

Affected by Ritual. Predictors of Agreement with Church Marriage Rites in The Netherlands

Remco Robinson^a, Chris Hermans^b, Peer Scheepers^c & Hans Schilderman^d

- a) Department of Empirical Practical Theology at the Radboud University Nijmegen
r.robinson@wanadoo.nl
- b) Department of Empirical Practical Theology at the Radboud University Nijmegen
c.hermans@rs.ru.nl
- c) Department of Social Sciences at the Radboud University Nijmegen
pesc@socsci.ru.nl
- d) Department of Empirical Practical Theology at the Radboud University Nijmegen
h.schilderman@rs.ru.nl

Received 15 December 2006; accepted 28 February 2007

Abstract

Why do couples opt for a church wedding ritual living in a modern secularized society. Based on the ritual form hypothesis of Lawson and McCauley, the authors identify the specific church wedding rites as special agent rituals and the rites that form the ritual framework of every eucharist or prayer (and communion) services (eucharistic rites) as special instrument rituals. The participants not only distinguished the church wedding rites from the eucharistic rites, but also discerned a third group of rites, musical rites. 26% of the participants were affected by the eucharistic rites, whereas 63% and 80% were affected respectively by the musical and church wedding rites. The research shows that different indicators of religious socialisation and conceptions of marriage predict the extent to which participants feel affected by the three types of rites. In the case of the musical and church marriage rites the sole influence is the importance attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals. Conceptions of marriage account for only a small part of the relation between religious socialisation and the extent to which people feel affected by church marriage rituals. Only in the case of the eucharistic rites religious socialisation and conceptions of marriage are decisive. The extend of affection by the church wedding rituals depends mostly on the importance the participants attach to ecclesiastic transitional rituals. The church is seen as a service institution that dispenses transitional rituals. In this way, the church helps marital couples and their social environment to cope with the contingent elements of these pivotal moments.

Keywords

church wedding rituals, ritual form hypothesis, religious socialisation, conceptions of marriage

1. Introduction

Why do people want to have a church marriage ritual? In modern society, marrying in the church has become a matter of choice (Berger, 1980). Some people opt for a church marriage ritual; others do not. Two major social processes have turned the institutions of marriage and the church into a private affair, i.e. an option rather than a necessity. Our modern society can be characterised by the process of individualisation. This process has influenced the religious domain in society and the church in particular. This transformation of religion is known as secularisation. In line of the process of individualisation and secularisation, one would think that church marriage rites are declining in our society (section 1.1.). Nonetheless, people still opt for a church marriage. Why? Could this be the case because it is a special ritual, rich in symbols and metaphors, which in principle can happen to them only once? Are participants moved by this ritual, whether or not they belong to the church or not? (see 1.2) If church marriage rituals move the participants, it would explain why couples opt for a church marriage ritual despite the fact that church affiliation is low. On the basis of our reflection on the problem of our research, we will formulate two research questions (1.3).

What do we mean by “moved by rituals”? In section (2), we commence by discussing the two modes of religiosity of Whitehouse and the Ritual Form Hypothesis of McCauley and Lawson. We discuss the different rites out of which the church wedding ritual is made up. Then, we characterize the different rites of the church wedding ritual, using the Ritual Form Hypothesis. Our third section describes our research sample and the measuring instrument used to measure the extent of which the participants were affected by the different rites of the church wedding ritual. In our fourth section we describe the results of our empirical research regarding our forementioned research questions. We end our contribution with some tentative conclusions and questions for further research.

1.1 *Declining Number of Church Marriage Ceremonies*

Since the 1960s there has been a sharp drop in the number of church marriage ceremonies as a result of individualisation and especially secularisation.¹

¹ In the period from 1950 to 2000 the number of marriages in the Netherlands per 1000 males aged fifteen or older has dropped from 58.3 to 30.7 (Data obtained at <http://statline.cbs.nl>). In Europe the amount of weddings has dropped from 3.3 million in 1972 to 2.2 million in 2004. If we take a population growth of 8% into account, the amount of weddings per 1000 inhabitants has dropped from 7.9 to 4.2 over this period (Eurostat 2004).

Individualisation has greatly changed the way couples live together. The institution of marriage is no longer the exclusive means of organising cohabitation. And if people do get married, it is by no means always for life.² Cohabitation, too, has changed. If people marry, it is at an increasingly later age. They no longer get married from their parental homes in order to live together but do so after a spell of cohabitation, which may be seen as a trial marriage of sorts (Garssen 2001, pp. 3-29). All this has led to a sharp decline in the number of marriages, including church marriage ceremonies. This is partly a result of the decline in the number of marriages generally, but the decrease in the number of church marriages is also attributable to a second process — secularisation.

Secularisation is a consequence of individualisation in the religious domain of society. It has contributed greatly to the dwindling number of church marriages.³ Within the secularisation process one can distinguish between de-institutionalisation, de-traditionalisation and privatisation. Marriage is a religious institution but, like church membership, it has become a matter of personal choice. And people who are church members may also choose not to marry in church. Church membership has declined sharply, and with it the number of church marriages. After all, people who have no church affiliation seldom if ever opt for a church marriage ritual.⁴ There is also less agreement with the church's conception of marriage and matrimonial values, and by no means all church members subscribe to these. Thus there are couples who have children before they get married and those who choose to remain childless after marriage. Church members, moreover, get divorced. Finally, individual church members are much less influenced by their co-religionists. The church community as a social group determines people's lifestyle to a very limited extent. Hence there is little social pressure to get married in church and live according to its views and values.

There has been a marked decline, then, in the number of church marriages, agreement with the church's notions about marriage and living according to its matrimonial values.

Zo is het aantal huwelijken binnen Europa van 3,3 miljoen in 1972 gedaald naar 2,2 miljoen in 2004. Wanneer we daarmee een bevolkingsgroei van 8% verdisconteren dan is het aantal huwelijken per 1000 inwoners gedaald van 7,9 naar 4,8.

² In the Netherlands, the number of divorces has escalated dramatically from 5.7 per 1000 inhabitants in 1960 to 31.1 per 1000 inhabitants in 2004 (<http://statline.cbs.nl>).

³ The proportion of marriages that are followed by a Catholic marriage ritual, for example, has dropped from 35.9% in 1975 to 12.2% in 2000 (Michels 2004, p. 23).

⁴ In his thesis Michels (2004, pp. 117-126) discusses the way non-members of churches devise their own religious rituals.

1.2 *A Church Marriage Ritual Nonetheless*

Yet there are still people who opt for marriage, and for a church marriage to boot. What does it mean to them? Are they the last of the devout Dutch? Have they refused to embrace present-day individualised notions and value orientations? Probably their reason for wanting a church marriage pertains to the nature of the ritual. Church marriage rituals are defined variously as life rituals (Boeve, Bossche, Immink & Post 2003, p. 7), rites of passage (Stevenson 1987) and a key ritual in the human lifespan (Michels 2003, p. 131). These rituals can be associated with various phases of life, but in any event with birth, marriage and death. Life rituals occupy a special place in the church's ritual repertoire. They occur less frequently (for the same participants usually only once) and their form and content are distinctive. They are specific rites, comprising a wealth of symbols and metaphors. Those who still opt for a church marriage may do so because it is a special ritual, rich in symbols and metaphors, which in principle can happen to them only once.

1.3 *Research Questions*

If church marriage rituals move the participants, it would explain why couples opt for a church marriage. Church marriage rituals differ from other church rituals in respect of a number of rites, symbols and metaphors that do not occur in any other ritual. People who grew up in the Christian tradition may understand these rites, symbols and metaphors better and may be more deeply affected by the ritual. Thus participants' religious socialisation could influence the extent to which they are moved by the ritual.

But religious socialisation is not the only factor. Conceptions of marriage in Western Europe and the United States are heavily influenced by Christianity. For centuries the church was the institution where people got married. Secularisation and individualisation have changed people's perception of marriage and cohabitation. The Christian ideal of marriage as a lifelong union, in which sexuality and having children are accommodated in an exclusive way, is no longer the dominant form of cohabitation. Hence it could well be that it is not so much religiosity generally that determines the extent to which people are affected by church marriage rituals. Maybe it is more a matter of changed conceptions of marriage.

That brings us to our research questions:

1. In how far do participants in church marriages feel moved by these rituals?

2. To what do indicators of religious socialisation and conceptions of marriage predict the extent to which participants feel affected by church marriage rituals?

The next section, we commence by discussing the two modes of religiosity of Whitehouse and the Ritual Form Hypothesis of McCauley and Lawson. We discuss the different rites out of which the church wedding ritual is made up. Then, we characterize the different rites of the church wedding ritual, using the Ritual Form Hypothesis. Our third section describes our research sample and the measuring instrument used to measure the extent of which the participants were affected by the different rites of the church wedding ritual. In our fourth section we describe the results of our empirical research regarding our forementioned research questions. We end our contribution with some tentative conclusions and questions for further research.

2. Theories and Hypotheses

What do we mean by “moved by rituals”? We will first present a theory from the cognitive science of religion on the way rituals (may) affect people. Then we discuss our hypotheses about the relation between religious socialisation and the impact church marriage rituals have on them. Finally we formulate hypotheses about the explanatory role of conceptions of marriage in the relation between religious socialisation and the extent to which people are affected by church marriage rituals.

2.1 *Affected by Church Marriage Rituals*

Two Modes of Religiosity

Being affected by a ritual is a highly generalised concept that says little more than that the ritual affects one's state of mind. One ritual may affect it more than another, and the impact may relate to all sorts of attributes of participants. For the purpose of this thesis we confine ourselves to only one attribute: cognitive structure. To this end we use a theory from cognitive science of religion. From that perspective rituals may be classified according to two criteria: frequency of performance (daily, weekly or once in each generation) and number of sensory stimuli provided (beautiful vestments, candles, music, incense, etc.). Often the two features are interrelated. High frequency rituals offer little sensory stimulation, whereas low frequency ones usually provide many stimuli. The rituals that Van Gennep described as rites of passage have a low frequency (in the sense that they occur only once in a person's lifetime).

Whitehouse (2000, 1-17) explains this relation in terms of a psychological distinction between semantic and episodic memory. Rituals are a major medium for handing down religious and cultural traditions, hence remembering their form and content is important. Episodic memory concerns mental representations of personally experienced events that are conceptualised as unique episodes in the person's life. Semantic memory refers to mental representations of a general, propositional nature. New experiences are stored in episodic memory. If the experience keeps recurring, it gives rise to a kind of scheme of the event in semantic memory. When you take a child to a church service for the first time it is able to reproduce diverse moments in the service. If you ask a regular churchgoer, she can explain the *general* course of the ritual in detail, but hardly any specific moments are recorded in memory unless the scheme is disrupted to the extent that it becomes a new experience in episodic memory. Whitehouse maintains that this requires a powerful affective stimulus. When someone has a special experience that does not fit into the existing schemes it gives rise to a powerful affective stimulus. That intensifies brain activity and the person remembers the event in vivid detail, known as flashbulb memory.

McCauley and Lawson (2002) use Whitehouse's notion about mental processes, but they link it with the form of the ritual rather than its frequency. Whitehouse holds that the difference between the modes lies in the frequency of the experience. If a ritual happens regularly, it contains fewer stimuli and is stored in semantic memory. By the same token rituals that occur rarely include many sensory stimuli to enable the person to remember them vividly. McCauley and Lawson, by contrast, explain the two modes of religiosity in terms of their form, on the basis of two principles: the principle of superhuman agency (PSA) and the principle of superhuman immediacy (PSI). These principles assume that in the participants' perception a deity (culturally postulated superhuman agent, CPS agent) enters their reality at a given moment. The first principle, PSA, pertains to the way the CPS accomplishes this entry: via the officiant (special agent ritual), the instrument (special instrument ritual) and others undergoing the same ritual (special patient ritual). The second principle, PSI, relates to the moment when the CPS first enters the participants' reality. This often requires various enabling rituals. The officiant must be ordained/consecrated, the instrument must be blessed and the patient must be ritually purified.

McCauley and Lawson distinguish between two types of rituals: odd and even-numbered rituals. The two principles PSA and PSI make it possible to classify rituals into a scheme. Special agent rituals are usually odd-numbered and normally require fewer enabling rituals than special instrument and special

patient rituals. These authors maintain that in the eucharist contact with the CPS agent is established by means of the instruments of bread and wine. However, the ritual requires, firstly, an ordained priest (rite 1), who must then officiate in consecrating the elements (rite 2).⁵ Thus two enabling rituals are needed. When a priest is ordained, by contrast, the ritual is conducted by a bishop in terms of the apostolic succession, thus establishing contact with the CPS agent. Hence only one enabling ritual is required. The fewer enabling rituals are required, the more direct the presence of the CPS, which has implications for the perceived effect of the ritual. The more direct the presence of the CPS in the ritual, the more lasting its effect. Special agent rituals often have a lifelong effect, whereas special patient or special instrument rituals are repeatable or need to be repeated regularly. The eucharist can be celebrated daily, whereas ordination occurs only once in the priest's life. The more direct the CPS's presence in the ritual, the more sensory stimuli it will contain to convey that presence. Hence special agent rituals usually occur less frequently and provide more sensory stimuli because of the more direct presence of the CPS (McCauley & Lawson 2002, pp. 8-35, 50, 51).

Church Marriage Rituals as Special Agent Rituals

Marriage rituals are complex, comprising a mixture of marriage rites and rites from the Sunday service — either a eucharist or a prayer and communion service. In McCauley and Lawson's theory (2002, p. 29) marriage rituals are special agent rituals, because the presence of the priest makes the ceremony a sacramental marriage.⁶ Because the CPS is present in the ritual via the ordained priest,⁷ it acts very directly and the ritual has a lifelong effect. Hence marriage rituals have a low frequency: a person undergoes them once, at most twice. After all, the Roman Catholic Church does not allow divorce. A great many

⁵ From the perspective of present-day sacramental theology and liturgical studies this can be whittled down somewhat, but what we are looking at is the principle of McCauley and Lawson's clarificatory model.

⁶ In terms of Roman Catholic marriage theology and canon law this is problematic, because it views the priest's role as purely that of an attestor? and it is the couple themselves who, as baptised people, perform the sacramental marriage. McCauley and Lawson, however, view it from a cognitive-scientific angle, that is as perceived by the participants, who are usually not trained theologians. Besides, several theologians — including Roman Catholics — want this conception to be modified. They prefer to interpret the marriage sacrament after the fashion of the Orthodox churches, who adhere to the view prevailing before medieval scholasticism: it is the priest who administers the marriage sacrament in the nuptial blessing (Zieroff 2002, pp. 88-91).

⁷ Hence only one enabling ritual.

sensory stimuli are offered. Bride and groom are beautifully dressed; the liturgical festive colour (white) is used; there are lovely flowers; special hymns are sung and special music is played. The marriage ritual itself is unique: giving the right hand, pronouncing the marriage vows, exchanging rings, and the solemn nuptial blessing.

The rites deriving from the Sunday service (here called simply eucharistic rites)⁸ cannot be classified as special agent rituals. If they are taken from a eucharistic or prayer and communion service, we have a special instrument ritual⁹ that can be performed daily. If they come from a prayer service, one could say that the CPS agent is present in the proclaimed word, making it a special instrument ritual as well.¹⁰ This means they are high frequency rituals. Although the eucharist may contain a lot of stimuli, their effect is usually slight because of the high frequency. This is known as the tedium effect (McCauley & Lawson 2002, p. 50, 51, 98-123). In the Dutch Roman Catholic Church, moreover, the Sunday mass has become more austere since the 1970s, hence the amount of sensory stimulation is confined to a minimum. In any case eucharistic rites contain fewer sensory stimuli than marriage rites. Thus church marriage rituals comprise a combination of special, powerfully stimulating rites and ordinary, simple rites. Below we deal with the various rites in greater detail.

Rites of Church Marriage Rituals

There are various rituals for both civil and church marriages. We have said that in this thesis we confine ourselves to Catholic marriage rituals that have a long history, in the course of which diverse rites were added. The ritual started off as a blessing of the bride, the bridal veil or the bridal chamber. This was expanded into a ritual in the church vestibule, followed by a festive eucharistic service. Later it was conducted in the course of a eucharistic service. Note that when the ritual was moved to the church vestibule the priest's requests for bride and groom's assent (the vows) were introduced. Since in Western Christianity the

⁸ Since it is usually a wedding *mass* and the rites from the prayer and communion service and from the service actually derive from the eucharistic service, we use the term 'eucharistic rites' as an umbrella term.

⁹ It is via the host consecrated by an ordained priest that Christ's presence is realised. That makes it an even-numbered ritual.

¹⁰ Although a prayer service does not demand the presence of a priest, the person leading the service is a deacon or pastoral worker. Deacons, like priests, are ordained and pastoral workers are introduced to the parish in the liturgy. Besides, the liturgical functions of pastoral workers are subject to profound ministrytheological debate, too complex to be analysed here.

vows came to signify the administration of the marriage sacrament, it superseded the importance of the nuptial blessing. In the current ritual the nuptial blessing once again occupies a prominent place, and in the new Roman Catholic marriage ritual it has changed from a blessing of the bride to a blessing of the bridal couple. Hence the Catholic marriage ritual has two key elements: the marriage vows and the nuptial blessing.

Prior to the exchange of vows the couple are told what a Catholic marriage entails in the pastor's introduction. In addition they are questioned. There are three cardinal questions (Nederlandse Bisschopsconferentie 1996, p. 33, 34):

1. a question regarding the freedom of bride and groom
2. a question regarding their mutual fidelity
3. a question about their willingness to have and raise children

After the priest has obtained the couple's assent, he confirms their vows. He then blesses the rings, which are duly exchanged. The exchange of rings has become a major symbol of marriage, although actually it is simply a duplication of the engagement ring. Engagement rings date back to a tradition in the East Roman empire, in which a ring was given as a pledge on betrothal. In Tertullian's time (2nd century) this rite reached the West Roman empire as well (Schillebeeckx 1963, p. 126). The ring symbolised or embodied the bride price, which recompensed the bride's father for the financial loss incurred through her departure.

These five elements in chronological order — pastor's introduction, questions, exchange of vows, blessing and exchange of rings, and the nuptial blessing — form the core of the church marriage ritual. In the course of history certain important elements were added that were not necessarily ecclesiastic or did not necessarily form part of the marriage ritual.

A highly emotional moment in church marriage rituals is a non-ecclesiastic rite: the giving away of the bride. The groom enters with the pastor, while the bride's father walks up the aisle with the bride in a kind of procession and hands her to her bridegroom. Originally this rite indicated the transfer of the bride, who passes from her father's care to her husband's. It is a drastic abridgement of the Roman *Domum-Ductio*, when the bride was conducted to her husband's home (Schillebeeckx 1963, p. 166). This rite is not included in the *Rituale Romanum*, in which the priest fetches bride and groom from the church door, hence the bride is not given away. Liturgical commentaries reject the giving away of the bride as un-Christian, since the church wants to stress the equality between bride and groom, inter alia by replacing the blessing of the bride with the nuptial blessing (Stevenson 1987, p. 125). The church's

rejection of the giving away of the bride has had little impact on liturgical practice — it remains a popular rite (Otnes & Peck 2003, p. 112). It is noteworthy that the giving away of the bride mostly happens in church, not in the civil ceremony.

Three major rites that do not really form part of the marriage ritual as such are the communion of bride and groom, the presentation of a nuptial Bible or candle and veneration of Mary. The bride and groom's communion is actually the start of the communion rite, but it is usually particularly solemn, partly because only a few of the participants in the marriage ritual take communion.

The presentation of the nuptial Bible or candle occurs, in accordance with Roman Catholic ritual, just before the final blessing and is optional.

In the ritual guidelines the veneration of Mary is known as a local custom (p. 73) and is devotional. The bride may identify with Mary as the mother, but it is also customary for bride and groom to venerate Mary together, thus involving the holy family rather than Mary alone.

That adds up to nine marriage rites:¹¹

1. Entrance of bridal couple
2. Pastor's introduction
3. Questioning by pastor
4. Exchange of vows
5. Exchange of rings
6. Nuptial blessing
7. Communion of bridal couple
8. Presentation of nuptial Bible or candle
9. Veneration of Mary

Because church marriage rituals often occur in the course of a eucharist (the preferred option in the ritual guidelines), they comprise more than the nine rites listed above. In all church marriage rituals there are Bible readings, often in conjunction with a poem or some other text of the couple's choice. In a few instances it is confined to a poem or text written by the couple themselves. Such texts may accord to a greater or lesser extent with the occasion or the couple's tastes and biography (Scheer, 1979).

The readings are usually followed by a sermon, contemplation or reflection. Often the pastor (or whoever is conducting the contemplation) tries to link

¹¹ Not all church marriage rituals include all nine rites. The bride and groom's communion and veneration of Mary in particular may be omitted.

the reading(s) with the couple's life story. The focus is on their past and future — how they met and decided to get married and the prospects for their future life, together with all the joys and troubles that await them. At various moments in the liturgy there are prayers, in any event the prayer for the day or collect, as it is traditionally called. The ritual guidelines contain various alternatives, but often a special prayer is written for the particular day or the particular couple. In the case of a wedding *mass* there is also the prayer over the gifts and the post-communion prayer that is unique to the wedding mass.

From the eucharistic rites we identify the following elements:¹²

1. readings from the Bible or some other source
2. sermon
3. prayers
4. hymns and songs
5. playing and listening to music
6. eucharistic prayer
7. consecration
8. Our Father
9. final blessing
10. fellowship

We take these liturgical rites as our point of departure in assessing the extent to which church marriage rituals affect the participants.

We have now distinguished between two types of rites in church marriage rituals generally: church marriage rites and eucharistic rites. Secondly, we interpreted these in terms of the theory of McCauley and Lawson, according to which marriage rites are a special agent ritual and eucharistic rites are a special instrument ritual. Hence we anticipate that participants' notions about the extent to which they are affected by the various rites in church marriage rituals can be approached on the basis of two kinds of rites: church marriage rites and eucharistic rites. Since the latter represent a special instrument ritual that features in the Sunday liturgy as well and participants may therefore take part in them every week, whereas marriage rites as a special agent ritual occur less frequently, we expect participants to be affected more powerfully by the church marriage rites than by the eucharistic rites.

¹² Again not all these rites actually have to be performed.

2.2 *Religious Socialisation*

In our second research question we assess in how far religious socialisation influences the effect of church marriage rites on the participants. Our thinking about the effect of religious socialisation is based on Durkheim's theory that the more closely people are integrated with their religious community, the more they will subscribe to its values and norms (Durkheim 1951, pp. 159-170). People who have had a more thorough religious socialisation will be more familiar with church rites. Church marriage rites are special agent, odd-numbered rituals. The CPS is directly present via the priest. Hence church marriage rituals offer many sensory stimuli and occur fairly infrequently. As a result the measure in which they affect participants is less dependent on religious socialisation. Those with a low level of religious socialisation will be no less affected than people with a high degree of religious socialisation. By and large we do not expect religious socialisation to have much influence on the extent to which people feel affected by the marriage rites. Eucharistic rites, as mentioned already, are special instrument, even-numbered rituals. The CPS is less directly present, so they provide fewer sensory stimuli (fewer, at any rate, than church marriage rites) and therefore affect participants less. In the case of people with a thorough religious socialisation, however, the schemes for these rites are located in semantic memory, hence they will be more affected by the rites than those with a lesser degree of religious socialisation.

There are several ways to study people's religious socialisation. One of these is to study the influence of socialising actors. People encounter various socialising actors in the course of their lives. Here we confine ourselves to religious socialisation by parents, the socialising community to which the participants belong, and the one to which their partners (where applicable) belong.¹³ Three aspects of the respondent's and his or her partner's socialising community are pertinent: the respondent's church membership, integration with the religious community in the form of participation in religious life, and integration in the form of the strength of the respondent's faith. Indicators of integration in the form of participation in religious life are frequency of church attendance, church involvement and importance attached to participation in transitional church rituals. Indicators of integration in the form of strength of belief are religious salience (the importance of religion in the respondent's life) and the respondent's certainty of the existence of God or an ultimate reality.

¹³ Durkheim conceives of religious socialisation as a linear process. This notion of socialisation has come under fire and it now tends to be interpreted as an interactive process (Bouw & Kruithof 1993; Hurrelmann 1986).

Our hypotheses on the relation between participants' religious socialisation (through these actors) and the extent to which they feel affected by the eucharistic rites. These hypotheses read as follows:

1. Socialisation by parents:

- (a) *Children from homes where both parents are church members will be more deeply affected by the eucharistic rites than those from homes where one or both parents are non-members.*
- (b) *Children from homes where one parent is a member of a church or religious community will be more deeply affected by the eucharistic rites than those from homes where both parents are non-members.*
- (c) *Children from homes where neither parent belongs to a church or a religious community will be less affected by the eucharistic rites than those from homes where one or both parents are members of a church or religious community.*

2. Socialisation by the religious community:

- (a) *People who regard themselves as church members will be more deeply affected by the eucharistic rites than non-members.*
- (b) *People whose partners regard themselves as church members will be more deeply affected by the eucharistic rites than people whose partners regard themselves as non-members.*

3. Integration with community through ritual participation:

- (a) *The more regularly people go to church, the more they will be affected by the eucharistic rites.*
- (b) *The more closely people are integrated with their church or religious community, the more deeply they will be affected by the eucharistic rites.*
- (c) *The more closely the person or her partner is integrated with a church or religious community, the more she will be affected by the eucharistic rites.*
- (d) *The more importance people attach to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals, the more deeply they will be affected by the eucharistic rites.*

4. Integration with the community through strenght of belief:

- (a) *The greater the role of religion in a person's life, the more deeply he will be affected by the eucharistic rites.*
- (b) *The more certain people's belief in God or an ultimate reality, the more deeply they will be affected by the eucharistic rites.*

2.3 Conceptions of Marriage

In our second research question, we also refer to the influence of conceptions of marriage. Conceptions of marriage will have little effect on the extent to which people feel affected by eucharistic rites, since they do not relate to these rites. Hence our hypotheses are confined to the relation between participants' conceptions of marriage and the extent to which they feel affected by the church marriage rites.

1. Contract: *The more people subscribe to the religious and ecclesiastic judicial dimension, the more deeply they will be affected by church marriage rites.*¹⁴
2. Having children: *The more strongly people agree with the notion that having children is a religious task, the more they will be affected by church marriage rites.*¹⁵
3. Sexuality: We have no hypothesis on this value, since sexuality does not feature in the symbols and metaphors of church marriage rites.
4. Love: *The more people agree with notions about love, the more they will be affected by church marriage rites.*¹⁶

3. Research Design

In this section we describe our sample taken in 2005 and the measurement instrument created to assess our research questions. We confine ourselves to the description of the measurement instrument used to measure the extend of affection by the different rites, because the description of the other measurement instruments would be beyond the scope of this article.

3.1 Sample

To answer our research questions and test our hypotheses we used the data we collected in the period January to June 2005. From the total number of Roman

¹⁴ People who attach more value to marrying before the church and before God will be more affected by the church marriage rites, because that is when they are married, not in the magistrate's court.

¹⁵ People who believe that they have a God-given task to have children will be more affected by the church marriage rites, for that is when the couple are given that task.

¹⁶ Love is focal in the church marriage rites, especially self-effacing and caring love. People who set greater store by love or by one of its dimensions will be more deeply affected by church marriage rites.

Catholic parishes in the Netherlands we drew a random sample of 150 parishes. The pastors or pastoral volunteers involved in marriage services in these parishes were requested to ask prospective bridal couples to take part in the study. A maximum of three couples per parish participated. Shortly after the wedding they completed a questionnaire, in which they supplied the particulars of six guests. Because we wanted sufficient respondents who were not church members, three of the six guests had to be people who had been, or planned to, get married in church, and three of them people who did not have or want a church marriage. These six people were also asked to complete a questionnaire.¹⁷ Thus the population from which we drew our sample consisted of participants in Catholic marriage rituals and our findings can be generalised to that population.

Not all parishes had weddings in the research period. Especially (according to the pastors) aging parishes had no weddings at all. In the end we had a list of 131 bridal couples and 169 of their guests. Of the 300 questionnaires circulated 216 were completed and returned (71%). Of these 81 were from couples (74%) and 55 from wedding guests (25%). Among the respondents 162 (75%) were church members: 151 Roman Catholics (70%) and 11 members of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (5%). Fifty-four respondents were not church members (25%).

3.2 *Measuring Instruments*

To measure the extent to which participants in marriage rituals are affected by the various rites, we presented the rites identified in section 2 to them, with the following question: *There are moments in marriage ceremonies that one never experiences elsewhere and that can affect one. Thinking back on the marriage ceremony, could you indicate how intensely you experienced the following moments?* We also presented them with the various eucharistic rites, with the following question: *In the course of a church marriage ceremony you may have found various moments moving. Thinking back on the ceremony, could you indicate how intense each of these moments was?*

In section 2 we described the various rites in the marriage ritual, both marriage rites and eucharistic rites. But are both kinds of rites recognised by the

¹⁷ Because ours is what is known as a stratified sample, we conducted a variance analysis of notions about the goal of church marriage rituals before we proceeded with the other analyses. In this prior analysis we compared the variance of individual respondents with that of respondents grouped according to a specific wedding, with a view to possible clustering of wedding guests with the bridal couple concerned. At a significance level of 5% the difference between the two variances was significant. At a significance level of 1% it no longer was.

Table 1: Factor analysis of extent to which participants are affected by liturgical elements

Items	Theoretical domain	Communality	Eucharistic rites	Musical rites	Marriage rites
During the eucharistic prayer	Eucharistic rite	.78	.92		
When the priest holds up the bread and wine	Eucharistic rite	.78	.92		
During the Our Father	Eucharistic rite	.73	.86		
During the Bible readings	Eucharistic rite	.60	.75		
When the couple received communion	Marriage rite	.65	.66		.28
During the sermon	Eucharistic	.53	.65		
During the prayers	Eucharistic rite	.52	.59		
During the final blessing	Eucharistic rite	.61	.53		.32
When the couple move to the Lady altar	Marriage rite	.48	.43	.21	.18
During the music	Eucharistic rite	.93		.95	
When singing the hymns	Eucharistic rite	.70	.21	.70	
When the couple pledge their faithfulness to each other	Marriage rite	.69			.82
At the exchange of rings	Marriage rite	.57			.71
When the couple enter the church	Marriage rite	.47			.68
When the pastor officially addresses the couple	Marriage rite	.62	.32		.54
The fellowship with others during the service	Eucharistic rite	.47			.46
Cronbach's alpha			.93	.89	.84

participants as distinct types? To determine this, we conducted a factor analysis. Below we indicate the dimensions of each item that we discerned theoretically (theoretical domain) and which factors featured in the respondents' answers, with the concomitant communality coefficients and factor loadings.¹⁸ On the basis of the factor analyses we constructed scales. The frequency distribution of scores on each scale appear below the factor analysis.¹⁹ Scores on these scales were used answer our research questions and for further analyses.

The factor analysis²⁰ yielded three factors (see Table 1). Most items on the eucharistic rites loaded on the first factor except for two items relating to music, which both loaded on the second factor. Two items on marriage rites loaded on the first factor (couple's communion and veneration of Mary). Hence the first factor was labelled 'eucharistic rites'. The explanation of the fact that the couple's communion also loaded on this factor could be that it is interpreted as the start and part of the communion of all participants, rather than as a solemn moment in the marriage ritual. The veneration of Mary is probably not regarded as a component of the marriage rites either, since the ordinary eucharist includes a hymn to Mary as well. Because two music-related items loaded on the second factor, we labelled it 'musical rites'. The fact that these two items constitute a separate factor is probably because all participants listen to the music and sing together, whereas the marriage rites and eucharistic rites respectively focus on the couple and the priest. Music, especially singing, may strengthen the fellowship, because it stimulates participants to listen to each other and respond to changes in tone, melody and rhythm (Ford, 1999, p. 122). The other items on marriage rites loaded on the third factor, which was therefore labelled 'marriage rites'.

Thus the factor analysis confirmed our distinction between eucharistic rites and marriage rites, albeit with the addition of a further distinction, musical rites. The scales based on this factor analysis proved to be reliable (Cronbach's alpha .88 and .80).

4. Results

In this section we discuss the major findings of our empirical research regarding our research questions. First we will describe the extent to which the participants felt affected by the three types of rites. Then, we will describe three regression analyses, conducted to measure the influence of religious

¹⁸ Factor loadings below .20 are omitted.

¹⁹ Scale scores were calculated by summing each respondent's score on the items for each factor and dividing by the number of valid scores.

²⁰ Oblimin, minimal eigenvalue 1.

socialisation and conceptions of marriage on the extend of affection by the three types of rites.

4.1 *Extend of Affection*

Our first research question is: In how far do participants in church marriages feel moved by these rituals? Below we show in how far participants felt they were affected by the different types of rites.

Table 2: Emotional effect of eucharistic rites

Label	Scores	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Totally unaffected	1	12	5.6	5.6
Unaffected	2	50	23.1	29.1
Mildly affected	3	93	43.1	72.8
Affected	4	55	25.5	98.6
Deeply affected	5	3	1.4	100.0
Missing	3	1.4		
Total	216	100.0		

Table 2 shows that almost a third (29.1%) of the respondents feel unaffected by these rites; 43.1% feel mildly affected, while a quarter of the participants (26.9%) feel that they are affected by the eucharistic rites.

Table 3: Emotional effect of musical rites

Label	Scores	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Totally unaffected	1	8	3.7	3.8
Unaffected	2	15	6.9	10.8
Mildly affected	3	55	25.5	36.6
Affected	4	86	39.8	77.0
Deeply affected	5	49	22.7	100.0
Missing	3	1.4		
Total	216	100.0		

Table 3 shows that only a handful of respondents (10.8%) are unaffected by the musical rites; 36.6% feel mildly affected. The majority (62.5%) feel affected by the musical rites.

Table 4 shows that a mere 3.3% feel unaffected by the marriage rites, while 17.6% feel mildly affected. The majority of the respondents (80%) feel they are affected by the church marriage rites.

Hence there is a manifest difference in the extent to which respondents feel affected by the various types of rites. Whereas a clear majority feel affected by the musical and marriage rites, only a quarter of the respondents feel the same about the eucharistic rites. It should be noted, however, that only a quarter of them feel unaffected by these rites.

Table 4: Emotional effect of marriage rites

Label	Scores	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Totally unaffected	1	1	0.5	0.5
Unaffected	2	6	2.8	3.3
Mildly affected	3	38	17.6	20.9
Affected	4	119	55.1	76.3
Deeply affected	5	51	23.6	100.0
Total		100.0		

In summary: the answer to our first research question is: *A large majority of participants feel affected mainly by the marriage and musical rites. The eucharistic rites (or, where applicable, the communion or prayer rites) affect them far less.*

4.2 Predictors of Agreement

To answer our second research question about the influence of religious socialisation and conceptions of marriage on the extent to which participants think that the church marriage rites affect them, we use a regression model. We use four models for religious socialisation by parents, integration with the religious community via participation in religious life, integration through strength of belief, and conceptions of marriage. We apply the models to the dependent variables — eucharistic, musical and marriage rites.

Eucharistic Rites

The following table reflects the regression coefficients for the eucharistic rites.

Table 5: Parameter estimates for the regression analysis of eucharistic rites

p.-values .05 in bold, n=171

Hypotheses and models	1a-d	2a-b	2c	3-6
	1	2	3	4
Church membership Parents:				
Both parents	.00	.00	.00	.00
One parent	-.10	-.24	-.18	-.15
Neither parent	-.86	-.13	-.07	-.13
Frequency of church attendance				
		.01	-.08	-.18
Church membership: Respondent				
Partner		-.24	-.30	.03
		.18	.27	.13
Intentional participation transitional rituals				
		.53	.52	.44
Religious salience				
			.20	.10
Belief in God				
			.03	-.05
Belief in ultimate reality				
			.15	.22
Contract:				
Religious/ecclesiastic				.32
Personal				-.13
Social				.01
Exclusively judicial				-.01
Alternative forms of cohabitation				
				.02
Having children:				
Religious task				-.12
Social expectation				.03
Sexuality:				
Premarital sex				-.01
Homosexuality by nature				.02
Homosexual behaviour				-.15
Love:				
<i>Agapè</i>				.06

Table 5: (*cont.*)**p.-values .05 in bold, n=171**

Hypotheses and models	1a-d	2a-b	2c	3-6
	1	2	3	4
<i>Eros</i>				-.03
<i>Philia</i>				-.03
<i>Storgè</i>				.03
R-square	.13	.35	.42	.51
Adjusted R-square	.12	.32	.39	.43

The regression coefficients for model 1 confirm hypotheses 1a to 1d that there is a significant difference (–.86) between the impact of the eucharistic rites on people from homes where both parents are members of a church or religious community and from homes where neither parent is a member. Hypotheses 2a and 2b anticipate that the extent of integration via participation in church life will have a greater effect on the extent to which participants feel affected by the eucharistic rites than religious socialisation by parents. This was confirmed. The significant effect of parental church membership becomes insignificant (–.13) when predictors of integration with the church or religious community via participation in religious life is included in the analysis (model 2). The only significant effect is that of importance attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals (.53). When the predictors of strength of belief are incorporated (model 3) the effect of participation in transitional rituals remains intact (.52), but there is a new significant effect — that of religious salience (.20). The inclusion of conceptions of marriage in model 4 reveals a significant negative effect of frequency of church attendance (–.18). The effect of the importance attached to participation in transitional rites remains positive and significant, albeit less pronounced (.44). Religious salience no longer has a significant effect, but that of belief in an ultimate reality becomes significant (.22). Among conceptions of marriage three predictors have a significant effect: the notion that one marries primarily before God and the church (.32), that one marries primarily before one's partner (–.13) and that homosexual behaviour is unacceptable (–.15). Finally, conceptions of marriage have a suppressor effect (Scheepers et al. 2001, p. 256; Davis 1985, p. 33). The insignificant effect of frequency of church attendance becomes significant, in that matrimonial values have a neutralising effect on both frequency of church attendance and the extent to which participants feel affected by the eucharistic rites. The same applies to belief in an ultimate

reality. In the fourth model this effect becomes significant, whereas in model 3 it was not.

The four models show that religious socialisation by parents influences the extent to which participants feel affected by the eucharistic rites, but this effect is neutralised by participation in religious life, more particularly the value attached to participation in transitional rites. In the subsequent models this effect remains significant — indeed, almost constant.²¹ Inclusion of the predictors of strength of belief does not neutralise anything, but adds the effect of religious salience. As for explained variance (R-square), the predictors of participation in religious life increase the explanatory power of the model considerably, although that applies to the other models as well. This enables us to answer our second research question about the eucharistic rites: *Participants' religious socialisation largely explains the extent to which they feel affected by the eucharistic rites.*

Inclusion of the predictors of conceptions of marriage does not neutralise the influence of religious socialisation. More than that, its suppressor effect brings to light the decisive influence of frequency of church attendance and strength of belief in an ultimate reality. It does, however, neutralise the effect of religious salience, and the influence of importance attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals declines. This enables us to answer our third research question about the eucharistic rites: *Conceptions of marriage only partly explain the influence of religious socialisation on the extent to which participants feel affected by the eucharistic rites.*

When we look for decisive attributes and notions, we observe the negative effect of frequency of church attendance. This we cannot explain. One would have expected an opposite effect, also in light of the other decisive attributes. Probably we are dealing with a statistical anomaly. In addition the importance attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals and strength of belief in an ultimate reality play a major role. Among conceptions of marriage the notion that one marries primarily before God and the church has a positive effect and the notion that one marries primarily before one's partner and that homosexuality by nature is unacceptable have a negative effect. Hence positive effects stem from attributes and notions that assign the church and religion a prominent place, whereas negative effects (apart from frequency of church attendance) come from attributes and notions focusing on the individual and entailing a permissive attitude towards homosexuality by nature.

²¹ The fact that we are dealing with a standardised coefficient makes comparison within and between models possible.

Musical Rites

The following table gives the regression coefficients for musical rites.

Table 6: Parameter estimates for the regression analysis of musical rites

p.-values .05 in bold, n=171

Hypotheses and models	1a-d	2a-b	2c	3-6
	1	2	3	4
Church membership Parents:				
Both parents	.00	.00	.00	.00
One parent	.41	.26	.31	.39
Neither parent	-.59	.09	.19	.26
Frequency church attendance		.05	.01	.03
Church membership respondent		.19	.18	.13
Church membership partner		-.11	.04	
Intentional participation transitional rituals		.48	.40	.40
Religious salience			.02	.01
Belief in God			.21	.21
Belief in ultimate reality			.05	.02
Contract				
Religious/ecclesiastic				.08
Personal				.03
Social				-.02
Exclusively judicial				-.06
Alternative forms of cohabitation				.05
Having children:				
Religious task				.04
Social expectation				-.04
Sexuality:				
Premarital sex				.02
Homosexuality by nature				.12
Homosexual behaviour				-.03
Love:				
<i>Agapè</i>				.05

Table 6: (*cont.*)**p.-values .05 in bold, n=171**

Hypotheses and models	1a-d	2a-b	2c	3-6
	1	2	3	4
<i>Eros</i>				
<i>Philia</i>				.07
<i>Storgè</i>				-.06
R-square	.06	.23	.27	.31
Adjusted R-square	.05	.20	.23	.20

The first model confirms hypotheses 1a to 1d. There is a significant negative difference (–.59) in the extent to which participants feel affected by musical rites between respondents from homes where both parents are members of a church or religious community and those from homes where neither parent is a member. Participants from homes where both parents are non-members feel less affected by church marriage rituals than those from homes where both parents are members. When the predictors of participation in religious life are added in the second model this significant effect is neutralised. Now the important effect is that of importance attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals (.48). This positive effect remains significant in models 3 and 4, although it decreases slightly (.40). As in the case of the eucharistic rites, inclusion of the predictors of strength of belief in model 3 has no significant effect in itself, but it does slightly reduce the impact of the importance that participants attach to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals (.40). Inclusion of the predictors of conceptions of marriage in model 4 likewise has no significant effect and does not neutralise any other effect. The significant effect of importance attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals remains unchanged (.40).

In terms of McCauley and Lawson's theory musical rites are special patient rituals rather than special agent rituals. Participants in church marriage rituals sing to God and the rites are even-numbered (McCauley & Lawson 2002, p. 28). But they do little more than offer sensory stimulation and usually have a low frequency, since special hymns are sung in marriage ceremonies and other music is specially chosen for the occasion. It is the emotionality or aesthetic quality of the actual music that evokes the presence of the CPS. We surmise that these rites too function in much the same way as special agent rituals. The regression analyses show that the more thoroughly people are religiously socialised by their parents and community, the more these rites affect

them. Over half the participants feel affected or even deeply affected by the musical rites (table 5.4). One would expect religious socialisation to have a less decisive effect, since the impact of the rites depends more on the intensity of the sensory stimuli than on repetition. The reason why religious socialisation remains decisive could lie in the religious character of the music (even when popular music is used along with hymns). In that case it seems plausible that participants with a thorough religious socialisation would be more powerfully affected by these rites. As for explained variance, it is mainly participation in church life, more especially the value attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals, that has substantial explanatory power. Hence the answer to our second research question reads: *Participants' religious socialisation explains the extent to which they feel affected by musical rites to a considerable extent.*

Predictors of conceptions of marriage do not neutralise the effect of the importance attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals. In themselves they have no decisive impact either and explained variance barely increases. Thus the answer to our third research question reads: *Conceptions of marriage do not explain the influence of participants' religious socialisation on the extent to which they feel affected by musical rites to any appreciable extent.*

The pre-eminence of the value attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals could indicate that we are dealing mainly with a specific type of Christian. Their Christianity is not a matter of belief, church attendance or conceptions of marriage, but a conviction that it is important for them to get married in church, have their children baptised and eventually have a church burial. Hence they are probably people who regard the church as a kind of 'service institution' dispensing life rituals. They are still Christian in their socialisation to the extent that they turn to the church for these rituals, but that's where their commitment ends.

Marriage Rites

The following table gives the regression coefficients for the marriage rites.

Table 7: Parameter estimates for the regression analysis of marital rites

p.-values .10 in bold, n=172

Hypotheses and models	1a-d	2a-b	2c	3-6
	1	2	3	4
Church membership Parents:				
Both parents	.00	.00	.00	.00
One parent	-.27	-.43	-.38	-.31
Neither parent	-.36	.12	.20	.19

Table 7: (*cont.*)**p-values .10 in bold, n=172**

Hypotheses and models	1a-d	2a-b	2c	3-6
	1	2	3	4
Frequency church attendance		-.02	-.07	-.10
Church membership respondent		.09	.07	.09
Church membership partner		.04	.16	.17
Intentional participation transitional rituals		.51	.43	.32
Religious salience			.06	.00
Belief in God			.17	.22
Belief in ultimate reality			.14	.12
Contract:				
Religious/ecclesiastic				.09
Personal				.01
Social				.13
Exclusively judicial				-.09
Alternative forms of cohabitation				.04
Having children:				
Religious task				-.03
Social expectation				-.03
Sexuality:				
Premarital sex				.06
Homosexuality by nature				.13
Homosexual behaviour				-.11
Love:				
<i>Agapè</i>				-.00
<i>Eros</i>				.07
<i>Philia</i>				.07
<i>Storgè</i>				.12
R-square	.03	.19	.25	.32
Adjusted R-square	.02	.16	.21	.21

The first model confirms hypotheses 1a to 1d that people from homes where both parents are members of a church or religious community are more powerfully

affected by the marriage rites than those from homes where neither parent is a member: there is a significant difference ($-.36$) in the extent to which the two groups are affected by the marriage rites. In the second model, which includes the predictors of participation in religious life, the significant difference is neutralised, but the difference between respondents from homes where both parents are church members and from homes where only one parent is a member becomes significant ($-.43$). The predictors probably have a suppressor effect. Among the predictors the importance that participants attach to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals have a significant positive effect ($.51$). In the third model the predictors of strength of belief don't neutralise this effect, but merely reduce it slightly ($.43$). However, the significant difference between respondents from homes where both parents are church members and from homes where only one parent is a member is neutralised. The predictors of strength of belief have no significant effect, neither do the predictors of conceptions of marriage that are added in model 4. However, the significant positive effect of the importance attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals declines ($.32$).

As pointed out in section 2.2, marriage rites can be defined as a special agent ritual: the CPS is present in the priest. The ritual has a lifelong effect, hence its frequency is low. The direct presence of the CPS is expressed in the wide variety of sensory stimuli. Our hypotheses anticipate mainly a correlation between conceptions of marriage and the extent to which participants feel affected by the marriage rites. The regression analyses show that they do not correlate significantly. Despite some correlations between these two variables, conceptions of marriage ultimately have no decisive impact. The decisive predictors are those of religious socialisation by the religious community. Hence the effect of marriage rites on participants is not caused only by the sensory stimuli; they must also be able to interpret these. That is the only explanation for the decisive influence of religious socialisation. It is a necessary condition. Note, however, that this applies only to the extent to which these people attach value to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals. Most likely they belong to the same group as those who feel affected by the musical rites. Evidently the fact that they turn to the church for transitional rituals goes hand in hand with sufficient familiarity with the symbols and metaphors of church marriage rites to be affected by them.

When it comes to explained variance, socialisation by parents does have an impact, but it only explains a fraction of the variance ($.03$) in the impact of these rites. The greater part of the variance ($.19$) is explained by integration with the religious community through participation in religious life, especially the importance attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals.

The predictors of strength of belief slightly increase the explained variance. Hence the answer to our second research question about marriage rites reads as follows: *Religious socialisation, especially participation in the religious life of the community, explains the extent to which participants feel affected by the marriage rites to a considerable extent.*

Explained variance increases a little more when the predictors of conceptions of marriage are included, but this increase disappears when we control for number of predictors (adjusted R-square). In fact, conceptions of marriage hardly increase the explanatory power of the model at all. Hence the answer to our third research question about the marriage rites reads: *Conceptions of marriage do not explain the relation between religious socialisation and the extent to which people feel affected by the marriage rites to any extent.*

Three Types of Rites

If we look at the three regression analyses collectively, we observe that religious socialisation by parents has an effect throughout, most markedly in the case of the eucharistic rites. The impact of importance attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals is consistently *decisive* and is not neutralised by any of the other predictors. Only in the case of the eucharistic rites do other predictors have any influence, some of them in model 4 a decisive influence. Religious salience has an influence in model 3, but it is neutralised in model 4. Predictors of conceptions of marriage, however, have a decisive effect (along with participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals).

The three regression analyses show a clear distinction between the eucharistic rites on the one hand and the musical and marriage rites on the other. We interpret the eucharistic rites as special instrument rituals. Although the musical rites may be special patient rituals, they do not function as such. The marriage rites are manifestly special agent rituals. Hence it is remarkable that conceptions of marriage have a decisive effect in the case of eucharistic rites but not in that of the other rites. In fact, the powerful impact of religious socialisation on the extent to which participants feel affected by the musical and marriage rites is confined to the importance they attach to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals. In our view this indicates that these rites have a more marked religious character than we anticipated. People do not opt for these rites on, for example, purely aesthetic grounds but actually attach value to participating in such an ecclesiastic transitional ritual. By contrast, the extent to which they feel affected by the eucharistic rites is less exclusively associated with the importance attached to ecclesiastic transitional rituals. At the same time people's perception of marriage (before God and the church, before their partner, their attitude towards homosexual behaviour) has a strong

influence. We may take it that participants in eucharistic rites in the course of a church marriage ritual associate them more with the marriage rites than with the rites of the Sunday liturgy. We did not investigate the extent to which participants feel affected by the eucharistic rites in the Sunday liturgy, so we cannot say to what extent they feel affected by the eucharistic rites *per se*. People who attach value to the religious and ecclesiastic character of marriage are more deeply affected by the eucharistic rites. The religious and ecclesiastic nature of church marriage rituals is probably manifested most clearly in these rites. If people attach more value to the personal character of marriage, they are less affected by the eucharistic rites. Hence we are clearly dealing with two distinct types of rituals, with the eucharistic rituals expressing the religious and ecclesiastic aspect.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

In this last section we formulate some tentative conclusions and pose several questions for further research.

5.1 Conclusions

In our contribution we considered why people still get married in church, in view of the social processes that are placing both marriage and the church under pressure. In response to our first research question we conclude that participants in church marriage rituals distinguish between marriage rites, musical rites and eucharistic rites. Marriage rites relate explicitly and exclusively to the marriage ceremony. Musical rites include both singing (hymns and other songs) and listening to live or recorded songs or instrumental music. Respondents indicate that they are most affected by the marriage rites (80%) and the musical rites (62.5%). Only 26.9% of them feel affected by the eucharistic rites. Thus they are very much affected by the marriage ritual, but less by the rites of the (eucharistic) service interwoven with it.

As for the second research question, we conclude that religious socialisation definitely influences the extent to which people are affected by church marriage rituals. In the case of the impact of the eucharistic rites both religious socialisation by parents and participation in religious life — to a limited extent also strength of belief — are pertinent. However, the importance attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals is patently the decisive factor. In the case of the musical and church marriage rites the sole influence is the importance attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals. Following Lawson and McCauley's theory, we defined eucharistic rites as special

instrument, even-numbered rituals, in which God is represented mainly by the host and the proclaimed word. Musical rites are special patient rituals, but consist almost totally of sensory stimuli and therefore should affect people profoundly. Marriage rites are special agent, odd-numbered rituals, in which the CPS is directly present, as expressed by the much richer variety of sensory stimuli compared with the eucharistic rites. It seems likely, however, that these stimuli require some minimal religious socialisation to be interpretable and capable of affecting people. That minimum is the value people attach to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals.

The answer to the third research question permits the conclusion that conceptions of marriage account for only a small part of the relation between religious socialisation and the extent to which people feel affected by church marriage rituals. Only in the case of the eucharistic rites is it decisive. As far as their meaning is concerned they are linked with the other rites. In fact, they highlight the religious and ecclesiastic character of church marriage rituals, and depending on the value people attach to that, they are more or less affected by the eucharistic rites.

5.2 *Discussion*

Why do people still get married in church? Karl-Josef Kuschel's (1993) answer to this question is theological and normative. In his view the extra value of a church marriage is that it adds a dimension of depth to the choice of a partner. In other words, opting for a church marriage involves God in the contingent choice of a life partner, which can then be viewed in a religious perspective. Our study shows that church marriage rituals affect the participants deeply, especially the marriage and musical rites. They are less affected by the eucharistic rites, which contribute most to the religious and ecclesiastic character of the ceremony (see above). In these rites God is less directly present (i.e. in the elements consecrated by the priest and the proclaimed word) and they also offer least sensory stimulation. But the rites that do affect people — musical and marriage rites — also have a religious character. The more thorough people's religious socialisation, the more they are affected by them. The main influence is the importance attached to participation in ecclesiastic transitional rituals. In short, musical and marriage rites affect participants mainly because they want to take part in the church's transitional rituals. That would mean that they do find the religious perspective offered by a church marriage ritual important. After all, it is at peak moments in life when the ordinary course of events changes or is changed that people turn to the church. The ritual probably addresses participants inasmuch as they attach value to participation in

ecclesiastic transitional rituals and thus gives them the resources to deal with the contingency that features at such moments.

The majority of people in our sample were not frequent churchgoers, but this did not greatly affect the extent to which they were moved by the church marriage ritual. On the other hand, most of them attach importance to ecclesiastic transitional rituals. They are not characterised by close involvement with the church or an explicitly religious lifestyle, yet at pivotal moments in their lives they still turn to the church. That is a minimal form of religious socialisation: the church is seen as a service institution that dispenses transitional rituals. If Kuschel's interpretation holds water, the church fulfils a major religious and social function at these key moments, namely dealing with the contingency of life. The fact that church marriage rituals make an impression on participants, as our study demonstrates, could be evidence of this. An interesting theme for further research would be to determine whether the impact of these rites influences the way participants handle the contingency of their lives. To this end one would have to determine more accurately how they are affected and what it does to them.

References

- Berger, P.L. (1980). *The heretical imperative*. New York: Anchor Press.
- Boeve, L., Bossche, S. van den, Immink, G., & Post, P. (eds). (2003). *Levensrituelen en sacramentaliteit. Tussen continuïteit en discontinuïteit*. Kampen: Gooi & Sticht.
- Bouw, C., & Kruithof, B. (eds). (1993). *De kern van het verschil*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Davis, J.A. (1985). *The logic of causal order*. Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sara Miller McCune, Sage.
- Durkheim, E. (1951). *Suicide*. New York: Free Press.
- Eurostat. (2004). Population statistics 2004. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Ford, D.F. (1999) *Self and salvation; being transformed*. (1999). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Garssen, J. (2001). *Samenleven. Nieuwe feiten over relaties en gezinnen*. Voorburg, Heerlen: CBS.
- Hurrelmann, K. (1986). *Einführung in die Sozialisationstheorie*. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Kuschel, K.-J. (1993). Das sakrament der Ehe. J. Hoeren (ed.), *Wo Gott uns berührt. Der Lebensweg im Spiegel der Sakramente* (pp. 94-110). Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.
- McCauley, R.N. & Lawson, E.T. (2002). *Bringing ritual to mind: psychological foundations of cultural forms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Michels, T. (2003). Fasering, privatisering en personalisering bij de huwelijksluiting? *Levensrituelen en sacramentaliteit* (pp. 131-143). Kampen: Gooi & Sticht.
- . (2004). *Daarom hebben wij stenen ringen. Recente ontwikkelingen rond het ritueel van de huwelijksluiting*. Tilburg: Michels.
- Nederlandse Bisschopsconferentie (1996). *Orde van dienst voor de liturgische viering van het huwelijk* (vol. 7). Zeist: Nationale Raad voor de Liturgie.

- Otnes, C.C. & Peck, E.H. (2003). *Cinderella dreams. The allure of the lavish wedding*. Berkely, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Scheepers, P., Gijssberts, M., & Hello, E. (2001). Religiosity and prejudice against ethnic minorities in Europe: cross-national tests on a controversial relationship. *Review of Religious Research*, 43 (3), 242-265.
- Scheer, A. (1979). Peilingen in de hedendaagse huwelijksliturgie. *Tijdschrift voor Liturgie* (63), 259-317.
- Schillebeeckx, E. (1963). *Het huwelijk. Aardse werkelijkheid en heilsmysterie* (vol.1). Balthoven: Nelissen.
- Stevenson, K.W. (1987). *To join together. The rite of marriage*. New York: Pueblo.
- Whitehouse, H. (2000). *Arguments and icons: divergent modes of religiosity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.