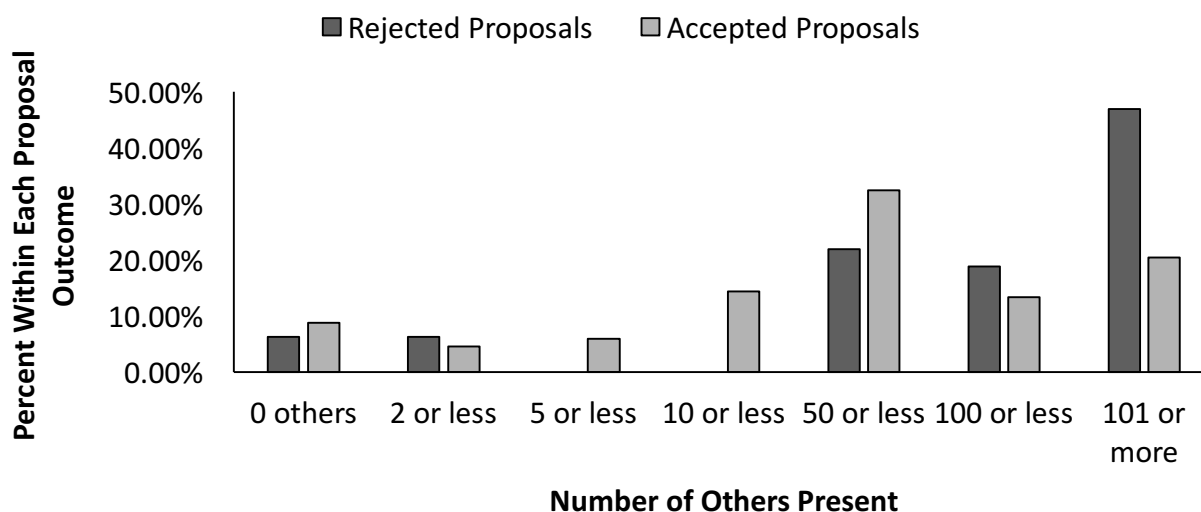


Figure 2. Percent of the number of others present within rejected and accepted proposals in Study 1.

Connection motivation. Prior to running my analyses involving both couple members, I checked for distinguishability and nonindependence following recommendations by Kenny and colleagues (Kenny, Kashy & Cook, 2006). Distinguishability relates to “whether or not two dyad

members can be distinguished from each other by some variable” (Kenny et al., 2006, p. 6).

Nonindependence relates to whether the behaviour of one member of the dyad influences the behaviour of the other member of the dyad. In addition to men and women being distinguishable theoretically due to their different roles, results indicated that they were also distinguishable empirically ($\chi^2(1) = 78.62, p < .001$ for connection motivation and $\chi^2(1) = 224.85, p < .001$ for distance variation). Because couple members are in a relationship and interacting with each other (i.e., men’s behaviour influences women’s behaviour and vice versa), their data may be nonindependent. I correlated men’s and women’s connection motivation and distance variation scores while partialling out proposal outcome. The data were indeed nonindependent (r s were $.73, p < .001$, for connection motivation and $.16, p = .007$, for distance variation). Therefore, the analyses to follow treated the couples as distinguishable and nonindependent.

I tested the hypothesis that connection motivation would decrease from pre- to post-proposal for both members of the couple during rejected proposals (revised H3). I also tested the hypothesis that connection motivation would be higher at both time points for both members of the couple during accepted proposals compared to during rejected proposals (revised H5). To do so, I ran a saturated error mixed-model ANOVA with gender (0 = women, 1 = men), proposal outcome (0 = rejected, 1 = accepted), time (0 = pre-proposal, 1 = post-proposal), all possible two-way interactions, and the three-way interaction predicting connection motivation (West, 2013).⁹

A three-way interaction emerged (see Table 8 and Figure 3). Supporting revised H3, during rejected proposals, men and women both exhibited decreased connection motivation from pre- to post-proposal, $\beta = -1.19$, 95% CI $[-1.31, -1.08]$, $SE = 0.06, p < .001$ and $\beta = -0.81$, 95% CI $[-0.94, -0.68]$, $SE = 0.07, p < .001$, respectively. Note that men reacted more strongly than

women. Supporting revised H5, connection motivation was higher at both time points for couple members during accepted proposals compared to during rejected proposals. That is, women exhibited higher connection motivation during accepted compared to rejected proposals pre-proposal and especially post- proposal, $\beta = 1.57$, 95% CI [1.44, 1.70], SE = 0.06, $p < .001$ and $\beta = 3.36$, 95% CI [3.23, 3.49], SE = 0.06, $p < .001$, respectively. And men exhibited higher connection motivation during accepted compared to rejected proposals pre-proposal and especially post- proposal, $\beta = 0.79$, 95% CI [0.65, 0.92], SE = 0.06, $p < .001$ and $\beta = 2.73$, 95% CI [2.61, 2.86], SE = 0.07, $p < .001$, respectively.

Table 8. *Gender, Proposal Outcome, and Time Predicting Connection Motivation Scores in Study 1*

Parameter	β	95% CI		SE	p
Intercept	3.44	3.31	3.56	0.06	< .001
Gender	0.87	0.77	0.96	0.05	< .001
Proposal outcome	1.57	1.44	1.70	0.06	< .001
Time	-0.81	-0.94	-0.68	0.07	< .001
Gender X Proposal outcome	-0.79	-0.89	-0.68	0.05	< .001
Gender X Time	-0.39	-0.49	-0.29	0.05	< .001
Proposal outcome X Time	1.79	1.65	1.93	0.07	< .001
Gender X Proposal outcome X Time	0.16	0.05	0.27	0.05	.004

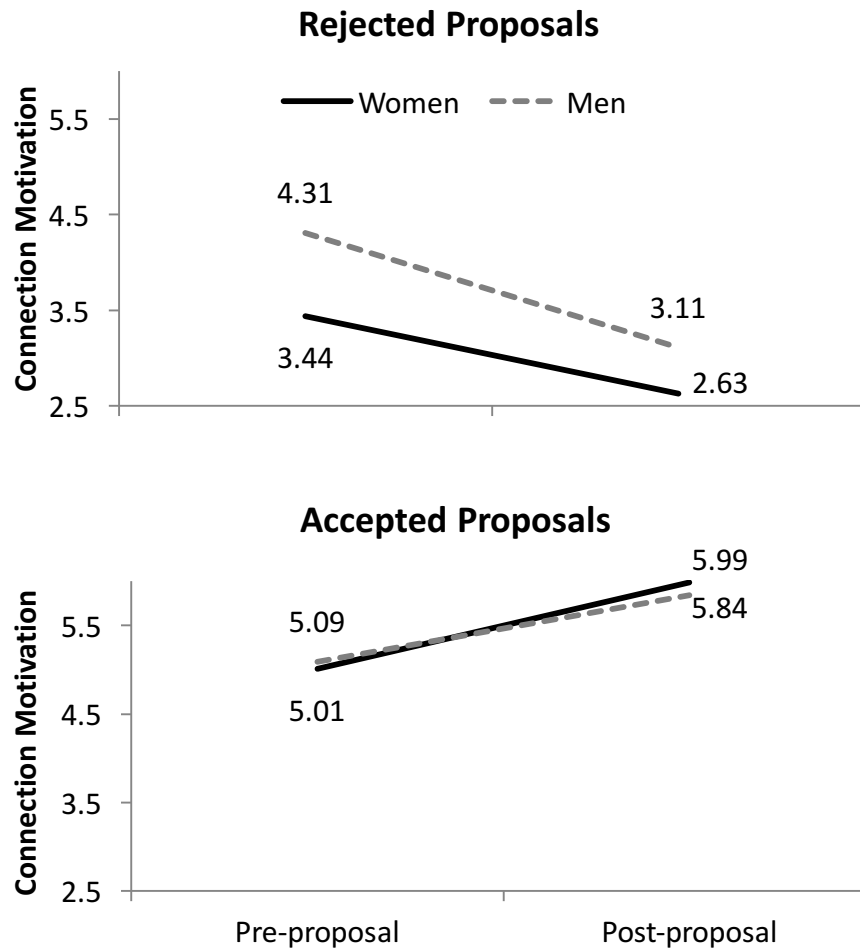


Figure 3. Top panel: Connection motivation exhibited pre- and post-proposal for rejected proposals by gender in Study 1. Bottom panel: Connection motivation exhibited pre- and post-proposal for accepted proposals by gender in Study 1.

Additionally, men and women both exhibited increased motivation from pre- to post-proposal during accepted proposals, $\beta = 0.75$, 95% CI [0.71, 0.80], $SE = 0.02$, $p < .001$ and $\beta = 0.98$, 95% CI [0.93, 1.03], $SE = 0.03$, $p < .001$, respectively. Note that women reacted more strongly than men. Examination of the time slopes for men and women in each proposal outcome suggests that this three-way interaction is driven by men's and women's different reactions

during the proposal. Women increase their connection motivation more than men during an accepted proposal, whereas men decrease their connection motivation more than women during a rejected proposal. Thus, men's connection motivation is more affected during rejected proposals and women's connection motivation is more affected during accepted proposals.

Finally, during rejected proposals, women showed much lower connection motivation than men, particularly pre-proposal, but also post-proposal, $\beta = 0.87$, 95% CI [0.77, 0.96], SE = 0.05, $p < .001$ and $\beta = 0.48$, 95% CI [0.39, 0.57], SE = 0.04, $p < .001$, respectively. This suggests that these women may have generally felt less connected to their partner than men, and that their behaviour pre-proposal may foreshadow their response to the proposal.

Resolving a potential confound. Coders were not blind to the proposal outcome. Therefore, at a later date, a fifth team of four coders who were blind to the proposal outcome rated the women's pre-proposal behaviour on the same items as Teams 2 – 4 (see Appendix C for coding schemes). They rated just the women's pre-proposal behaviour, because it appeared that women behaved differently in rejected and accepted proposals, even before the proposal occurred. Instead of watching the videos on their own time like members of Teams 2 – 4, coders came into the lab and watched them together. This ensured that everyone had the same experience (e.g., it ensured that there were no distractions). Coders watched each pre-proposal video twice, because the videos were short. Note that for some proposals it was obvious what the woman's response would be (e.g., when she accepted the proposal before her partner asked). However, when questioned after coding was finished, coders were unaware of how many and which videos were of rejected proposals.¹⁰ ICCs ranged from .65 to .87. ICCs comparing Teams 2 – 4's ratings to Team 5's ratings indicate acceptable reliability (ICCs = .67-.88 for the

individual items; ICC = .78 for the pre-proposal connection motivation score). Results reported throughout are using Teams 2 – 4’s ratings.

Goal conflict. I next explored EH4 that conflict between approach and avoidance goals would be associated with the proposal outcome. I used the same model as with connection motivation to predict distance variation (i.e., the extent to which couple members wavered between approaching their partner and distancing themselves from their partner), which I believe assesses couple members’ conflict between approach and avoidance goals. As with connection motivation, a three-way interaction emerged (see Table 9 and Figure 4).

Table 9. *Gender, Proposal Outcome, and Time Predicting Distance Variation Scores*

Parameter	β	95% CI		SE	<i>p</i>
Intercept	1.40	1.16	1.63	0.12	< .001
Gender	-0.24	-0.49	0.00	0.13	.052
Proposal outcome	0.07	-0.18	0.32	0.13	.597
Time	0.72	0.47	0.97	0.13	< .001
Gender X Proposal outcome	0.01	-0.25	0.27	0.13	.935
Gender X Time	-0.48	-0.76	-0.19	0.14	.001
Proposal outcome X Time	-0.72	-0.98	-0.45	0.14	< .001
Gender X Proposal outcome X Time	0.60	0.30	0.91	0.15	< .001

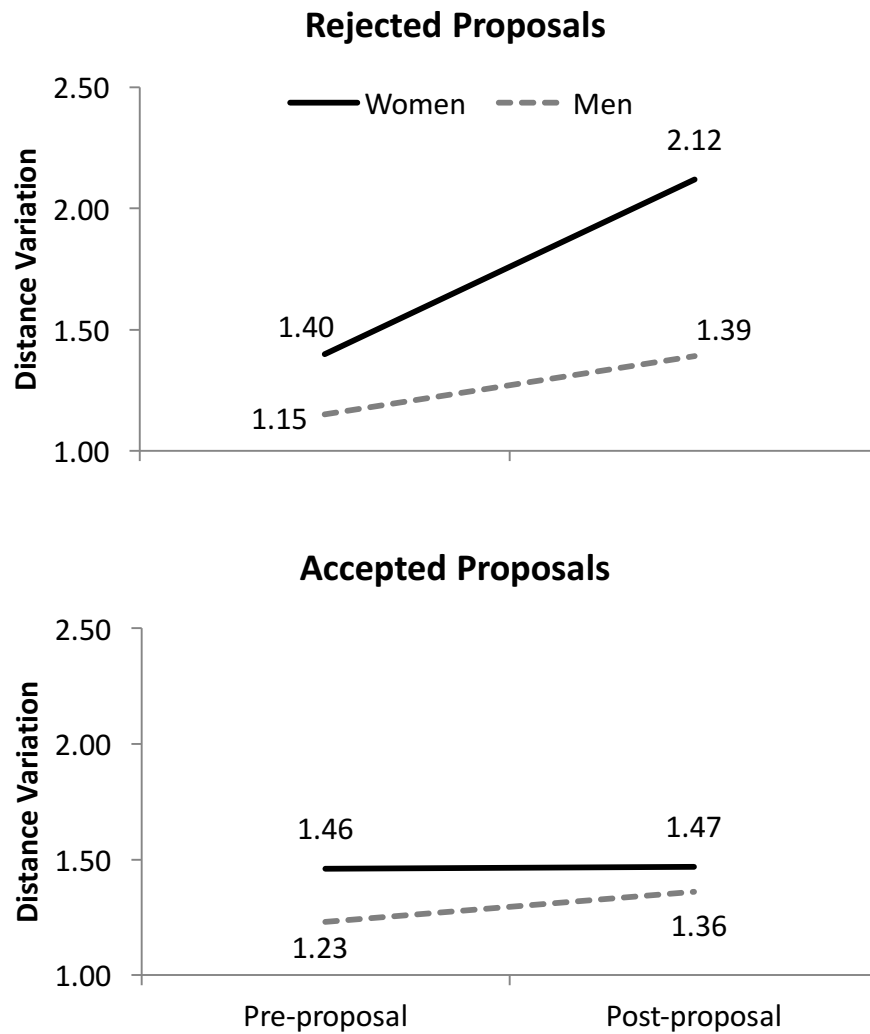


Figure 4. Top panel: Distance variation exhibited pre- and post-proposal for rejected proposals by gender in Study 1. Bottom panel: Distance variation exhibited pre- and post-proposal for accepted proposals by gender in Study 1.

During rejected proposals, women experienced greater distance variation pre-proposal than men, $\beta = -0.24$, 95% CI $[-0.49, 0.00]$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = .052$. This makes sense given that the men are proposing, and are thus presumably quite clear about their goals, but is still interesting because it indicates that these women may have felt conflicted before their partner even asked

the question. Of note, women who rejected a proposal were the most conflicted after the proposal occurred. These women exhibited increased distance variation as the proposal progressed, $\beta = 0.72$, 95% CI [0.47, 0.97], $SE = 0.13$, $p < .001$, and exhibited greater distance variation post-proposal than men whose proposal was rejected and in comparison to women who accepted a proposal, $\beta = -0.72$, 95% CI [-0.95, -0.49], $SE = 0.12$, $p < .001$ and $\beta = -0.65$, 95% CI [-0.87, -0.42], $SE = 0.12$, $p < .001$, respectively. Rejecting a proposal is not part of the script, and these women may have been unsure of what to do. Their goal conflict was evident in many videos where women would pace when they realized what was occurring or back away from their partner and then move towards their partner to try to get him to stand up, before exiting the area and often leaving him behind.

Thematic Coding

Common themes that emerged included encouraging traditionalism and spectacle, proposal orchestration, emotion and adrenaline, and the presence of intoxicants. These themes help to address my research goal of understanding the characteristics of accepted and rejected marriage proposals, and what distinguishes the two.

Encouraging traditionalism and spectacle. When an audience was present, the audience members often encouraged the traditional components of the proposal thereby perpetuating social norms concerning marriage proposals. For example, in both rejected and accepted proposals, men were encouraged by those present to kneel on one knee. As another example, there was an instance of a man whose proposal was accepted, but he did not ask “Will you marry me?” After the proposal, family members posed the couple together to recreate the moment with pictures and told him to ask, saying that they wanted to hear it. After he asked (which got an “Aww”), someone said “Now let’s see the ring!” Thus, people enjoy seeing the

traditional elements enacted. For both rejected and accepted proposals, in addition to traditional elements being present, the man often proclaimed his love for his partner. In other words, proposals were a spectacle (Schweingruber et al., 2004, 2008; Vannini, 2004).

Moreover, audience members tended to reinforce the proposal as a performance. They encouraged performance and spectacle through clapping, cheering, shouting, exclaiming (e.g., “Oh my God!”), smiling, laughing, “oohing and “awing,” and recording the proposal. The couple members sometimes also encouraged the spectacle. For instance, one man encouraged clapping after the proposal. Additionally, the audience would often encourage an affirmative response, particularly when witnessing rejected proposals. For example, sometimes they would exclaim “Yes is the answer!” “Say yes, don’t think, say yes!” or they would chant “Say yes!” Alternatively, the audience members sometimes got involved by asking questions such as “what’s the answer?! Did she say yes?” to determine the outcome of the proposal and know the ending of the performance that they witnessed. The audience in YouTube videos often took pictures/video for both proposal outcomes. This indicates that the proposal is a moment that people want to capture and tell others about even when they are not related to the couple.

The audience would clap and cheer for both proposal outcomes. However, when the proposal script was violated because the woman said no, the audience would go silent or become negative (e.g., boo) and/or confused (e.g., “What the heck?”). In these cases, some audience members would become sympathetic and attempt to console one or both couple members. The audience rarely appeared to be negative during accepted proposals, but they were sometimes negative for rejected proposals. For one rejected proposal an audience member shouted “Don’t do it bro!” In another, women present shouted “Don’t embarrass him” and “I’ll take it!” Understandably, the woman being proposed to in this case was crying. Taken together, the

audience often has an effect on the couple members while they are experiencing the proposal, likely affecting their goals and behaviour. People tend to enjoy viewing proposals and encourage the norm. However, consistent with other research on norm violation (Rossano, 2012), when this norm is violated, they can become confused and sometimes hostile.

Proposal orchestration. Rejected and accepted proposals shared many characteristics in terms of orchestration of the proposal. For both proposal outcomes, men would sing a song, orchestrate a flash mob, mention God, proclaim their love, hold their partner's hand, or say her name before asking the question. Additionally, regardless of proposal outcome, men sometimes asked the question more than once, perhaps to be sure of their partner's answer. Rejected and accepted proposals also both took place at similar times of the year (e.g., at Christmas time).

Even the location was similar across proposal outcomes. For example, both proposal outcomes occurred on stages at concerts, at sporting events, at Times Square in New York, in restaurants, and at churches. They both also took place at shopping malls and in food courts, although these two locations were more common in rejected proposals (8%) than in accepted proposals (3%). It is possible that being proposed to at a mall lacked the romance and intimacy that women may have preferred.

Rejected proposals seemed to be orchestrated in a way that was unresponsive to the woman's desires concerning her ideal proposal. A good example of this type of unresponsiveness to the woman's preferences was evident in one of the rejected proposals where the woman responded to the proposal by crying out "This is insane!! What are you doing!?! This is insane, you can't do it like this!!" This particular woman was proposed to on a sports show and proceeded to burst into tears and run off camera following her exclamation. The man appeared to be dumbfounded when she left and immediately called his parents to tell them to stop recording

the show. This scene suggested that the man did not know or perhaps care about his partner's desires. This scene also illustrates how emotional the proposal can be.

Emotion and adrenaline. Couple members and others present were often emotional during the video. Women regularly cried (almost weeping at times), whereas men appeared to cry less often. During accepted proposals, women would crouch down with emotion once they realized what was taking place. Previous research indicates that couple members' cortisol spikes when they talk about getting married (Loving et al., 2009). The hormonal response that appears to surge through people's bodies during proposals was evident in the majority of proposals. During the proposal and afterwards, people's hands and voices frequently shook. At times they would verbally acknowledge their physiological arousal (e.g., "my hands are shaking"). Perhaps to encourage women to attribute their arousal to love for their partner (e.g., White & Kight, 1984), some men increased their partner's adrenaline before they proposed by taking her skydiving or racecar driving, by faking his death, or, to a lesser extreme, by blindfolding her. This was a gamble, because arousal magnifies what people normally feel (e.g., White, Fishbein, & Rustein, 1981). Thus, men who physiologically aroused their partner might have caused their partner to experience increased attraction if their partner was already attracted, and therefore led to an increased likelihood of proposal acceptance. Alternatively, men who physiologically aroused their partner might have caused their partner to experience decreased attraction if their partner's attraction was waning or non-existent, and therefore led to a decreased likelihood of proposal acceptance. In other words, increasing the adrenaline of a partner whose affections are waning can backfire.

Many of the rejected and accepted couple members' behaviours appeared to be quite similar before the proposal. Women would freeze, bring their hands to their chest or face, appear

surprised, exclaim things like “Oh my God!” and start crying. Men would engage in the traditional proposal script and smile. This is where the similarities between proposal outcomes would end. During rejected proposals, women would sometimes try to stop their partner from asking the question, halt the ritual, and/or pace in distress. A fight or flight response appeared to occur for them and they would start arguing or backing away from their partner before turning around and walking or running. The smile of men would freeze and then disappear once they realized that their proposal was not accepted. These men would then often appear devastated, confused, and/or angry. In contrast, during accepted proposals, women waiting for their partner to ask the question sometimes prematurely said “yes” or bounced around in eagerness. These women would then throw their arms around their partner, or stand there crying with their arms tucked up and their partner hugging them. Couples experiencing accepted proposals often had huge smiles on their faces after the proposal. Taken together, it is evident that proposals can be an extremely arousing and emotional event for those involved.

Intoxicants. Perhaps to mitigate the effect that proposing has physiologically and mentally, or perhaps to mitigate inhibition, alcohol was present in both accepted and rejected proposals. Men whose proposal was accepted did not appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of proposing, whereas some of the men whose proposal was rejected did appear to be intoxicated. Women may be unsure of the veracity of the proposal and the seriousness of the proposal when they know that their partner is intoxicated. Study 2 will be able to provide further insight into couple members’ thoughts and feelings when one or both members are intoxicated during the proposal.

Discussion

The goal of this research was to determine the characteristics of accepted and rejected marriage proposals, and what distinguishes the two. As part of this goal, I tested various confirmatory (H1-2) and exploratory hypotheses (EH1-3) regarding couple member characteristics, traditionalism, and the presence of others. Results suggest that accepted and rejected proposals share many characteristics, including location and how the man orchestrates the proposal. Couples experiencing accepted and rejected proposals also share characteristics such as age (EH1).

Supporting H1, more than half of men in both proposal outcomes engaged in at least three out of the four traditional behaviours involved in the proposal script. However, overall, men who were rejected engaged in fewer traditional behaviours than men who were accepted. Addressing EH2, offering a ring emerged as a particularly important part of the script. Recall that men who offered a ring were 20 times more likely to be accepted than men who did not offer a ring. This number is likely an overestimation because of the small sample size for rejected proposals (e.g., Lakens & Evers, 2014), yet I expect to find a similar trend in the results of Study 2. Some women enjoy having traditional elements present in the proposal because it reflects the sincerity of the proposal (Schweingruber et al., 2004). Thus, some women may have interpreted the lack of a ring as signaling their partner's insincerity and unpreparedness to get married. Women may have also interpreted the absence of a ring as signaling that their partner lacked the resources to provide for them, because ring cost is associated with men's income (Cronk & Dunham, 2007). Research that has focused on low-income women finds that women often want a partner who can help support a family (e.g., Harris & Parisi, 2008). So women in the present research who did not receive a ring may have thought their partner could not support a family.

Men may not have offered a ring for a variety of reasons. For example, perhaps men who were rejected did not want to risk spending money on the ring, in case their partner said no (J. Wood, personal communication, March 7, 2016) or maybe they could not afford a ring in the first place (E. Woodin, personal communication, April 29, 2016). Alternatively, perhaps rejected proposals were more impromptu than accepted proposals and so the men did not have time to get a ring. Study 2 will be able to provide more insight into people's thoughts and feelings regarding traditionalism and the ring.

In addition to being less traditional, supporting H2, rejected proposals were also more likely to take place in front of a greater number of people than accepted proposals. Very public proposals may not be ideal for most people, and rejected proposals were more likely to be extremely public than accepted proposals. Moreover, addressing EH3, men who were rejected were more likely to propose in front of strangers and less likely to propose in front of family than men who were accepted. It is possible that couples who experienced a rejected proposal lacked family support for the relationship. I expect to replicate these results in Study 2 and that Study 2 will shed light on why proposal outcomes are associated with the number and composition of those present. Discussing marriage would presumably make the direction of the relationship and desires of the couple members clear to each other, putting couple members "on the same page" about where the relationship is headed, how the proposal should occur, and who should be present. I expect that couples experiencing rejected proposals are less likely to talk in advance about marriage, and so men who are rejected may be less aware of their partner's proposal preferences than men who are accepted. I test this hypothesis in Study 2.

As another part of my goal, I tested various confirmatory hypotheses (H3-6) and an exploratory hypothesis (EH4) regarding approach and avoidance goals. Results indicated that

men who were rejected were not alone in lack of knowledge about their partner's goals. Outside observers had difficulty distinguishing couple members' approach and avoidance goals.

Therefore, I combined the data for these goals into one variable, revised H3 and H5, and dropped H4 and H6. Revised H3 was supported: Couple members who experienced a rejected proposal showed decreased connection motivation from pre- to post-proposal. Revised H5 was also supported: Couple members who experienced an accepted proposal showed higher connection motivation at both time-points in comparison to couple members who experienced a rejected proposal. Results also indicated that men's connection motivation was more affected during rejected proposals, whereas women's connection motivation was more affected during accepted proposals. These results likely reflect men's shock when rejected and women's excitement when accepting a proposal.

The post-proposal behaviour of women who accepted a proposal starkly contrasted with the behaviour of women who rejected a proposal. Relating to EH4 concerning goal conflict and the proposal outcome, the motivations of women who accepted a proposal were clear: they wanted to connect with their partner. In contrast, women who rejected a proposal appeared very conflicted. Some women in the videos attempted to stop the ritual and may have felt torn between accepting the proposal to save their and their partner's face and leaving the situation. Women who rejected a proposal also demonstrated much lower connection motivation than their partner pre-proposal and especially post-proposal, indicating that the strength of women's motivation differed from their partner's and they were not aligned. Together, these findings indicate that relationship functioning is evident to outside observers during this event and that it may be possible to predict who will accept and who will decline a proposal based on behaviour captured on video.

A strength to this study was its use of video analysis. By analyzing video, my coders and I were able to analyze proposals in action and objectively code behaviour. The average video length was three minutes long. This short length indicates that the marriage proposal is an event that occurs quickly, which could be another reason why it is understudied. The 30 seconds preceding and 30 seconds following the proposal was enough time to capture the essence of the proposals. However, a limitation to this study is that some videos had fewer details than others and I was missing information about characteristics of the couple members and their relationship. For example, not all videos mentioned how long the couple was dating before the proposal occurred. Study 2 will help fill in these details and more.

Unfortunately, I was unable to gather as many videos of rejected proposals as I would have liked because many turned out to be fake. People who are part of comedy troupes, students conducting social psychology studies for class, and sports teams' media personnel were often the source of the fake videos. The final sample of rejected videos was smaller than desired, meaning that the effect sizes may be overestimated and the results for rejected proposals should be treated with caution. My next study will seek to replicate the present study, but will use a larger sample size and will use a different format for sharing the cultural product: the proposal story written from a couple members' perspective.

Study 2

To understand motivation, goals, thoughts, and feelings from the perspective of one of the couple members, I analyze written accounts of proposals in Study 2. My aim in Study 2 is to not only test the same hypotheses as Study 1 using a larger sample size, but to also examine in further detail some of the themes noted in Study 1 and to determine whether there are other themes that may not have been captured in the videos. As with Study 1, I hypothesize that there will be many (i.e., 3-4) rather than few (i.e., 0-2) traditional behaviours performed regardless of proposal outcome (H1), and I expect there will be more people present during rejected than accepted proposals (H2). To replicate Study 1, I adopt the hypotheses regarding connection motivation. Specifically, I predict that connection motivation will decrease from pre- to post-proposal for couple members experiencing rejected proposals (revised H3). I also expect that connection motivation will be higher across time for couple members during accepted proposals compared to during rejected proposals (revised H5). Furthermore, I will again test my exploratory hypotheses regarding the relationships between the proposal outcome and couple characteristics, traditionalism, and audience type (EH1-3). I will not formally test my exploratory hypothesis regarding goal conflict, because I do not have a measure to do so (EH4).

New to Study 2, I hypothesize that couples experiencing rejected proposals will be less likely to have talked about marriage in advance than couples in accepted proposals (H7). Talking about the future of the relationship is often avoided by people who do not know where they want the relationship to go and by people who are aware that they are not on the same commitment-level as their partner (Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004). People may also make assumptions about their partner's commitment and believe that their partner shares their view for the direction and pace of the relationship, without having explicitly discussed it. Not discussing marriage

beforehand (and consequently not being “on the same page”) may be a reason why some proposals are rejected.

By examining first-person accounts of marriage proposals, I will be able to “get in the head” of one of the couple members. This will allow me to gain insights that I would not be able to gain by observing proposal behavior. For example, people assume that couples break up after a rejected proposal (e.g., Orbuch, 2015), but there is no data to confirm this. The accounts may provide information about the relationship status before, during, and after the proposals, and about how people feel about their relationship status. Additionally, I will be able to gain an understanding of the motivations that people hold within proposals. For example, I will be able to better understand why men who are rejected propose and why their proposals are rejected. I can also capitalize on the use of computer programs to analyze the text to gain insight into people’s goals, feelings, and how they tell their stories. In sum, analyzing people’s proposal stories will provide a fuller picture of circumstances around proposals, including illuminating details about the couple.

In addition to coding the written accounts, in this study I will use Pennebaker’s Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count software (LIWC; Pennebaker, Booth, & Francis, 2007) to analyze the proposal stories. LIWC is a computer program that analyzes text and provides the percentage of total words that are present in the text for a given category. Categories cover many areas (e.g., expressions of certainty). For example, with the output of this software, I will be able to determine how often expressions of certainty are used in descriptions of accepted vs. rejected proposals. If expressions of certainty are written more often in accepted proposals, then it might indicate that people are more certain about their decision in accepted proposals than rejected proposals. LIWC has been used in the content analysis of a variety of sources, such as instant

messages (Slatcher, Vazire, & Pennebaker, 2008), face-to-face interactions (Loving et al., 2009), and Internet diaries (i.e., blogs; Slotter, Gardner, & Finkel, 2009). Combining multiple analysis techniques will provide a unique view of proposals.

Methods

Data Collection

First-person written accounts of proposals were collected from forums on the websites Reddit.com and Weddingbee.com. Most of the content was collected from Reddit. Three trained research assistants and I gathered the accounts using similar methods to Study 1. To be consistent with Study 1, we used the same search terms, limited the search to a narrow timeframe, used similar selection criteria, and noted account characteristics (e.g., the date the account was posted). In addition to the search terms from Study 1, we searched for terms such as “proposal stories,” and “engagement stories.” Similar to how YouTube provides recommended videos, Reddit and Weddingbee sometimes provide links to forum discussions that are similar to the topic of interest. Therefore, we also looked at suggested discussions that were linked to the forum discussion. Written accounts were gathered from January 7 – February 12, 2015 and May 6 – 7, 2015.

The selection criteria included excluding duplicate accounts, descriptions of movies or scripted TV, descriptions that were not in English, descriptions that were not first person accounts, accounts not involving a marriage proposal (i.e., were irrelevant, like a “prom proposal”), and accounts of proposals where both couple members had the same gender. This latter characteristic was determined by account content (e.g., if the person wrote “my partner and I are both women (we’re lesbians)”) and pronoun usage. As with Study 1, there were very few accounts involving same-gendered couples.

We assigned each account an identification number so that they would not be associated with a username. The total sample consisted of 400 proposal descriptions (200 accepted proposals, 200 rejected proposals), which is the sample size that I aimed to achieve based on the

power analyses for Study 1. I did not use the effect sizes from Study 1 to calculate the sample size needed to have sufficient power in Study 2, because the sample size for rejected proposals in Study 1 was lower than ideal, which may have biased the observed effect sizes and thus biased my power calculations.

Coding the Written Accounts

Coders other than me were unaware of the study's hypotheses. Coders completed the coding on their own time and were trained using example accounts. The example accounts were from the sample, included accepted and rejected proposals, and were chosen because they illustrated various levels of the coding scales. Example behaviours were pointed out and discussed. Coders were encouraged to use the full range of the scale. If it was unclear whether or not the item was present, then the item was left blank on the coding sheet and treated as missing in the data file.

Basic coding. The research assistants who helped collect the accounts noted the date the account was posted, its rating score as given by readers, the location of the proposal (e.g., at a mall), and the proposer's gender (see Appendix D for coding scheme).¹¹ Gender was determined based on pronoun usage. This coding was conducted to get a sense of the sample and to address EH1. The written accounts on Weddingbee did not have as much information associated with them as the accounts on Reddit. For example, Weddingbee does not allow readers to rate text. Weddingbee does provide the approximate date/time that the account was written (e.g., 3 hours ago or 3 months ago).

Coding traditionalism and the presence of others. To address H1-2 and EH2-3, two coders from Team 1 in Study 1 coded the same traditionalism and presence of others items as Study 1 (see Appendix D for the coding scheme). Traditionalism items were again summed to

create a total *traditionalism* score ($M = 1.74$, $SD = 0.91$; $ICC = .61$). Higher numbers indicate that the proposal was more traditional. In addition, these two coders also rated whether the proposee appeared to be surprised ($0 = no$, $1 = yes$), because the element of surprise is considered to be part of the performance (Schweingruber et al., 2004; Vannini, 2004). Moreover, these coders noted whether there was mention of family or friends being involved in the proposal ($0 = no$, $1 = yes$), because their involvement may indicate support for the proposal, and support from family and friends can have a positive effect on relationship quality (e.g., Sinclair, Felmlee, Sprecher, & Wright, 2015). Cohen's kappas ranged from 0.50 – 0.93 (all $ps < .001$; Feng, 2015). I resolved any discrepancies between coders.

Coding connection motivation. After reading 40 accounts, it became obvious that we could not code the behavioural items from Study 1 due to a dearth of information relating to those variables. I was able to solve this problem with LIWC. First, I created a word list of 50 approach-related words and 50 avoidance-related words that were drawn from previous social psychological research studying similar phenomena (Elliot, 2008; Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002; Murray, Derrick, Leder, & Holmes, 2008; Stinson, Cameron, & Robinson, 2014). Example approach words include *approach*, *like*, and *toward*. Example avoidance words include *avoid*, *dislike*, and *away*. Then I used LIWC to determine the proportion of approach and avoidance words used in each account. To make the context similar to that of Study 1, I split the account content into four parts: pre-proposal and post-proposal, and women's behaviour and men's behaviour. In other words, I created 4 edited "accounts" comprised only of the information relevant to each category (e.g., women's behaviour pre-proposal), and then ran each of the four edited accounts through LIWC (women's behaviour pre-proposal $n = 278$; men's behaviour pre-proposal $n = 385$; women's behaviour post-proposal $n = 365$; men's behaviour post-proposal $n =$

216). It was not possible to split all accounts because of the varying level of details present in each account (e.g., some accounts did not mention men after the proposal).

Consistent with prior research (e.g., Gable, 2006), and unlike Study 1, approach and avoidance goals were uncorrelated ($r = -.08$, $p = .139$). However, both items had low variability ($M_{\text{Approach}} = 1.62$, $SD_{\text{Approach}} = 1.22$; $M_{\text{Avoidance}} = 1.13$, $SD_{\text{Avoidance}} = 1.21$; $n = 374$), thus it is not too surprising that they were uncorrelated (Furr & Bacharach, 2013). Additionally, I was likely able to distinguish between goals in this study because accounts were written by couple members and not by a third-party who lacked insight into the couple members' perspectives. Despite being uncorrelated, I analyzed approach and avoidance goals together, because I wanted to facilitate comparisons with Study 1. I reverse-scored the avoidance scores by subtracting each score by the highest value and then combined them with the approach scores to create the connection motivation item ($M_{\text{women}} = 17.56$, $SD = 5.21$; $M_{\text{men}} = 7.26$, $SD = 1.75$; $\alpha = .14$).¹² Reliability may be low due to lack of variance in approach and avoidance items, and because the combined measure only has two items (approach and avoidance). Readers should keep the low reliability of this measure in mind when interpreting the effect sizes to follow because they may be underestimated (Furr & Bacharach, 2013).

Exploratory computer text analysis. To provide additional insight into the content and nature of the text, I ran all 400 full written submissions through LIWC. This computer program allows users to create their own word lists (like I did with approach and avoidance goals), and also provides an extensive dictionary that can be used by researchers to code a wide range of content. The content categories that I focused on were pronouns, positive emotion, negative emotion, social processes, certainty, inhibition, inclusion, and exclusion. Each category had its own list of words, and the program calculated the percentage of words reflecting each category

in the text (see Appendix E for example words from each category as used in Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010; see Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010, for validation and review of LIWC). I chose to code emotion and social process categories because they appear to tap into the same constructs that coders rated in Study 1 (i.e., emotion and presence of others). I chose certainty and inhibition because proposers of accepted proposals may be more certain and perhaps less inhibited than proposers of rejected proposals, and this might be reflected in how they tell their story.

Relationship status and talking in advance. To examine relationship status before and after the proposal and to test my hypothesis that couples experiencing rejected proposals would be less likely to discuss marriage in advance of the proposal than couples experiencing accepted proposals (H7), a coder and I coded the following variables: *Relationship status* (were the couple members friends before they started dating; did they remain friends afterwards [coded only for rejected proposals]); did they break up before the proposal occurred; did they break up right after the proposal occurred; were they still together at the time of writing; did they date for a period of time after the proposal; did they ever date [it is possible that proposals involved people who have never dated, such as friends]), and *talk in advance* (did the writer indicate that the couple members had talked about marriage in advance of the proposal; see Appendix D for the coding scheme). One coder coded the full (i.e., non-split) accounts for these items using a dichotomous measure (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*). To establish reliability, I also coded 30% of the sample (kappas range from 0.70 – 1.00, all $ps < .001$). For rejected proposals, I also noted the relationship length after the proposal and whether couples got engaged at a later date.

Couple members' motivations and reactions. To provide additional insight into the accounts, I trained a coder to note motivation and behaviour in the full (i.e., non-split) accounts

using four items: what was the writer's perception of the man's motivation for proposing?; what reason was given for the woman's response?; what was the woman's reaction to the proposal?; what was the man's reaction to the woman's response (Appendix D). I then used the constant comparative approach to create categories of common responses. To add some quantitative insight into this qualitative approach, I then quantified the presence of some categories. Noting reactions will further understanding of the couples' experience and will also help address my research goal.

Thematic coding. As in Study 1, I conducted thematic coding and categorized the data. I also quantified the presence of some findings . Results of this coding informed themes discussed at the end of the results section.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

The majority of proposers appeared to be men (93.7%; recall that we selected what appeared to be male-female couples) and one couple did not have a proposer because the decision was mutual. More women had their proposals rejected ($n = 20$) than accepted ($n = 5$). Once again, because there were so few women proposing to their partners ($n = 25$), I was unable to make meaningful comparisons to proposals where the men proposed. Therefore, the results below exclude proposals where women proposed and the one account that indicated that the decision to get engaged was mutual (final sample $n = 374$). I did not exclude female proposers from my original search, because it was possible that I would get more accounts with female proposers compared to Study 1.

Account characteristics. The accounts included in the sample represented a wide range of reactions by readers on the sites as reflected by the ratings score, and so the results may be generalizable to different types of proposals (see Table 10). The woman was most often the storyteller (81%), thus readers should keep this in mind when interpreting the results. Because the accounts did not typically provide information about the couple-members' ages (especially in accounts of accepted proposals), I could not test whether age differed by proposal outcome as part of EH1. However, there were more people in this study than Study 1 who mentioned relationship length prior to the proposal. Therefore, I was able to address EH1 and compare whether relationship length prior to the proposal was related to the proposal outcome. Couples experiencing rejected proposals dated for an average of two years less ($M_{years} = 2.20$, $SD = 2.10$, $n = 67$) than couples in accepted proposals ($M_{years} = 4.20$, $SD = 1.81$, $n = 39$), $M_{diff} = -2.00$, 95% CI $[-2.80, -1.20]$, $t(104) = -4.97$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.02$. This suggests that perhaps couples

experiencing rejected proposals did not know each other as well or were less ready for marriage than couples experiencing accepted proposals. The thematic analysis will provide more insight into these results. Due to the varying nature of detail in each of the accounts, it was not always possible to include the full sample in each analysis. Therefore, I present the number of accounts included alongside each analysis.

Table 10. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges in Written Accounts and Couple C*

Characteristics in Study 2

Variable	n	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Ratings score	262	0	3831	73.79	337.42
Approximate age of man	25	16	38	22.68	5.01
Approximate age of woman	55	14	28	20.07	3.53
Relationship length (years)	106	.01	10	2.94	2.21

Traditionalism and the presence of others. Tables 11, 12, and 13 provide the descriptive statistics for traditionalism and the presence of others items. Replicating Study 1, most men knelt on one knee, presented a ring, and asked “will you marry me?” and few mentioned whether the woman’s parent was asked for permission. Consistent with other research on the proposal ritual (e.g., Moore et al., 2015; Schweingruber et al., 2004), the majority of women were surprised. The fact that so many writers mentioned some form of traditional behaviour reinforces how salient these behaviours are and how important they are to the ritual. Unlike Study 1, most proposals were private ($n = 179$), and only 14 proposals appeared to have more than 101 people present. This indicates that the sample includes many private proposal accounts that may have been missing from Study 1. Still, about 34% of proposals had an

audience, therefore the results to follow can potentially be generalized to different types of proposals.

Table 11. *Frequency of Traditionalism by Proposal Outcome in Study 2*

Proposal outcome	Traditionalism				
	Bend on one knee	Offer ring	Asked for permission	Asked question	Surprise
Rejected proposal	29 (40.3%) n = 72	48 (51.1%) n = 94	5 (7.9%) n = 63	118 (80.3%) n = 147	133 (95%) n = 140
Accepted proposal	130 (76%) n = 171	124 (89.9%) n = 138	17 (81%) n = 21	143 (88.3%) n = 162	173 (90.1%) n = 192

Note. Percentage of sample within the proposal outcome is presented in parentheses.

Table 12. *Frequency of the Presence of Others by Proposal Outcome in Study 2*

Proposal outcome	Presence of others			
	Presence of others in general	Strangers present	Family present	Friends present
Rejected proposal	47 (44.8%) n = 105	25 (25%) n = 100	15 (14.2%) n = 106	16 (15.4%) n = 104
Accepted proposal	58 (31.9%) n = 182	40 (22%) n = 182	21 (11%) n = 191	25 (12.9%) n = 194

Note. Percentage of sample within the proposal outcome is presented in parentheses.

Table 13. *Frequency of the Approximate Number of Others Besides the Couple Members Present in Study 2*

	0	2 or less	5 or less	10 or less	50 or less	100 or less	101 or more
Frequency (% of sample)	179 (66.3%)	16 (5.9%)	6 (2.2%)	9 (3.3%)	33 (12.2%)	13 (4.8%)	14 (5.2%)

Note. n = 270

As with Study 1, I conducted Pearson chi-square analyses to examine the relationship between the total traditionalism score and each audience type, as well as each traditionalism item and each audience type. There were many associations between variables (see Table 14 for odds ratios). The total traditionalism score was again unrelated to the presence of others in general and to the audience type. Kneeling on one knee was again associated with the presence of others in general, $\chi^2(1) = 10.16, p = .001$, Cramer's $V = .21, p = .001$, Fisher's exact $p = .001$. New to Study 2, asking "will you marry me?" was also associated with the presence of others in general, $\chi^2(1) = 12.24, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .22, p < .001$, Fisher's exact $p < .001$. Kneeling on one knee is an obvious signal of the intention to propose, as is asking the question, and I noticed that the audience encouraged both.

Table 14. *Odds Ratios for the Presence of Others and Traditionalism in Study 2*

Presence of others	Traditionalism			
	Bend on one knee	Offer ring	Asked for permission	Asked question
Presence of others in general	2.89** (223)	1.07 (202)	1.11 (66)	5.01** (244)
Strangers present	2.36* (223)	1.01 (202)	0.58 (67)	2.00 (241)
Family present	2.09 (229)	1.78 (209)	5.60+ (66)	6.50+ (254)
Friends present	3.78* (234)	1.27 (208)	0.70 (67)	4.05 (255)

Note. Sample size presented in parentheses. Read like this: The odds of the man kneeling were 2.89 times higher if the proposal was in public compared to private.

Pearson chi-square exact two-tailed significance * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Fisher's Exact + $p < .05$.

Exploratory computer text analysis. The descriptive statistics and correlations for the percent of total words that correspond with each of the LIWC categories for the full account are

in Table 15. Correlational analyses revealed that the proposal outcome was associated with most of the LIWC categories. Accounts of rejected proposals paint a picture that involves people, exclusion, and negative expressions of emotion. The pronoun results indicate that writers of rejected proposals were self- and partner-focused. Accounts of accepted proposals paint a picture that involves long stories describing inclusion and high connection motivation. The pronoun results indicate that writers of accepted proposals were couple-focused. Interestingly, certainty and inhibition were unrelated to the proposal outcome, indicating that writers of rejected and accepted proposals expressed similar levels of certainty and inhibition in their accounts. The fact that writers of rejected proposals wrote about the experience in negative terms and using a self- and partner-focus indicates that they may have been writing about a low relationship quality relationship. Together, these results help uncover the similarities and differences between proposal outcomes by showing that writers are certain in their decision and uninhibited when articulating their very different experiences.

Table 15. *Means and Standard Deviations of Linguistic Categories, and Correlations Between Linguistic Categories and the Proposal Outcome in Study 2*

LIWC category	Mean (SD)	Correlation with proposal outcome
1. Word count	197.05 (114.22)	.47**
2. I	7.56 (2.61)	-.41**
3. We	2.19 (1.56)	.31**
4. You	0.49 (0.86)	-.05
5. He/She	5.27 (2.39)	-.32**
6. They	0.17 (0.38)	.11*
7. Positive Emotion	3.09 (1.90)	.09
8. Negative Emotion	1.69 (1.46)	-.42**
9. Social Processes	14.06 (4.08)	-.34**
10. Certainty	1.25 (1.10)	.00
11. Inhibition	0.46 (0.61)	.03
12. Inclusion	7.37 (2.44)	.29**
13. Exclusion	2.17 (1.59)	-.27**
14. Connection motivation	4.41 (0.83)	.28**

Note. Variables 2-17 reflect a percentage of the total words used in each description (n = 374).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Main Analyses

Traditionalism and the presence of others. For the Pearson chi-square results reported below, note that there were generally more missing data for rejected proposals than accepted proposals. For example, it was hard for coders to tell whether people were present during the rejected proposals. As in Study 1, I conducted Pearson chi-square analyses to assess the relationship between the proposal outcome (i.e., acceptance vs. rejection) and traditionalism (the total variable as well as the individual items that indicate traditionalism), and the proposal

outcome and the presence of others (whether or not people were present and the approximate number of others present).

I tested the hypothesis that there would be many (i.e., 3-4) rather than few (i.e., 0-2) traditional behaviours performed regardless of proposal outcome (H1). Unlike Study 1, my hypothesis was not supported. Only 7.5% of men experiencing rejected proposals performed 3 out of the 4 behaviours (none performed all four) and only 35.9% of men in accepted proposals performed 3 or 4 behaviours. To ease calculation of the odds of performing many vs. few traditional behaviours, I ran a chi-square analysis with traditionalism split into many (3-4 behaviours) vs. few (0-2 behaviours) traditional behaviours performed. The odds of performing many vs. few traditional behaviours for rejected proposals were 0.08, and for accepted proposals it were 0.56.

To help answer my research question, I returned to the analysis involving the total traditionalism score and looked at whether traditionalism varied by proposal outcome. Men whose proposal was rejected once again performed fewer traditional behaviours than men whose proposal was accepted, $\chi^2(4) = 90.69, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .51, p < .001$, Fisher's exact $p < .001, n = 352$. Thus, while proposals were not always very traditional, accepted proposals were more traditional than rejected proposals. Furthermore, when testing whether certain behaviours were particularly associated with the proposal outcome (EH2), I found that kneeling, offering a ring, and asking for permission were important. The odds of being accepted were 4.70 times higher if the man knelt on one knee compared to if did not kneel, $\chi^2(1) = 26.62, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .34, p < .001, n = 243$. Replicating Study 1, the odds of being accepted were 8.49 times higher if the man offered a ring compared to if he did not offer a ring, $\chi^2(1) = 43.88, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .44, p < .001, n = 233$. Additionally, the odds of being accepted were 49.30

times higher if the man asked for permission compared to if he did not ask for permission, $\chi^2(1) = 43.44, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .72, p < .001, n = 84$. Regardless of proposal outcome, 85% of men asked "Will you marry me?" $\chi^2(1) = 3.76, p = .060$, Cramer's $V = .11, p = .060, n = 309$, and 92% of proposals were a surprise, $\chi^2(1) = 2.69, p = .146$, Cramer's $V = .09, p = .146, n = 332$. Therefore, these two components are key parts of the ritual, but they do not differentiate between acceptance and rejection. Taken together, traditionalism is important for the success of a proposal, with certain behaviours, such as offering a ring, being vital to the ritual.

I next tested the hypothesis that there would be more people present during rejected proposals than accepted proposals (H2). I first examined whether the proposal outcome was related to people being present in general, regardless of audience-type. Unlike Study 1, which found that proposal outcome was unrelated to whether or not the proposal was public, in this study the odds of being rejected were 1.73 times higher if the proposal was public compared to private, $\chi^2(1) = 4.77, p = .031$, Cramer's $V = .13, p = .031, n = 287$. This suggests that men should not assume that their partner will say yes when they propose in front of an audience. The approximate number of people present did not differ by proposal outcome, because over 60% of proposals occurred in private, $\chi^2(6) = 5.33, p = .514$, Cramer's $V = .14, p = .514$, Fisher's exact $p = .507, n = 270$ (see Figure 5). There were also no differences between the proposal outcome and who was present at the proposal, so rejected and accepted proposals took place in front of similar audiences (EH3). But, they did not have similar rates of help with the proposal. Family and friends did not help with the proposal 84.7% of the time. However, the odds of being accepted were 3.95 times higher if family or friends helped than if they did not help, $\chi^2(1) = 12.88, p = .001$, Cramer's $V = .20, p = .001, n = 320$. Taken together, most proposals took place in private, whereas those that occurred in public were rejected more often than not and were

rejected in front of similar audiences as accepted proposals. The proposal stood a better chance if it occurred with the help of family and friends (they did not have to be present at the actual proposal to help). Having family and friends help with the proposal likely indicates to the couple members that their support network endorses the engagement. Having their support is important because it contributes to relationship well-being (e.g., Sprecher & Felmlee, 2000).

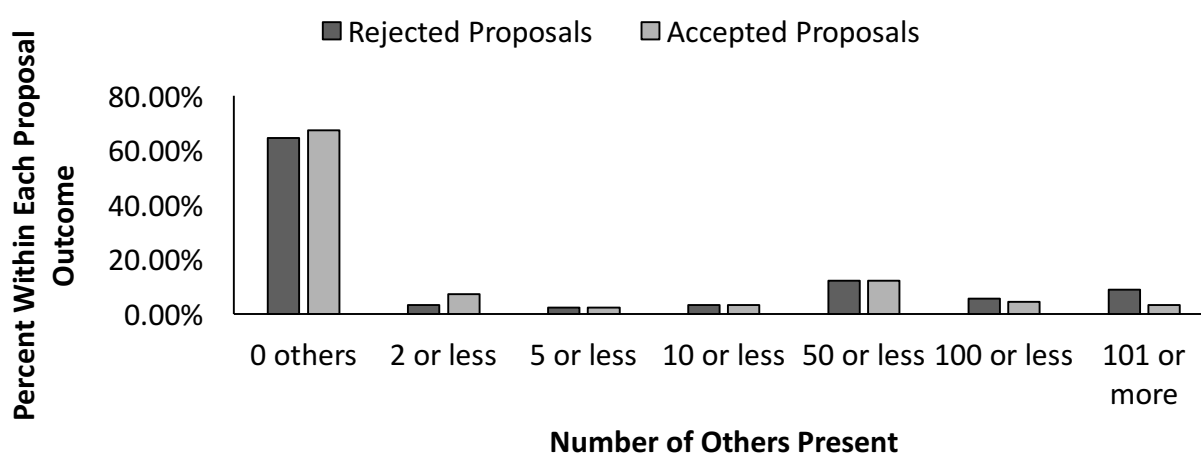


Figure 5. Percent of the number of others present within rejected and accepted proposals in Study 2.

Connection motivation. Recall that I split each account into four edited “accounts” comprised only of the information relevant to each category (e.g., women’s behaviour pre-proposal). By doing so, I was able to separate men’s and women’s behaviour and conduct the same analyses as Study 1. As in Study 1, I checked for distinguishability and nonindependence. In addition to men and women being distinguishable theoretically due to their different roles, results indicated that men and women were also distinguishable empirically ($\chi^2(1) = 30.80, p <$

.001). I correlated men's and women's connection motivation scores while partialling out proposal outcome to check for nonindependence. The data were independent at conventional levels of statistical significance (i.e., $p < .05$; in other words, the data were not nonindependent; $r = .09$, $p = .092$). However, Kenny and colleagues' (2006) note, "for reasons of power, we recommend that nonindependence be presumed to exist if it is plausible, even if it is not statistically significant in a specific instance." (p. 67). Thus, I treated the data as if they were nonindependent in the analyses and treated the data with the assumption that men's behaviour influenced women's behaviour and vice versa.

I tested the hypothesis that connection motivation would decrease from pre- to post-proposal for both members of the couple when experiencing rejected proposals (revised H3). I also tested the hypothesis that connection motivation would be higher at both time points for both members of the couple during accepted proposals compared to during rejected proposals (revised H5). To do so, I ran a saturated error mixed-model ANOVA with gender (0 = women, 1 = men), proposal outcome (0 = rejected, 1 = accepted), time (0 = pre-proposal, 1 = post-proposal), all possible two-way interactions, and the three-way interaction predicting connection motivation.⁷

A three-way interaction emerged (see Table 16 and Figure 6). Revised H3 was supported for women but not men. Women who rejected a proposal exhibited decreased connection motivation from pre- to post-proposal, $\beta = -3.58$, 95% CI [-4.35, -2.81], SE = 0.39, $p < .001$. Men who were rejected did not, although the effect was in the predicted direction, $\beta = -0.33$, 95% CI [-0.84, 0.18], SE = 0.26, $p = .208$. Note then that unlike Study 1, women reacted more strongly than men (likely because they were often the writers). Additionally, revised H5 was somewhat supported for women but not men. Pre-proposal, women who accepted their partner

demonstrated *lower* connection motivation than women who rejected their partner, but post-proposal, replicating Study 1, these women had much higher connection motivation than their rejecting counterparts, $\beta = -0.42$, 95% CI $[-0.83, -0.02]$, $SE = 0.21$, $p = .042$ and $\beta = 5.27$, 95% CI $[4.27, 6.26]$, $SE = 0.51$, $p < .001$, respectively. There were no outcome or time effects for men.

Table 16. *Gender, Proposal Outcome, and Time Predicting Connection Motivation Scores in Study 2*

Parameter	β	95% CI		SE	p
Intercept	25.81	25.47	26.15	0.17	< .001
Gender	-0.36	-0.72	-0.00	0.18	.050
Proposal outcome	-0.42	-0.83	-0.02	0.21	.042
Time	-3.58	-4.35	-2.81	0.39	< .001
Gender X Proposal outcome	0.34	-0.10	0.77	0.22	.128
Gender X Time	3.25	2.38	4.12	0.44	< .001
Proposal outcome X Time	5.69	4.62	6.76	0.54	< .001
Gender X Proposal outcome X Time	-5.28	-6.46	-4.10	0.60	< .001

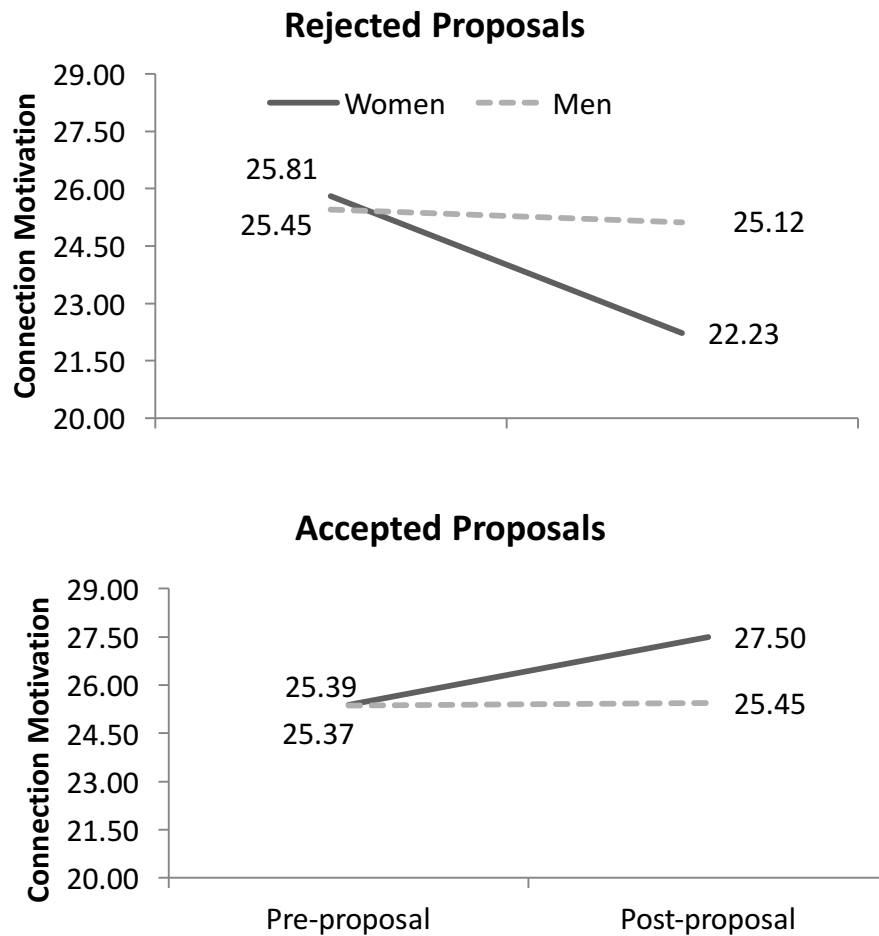


Figure 6. Top panel: Connection motivation exhibited pre- and post-proposal for rejected proposals by gender in Study 2. Bottom panel: Connection motivation exhibited pre- and post-proposal for accepted proposals by gender in Study 2.

Additionally, replicating Study 1, women who accepted a proposal exhibited increased connection motivation from pre- to post-proposal, $\beta = 2.11$, 95% CI [1.37, 2.85], $SE = 0.38$, $p < .001$ and reacted more strongly to the proposal than men, $\beta = 0.08$, 95% CI [-0.36, 0.51], $SE = 0.22$, $p = .727$. Thus, women in both proposal outcomes reacted more strongly than men. Again likely because women tended to be the writers and so they would have been biased by their own

perspective. It is possible that the results would be different if there were more narratives from the perspective of men.

Finally, during rejected proposals, women showed greater connection motivation than men pre-proposal, but, replicating Study 1, men showed much greater connection motivation post-proposal due to women's drop in connection motivation, $\beta = -0.36$, 95% CI $[-0.72, -0.00]$, $SE = 0.28$, $p = .050$ and $\beta = 2.89$, 95% CI $[2.08, 3.70]$, $SE = 0.41$, $p < .001$, respectively. This suggests that these women may have initially felt somewhat connected to their partner before he proposed, but wanted distance afterwards.

Relationship status and talking in advance. Descriptive statistics for the relationship status and talk in advance items are in Table 17. Not shown is the relationship length after the proposal (coded for rejected proposals only). I could only get an approximate relationship length after the rejected proposal occurred because writers were sometimes vague. Of those who did write a concrete number ($n = 21$), the average relationship length was 2.41 years ($SD = 3.17$, range = 0.02 – 12 years). Of those who were more vague ($n = 30$), the most common length was “a few months later” ($n = 5$). Thus, couples stayed together for a long time after the rejected proposal and a few even later married or remained friends. Therefore, a rejection does not mean the end of a relationship. Results also revealed that couples in rejected proposals were less likely to talk about marriage in advance of the proposal compared to couples in accepted proposals, supporting H7, $\chi^2(1) = 46.43$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .74$, $p < .001$, $n = 86$.

Table 17. *Frequency of Relationship Status and Talk in Advance Variables by Proposal Outcome in Study 2*

Variables	Rejected proposals	Accepted proposals
<i>Relationship status</i>		
Friends before dating	25 (59.5%) n = 42	2 (100%) n = 2
Friends after proposal	30 (36.6%) n = 82	N/A
Broke up before proposal	29 (16.8%) n = 173	0 (0%) n = 194
Broke up right after proposal	87 (60%) n = 145	0 (0%) n = 194
Still together at time of writing	9 (5.1%) n = 177	194 (100%) n = 194
Dated after the proposal	49 (34.5%) n = 142	194 (100%) n = 194
Never dated	18 (10.1%) n = 178	0 (0%) n = 194
<i>Talk in advance</i>		
Talked about marriage in advance	13 (28.9%) n = 45	41 (100%) n = 41

Note. Percentage of sample within each proposal outcome is presented in parentheses. Ns vary because not all accounts mention information related to each item. The *friends after proposal* item applies only to relationships that dissolved.

Couple Members' Motivations and Reactions

I next examined the coding results of people's motivations and reactions within proposals. I focus more on rejected than accepted proposals below, because rejected proposals are less well understood.

Reasons for proposing. Sometimes the writer indicated why they proposed or why they thought that their partner proposed. Common reasons for proposing included fear of transition (e.g., trying to keep the partner from moving to a different city or trying to stop the relationship from ending), a big event occurring (e.g., pregnancy or birth), commitment (e.g., wanting to demonstrate a desire to commit to the partner), practicality (e.g., desire for better health care), and love. All of these reasons appeared in both accepted and rejected proposals, except for the

fear of transition; this reason was only mentioned in rejected proposals. Proposing as a way to “save the relationship” (a term used by some writers) was present in 15.8% of rejected proposal accounts, and was not present in accepted proposal accounts. One woman wrote that her partner believed that marriage would solve their relationship problems and would make them happy. She believes that the proposal was a way to stop her from ending the relationship. As a different perspective, one man wrote that he proposed because he had to know her response, even though he knew his partner was leaving him and that her response would likely be “no.” He writes, “I didn’t think I could live with that question mark for the rest of my life.” Taken together, men often proposed for similar reasons regardless of proposal outcome, but rejected men were more likely to propose out of desperation and to remove ambiguity.

Reasons for response to the proposal. Women would accept a proposal because they were in love with their partner and because “it felt right,” which is consistent with research showing that most people believe that love is necessary for marriage (e.g., Simpson, Campbell, & Berscheid, 1986). Writers of rejected proposals also mentioned love, but they were referring to the *absence* of love. This was not the most common reason for rejecting a proposal, though. The most common reason why women declined a proposal was the belief that they were too young or not ready to get engaged (present in 27% of accounts). As an example, one writer mentioned an impromptu proposal that took place at a gas station after the couple was dating for two months. The woman indicated that she was “young and still in college” and not yet thinking about marriage. Another woman shared a similar story about being proposed to at age 18, also after a short dating period, but this proposal came after she told her partner that relationship dissolution was imminent. Indeed, the next most common reasons for declining a proposal included relationship problems (e.g., they had broken up; 16%), their partner’s flaws (14%),

incompatibility (13%), and it “not feeling right” (13%). For example, one woman wrote: “He was a great guy but he wasn’t the one.” Others did not have such favourable views of their partner. Indeed, the phrase “I dodged a bullet” appeared often in descriptions of rejected proposals. Thus, women often accepted a proposal when they loved their partner and rejected a proposal when there were problems with timing, the relationship, or compatibility.

Women’s reactions to proposals. Women’s affect and behaviour during rejected proposals were consistent with Study 1. “Feeling bad,” mixed feelings, anger, and laughter (usually in disbelief) were all common. For example, one woman wrote “I turned him down as gently as I could. The look on his face still haunts me” while another wrote “I laughed in his face.” It is possible that those who felt bad about rejecting their partner experienced approach and avoidance goal conflict at the time. As with Study 1, women usually tried to separate themselves from their partner after the proposal by leaving the proximity or by telling their partner to leave. Crying was the most frequent response for women in both rejected and accepted proposals, although the women cried for different reasons. Surprise and disbelief were also reactions shared by women in rejected and accepted proposals. Unlike women who rejected a proposal, and consistent with Study 1, happiness, excitement, laughing, kissing and hugging were common reactions by women who accepted a proposal. However, a new theme to emerge that was not present in Study 1 was expressions of disappointment by a small number of women in rejected *and* accepted proposals. Women’s disappointment in rejected and accepted proposals both appeared to come from a lack of traditionalism within the proposal. However, unlike disappointed women who rejected a proposal, disappointed women who accepted a proposal often included mention of love for their partner in their account to compensate for the disappointment.

Men's reactions to their partner. Some men whose proposal was rejected thought that their partners were crying tears of joy before they discovered that their partner was really crying tears of sadness. These men comforted their partner before discovering the reason behind the tears. Men's reactions to their partner during rejected proposals were also consistent with the results of Study 1. Men felt hurt, upset, anger, shock, and confusion, but crying was the most common response. Sometimes rejected men attempted to retaliate (e.g., by divulging their partner's secrets), kept trying to propose, acted understandingly, attempted (or succeeded at) suicide, and/or stalked their partner after their partner said no. In contrast, and consistent with Study 1, men's reactions to their partner during accepted proposals often involved shaking, crying, laughing, and relief, but hugging and kissing were the most common responses.

Themes

Multiple themes emerged from this study, including several from Study 1. Common themes that emerged included proposal orchestration, traditionalism, (un)responsiveness, emotion and adrenaline, the presence of intoxicants, and relationship challenges. These themes help to address my research goal of understanding the characteristics of accepted and rejected marriage proposals, and what distinguishes the two.

Proposal orchestration. The five most common proposal locations were at home (26%), by water (9%), at a park (8%), on a trip/vacation (6%), and at a restaurant (6%). These top locations are consistent with other research (Hoplock, 2015). When split by proposal outcome, the top three locations for rejected proposals were at home (19%), at a park (7%), or in a car (5%), and the top four locations for accepted proposals were at home (33%), by water (16%), on a trip and at a park (both 10%). These results indicate that they are generalizable to other research on proposals.

Traditionalism. Consistent with Study 1, traditionalism was encouraged by the audience. For example, one woman who rejected a proposal wrote, “Someone even gave him a ring to put on me, as a rental I guess.” Women who wanted a traditional proposal but did not get one missed the traditionalism. A small number of women who experienced rejected proposals discussed how they would have preferred a traditional proposal (1.9%), and perceived the lack of traditionalism to mean that their partner was not ready to be committed or that the proposal was insincere. For example, one woman wrote, “I told him if he wasn’t confident enough to propose face to face with a ring he had acquired, then he wasn’t ready for marriage.” Not asking for a parent’s blessing was also a bone of contention for a few women. Some writers of rejected proposals hinted that the outcome would have been different if the man had engaged in a more traditional proposal. For example, one woman wrote that she told her ex-partner that his proposal was not a good one and that he should have asked her father for permission and created an elaborate date so they could tell a good story later on. Thus, traditionalism is important even in rejected proposals.

Women in accepted proposals also expressed wanting a traditional proposal. For example, some writers mention that the woman wanted her partner to ask, “will you marry me?,” and just phrasing it as a statement would not do. Some looked down on an untraditional proposal. For example, after telling her own proposal story, one woman told the story of her sister’s non-traditional, non-elaborate proposal and called it lame. Perhaps some women who did not get the proposal or ring they wanted felt resentful and disappointed because they feared how others might view the proposal. For example, a few women wished that they were more dressed up for the occasion and/or wished that their partner had proposed in a way that fit their idea of romance. Sometimes it is the man who wishes that the proposal was more romantic than it was, but the

woman does not mind how it actually occurred. For example, one man lamented that he wished his proposal was more romantic and special than the drunken proposal that occurred in front of a portable toilet. So both men and women can be unhappy with how the proposal occurred. Some couples even fought about the proposal, which is significant because it indicates that the proposal may have been inconsistent with the desires of a couple member and could have an effect on the relationship.

(Un)Responsiveness. Some rejected men had a history of not being understanding, validating, and caring (i.e., they were unresponsive to their partner; Reis & Clark, 2012). The way in which these men proposed may have indicated to their partner that they did not care about or understand what their partner wanted. For example, one woman writes, “I’m not really the marrying kind, and he knew that, so it was another sign that he didn’t really know or care for what I wanted from my life.” Women also described proposals that involved abuse (e.g., hair pulling to get the woman’s attention) or missing elements of the ritual that mattered to the women. For example, one writer mentions that the couple was going through a lot of problems and her partner proposed without a ring. She took offense at this and that the proposal was unplanned. After prompting, her partner said that he thought it would be a good time to propose. She disagreed and ended the relationship. These women felt unvalued by their partner. In contrast, most women in accepted proposals felt highly valued, understood, and cared for. They often said they felt lucky and 18% described the proposal as “perfect.” These accounts indicate that men’s behaviour within the proposal and how they orchestrate the proposal may be an important signal of their responsiveness and may reflect overall relationship quality.

Emotion and adrenaline. Emotion and adrenaline again emerged as themes in the present study. As discussed in the section concerning reactions within proposals, the reactions of

couple members and the level of emotion conveyed through writing indicate that proposals tend to be an emotion-filled event for couples. Additionally, adrenaline was evident in the descriptions of men's and women's reactions, particularly in accepted accounts. Both men and women had shaking hands and pounding hearts. Some writers even described memory loss as a result of their arousal (mainly what was said during the proposal).

Intoxicants. Some women questioned their partner's sincerity if he was intoxicated during the proposal. Women who wanted to marry their intoxicated partner often checked the next day to determine whether their partner was sincere and remembered the proposal, and would only accept the proposal after he expressed sincerity. Women who did not want to marry their intoxicated partner rejected him at the time of the proposal. I could not determine if men whose proposal was rejected were more likely to be intoxicated than men whose proposal was accepted, but drugs were only mentioned in rejected proposals.

Relationship challenges. Mental health issues were mentioned in 5.6% of the rejected proposal accounts as something that one of the couple members was experiencing at the time. For example, one woman wrote that her ex-partner proposed repeatedly when she was severely depressed, because he wanted to take care of her. As another example, one woman wrote about helping a man find a psychiatrist when he proposed after two weeks of dating. More concerning, stalking and abuse were mentioned in 18% of the rejected proposals. None of these factors were mentioned in the accepted proposal accounts. These results suggest that rejected proposals may result from very real relationship challenges.

Discussion

The present study largely replicated the results of Study 1 and builds upon it by furthering understanding of intra- and inter-personal processes within rejected and accepted marriage proposals. The present study found that compared to accepted proposals, rejected proposals often involve proposing using fewer traditional behaviours, in public, without talking in advance about marriage or proposal preferences, and being in more distressed relationships that usually end in dissolution. Different goals, miscommunication, and a lack of responsiveness between couple members were evident in the relationships of those experiencing rejected proposals.

A strength to this study is that it utilized anonymous responses. Anonymous forums are an outlet to discuss thoughts and feelings about the proposal and the relationship, including taboo topics like disappointment. They are also a good way to access hard to study topics in a way that is still ethical (Wilkinson & Thelwall, 2011). Many descriptions were very candid and allowed me to garner a perspective that may not be gained from face-to-face interviews. For example, some writers of rejected proposals indicated that they had never told their story before and that they had refrained from telling their story to their support network. Others went to lengths to ensure that they were anonymous by creating a new user account for the purpose of telling the story so that it could not be tracked back to them. The descriptions also allowed me to gain a perspective that was not as clearly available in video. For example, by analyzing accounts written by a member of the couple, I was often able to determine whether or not the couple discussed marriage in advance of the proposal.

Talking in advance about the state or future of the relationship would have saved some people some heartache. Recall that almost three-quarters of the writers of rejected proposals

indicated that marriage was not discussed in advance of the proposal, whereas all of the writers of accepted proposals indicated that it was discussed in advance. Thus, this variable provides some insight into why proposals were rejected: most couples experiencing rejected proposals had communication issues. Of those within the rejected proposals who did talk about it in advance, some indicated that they told their partner that they did not want to get married or did not believe in the institution of marriage and their partner still proposed. These people perceived their partner to be unresponsive, because their partner did not understand or care about what had been previously discussed. These accounts were written from the perspective of the woman, and it is unclear why the men proposed. A couple of women indicated that they did want to get married, but then changed their mind and failed to tell their partner about their change of heart until after he had proposed. These accounts were written from the perspective of the man, and it is unclear what changed these women's minds. Perhaps in the former case, the relationship was going well and the men thought their partner would change her mind. Indeed, one woman provided some insight by writing that her partner could not understand that she was serious about not wanting to get married. Perhaps in the latter case, the women started thinking more seriously about marriage after the discussion and had difficulty breaking up with their partner before the proposal, or something about the proposal made them realize that they did not want to marry their partner. Indeed, one woman said yes, then "had an epiphany" and changed her response less than a day later. Another woman expressed being unsure of whether she and her partner should get engaged when he pretended to get very angry at hotel staff, but accepted the proposal when he later asked. Previous research finds that people have a difficult time rejecting others (Joel, Teper, & MacDonald, 2014) and breaking up with a partner after agreeing to marriage is likely very difficult. Further dyadic research is needed.

Women varied in terms of how valued they felt by their partner. Feeling understood, cared for, and validated is associated with long-term relationship outcomes (e.g., Derrick et al., 2012). So, how valued women felt within their marriage proposal may have long-term effects on their relationship. By studying the role of responsiveness in this cultural ritual, the present dissertation helps researchers to better understand why some relationships do well and others do not, and answers a call for research on how responsiveness relates to cultural norms (Reis & Clark, 2012, p.18). Future research should attempt to replicate these results using longitudinal data, yet it is clear that perceptions of responsiveness were present in the narratives.

General Discussion

The present dissertation takes the first step towards illuminating the circumstances around rejecting and accepting a marriage proposal by quantitatively and qualitatively examining documented accounts of proposals in social media. I identified characteristics of accepted and rejected marriage proposals, and what distinguishes the two. Additionally, I discovered more about people's relationship status before and after the proposal. Finally, I discovered people's motivations for proposing and for their response to the proposal. I address each of these in turn below. I also tested a variety of confirmatory and exploratory hypotheses, and found partial support for each of them (see Tables 18 and 19 for a summary of results).

Table 18. *Results Summary of the Confirmatory Hypotheses in Studies 1 and 2*

Confirmatory hypotheses	Study 1	Study 2
H1. There will be many (i.e., 3-4) rather than few (i.e., 0-2) traditional behaviours performed regardless of proposal outcome.	Supported.	Not supported.
H2. There will be more people present during rejected than accepted proposals.	Supported.	Supported.
rH3. Connection motivation will decrease from pre- to post-proposal for both couple members during rejected proposals.	Supported.	Supported for women, but not men.
rH5. Connection motivation will be higher at both time points for both couple members during accepted proposals compared to during rejected proposals.	Supported.	Somewhat supported. Compared to women who rejected a proposal, women who accepted a proposal had lower connection motivation prior to the proposal, but had much higher connection motivation after the proposal. There was no effect of time or proposal outcome for men.
H7. Couples experiencing a rejected proposal will be less likely to have discussed marriage in advance of the proposal than couples experiencing an accepted proposal.	N/A.	Supported.

Note. rH3 and rH5 = revised hypothesis. H4 and H6 were dropped from both studies in light of the new connection motivation measure.

Table 19. *Results Summary of the Exploratory Hypotheses in Studies 1 and 2*

Exploratory hypotheses	Study 1	Study 2
EH1. Certain couple characteristics (e.g., age of couple members, relationship length) are associated with the proposal outcome (i.e., whether the proposal is accepted or rejected).	Couple members appeared to be similar in age across proposal outcome. It was not possible to test for differences in relationship length or proposer gender.	It was not possible to test for differences in age or proposer gender. However, couples who experienced rejected proposals dated for about two years less, on average, than couples who experienced accepted proposals before the proposal occurred.
EH2. Certain behaviours involved in a traditional marriage proposal (e.g., offering a ring, kneeling on one knee) are associated with the proposal outcome.	The ring mattered: Women were 20 times more likely to accept the proposal when there was a ring.	The ring mattered: Women were 8 times more likely to accept the proposal when there was a ring. Kneeling and asking for a parent's permission also mattered: Women were 5 times more likely to accept when he knelt and 49 times more likely to accept when he asked for permission.
EH3. There is a relationship between audience type (i.e., who is present at the proposal- e.g., strangers, friends) and the proposal outcome.	Rejected proposals were more likely to take place in front of strangers, whereas accepted proposals were more likely to take place in front of family.	Accepted proposals were more likely to take place in private and have the help of friends and family than rejected proposals.
EH4. Goal conflict between approach and avoidance goals is related to the proposal outcome.	Women who rejected a proposal experienced greater goal conflict after the proposal than women who accepted a proposal.	N/A.

Characteristics of, and Differences Between, Proposal Outcomes

Rejected and accepted marriage proposals share many similarities. A few include location, style of proposing (e.g., using a flash mob), and reasons for proposing. However, rejected and accepted proposals also have some key differences. A few include the presence of others, couple characteristics, and the reasons for rejecting a proposal and for proposing. Rejected proposals were more likely to take place in public in front of many strangers, whereas accepted proposals were more likely to take place in private or in front of family. Family and friends were also less likely to assist in orchestrating the proposal in rejected proposals compared to accepted proposals. It appears that how men propose may be indicative of relationship functioning. Many couples experiencing rejected proposals described poor quality relationships, issues with inequity between couple members, infidelity, relationship abuse, and substance abuse. Accepted proposals did not mention these issues. Study 2 revealed that rejected men were proposing too early in the relationship; two years earlier than accepted men, on average. Although Study 1 did not find differences in age between couple members in rejected and accepted proposals, and Study 2 was not able to test for differences, Study 2 revealed that women rejected a proposal when they thought that they were too young to get engaged. Rejected proposals were sometimes more impromptu and guided by desperation than accepted proposals. This may explain why rejected were less traditional than accepted proposals.

Traditionalism. This research replicates past research that finds that traditional proposal behaviours are an important part of the ritual and that the ring is a key component of the ritual (e.g., Hunter, 2012; Schweingruber et al., 2004; The Knot, 2015). I add to prior research by demonstrating that men whose proposal is rejected do not always follow the ritual to the same degree as men whose proposal is accepted. Furthermore, by examining rejected proposals in

addition to accepted proposals, I was able to show just how important the ring is to the ritual: women were much less likely to accept the proposal if there was no ring. It is unlikely that traditionalism in-and-of itself leads to acceptance or rejection, but rather, what traditionalism symbolically represents to the couple members and audience. For example, the engagement ring signals that the man is willing to invest in the relationship (Camerer, 1988; Cronk & Dunham, 2007; Schweingruber et al., 2004). Thus, some people may interpret a lack of a ring as evidence of relationship functioning and as the man being unready to commit to marriage. Furthermore, women and the audience want to see the ring and may even provide a ring for the man to use when he does not have one. Additionally, men who do not propose with a ring often mention that they intend to buy one for their partner. Therefore, people appear to be aware of the importance of the ring and have some idea in mind of what it signifies about the couple and the relationship. Future research should gain a greater understanding of the various perspectives that people hold about engagement rings and how they relate to proposal outcomes.

Connection motivation. Although the coders in Study 1 were reliable, they were unable to distinguish between approach and avoidance goals. As mentioned previously, people may engage in the same behaviour for different reasons. Thus, in both studies, I combined approach and avoidance goal scores into a single rating of connection motivation. The results illustrated two very separate experiences: For accepted proposals, women were often overjoyed that their partner was proposing and men were happy and relieved, whereas for rejected proposals, women were often conflicted and wanting to exit the situation, and men were shocked that things did not go to plan. Men may be surprised about the rejection, but women tend to be the ones who are more attuned to intimacy in the relationship (Heller & Wood, 1998), are slower to say “I love you” (Ackerman et al., 2011), and are perceived to be more in control of a breakup by both men

and women than men (Gray & Cohen Silver, 1990). Therefore, women may have “seen the writing on the wall” and been looking to end the relationship at a time when men thought that things were ok. Future research should attempt to replicate the finding that women who accepted a proposal demonstrated lower connection motivation before the proposal than women who rejected a proposal in Study 2, because this result was not found in Study 1. It is possible that the different method (video vs. narrative) helps explain the difference in results, because a third-party observer rating the proposal is different from reflecting on the proposal.

Relationship status. This is the first research to test the belief that the relationship is over when a proposal is declined. I found that this is not always the case, at least not right away. Many couples dated or remained friends after the rejected proposal. A small number even got married. Future research should determine why there are differences in relationship outcomes for couples experiencing rejected proposals. How the couple members respond within the proposal and the degree of understanding between members may account for why some proposals result in an amicable breakup and why some couples remain together after the proposal. Indeed, one man writes, “She played it pretty well and pulled me into another room and we talked it out. I understood why she was saying no. It didn’t make anything easier at that moment, but it was a big reason we were able to stay together.” Thus, it is likely that the personality and relationship dynamics of the couple members play a role in how well relationships fare after a rejection. By analyzing accounts written by a member of the couple, I was often also able to determine people’s motivations within the proposal.

Couple members’ motivations and reactions. One important contribution of this research is that I was able to provide insight into couple member’s motivations within proposals. That is, by assembling a list of reasons for why people propose and why people reject or accept a

proposal, I was able to shed additional light onto why people get married and what prompts proposing. As mentioned in the introduction, this knowledge could help researchers to create theory, predict behaviour, and develop interventions aimed at improving relationships. Previous research that has examined why people get married (e.g., Wiik et al., 2010) has found that education, commitment to the relationship, and income predict intention to marry. The present research finds that age is also important. The most common reason for rejecting a proposal was thinking that one or both of the couple members were too young. This is reasonable, because research indicates that people who marry young are more likely to get divorced than people who wait until they are older (Lehrer, 2006). In fact, the present research adds to previous by showing that many of the reasons for declining a proposal could be boiled down to poor timing: Timing in their stage in life (e.g., age), timing in the relationship (e.g., whether they are about to break up), timing in what is going on in their lives (e.g., death, recovery from previous long-term relationship), and timing in what they are doing at the time (e.g., taking a nap). Poor relationship quality is another main reason why proposals were declined. People often experience poor relationship quality when there is a power imbalance in the relationship (Miller, 2015).

Gender and Power Within Marriage Proposals

This research replicates research that finds that gender roles and norms are an important part of the ritual for proposals between men and women (e.g., Robnett & Leaper, 2012). Consistent with research by Schweingruber and colleagues (2004), there were very few women who proposed to their partner. In fact, more than 90% of proposers in both studies were men. In Study 1, the numbers of women in rejected and accepted proposals were roughly even (4 rejected women, 3 accepted women), however there was a bigger difference between the two in Study 2 (20 rejected women, 5 accepted women). Via the written accounts, I was able to discover that

two men rejected their partner because they wanted to be the ones to propose. Thus, women were being discouraged from being dominant within relationships. Schweingruber and colleagues (2004) found that proposals by women are often perceived to be a joke and are not usually taken seriously. It is possible that something is different about the nature of relationships where women's proposals are accepted and taken seriously. Indeed, in Study 2, men who accepted the proposal were often excited to receive a proposal. Perhaps couple members who are happily part of subverted proposals hold more feminist attitudes than couples who prefer not, or refuse, to subvert this component of the proposal script. I, like others (e.g., Schweingruber et al., 2004) agree that future research should gain a better understanding of couples who subvert the ritual.

Women who rejected a proposal or whose proposal was rejected sometimes became "ladies in waiting." For example, one man proposed using a plastic toy ring after dating his partner for a short period of time. He then waited 12 years to propose again, perhaps to be sure that she would say yes. He told her that the rejection hurt and that it had seemed like the perfect moment. This woman (and others) reported feeling badly about rejecting the proposal the first time, but also reported having been very surprised that their partner proposed and thinking that it was a joke at the time. Future research could explore the motivations behind waiting so long afterwards to propose and why the women did not propose themselves once they were ready.

Social norms and power likely play a role in why some couples waited long to propose again. People do not like to think about their relationships and their proposal in terms of power, and avoid thinking about the origins of the traditional proposal components (e.g., Schweingruber et al., 2004). However, the component of the ritual related to the man being the proposer gives men the power to decide when to propose and forces women who want to get married into a "lady in waiting" position. As mentioned in the introduction, waiting for a partner to propose is

the source of much anxiety for some women. Social psychological literature finds that the person who is less committed has more power in the relationship (Lennon, Stewart, & Ledermann, 2013). Thus, in these cases the men have more power within the relationship and it is possible that they are less committed to the relationship depending on their reasons for making their partner wait. Perhaps, men who have had their marriage proposal rejected by their partner wait so long to re-propose so that they can re-gain and exert that power.

Men's power in the relationship is undermined during rejected proposals and so they may engage in strategies to re-gain it, such as being vengeful (e.g., spreading malicious lies), or stalking their partner. Indeed, people (usually men) are most likely to hurt or kill their partner after a rejection as a way to control their partner (e.g., Hotton, 2001). Some women described abusive or inequitable relationships where they were giving more benefits than they were receiving. When their partner asked them to marry them or framed it as a statement (e.g., "I'm proposing to you. You can change your Facebook status if you want to."), women took the opportunity to decline. For a few, this was also their chance to leave the relationship. Future research could explore power during rejected proposals. Doing so would build on the marriage proposal literature that already does an excellent job of discussing the roles of power, sexism, and heteronormativity within the proposal ritual (e.g., Hunter, 2012; Parkin, 2012; Robnett & Leaper, 2012; Schweingruber et al., 2004).

Strengths and Limitations

The research presented in this dissertation has many strengths. In addition to the strengths mentioned throughout the paper, one strength of this research was that I was able to collect a range of experiences that alluded to variations in relationship quality that couples experienced. I gathered the experiences of people who ranged from extremely unhappy to the extremely happy couples. People's relationship quality appeared evident based on how they wrote their narrative. For example, pronoun usage was associated with the proposal outcome, which is consistent with prior research on pronoun usage in relationship narratives (e.g., Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998; Fitzsimons & Kay, 2004). As another example, people who appeared to have higher relationship quality also framed their story in positive terms. These writers would write that the proposal was "perfect" or that it was reflective of them as a couple. Positive framing is often related to good relationship quality (e.g., Murray et al., 1996), and so these writers may have a good quality relationship with their partner. Yet, use of positive emotion words was unrelated to the proposal outcome, indicating that some people who wrote about a rejected proposal may have also come to view the situation positively. They may have also been ambivalent about the situation, because rejected proposals also contained a higher proportion of negative emotion words than accepted proposals. A limitation to some of these linguistic results (e.g., the women's connection motivation results) is that I do not know if they reflect how the writers feel about the proposal at the time of writing, or at the time that the proposal was occurring, or both. It may be the first option, because how people feel in the moment can colour their narratives (Baxter & Bullis, 1986). Taken together, this research adds to the proposal literature by examining a range of proposal experiences and replicates previous findings regarding narrative construction. It also adds to the narrative literature by being the first to study

language use in proposal narratives. Future research could further explore the relationship between marriage proposal narratives and relationship outcomes.

There were limitations to the methods used. One limitation to the present research is that the videos and text were a representative sample of YouTube.com, Reddit.com, and Weddingbee.com and may not have been a representative sample of the general population. The video and written accounts given online may not be representative of what generally occurs in the general population as not everyone posts their content online. Additionally, people who post their accounts may often have extraordinary accounts or have a certain kind of personality type or demographic compared to those who do not post online. However, the videos and texts varied greatly in terms of elaborateness of the proposal, popularity, views, and length. Moreover, online sharing appears to be becoming normalized, allowing for greater variation in who is present and posting online. The current generation experiencing engagement are the same age as the average demographic for online social media websites, making research on marriage proposals easier than before.

The results of this research are limited in generalizability because they exclude the experiences of proposers who are women as well as the experiences of same-gender couples. Moreover, Study 2's results may be limited because 80% of writers were women, and so they were likely better able to articulate their experience than that of their partner. It is possible that the results would be different if there were more narratives from men's perspective. Additionally, research assistants and I were only able to guess people's identified gender based on their self-presentation (e.g., their appearance and pronoun usage), which may not be consistent with the actual gender with which they identify. Therefore, it is possible that the people in the videos, for example, did not identify with the label that we applied to them.

Furthermore, we were unable to measure their sexual orientation, therefore we cannot make an assumption that all couples included in Study 1 and 2 identify as heterosexual. This is important because I may be missing out on variance- there may be greater variability in the experiences of proposals that I was unable to capture.

A cursory viewing of videos and descriptions that involved proposers who appeared to be women and proposals with couples whose members appeared to be the same gender indicated that the traditional proposal script is followed. Many proposers, regardless of the appearance of their gender or sexual orientation, kneel on one knee, present a ring, and ask “will you marry me?” However, very few, if any, rejected proposal videos involve couples whose members appear to be the same gender on social media. An important next step would be to have couples provide information about their proposal and compare across gender and sexual orientation. By including these two variables, I would be able to capture the experiences of people of all genders and orientations that are often excluded in science. Many papers on engagement and weddings discuss how important it is to include same-sex couples in the research (e.g., Besel, Schindler Zimmerman, Fruhauf, Pepin, & Banning, 2009; Hunter, 2012; Robnett & Leaper, 2012; Schweingruber et al., 2004), but they still excluded these couples from their work. I also agree that research should be inclusive and am working on a follow up study to this dissertation that does not exclude people based on their sexual orientation or the gender of the proposer. In regards to same-sex couples, legalization of same-sex marriage has been increasing world-wide. Same-sex marriage became legal in the United States in June 2015 and has been legal in Canada since 2005. Research indicates that same-sex couples face similar pressures from their support network to marry as do different-sex couples (Lyon & Frohard-Dourlent, 2015). So same-sex couples may experience a few of the same issues relating to marriage proposals as the male-

female couples in the present research. Only one case study (Lucca & Bala, 2013) and two small qualitative studies (Glass, 2014; Suter & Daas, 2007) have illustrated how same-sex couples navigate their marriage proposal. Taken together, more people will experience proposals and a small sample size will not be a good excuse for future researchers to be exclusive.

Future Directions

The results of this dissertation highlight just how much more there is to learn about marriage proposals. I outline a few of the many potential directions for future research next.

The role of individual differences. One important next step is to determine how individual differences relate to the proposal. Currently no research examines the role of personality within proposals to help explain behaviour. Attachment anxiety is characterized by concerns with a romantic partner's availability when needed (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). People higher in attachment anxiety are prone to feeling unlovable, and as such, they worry about rejection and feel compelled to excessively seek reassurance. Attachment anxiety is linked to physical and psychological abuse (e.g., Henderson, Bartholomew, Trinke, & Kwong, 2005) and to negative responses to breakup, including extreme distress and vengeful behaviour (Davis, Shaver, & Vernon, 2003). Attachment anxiety may explain the behaviour of men who propose early in the relationship, because they worry that their partner might one day leave them for someone else. For example, one woman wrote about how her partner could see himself marrying her and so did not want to wait to propose in case she left him for someone else. Receiving signals that their partner wants to end the relationship may prompt a person who is higher in anxious attachment to propose marriage as a means of reassurance-seeking. Indeed, three women specifically wrote that their partner was clingy and these relationships eventually ended. Attachment anxiety may also explain the vengeful behaviour and the attempts at re-establishing the relationship that some men engaged in after their proposal was rejected. Insecure people crave connection, but this is yet another example of them "shooting themselves in the foot."

Recent research indicates that clinginess and insecurity are common "deal-breakers" for people (i.e., traits that people avoid in a romantic partner; Jonason, Garcia, Webster, Li, &

Fisher, 2015), and the present research supports those findings. It extends research by showing that what people believe (i.e., that a characteristic is a deal-breaker) and what they do (i.e., break up with a person who has the deal-breaking characteristic or reject their proposal) commonly align when it comes to deciding to commit to a marital relationship with a person. Future research should include relational security measures (e.g., attachment security) to replicate the present dissertation's findings and further examine the association between relational security and proposal outcome.

Foreshadowing the future? Another important next step is to clarify how the proposal relates to relationship functioning in the short- and long-term. Getting married is arguably one of the most important social behaviours that people engage in because of its huge impact on well-being and health – for better or for worse (e.g., Holt-Lunstad, Birmingham, & Jones, 2008; Manzoli, Villari, Pironec, & Boccia, 2007). For example, people who are happily married have lower blood pressure, experience less stress and depression, and are more satisfied with life than people who are unhappily married (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2008). Married people are also more likely to have a longer lifespan than those who are unmarried, especially if they are happily married (King & Reis, 2012). It is possible that the impact of marital quality on well-being and health begins at the start of the marriage process: at the marriage proposal. The present research provides some support for the idea that the enactment of and responses to the marriage proposal may foreshadow relationship functioning down the line. For example, how people wrote about the importance of traditionalism for their proposal and how they interpreted the presence or absence of traditionalism within their proposal appeared to relate to feelings in the relationship.

Research is mixed about how traditionalism within the proposal relates to later relationship functioning. Outsiders do not tend to judge the couple's relationship strength based

on diamond size (Schweingruber et al., 2008). Furthermore, marriage duration is unrelated to the amount spent on a ring (Francis & Mialon, 2014). However, outsiders see a relationship as higher quality when the proposal is more traditional (Schweingruber et al., 2008) and couple members are aware of this (Schweingruber et al., 2004). Additionally, preliminary research indicates that satisfaction with the proposal, and the presence of an engagement ring, is associated with later relationship satisfaction and commitment (Lamb, Campbell, & Kaufman, 2012). The accounts in the present dissertation show that people can get upset when traditional behaviours are missing and use it as evidence of relationship functioning, which attests to how important following the ritual is to people. Future research should resolve this inconsistency and further clarify what traditionalism signifies to people. Measures of individual differences, such as benevolent sexism might help with clarification. Recall that Robnett and Leaper (2012) found that people who endorsed benevolent sexist beliefs desired a traditional proposal. While Robnett and Leaper's (2012) study did not measure what actually occurred within proposals and only measured proposal preferences, it is likely that the extent to which couple members endorse benevolent sexist beliefs plays a role in how traditionalism relates to relationship functioning.

Couple members' responses to the proposal in the moment and how they construe the proposal afterwards may also be key to predicting later relationship functioning. Satisfaction in the dating period and early marriage are predictive of later satisfaction and divorce (Huston, 2009). Research often examines the behaviour of newlyweds (e.g., Lavner & Bradbury, 2012), but it might be possible to determine which couples will eventually divorce based on their behaviour during the proposal. Huston (e.g., 2009) has found that a small percentage of couples who divorce early on in the marriage become disillusioned while others have unhappy relationships to begin with. Couples who become disillusioned marry when they are in love, but

the love decreases quickly after marrying. Disillusion may begin at the proposal. There were a small percentage of women in the present sample who accepted the proposal but were disappointed with how their partner proposed. One writer mentions resentment that she holds towards her partner because his proposal was less romantic and traditional than she had in mind. She concludes her account by writing “good thing I love him so much.” Because marital happiness tends to decline over time (e.g., VanLaningham, Johnson, & Amato, 2001), couples like these may run into difficulty as the marriage progresses unless they construe the situation positively (Murray, 1999). Most disappointed women eventually did by including qualifiers like “it feels very “us” to me now” (see Moore et al., 2015 for research on proposal accounts that include qualifiers). Disillusion may also occur for people who experience a “perfect” proposal, because proposers may not continue to be as romantic as they were during the performance (E. Woodin, personal communication, December 9, 2015). Further research is needed.

Additional research should examine how the proposal relates to relationship functioning in the short-term. For example, researchers could determine how proposals relate to dissolved engagements. Is the proposal at all related to whether or not a person dissolves the engagement? If it is, then how is it related? Furthermore, research is needed to examine what occurs when the proposee wants the proposer to re-propose. Data in the present study indicated that the proposal can be a source of conflict. No research on the topic of “re-dos” exists, but people discuss them on online forums. Additionally, after reading a news story about the present dissertation online, one man who was unhappy with his proposal, and whose partner was unhappy with the proposal, sent me a diary chronicling his attempt to re-propose everyday until they married (he ended around 70 proposals). Thus, how the proposal occurred appears to have an effect on how people feel about themselves and the relationship, especially in the short-term.

High levels of emotion and adrenaline may have affected enactment of the proposal script. The present research is the first to document that the flight/fight/freeze response occurs within marriage proposals and the findings demonstrate that marriage proposals can be very stimulating. For example, one woman who accepted a proposal in Study 1 and one woman who rejected a proposal in Study 2 fainted after being proposed to. Fainting during the proposal interrupts the ritual. In the video where the woman fainted, nervousness was mentioned and the man re-proposed after his partner had recovered from fainting. Research to date has yet to focus on the physiological and emotional effects that the marriage proposal can carry despite the fact that it can have short-term (and potentially long-term) effects on emotional and physical health. Future research should involve physiological and emotional measures to capture how couples within rejected and accepted proposals respond within the proposal or when thinking about the proposal. For example, researchers could examine the data from mini-computers (e.g., Fitbits or smart watches) to capture heart rate in the moment. Furthermore, if researchers know about the proposal in advance, then they could use experience-sampling software to capture emotion before, during, and after the proposal. This software prompts users to answer surveys at particular times. Alternatively, researchers could use the same or more intensive physiological measures to capture various physiological data while the person is recalling or viewing a proposal. Researchers could measure emotion before, during, and after the recall or viewing period to see how emotions are affected. Studying physiological responses and emotions when participating in or viewing marriage proposals would further clarify people's experiences.

Implications

The results of this dissertation could benefit lay people and the marriage industry (particularly professional marriage proposal planners) who are curious about marriage proposals

and want to orchestrate a successful proposal. The present research helps people to understand the characteristics of proposals, including rejected proposals, so that they might keep these characteristics in mind when planning their own proposal or when considering the proposals of others. For example, proposers could take away from this research that they should discuss marriage in advance of proposing and include in that discussion preferences for traditionalism, support network involvement, and privacy. Future research could help proposers and industry by determining what people want in a proposal, how what people want relates to individual differences, and why people want what they do. For example, existing research finds that most people want a private proposal, but some people want a semi-private proposal (i.e., in front of friends and family), and others want a public proposal (Hoplock, 2015). What are the characteristics of these different people? Understanding these issues could help proposers and industry, because it would help people be happier and more satisfied with their proposals and may have the downstream consequence of having a positive effect on the relationship. For proposers, they could make their partner happy, which could help the relationship. For industry, happy clients are likely to tell others about the company resulting in more business for the company. Additionally, knowing the characteristics of accepted and rejected proposals as well as the characteristics of popular proposal videos could help those who want to create a “viral” (i.e., popular) video that involves a marriage proposal. The results of the present dissertation have already helped a band to create a YouTube video that garnered the attention of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (The New Groovement, 2015).¹³ Thus, the results of the present dissertation are pertinent to many people and have practical implications, yet there is still much to learn about the nuances in proposal preferences.

Conclusions

It is unclear how common rejected proposals are, but this dissertation shows that they do occur. Across two studies, I was able to gather 240 accounts of rejected proposals, and this was just through social media. Moreover, the written accounts were limited to those written by a member of the couple. Many more written accounts exist that describe proposals from a third party's point of view. Thus, many marriage proposals are rejected, highlighting a blind spot in current research, which has only focused on accepted proposals to date. The present research contributes to knowledge of proposals by studying both rejected and accepted proposals. This dissertation also helps researchers, industry, and lay people to better understand the proposal experience of all of those involved, including how and why people propose and why they behave the way they do within proposals. The results of this dissertation highlight the importance of traditionalism and talking about marriage in advance of the proposal. It also illuminates relationship status around the proposal and people's motivations within proposals. Proposing marriage is one of the few rituals that many people all over the world engage in, and yet despite being an overlearned ritual, many aspects remain a mystery. The present research is a step towards unveiling the mystery.

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Footnotes

¹I use the pronouns “their” and “them” throughout to be inclusive of all genders.

²Figure based on 2012 United States’ statistics obtained from theweddingreport.com (<http://www.theweddingreport.com/wmdb/index.cfm?action=db.viewdetail&t=s&lc=00&setloc=y>)

³Some common rituals are quite individualized (Norton & Gino, 2014). For example, a sports player may enact a specific series of behaviours before each game or a family might engage in a specific sequence of behaviours on Christmas morning. However, the distinction of these behaviours from habits, routines, and other constructs has been debated due to their individualized nature (Vohs, 2014). My focus will be not be on the individualized rituals and instead will be on the significance of more widely performed rituals.

⁴It is unclear whether education is related to following the script, because this relationship has not yet been directly examined and the majority of research participants in studies on engagement have at least some college education (i.e., there is little variability in education in existing engagement research). Compared to people who have higher education and social class, people who have less education and a lower social class appear to have more traditional views of marriage (e.g., they believe that marriage is for life; Flouri & Buchanan, 2001), but this might not extend to enacting more traditional proposals. If one makes inferences based on social class research, then one can assume that there may not be differences in adhering to the script based on education-level.

⁵It should be noted that for the a-priori sample size calculation I used the calculator for hierarchical multiple regression because there was no a-priori sample size calculator on the site for mixed-model ANOVAs.

⁶Coders in Studies 1 and 2 also coded whether they were unsure of who was present at the proposal (see Appendices B and C), however reliability for this item was low in both studies (Kalpha = -0.10 in Study 1, Cohen's kappa = .11 in Study 2). Therefore, this item is not reported within the body of the paper. It should be noted that for both studies, coders were sure of who was present at the proposal more frequently than they were unsure of who was present.

⁷It is unclear why exactly asking "will you marry me?" had such a low reliability. This item should be interpreted with caution. It is possible that the coders and I were on a different page as to what "counted" as asking the question. Investigation revealed that the coders were somewhat consistent with each other (Krippendorff's alpha = .52). These coders were used in Study 2 where reliability for this item was much higher.

⁸The statistical program, SPSS, indicated that there were too few cases to calculate the alpha for pulling away. Examining proposees and proposers separately revealed an ICC of .96 for proposees and the too few cases error for proposers. Thus, it appears that this item was difficult to code when rating proposers. Additionally, Team 4 was originally going to code the frequency of open and closed body postures. However, they found it too difficult to code these items and inter-rater reliability was low after 40 ratings. I created the item outlined in text to replace them (see also Appendix C).

⁹All mixed-models in Studies 1 and 2 were estimated with Restricted Maximum Likelihood Estimation.

¹⁰It should also be noted that Team 5 watched videos that were on a USB that was plugged into the television. The timing of the audio was slightly off sometimes, but was not off when the videos played on the computer. Coders on Teams 2 – 4 watched the videos on

computers and not through a USB. None of the coders on Teams 2 – 4 mentioned an issue with audio indicating that it may have been isolated to Team 5.

¹¹At the time of my dissertation proposal, Reddit showed the number of times the text had been rated by others (by adding up the upvotes and downvotes), and how many upvotes and downvotes each written account had. Readers upvote when they want others to see a comment and downvote when they do not think the comment is worthy of being seen. At the time of data collection, the site no longer showed the number of upvotes and downvotes, and only showed the number of points a given post had. Upon reading the frequently asked questions (FAQ) section, it appears that the site's moderators had started to fudge the numbers anyway to deter spambots and so these numbers would have been inaccurate if I had gathered them. The FAQ does indicate that the number of points is accurate and this number is what I report.

I was unable to restrict to Canadian and American written accounts, because writers rarely indicated where they were from. However, informal demographic surveys of Reddit.com indicate that most users are from Canada or the United States (e.g., burgess_meredith_jr, 2011). Additionally, site metrics indicate that most visitors accessing Weddingbee.com are from the United States (Alexa, n.d.)

¹²Analyzing approach and avoidance scores separately yielded similar results to those presented.

¹³Unfortunately, at the time of writing, I was unable to find the links to the radio broadcast and the Canadian Broadcast Corporation's Facebook post. However, I was able to find a link to the YouTube video, which had over 700 views in February 2016 (see The New Groovement in the Reference section for a link to the video).

Appendix A

Table 20. *Coding Information*

Teams	Number of coders	Number of accounts coded by coders	Number of accounts coded by Lisa
Study 1			
<i>Team 1</i>			
Traditionalism and presence of others	4 including Lisa (one coder was subsequently excluded because of low reliability and not completing the coding)	40 rejected proposals and 60 accepted proposals	40 rejected proposals and 252 accepted proposals
Themes	4 including Lisa	40 rejected proposals and 60 accepted proposals	40 rejected proposals and 60 accepted proposals
<i>Team 2</i>			
Approach and avoidance affect	8	40 rejected proposals and 252 accepted proposals	0 rejected proposals and 0 accepted proposals
<i>Team 3</i>			
Approach and avoidance behaviour	5	40 rejected proposals and 252 accepted proposals	0 rejected proposals and 0 accepted proposals
<i>Team 4</i>			
Body openness	3	40 rejected proposals and 252 accepted proposals	0 rejected proposals and 0 accepted proposals
<i>Team 5</i>			
Same coding as Teams 2-4, but focused on women's behaviour pre-proposal	4	40 rejected proposals and 252 accepted proposals	0 rejected proposals and 0 accepted proposals
Study 2			
Traditionalism and the presence of others	3 including Lisa	200 rejected proposals and 200 accepted proposals	Lisa resolved discrepancies

Themes, relationship length, later engagement	Lisa	0 rejected proposals and 0 accepted proposals	200 rejected proposals and 200 accepted proposals
Relationship status and talk in advance	2 including Lisa	200 rejected proposals and 200 accepted proposals	60 rejected proposals and 60 accepted proposals
Motivations before and after the proposal	2 including Lisa	200 rejected proposals and 200 accepted proposals	60 rejected proposals and 0 accepted proposals

Appendix B

Instructions for Data Collection and Basic Coding (Done by Lisa and two other people),

Study 1

- Create Excel file with table that looks like the one on the next page.
- Search YouTube.com for the terms “marriage proposal,” “proposal,” “engagement,” “proposal + fail,” and “proposal + reject.”
- Select every third video that meets the criteria while ensuring that you include videos from the full range of possibilities, including the less viewed/lower rated videos.
- Limit the video search to a limited time frame of one to a few consecutive days. If you need more, then that’s ok, just take note of it. I’m aiming to get 400 videos (200 of accepted “yes” proposals and 200 rejected “no” proposals), so please try to get as many as you can of the one that you have been assigned.
- **Selection criteria**
 - Exclude duplicate videos, videos with poor quality, videos from a movie or scripted TV (although certain reality TV like the news will be retained), videos that contain only the perspectives of professionals, videos that are not in English, videos that do not involve a marriage proposal (i.e., are irrelevant, like a “prom proposal”), videos that do not take place in North America, and videos that involve people who appear to be over the age of 50
- Assign the videos an ID. Please note the number times the video has been viewed, the country of origin (when available), the date posted, the length of the video, the number of times the video has been rated by others (add up the number of thumbs up and thumbs down), the total rating score (and in parentheses note the number of thumbs up and number of thumbs down), the location of the proposal (e.g., at a mall, outdoors, in a home), the sex of the proposer, and the approximate age of the proposer and proposee. To get the total rating score, subtract the thumbs down from the thumbs up.
- For Lisa: Note relationship length and video title.

Appendix C

Coding Traditionalism and Presence of Others (Team 1, Study 1)

Traditional elements to a marriage proposal include: The proposer getting down on one knee, the offering of a ring, asking the question “will you marry me?,” asking the father or parents of the proposee for permission, and the proposal being a surprise. Please indicate whether or not the proposer bent down or tried to bend down on one knee by writing the letter ‘B’; please indicate whether the proposer offered a ring by writing the letter ‘O’; please indicate whether the proposer indicated that he or she asked for permission by writing the letter ‘A’; and please indicate whether the proposer asked “Will you marry me?” by writing the letter ‘Q’ in the cell beside the video ID. In the neighboring cell, please indicate whether others were present by writing a ‘P.’ If others are present, then please write an ‘S’ for Strangers, an ‘Fa’ Family, an ‘Fr’ for Friends, and/or a ‘U’ for Unsure. For example, if watching a video where the proposer gets down on one knee and produces a ring while family and friends are present, then in one cell write B, O; and in the next cell write P, Fa, Fr. Then please use the following rating scale to indicate the approximate number of others present during the actual proposal (i.e., when the proposer asks “Will you marry me?”)

0 Others	2 or less	5 or less	10 or less	50 or less	100 or less	101 or more
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please also take note of any other themes that you notice and write them in the Additional Comments column (see Content Coding Sheet).

Video ID	Traditionalism Bend on knee, Offer ring, Asked for permission, Asked question (B, O, A, Q)	Presence of Others Presence of others in general, Strangers, Family, Friends, Unsure (P, S, Fa, Fr, U)	Approximate number of others present	Additional Comments

Lisa note: How long have they been dating if they mention it?

Coding affect and reciprocity (Team 2, Study 1)

Please rate affect and reciprocity using the following scale.

Never			Sometimes			Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

It might be helpful if you start off by tallying the number of times positive or negative behaviors occurring in the interaction. After three tallies of the behavior (i.e., a rating of “3”), you need not be exact with tallies and you should attend more closely to the overall time involved (because tallying would involve many viewings of the interaction; “the tallies establish the frequency of the behavior while also gauging overall time of the behavior to select a final rating.” Humbad et al., 2011, p. 762).

Please code the 30 seconds leading up to the proposal (i.e., the proposer saying or showing “Will you marry me?”) and the 30 seconds after the proposal.

Proposer/Proposee Positive Affect - Smiling, laughing, humorous statements, and statements that make the partner feel understood and validated. This includes verbal and non-verbal affection. Examples: paraphrasing the partner’s statements, reflecting feelings, giving positive feedback, and expressing care, concern, or understanding of the person’s feelings. Does NOT include nervous laughter or smiling, or humor with a sarcastic or hostile undertone.

Proposer/Proposee Negative Affect - Any instance of a harsh tone or facial expression. Includes statements with negative content including criticism, nonverbal responses that communicate hostility, and disagreements said with harsh tone that do not further the discussion. Also includes displays of withdrawal such as not talking, staring into space, and leaving the room.

Nervousness- Any instance of a tense or nervous facial expression or laughter. Also includes fidgeting, self-manipulation (playing with their hair, clothes, etc.), perspiring, squirming, stuttering as they speak, and generally appearing nervous and jittery.

Does NOT include hostility or harsh tones.

Code reciprocity whenever one partner exhibits positive (or negative) behavior and the other partner responds in kind. Similar to affect, if the pattern of positivity (or negativity) continues between the partners, attend to the relative time spent by the couple engaging in such a back-and-forth manner.

Positive Reciprocity - Overall positivity and warmth in the couple. Code for smiling, laughing, and joking with each other (but do not code for hostile humor).

Negative Reciprocity - Code for hostility, harsh tone, frowning, and/or criticism towards each other.

Coding physical distance (Team 3, Study 1)

You will be looking at the distance between two people using subjective scales. As the interaction proceeds, please use the scales below.

Please code the 30 seconds leading up to the proposal (i.e., the proposer saying or showing “Will you marry me?”) and the 30 seconds after the proposal.

Do the proposer and proposee touch? Y for Yes, N for No

Does the Proposer/Proposee pull away/backpedal/move away when touched or when their partner attempts to touch? Leave blank if their partner does not touch or attempt to touch the Proposer/Proposee.

Never			Sometimes			Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Does the Proposer/Proposee seek touch (Example: the Proposer/Proposee reaches their hand out towards their partner)

Never			Sometimes			Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How intimate is the touching of the Proposer/Proposee? An example of Not at all intimate would be one member hitting the other non-affectionately. An example of Very intimate would be the two are all over each other.

No Touch	Not at All Intimate			Somewhat Intimate			Extremely Intimate
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Does the Proposer/Proposee vary in distance in relation to their partner throughout the interaction? (Example: the Proposer/Proposee sits close to their partner, then moves away, then is close to their partner again).

No Variability			Some Variability			A Lot of Variability
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Final coding body posture (Team 4, Study 1)

Please code the 30 seconds leading up to the proposal (i.e., the proposer saying or showing “Will you marry me?”) and the 30 seconds after the proposal. Watch all of the videos while rating the proposer, and then go back to the beginning and re-watch all of the videos while rating the proposee.

Please use the below scale to rate overall how open the body posture is:

Closed			Somewhat open			Open
1	2	3	4	5	6	7



Coding proposee's behaviour pre-proposal (Team 5, Study 1)

Affect and reciprocity

Please rate affect and reciprocity using the following scale.

Never			Sometimes			Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

It might be helpful if you start off by tallying the number of times positive or negative behaviors occurring in the interaction. After three tallies of the behavior (i.e., a rating of “3”), you need not be exact with tallies and you should attend more closely to the overall time involved.

Please code the 30 seconds leading up to the proposal (i.e., the proposer saying or showing “Will you marry me?”).

Proposee Positive Affect - Smiling, laughing, humorous statements, and statements that make the partner feel understood and validated. This includes verbal and non-verbal affection. Examples: paraphrasing the partner's statements, reflecting feelings, giving positive feedback, and expressing care, concern, or understanding of the person's feelings. Does NOT include nervous laughter or smiling, or humor with a sarcastic or hostile undertone.

Proposee Negative Affect - Any instance of a harsh tone or facial expression. Includes statements with negative content including criticism, nonverbal responses that communicate hostility, and disagreements said with harsh tone that do not further the discussion. Also includes displays of withdrawal such as not talking, staring into space, and leaving the room.

Nervousness- Any instance of a tense or nervous facial expression or laughter. Also includes fidgeting, self-manipulation (playing with their hair, clothes, etc.), perspiring, squirming, stuttering as they speak, and generally appearing nervous and jittery.

Does NOT include hostility or harsh tones.

Code reciprocity whenever one partner exhibits positive (or negative) behavior and the other partner responds in kind. Similar to affect, if the pattern of positivity (or negativity) continues between the partners, attend to the relative time spent by the couple engaging in such a back-and-forth manner.

Positive Reciprocity - Overall positivity and warmth in the couple. Code for smiling, laughing, and joking with each other (but do not code for hostile humor).

Negative Reciprocity - Code for hostility, harsh tone, frowning, and/or criticism towards each other.

Touch and distance

You will be looking at the distance between two people using subjective scales. As the interaction proceeds, please use the scales below.

Do the proposer and proposee touch? Y for Yes, N for No

Does the Proposee pull away when touched or when other attempts to touch?

Never			Sometimes			Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Does the Proposee seek touch (Example: the Proposee reaches their hand out towards their partner)

Never			Sometimes			Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How intimate is the touching of the Proposee? An example of Not at all intimate would be one member hitting the other non-affectionately. An example of Very intimate would be the two are all over each other. Leave blank if no touching.

Not at All Intimate			Somewhat Intimate			Extremely Intimate
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Does the Proposee vary in distance in relation to their partner throughout the interaction? (Example: the Proposee sits close to their partner, then moves away, then is close to their partner again).

No Variability			Some Variability			A Lot of Variability
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Body posture openness

Please use the below scale to rate overall how open the body posture is:

Closed			Somewhat open			Open
1	2	3	4	5	6	7



Content Coding (Team 1, Study 1)

1. What is the goal of this coding? Identify the themes that are evident in YouTube videos of accepted and rejected marriage proposals. You will be asked to create several categories of themes, and code different aspects of the videos into those categories.

2. How do I do the coding?

All coding will be done with pen and paper or by using a word processor and by watching the YouTube videos found on Google Drive. You will be asked to carefully watch the each video. You will want to consider what is taking place in the video (e.g., is there a flash mob?). Then, you will want to assign this idea to a particular category of ideas. Try not to speculate too far beyond what is in the video, so that the categories you create are close to the data. For example, if the proposer says "You make me a better man." You could create a category called "make me a better person" and assign that idea to that category. Any similar responses of that proposer or other proposers/proposees can be put in the "make me a better person" category. If you have several categories that are similar, you may wish to merge them into one larger category. For example, "crowd cheering" and "crowd booing" could be merged into the category "crowd involvement." As another example, "flash mob" and "backyard party" could be merged into the category "public context." As a final example, the proposer saying "I love you" and "you complete me" could be merged into the category "expressions of love." Thus, you will be creating your own categories, and categorizing responses into them as you go through the data. This will allow us to determine the main categories of benefits that exist in the data.

Start by creating a new category for each new theme that you come across. Eventually, your list of categories will be fairly comprehensive, so as you go through the data, you will be doing more sorting and less category-creation.

Some sub-categories will fit into more than one meta-category. That is ok.

Code accepted and rejected proposals separately. There may be category overlap between the two.

3. Coding practice

Below is a sample coding that was done on just three videos. First, watch the videos. Think about what is taking place. Then, you can see what types of categories I created. Note that you might have thought of different categories. There is no "right" answer, but we do want to try and be somewhat consistent. So for the first few practices, we will discuss our differences in coding and try to align ourselves.

Steps involved:

1. Watch each video carefully and note the context that it's taking place, and what people are saying and doing. Each time you notice a new theme, code it into a new category.
2. If you already have a category that describes this theme, you can code that response into an existing category.

3. Reduce the categories you have into main categories. You can make subcategories too.

S002

Christmas

Family present

Family involved (wearing shirts with letters spelling out marry me)

Proposee has extreme emotional reaction

Proposer tries to calm her down

Family records event

Cheering

Proposer and proposee hug

Proposer and proposee kiss

S018

Small party

Proposer fakes accident

Marry me is spelled out in letters

S197

Beyonce concert

“Put a ring on it” just ended

Crowd cheering

Proposer and proposee hug

Proposer and proposee kiss

Appendix D

Instructions for Data Collection & Basic Coding (Done by Lisa and four other people),

Study 2

- Search Reddit.com and Weddingbee.com for the following terms: “marriage proposal,” “proposal,” “engagement,” “proposal + fail,” and “proposal + reject.”
- Selection criteria:
 - Excluding duplicate accounts, descriptions of movies or scripted TV, descriptions that are not in English, descriptions that are not first person accounts, and descriptions not involving a marriage proposal (i.e., are irrelevant, like a “prom proposal”).
 - The story has to be long enough to be codable using a few of the following items: Traditionalism (Bend on knee, Offer ring, Ask parent, Ask question, Surprise), People present (who, how many), Affect (proposer and/or proposee positive and negative affect), Physical distance (pulling away, seeking touch, intimacy of touch, vary distance, body posture is open or closed).
- Assign the texts an ID (e.g., S001 or U001)
- Please note the date/time posted and the URL of the post.
- For Reddit only, click Permalink underneath the writer’s post, then copy that URL. Also copy the URL of the thread and note the thread’s title. How many “points” it has, the location of the proposal (e.g., at a mall, outdoors, in a home), the sex of the proposer, and the approximate ages of those involved, if available.
- Paste the text into 2 Word docs
 - One will have just the one entry. Save as the text ID
 - One will have all entries. Save as “Written descriptions of proposals (Un)Accepted.” Put the text ID at the top of each page with the text underneath it. Insert a page break between IDs so that each entry is on its own page.
- Goal is 200 texts split evenly between Reddit and Weddingbee.
- For Lisa and Ariana to note: Who is telling the story? What is the relationship length?

Coding Traditionalism and Presence of Others (Team 1, Study 2)

Traditional elements to a marriage proposal include: The proposer getting down on one knee, the offering of a ring, asking the question “will you marry me?,” asking the father or parents of the proposee for permission, and the proposal being a surprise. If any of these are present then use Scale 1. Next, please indicate whether others were present at the time of the proposal, and whether these others were strangers, family, friends, or you are unsure using Scale 1. You’ll also indicate whether family or friends helped orchestrate the proposal using Scale 1. Finally, please use Scale 2 to indicate the approximate number of others present during the actual proposal (i.e., when the proposer asks “Will you marry me?”).

Scale 1: 1 = Yes, 0 = No, Blank = Not mentioned

Scale 2:

0 Others	2 or less	5 or less	10 or less	50 or less	100 or less	101 or more
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Coding Instructions for New Themes

If the answer to an item is Yes, please put a 1 in its column. If the answer is No, please write a 0 (if you know the answer). Keep it blank if you don't know the answer.

Items:

Friends first? (1 = yes)- Were the couple members friends before they started dating/before the proposal?

Friends after? 1= yes- Did they remain friends after the proposal if there was a breakup?

Break up right after (1 = yes)- Did the couple members break up during/right after the proposal?

Break up before proposal (1 = yes)- Were they broken up when the proposer proposed?

Stayed together -i.e. were still together at time of writing (1 = yes)

Dated for a period of time after the proposal (1 = yes)- Did the couple members continue to date for any length of time after the proposal?

Never dated (1= yes)- Did the couple members date before the proposal?

Writer indicates stalking behavior or continued attempts at contact occurred towards proposee after proposal (1 = yes)

Mention mental health (1 = yes)- Is anything related to mental health/illness mentioned?

Mention abuse (1 = yes)- Do they mention some sort of physical or mental abuse?

Talked in advance (1 = never, 7 = often)- Did the couple members talk about marriage in advance? <- recoded to be 1 = yes, 0 = no too hard to tell how often.

Extra observations –Anything in particular you'd like to note

Example:

I was in high school (ew! Too young!) and we got in a giant fight (ex boyfriend, obviously) and I broke up with him. It was my senior year and we had been dating the entire time I was in high school. The day after I broke up with him, he showed up on my front porch with a ring and asked me to marry him, but I had to keep it a secret because our parents wouldn't approve at such a young age. I said no and told him to leave. He sat in his car crying for awhile. I'd like to say I never saw him again but I was young and naive so I took him back and we dated for a few more months before I finally broke it off and I haven't seen him since – it's been over 8 years. :D

Friend first:

Friend after: 0

Breakup right after: 0

Breakup before: 1

Stayed together: 0

Dated for a period of time after: 1

Never dated: 0

Stalking: 0

Mental health: 0

Abuse: 0

Talked in advance:

Example:

I was proposed to by my first boyfriend, back in senior year of high school. God, was it embarrassing! And I feel like an ass for saying that. We'd known each other since middle school and had been dating for about 6 months. We'd initially bonded over our mutual hate of our crappy high school and the fact that we were both aspiring artists.

To be honest, I'm not sure where I saw our relationship going or why I didn't discuss it with him outright. I'd always had a dream of going to a top college and when I miraculously got accepted to a great school on the east coast with a full scholarship, I guess I just assumed our relationship would dissipate over the summer.

Welp, picture me surprised when he spontaneously decided to have an art showing at his house, of some new painting he wanted to unveil for everyone. This was kind of weird since we frequently had parties with our artist friends but didn't do "unveilings". Anyway I get to the party and all of our friends are there, including his huge family. His oldest brother had driven in from two cities to be at this shindig so I thought my BF must have been accepted to a gallery or some crazy shit. And color me shocked when the painting was a giant portrait of my face with the words "will you marry me?".

And he gave the most awkward speech ever about how we were meant to be. And JFC but I was just so pissed off in the moment that all I could stutter out were some words about how we were never going to be together after high school and I would be moving away for college and never coming back to our home town, blah blah blah. After a heated exchange he belted out something about my black heart and that was the end of that.

He now paints animal faces for kids at the mall. I only know this because I was home for Christmas break and saw him there. I still feel like a POS for the way I rejected him, but not for rejecting him.

Friend first: 1

Friend after: 0

Breakup right after: 1

Breakup before: 0

Stayed together: 0

Dated for a period of time after: 0

Never dated: 0

Stalking: 0

Mental health: 0

Abuse: 0

Talked in advance: 0

Coding Instructions For Motivation and Reactions to Proposal

Please note the reason given for the response, the writer's perceived motivation behind the proposer's proposal, the proposee's reaction to the proposal, and the proposer's reaction to the proposee. If any or all of these items are missing, then please just leave the cell blank. If you'd like, you can include a brief quote (see Example 2 below).

Example:

I was in high school (ew! Too young!) and we got in a giant fight (ex boyfriend, obviously) and I broke up with him. It was my senior year and we had been dating the entire time I was in high school. The day after I broke up with him, he showed up on my front porch with a ring and asked me to marry him, but I had to keep it a secret because our parents wouldn't approve at such a young age. I said no and told him to leave. He sat in his car crying for awhile. I'd like to say I never saw him again but I was young and naive so I took him back and we dated for a few more months before I finally broke it off and I haven't seen him since – it's been over 8 years. :D

Reason given: Too young

Perceived motivation for proposal:

Proposee reaction: Told proposer to leave

Proposer reaction: Crying

Example:

I was proposed to by my first boyfriend, back in senior year of high school. God, was it embarrassing! And I feel like an ass for saying that. We'd known each other since middle school and had been dating for about 6 months. We'd initially bonded over our mutual hate of our crappy high school and the fact that we were both aspiring artists.

To be honest, I'm not sure where I saw our relationship going or why I didn't discuss it with him outright. I'd always had a dream of going to a top college and when I miraculously got accepted to a great school on the east coast with a full scholarship, I guess I just assumed our relationship would dissipate over the summer.

Welp, picture me surprised when he spontaneously decided to have an art showing at his house, of some new painting he wanted to unveil for everyone. This was kind of weird since we frequently had parties with our artist friends but didn't do "unveilings". Anyway I get to the party and all of our friends are there, including his huge family. His oldest brother had driven in from two cities to be at this shindig so I thought my BF must have been accepted to a gallery or some crazy shit. And color me shocked when the painting was a giant portrait of my face with the words "will you marry me?".

And he gave the most awkward speech ever about how we were meant to be. And JFC but I was just so pissed off in the moment that all I could stutter out were some words about how we were never going to be together after high school and I would be moving away for college and never coming back to our home town, blah blah blah. After a heated exchange he belted out something about my black heart and that was the end of that.

He now paints animal faces for kids at the mall. I only know this because I was home for Christmas break and saw him there. I still feel like a POS for the way I rejected him, but not for rejecting him.

Reason given: Proposee hadn't planned on them being together after high school

Perceived motivation for proposal: Proposer thought they were meant to be

Proposee reaction: Surprised and "pissed off" Proposee stutters her reasons for saying no and the couple fights a bit

Proposer reaction: Anger

Appendix E

Table 21. *Example Words From Each LIWC Category According to Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010*

Variable	Example words	Number of words in category
Pronouns	I, them, itself	70
Positive emotion	Love, nice, sweet	406
Negative emotion	Hurt, ugly, nasty	499
Social processes	Mate, talk, they, child	455
Certainty	Always, never	83
Inhibition	Block, constrain, stop	111
Inclusion	And, with, include	18
Exclusion	But, without, exclude	17

Note. Adapted from *The Psychological Meaning of Words* (pp. 39-41), by Tausczik, Y. R., & Pennebaker, J. W. (2010). *The psychological meaning of words: LIWC and computerized text analysis methods. Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 29*, 24-54.