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Post-Feminism, Shaming, and Wedding-Themed Reality Television

Katharine P. Zakos

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POST-FEMINISM, SHAMING, AND WEDDING-THEMED REALITY TELEVISION

by

KATHARINE P. ZAKOS

Under the Direction of Edward J. Friedman, PhD

ABSTRACT

This project combines elements of textual analysis, feminist criticism, and media reception studies to examine wedding-themed reality television programming. Drawing on feminist media studies, television studies, and new media studies, this project investigates identity construction through wedding-themed reality television in three case studies: the renegotiation of icons of traditional femininity on *Say Yes to the Dress*, the policing of female behavior and perceived unruliness through *Bridezillas*, and the depiction of female labor in celebrity culture through three weddings featured on *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. These three case studies deal with unique yet ultimately interconnected themes of gender identity construction and management. I argue that post-feminist ideologies are instrumental in shaping the way that identity is constructed through advocating specific behaviors and shaming others in three key areas: hyper-consumerism, the pursuit of pseudo-celebrity status, and the reinforcement of traditional gender norms. These themes appear in varied forms and function in

different ways across the three case studies. In addition, shaming is enacted in the programs and displayed in the audience response to those programs via social media in three ways: subtle discouragement, containment, and pseudo-resistance. This study begins with a close reading of the three television programs, followed by a reception study of the related conversations taking place on the social media platform Twitter to examine how the textual themes are being understood and discussed by viewers.

INDEX WORDS: Identity, Gender, Post-feminism, Consumption, Popular culture, Reality TV, Weddings, Wedding Industrial Complex, Social media, Twitter, Shaming, Trolling, Celebrity

POST-FEMINISM, SHAMING, AND WEDDING-THEMED REALITY TELEVISION

by

KATHARINE P. ZAKOS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctorate of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2015

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POST-FEMINISM, SHAMING, AND WEDDING-THEMED REALITY TELEVISION

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DEDICATION

For those we've lost along the way.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In 2012, Americans spent an average of \$27,000 on a wedding (excluding the honeymoon) (Petersen 2014, 1). This is no insignificant amount considering the median U.S. income at the time was only \$45,000 (Petersen 2014, 1). So how do we justify such an expense? According to Petersen (2014), we rarely balk at the hefty price tag for this event because we have been socialized to view our wedding day as the most important moment of our lives: “at few other times are we given a sizable, ever-expanding budget and told to spend it on whatever makes a day ‘perfect,’ even if that means spending outside our means” (2). Television, in particular, distributes many of these messages about creating the perfect wedding.

Television has long been considered an industrial complex in its own right,¹ and, as Angela Davis (2003) observed, there is often a symbiotic relationship between various industrial complexes. Television, like all mass media, is an ideological state apparatus² and functions as a transmitter of ideology, which makes it all the more significant as an industrial complex³ (as opposed to the more violent and oppressive control wielded by repressive state apparatuses such as the military or the prison industry). As a genre, reality television programming (and, more specifically, wedding-themed reality television programming) fits this model perfectly in that it is created and maintained for profit and ultimately seeks control through self-regulation. Expanding on Foucault’s (1977) notion of the industrial complex, the “wedding industrial complex” is the result of the combination of the 161 billion-dollar a year wedding industry (Harris 2008, 60) and wedding-themed reality television. Under the wedding industrial complex,

¹ Todd Gitlin (1983, 117) coined the term “television industrial complex” in *Inside Primetime*, and emphasized how television, like the military, the law enforcement establishment, and the medical field, has ultimately developed in the pursuit of the bottom line, so to speak. Profit and control are the driving forces behind these industries. For more on television’s role as a business, first and foremost, and how it functions as *both* culture industry *and* industrial culture see also Meehan (1994).

² For more on ideological state apparatuses, see Althusser (1971).

³ For a critique of various industrial complexes, see Davis (2003), Durazo (2006), Terry (1999), Puar and Rai (2002), Evans (2005), Rodriguez (2006), J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006), and Foucault (1977).

it is not enough to simply enter into the normalizing institution of marriage; one must now (more than ever before) do so in a very particular and highly performative way, dictated by the dominant cultural discourses currently circulating. The wedding industrial complex positions performing the role of “bride” today as more important than performing the role of “spouse.” But how can this be? Why has wedding culture become so huge at this cultural moment? What could account for the renewed emphasis on a site of such traditional gender identity? Engaging in a close textual analysis of wedding-themed reality television helps us to understand these larger questions.

The ideological power of wedding-themed reality TV is that it assumes all women want to be brides and tells women exactly how to go about performing the right kind of wedding. Traditionally, marriage has always been a normalizing institution, functioning as a dividing practice in our society. The wedding industry, which up until roughly ten years ago was primarily marketed through bridal magazines, trade publications, and the occasional wedding expo,⁴ has collided with the reality television boom to produce an explosion of wedding-themed programming.⁵ This relatively new sub-genre has capitalized on society’s fascination with celebrity culture, the drive toward hyper-consumerism, and the reinforcement of icons of

⁴ For an analysis of the wedding industry in popular culture more broadly, see Erika Engstrom’s (2012) *The Bride Factory: Mass Media Portrayals of Women and Weddings*; Alena Amato Ruggerio’s (2012) *Media Depictions of Brides, Wives, and Mothers*; Carol McD. Wallace’s (2004) *All Dressed in White: The Irresistible Rise of the American Wedding*; Katherine Jellison’s (2008) *It’s Our Day: America’s Love Affair with the White Wedding, 1945-2005*; Rebecca Mead’s (2007) *One Perfect Day: The Selling of the American Wedding*; Sharon Boden’s (2003) *Consumerism, Romance, and the Wedding Experience*; Jaclyn Geller’s (2001) *Here Comes the Bride: Women, Weddings, and the Marriage Mystique*; Chrys Ingraham’s (1999) *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*; Cele C. Otnes and Elizabeth H. Pleck’s (2003) *Cinderella Dreams: The Allure of the Lavish Wedding*; and Simon R. Charsley’s (1992) *Wedding Cakes and Cultural History*.

⁵ For example: *Amazing Wedding Cakes*, *Bridezillas*, *Wedding Story*, *For Better or For Worse*, *Whose Wedding Is It Anyway?*, *I Do Over*, *Wedding Day Makeover*, *My Fair Wedding*, *Four Weddings*, *My Big Fat Fabulous Wedding*, *Bridal Bootcamp*, *Brides of Beverly Hills*, *Platinum Weddings*, and *Say Yes to the Dress* (a franchise which includes *Say Yes to the Dress Atlanta*, *Say Yes to the Dress Big Bliss*, *Say Yes to the Dress Bridesmaids*, *Randy Knows Best* and multiple other spinoffs and specials), to name a few.

traditional femininity to promote the wedding itself as a normalizing tool, which has both ideological and financial implications.

Wedding culture is frequently discussed across social media platforms and the blogosphere, and advice on how to navigate the wedding industry is never in short supply. In light of these trends, my cases studies are designed to answer the following overarching research questions: first, what is unique about wedding-themed reality television as a sub-genre, and how do various programs compare within this sub-genre? Second, how are audiences reading these programs? Third, how is identity constructed through advocating specific behaviors and/or shaming others? And fourth, what is the ultimate result/payoff of this particular method of identity construction?

This project combines elements of textual analysis, feminist criticism, and media reception studies to examine wedding-themed reality television programming. Drawing on feminist media studies, television studies, and new media studies, this project investigates identity construction through wedding-themed reality television in three case studies: the renegotiation of icons of traditional femininity on *Say Yes to the Dress* (hereafter referred to as *SYTTD*), the policing of female behavior and perceived unruliness through *Bridezillas*, and the dismissal of female labor in celebrity culture through three weddings featured on *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* (hereafter referred to as *KUWTK*). These three case studies deal with unique yet ultimately interconnected themes of gender identity construction and management. I argue that post-feminist ideologies are instrumental in shaping the way that identity is constructed through advocating specific behaviors and shaming others in three key areas: hyper-consumerism, the pursuit of pseudo-celebrity status, and the reinforcement of traditional gender

norms.⁶ In addition, shaming is enacted in the programs and displayed in the audience response to those programs via social media in three ways: subtle discouragement, containment, and pseudo-resistance. This study begins with a close reading to identify themes related to the three texts named above, followed by a reception study of the related conversations taking place on the social media platform Twitter; this audience study is designed to examine how this specific group of viewers understands and discusses these television programs in light of the major categories of analysis.

1.1 Literature Review

This project builds upon and extends the work of scholars in feminist media studies, television studies, reception studies, new media studies, and shaming. In order to establish the framework for this project, I first provide an overview of the relevant literature in these key areas.

1.1.1 Feminist Media Studies

Feminist media studies can be traced back to the beginning of the second wave of feminism with the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. Friedan addressed "the media" in very general terms and sought to draw attention to something that she called "the problem that has no name" (1963, ch. 1). This phrase was meant to describe the feelings of confusion and dissatisfaction that many women were experiencing around this time in relation to their domestic (and only) role as wife, mother, and caretaker. In her initial discussion of "the problem that has no name," Friedan emphasizes the way that shame isolated women in this period (1950s-1960s) because they were often too "ashamed to admit [their] dissatisfaction" (1963, 14-15), and therefore had no idea that they were not alone in this feeling. She also

⁶ On post-feminism, see McRobbie (2009a), Tasker and Negra (2007), Gill and Scharff (2013), and Douglas (2010) (though she prefers the term "enlightened sexism" rather than "post-feminism").

discusses the relief that women felt in finally acknowledging these feelings and realizing that they were not alone (Friedan 1963, 20). Furthermore, Friedan (1963) addressed the role played by the media in this issue, in that they made women feel inadequate and ashamed if they could not fulfill and find pleasure in their role as the “happy housewife” (as the dominant ideology said they should), and also that the media failed to provide women with role models who had both a career and a family. She further discussed how girls are shamed at an early age by sex-educators, who frequently positioned those women who have happily and successfully defied traditional gender norms as “exceptional,” where exceptional is coded for shameful or somehow less than (Friedan 1963, 162). This early feminist analysis set the stage for later Second Wave works addressing the use of shaming to uphold images of traditional femininity and maintain the dominance of patriarchal society.

A great deal of early feminist media studies are also based on the analysis of literature, both due to the fact that many feminist writers were groomed in the literary studies tradition, and also because literary analysis was one of the only ways for their concerns to be taken seriously at that time. Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1970) was key in these early stages of the movement; Millett maintained that sex was a political act, and that sex between men and women functioned to sustain patriarchy, maintain the current social hierarchy, and continue women’s oppression. To support her arguments, Millett (1970) drew upon the work of three men who were considered to be the literary fathers of the sexual revolution: Norman Mailer, D.H. Lawrence, and Henry Miller. Millett (1970) used examples from their texts to show how sex, violence, and power were interconnected, and also introduced a counter-example of the unequal power relationship between two men having sex from the work of Jean Genet. Michele Wallace (1978), writing from both a feminist and race studies perspective (along with other notable feminists including

Angela Davis, Patricia Hill Collins, and Anna Laura Stoler), also drew upon popular literature to make her case in *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*. Based on examples from the work of Norman Mailer, Richard Wright, Stokely Carmichael, and others, Wallace (1978) argued that not only were black women being oppressed and ignored by dominant society and the mainstream women's movement, they were also being oppressed by black men and attributed worth only on the basis of their supporting position as wife and/or mother (a position also taken up by Angela Davis [1983] in *Women, Race and Class*). This literary analysis tradition continued in feminist media studies with the work of Angela McRobbie (2000), who looked at how the dominant ideology was used to construct and circulate the image of ideal womanhood to young girls.

Many feminist media studies of this period addressed cultural artifacts previously considered unworthy of study, like romance novels, soap operas, and pornography. Though these works addressed and acknowledged texts that women often found pleasurable, they simultaneously positioned them as low culture or sometimes even anti-feminist. One such study, Janice Radway's (1984) work in *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, featured an ethnographic analysis of the marginalized female romance novel reader. Romance novels had historically been considered trashy and not worthy of study alongside the great literary works of high art (a tradition that arguably still continues today), and many of the women in Radway's (1984) study spoke to the stigma or shame that frequently accompanied public acknowledgment of the pleasure of reading these novels.

1.1.2 Feminist Television Criticism

The representation of women in film and television has been a widely discussed area of study as well. Early work on the representation of women in film came primarily from film

studies scholars like Laura Mulvey (1975), whose essay “Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema” expanded on screen theory by introducing the idea of the “male gaze,” which Mulvey argued is the lens through which the majority of film is intended to be viewed. Relying on Marxist criticism and psychoanalysis, Mulvey (1975) examined how the spectator is virtually always constructed as male, which can be seen in the way that women in films are displayed as if to be looked at and men in films are positioned in such a way as to be identified with the audience.

Many women turned to television for better representations of women, and much of the early work in television studies was conducted by cultural studies and feminist scholars, perhaps due in part to the way that television has historically been undervalued in relation to film, frequently positioned as “lowbrow” and a more “feminine” form of entertainment.¹⁹ Significant contributions in this area include Lynn Spigel’s (1992) *Make Room for TV*, which discussed the introduction of television into the private/domestic realm and the way it was subsequently marketed toward women in the form of soap operas and daytime TV. Julie D’Acci’s (1994) *Defining Women: Television and the Case of Cagney and Lacey* utilized a Circuit of Media Study Model to examine how the production, representation, and reception of *Cagney and Lacey* positioned it as a feminist text.²⁰ Bonnie Dow’s (1996) analysis of the mixed-messages of the quasi-feminist *Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Murphy Brown* in *Primetime Feminism* is another early example.

Furthermore, Horace Newcomb’s (1976-2007) television anthology, *Television: The Critical View*, contains many examples of feminist television criticism, including Kathleen Rowe’s (1994) examination of Roseanne as the “unruly woman,” and Sarah Banet-Weiser’s (2007) take on Nickelodeon’s representational and marketing tactics in creating girl-power

¹⁹ See Newcomb (2010, 21) for more on early issues in television studies.

²⁰ For more on the Circuit of Media Study Model, see D’Acci (1994) and Du Gay, et al. (1997). For additional examples of its use, see Becker (2006), Johnson (2008), and Levine (2007).

culture and encouraging its expression via consumer citizenship. Finally, the edited collection *Feminist Television Criticism* has featured a variety of feminist media studies, including works such as Patricia Mellencamp's (1997) take on Lucy and Gracie as unruly women, Tricia Rose's (1997) analysis of the feminist potential of rap music, Kimberly Springer's (2008) construction of the new archetypes for the representation of black women in hip hop culture, and Bonnie Dow's (2008) examination of the tensions present in Ellen DeGeneres' coming-out narrative. Tanya Modleski (1997) tackles women's enjoyment of soap operas in "The Search for Tomorrow in Today's Soap Operas: Notes on a Feminine Narrative Form," and how the genre inherently upholds the centrality and primacy of the patriarchal family, and Susan Douglas's (1995) *Where the Girls Are* looks generally at the feminist potential of television.

Later scholarship on women in film and television continued to expand in new directions and has frequently addressed the intersectionality of difference,²¹ like Jacqueline Bobo's (2003) reception study of African American male and female viewers' reactions to Steven Spielberg's movie adaptation of Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*. Bobo (2003) found that black men did not like the way that male characters were portrayed in the film, but that black women read the film differently and enjoyed the relationships among the female characters. Similarly, Amy Hasinoff's (2008) "Fashioning Race for the Free Market on *America's Next Top Model*" looks at how contestants are encouraged to enact the "correct" racial performance in order to be more acceptable to potential future employers. This trend is frequently addressed in relation to popular culture, including Patricia Hill Collins's (2005) examination of African American

²¹ The term "intersectionality" was originally introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." The term has subsequently been developed to recognize the fact that one's race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. cannot be separated from one's other identities, especially in terms of multiple intersecting forms of oppression.

women being reduced to their body parts in *Black Sexual Politics*, where Collins constructs a timeline from Sara Bartman to Josephine Baker to Destiny's Child and Jennifer Lopez.

1.1.3 Post-feminism

Eventually, some feminist media studies scholars who identified with what came to be known as the Third Wave called for an end to the practice of denigrating media and popular culture that gave women pleasure. Many influential Third Wave feminists are not academics but rather theoretically informed critics writing for blogs, magazines, and other popular press outlets (Curry 2014; Levy 2005; Petersen 2014; Tanenbaum 2000; 2015a; 2015b). These battles within feminist media studies over whether the participation in and enjoyment of certain cultural artifacts constitutes a display of agency or an act of self-oppression coalesced in an era known as post-feminism. In *The Aftermath of Feminism*, Angela McRobbie (2009a) explains that post-feminism is the “process by which feminist gains of the 1970s and 1980s are actively and relentlessly undermined” (11). McRobbie (2009a) positions the filmic adaptation of *Bridget Jones' Diary* as indicative of the post-feminist trend to assume that all of feminism's goals have been accomplished, so it is no longer needed (a media driven movement that Susan Faludi [1991] discusses at length in *Backlash*). Scholars maintain that this sort of thinking paves the way for women to revert back to pre-feminist ways of thinking and modes of behavior because they are already liberated and have the right to choose which path to follow in life. This trend is frequently addressed in relation to popular culture; one such example is Ariel Levy's (2005) *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, where she uses “raunch” culture to show how the media is encouraging women and girls to contribute to their own oppression. Levy claims that she is not attacking sex or the sex industry, but rather attempting to emphasize the point that “the freedom to be sexually

provocative or promiscuous is not enough freedom; it is not the only ‘women’s issue’ worth paying attention to” (2005, 200).

Similarly, Susan Douglas’s (2010) *The Rise of Enlightened Sexism* uses the discourse of girl power to show how the media frames consumerism, being sexy, and competing with other girls as empowering (5-10). Douglas (2010), however, rejects the label “post-feminism” in favor of what she calls “enlightened sexism” (based on Jhally and Lewis’s [(1992) 2000] notion of “enlightened racism”), which she defines as a school of thought that “takes the gains of the women’s movement as a given, and then uses them as permission to resurrect retrograde images of girls and women as sex objects, bimbos, and hootchie mamas still defined by their appearance and their biological destiny” (10-11). Douglas maintains that enlightened sexism has led to “an explosion in makeover, matchmaking, and modeling shows” (2010, 10-11), and I argue that these genres have set the stage for the rise in wedding-themed reality television programming as well. Finally, one area that Douglas discusses relatively briefly but which is expanded upon in the present study is the notion of “ridicule as power” (15). Douglas calls attention to a current trend in media and popular culture that involves watching and deriving pleasure from ridiculing certain texts²⁷ and portrayals of women under the assumption that we (the viewers) are above it all, but she also emphasizes the fact that “the bacteria that comes in with this inoculation is girls policing one another and themselves, reinforcing norms about being ‘nice’ and ‘hot’” (15). This “hate-watching,” as we shall see, is in effect another example of shaming, but in this case it is generated by both the audiences and the contemporary media environment.

²⁷The concept of the “anti-fan” was first introduced in “New Audiences, New Textualities” by Jonathan Gray (2003), who differentiated between those who view and engage with media texts for reasons of genuine pleasure and commitment in viewing (fans), those “who strongly dislike a given text or genre, considering it inane, stupid, morally bankrupt and/or aesthetic drivel” (anti-fans), and those who view the text but are relatively uninterested, uninvolved and not at all committed (non-fans) (70-74).

Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra's (2007) edited collection *Interrogating Post-feminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* reflects similar themes; like McRobbie (2009a) and Douglas (2010), Tasker and Negra (2007) emphasize the connections between post-feminism, consumerism (6), and "commercial beauty culture" (3). In *New Femininities: Post-feminism, Neoliberalism, and Subjectivity*, Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff (2013) focus on the intersectionality of difference in the current era of neoliberalism and post-feminism (1), and position "post-feminism as a sensibility" (4). Many of the essays in their edited collection continue the work on reality makeover shows; Andrea L. Press (2013) in particular notes how *America's Next Top Model* is a useful tool in examining how post-feminism and makeover reality shows have led to the development of an "internal critical gaze" for women and girls (119).

Douglas (2010) also discusses the reality TV genre, and even goes so far as to provide a list of the top ten reality television themes that are indicative of enlightened sexism: women are to be judged first and foremost by their appearance; women need to compete over men; women can't get along with one another and will stab each other in the back; women are overly emotional and obsessed with relationships; women should be sexy, but not overly sexual; the worst thing a woman can be is a bitch: strong women are bitches and rich women are bitches; African American women are lazy, threatening, have a chip on their shoulder, are not marriage material, or all of the above (except for Tyra Banks); women (especially blondes) are shallow, materialistic, and live to shop; housework and child rearing are a woman's domain; and, finally, "Lesbians? What lesbians?" (which points to the relative lack of lesbians in reality TV) (198-210). Many of the aforementioned themes of the post-feminist era have coalesced in the study of

reality television programs, which have been the focus of much debate in television studies and feminist media studies alike.

1.1.4 Reality TV

Murray and Ouellette (2009) define reality television as “an unabashedly commercial genre united less by aesthetic rules or certainties than by the fusion of popular entertainment with a self-conscious claim to the discourse of the real” (3). Reality TV has grown in popularity due to relatively cheaper production costs (especially when compared to other primetime programming formats), a faster production schedule, and a reliance on non-union (and non-celebrity) talent and labor (Madger 2009; Raphael 2009). It has also proven incredibly profitable in both first-run and global syndication (Raphael 2009), and frequently attracts younger viewers (Magder 2009). According to Magder (2009)

Reality TV illustrates four significant changes to the production side of TV: the growing enthusiasm for prepackaged formats as a basis for program production; the emergence of product placement, or brand integration, as a source of revenue to program producers; the increasing tendency to use TV programs as the springboard for a multimedia exploitation of the creative property; and the growing strength of European program suppliers in the American (and international) television market. (149)

Reality television has played an important role in increasing media convergence, synergy, and interactivity across the television landscape (Madger 2009; Murray and Ouellette 2009). In addition, the reality TV genre is characterized by voyeurism, surveillance, self-discipline, cross-platform viewer engagement, consumerism/commercialization, and the potential for drama (Murray and Ouellette 2009).

Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette’s (2009) edited collection *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture* contains many essays that draw on the post-feminist ideals of consumerism and traditional gender norms (which we shall see across wedding-themed reality television

programming),³⁰ and Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn's (2004) edited collection *Understanding Reality Television* attempts to look at what reality TV is in this moment and its cultural, political, and ideological impact through different case studies. Rebecca Stephens's (2004) article, "Socially Soothing Stories? Gender, Race and Class in TLC's *A Wedding Story* and *A Baby Story*," deals explicitly with gender and the intersectionality of difference in reality TV. Marwan Kraidy and Katherine Sender's (2011) edited collection *The Politics of Reality Television: Global Perspectives* also acknowledges the influence of post-feminism with pieces that assume a more global perspective on neoliberalism and gender roles.

In *Better Living Through Reality TV: Television and Post-Welfare Citizenship*, Laurie Ouellette and James Hay (2008) maintain that reality television programs conform to neoliberal ideals of individualism and self-regulation (particularly makeover and self-improvement shows), and this theme continues in the work of Katherine Sender (2012), whose book, *The Makeover: Reality Television and Reflexive Audiences*, looks at how audiences respond to makeover shows and attributes more agency to audience members than earlier works on the topic. Brenda R. Weber (2009) extends this focus on makeover shows in *Makeover TV: Selfhood, Citizenship, and Celebrity*, where she notes the importance of traditional gender roles, consumerism, and self-regulation; Alice Marwick (2010) investigates similar themes in "There's A Beautiful Girl Under All of This: Performing Hegemonic Femininity in Reality Television," where she looks at the reality television makeover show *The Swan* and argues that it (and other shows in the makeover genre) encourage women to strive for unrealistic and largely unattainable standards of beauty.

There is also Weber's (2014) edited collection *Reality Gendervision: Sexuality and Gender on Transatlantic Reality Television*, which includes pieces like Maria Pramaggiore and

³⁰ See Derek Kompare's "Extraordinarily Ordinary: *The Osbournes* as *An American Family*," Jonathan Gray's "Cinderella Burps: Gender, Performativity, and the Dating Show," and Heather Osbourne-Thompson's "The Comedic Treatment of Reality: *Kathy Griffen: My Life on the D List*, *Fat Actress*, and *The Comeback*."

Diane Negra's (2014) "Keeping Up with the Aspirations: Commercial Family Values and the Kardashian Brand," where the authors trace consumerism and other post-feminist themes in the reality television show *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*. Finally, Jennifer Pozner's (2010) *Reality Bites Back: The Troubling Truth about Guilty Pleasure TV* also takes issue with the portrayal of gender roles in reality television and (though she never uses the term "post-feminist") does so in a manner similar to the work of McRobbie (2009a), Douglas (2010), and Levy (2005). As we shall see, wedding-themed reality television programming aligns with most of these generic conventions but also adds additional nuances unique to the sub-genre.

1.1.5 American Wedding Culture and Wedding-Themed Reality TV

Wedding-themed reality television has historically been presumed to be a subset of the makeover and/or dating show sub-genres, and there are indeed similarities, as my study will show, such as the reification of traditional gender roles, the emphasis on consumerism, the heteronormative focus, and the pursuit of micro-celebrity status. Scholars have repeatedly shown how makeover/self-improvement programs operate as normalizing texts by advocating a combination of hyper-consumerism and traditional gender roles (Gray 2009; Levine 2005; Pozner 2010; Ouellette and Hay 2008; Sender 2012; Watts 2004; Weber 2009). This echoes the lifestyle branding model in modern-day advertising whereby advertisers sell ideas rather than products (Klein 2000). Many of these shows foreshadow wedding themed reality programming's link between love/relationships/marriage and consumerism, often relying heavily on monetary rewards, merchandising, and/or other incentives. The makeover/self-improvement sub-genre and the dating show sub-genre both emphasize the dual goals of getting and pleasing a man, and the payoff in these shows is supposedly finding an everlasting love. Wedding-themed reality television shows have picked up where makeover/self-improvement shows and dating

shows have left off, both in the love story and in consumption practices. In wedding-themed reality television, “more love translates to more spending” (Engstrom 2007, 350), which is clearly evident in the universal emphasis on price.

There are also key differences between the makeover/self-improvement and dating shows and wedding-themed reality programming. Most studies of gender roles in makeover/self-improvement and dating shows focus on the importance of changing yourself in order to “please your man.” Much wedding-themed reality TV diverges in that it claims to advocate being the best version of yourself *for yourself*, thereby implying that the role of bride has broken free from the heteronormative confines of the traditional subordinate position. Unfortunately, this is not actually the case—in much the same way that Barbie’s wardrobe changed to coincide with her career advancements, women who watch wedding-themed reality TV are being fed a rhetoric of empowerment while the programming gets steadily “pinker.”³² As the present study will show, this trend is indicative of contemporary post-feminist ideologies (as discussed previously), and illustrates how wedding-themed reality television instructs women to be the perfect bride through a focus on pseudo-celebrity status, consumption, and the post-feminist reconstitution of icons of traditional femininity.

Jellison (2008) claims that wedding-themed reality television features “escapist fantasies” that “distract” women and offer a “vacation” or an “antidote to the complications of everyday life” (216-217). Jellison (2008) also notes that these shows focus on a woman’s right to have the perfect wedding of her dreams even if she does not really want or need a marriage, and can

³² See *Barbie Nation* (1998) for an examination of how Barbie has become simultaneously more powerful (assuming careers in fields traditionally viewed as more masculine, like that of a doctor) while her wardrobe has become steadily pinker in an attempt to maintain her femininity. Similarly, the opening credits of *SYTTD* are pink/purple/white through season six. Additionally, Peggy Orenstein’s (2007) *Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the New Girlie-Girl Culture* also looks at how Princess culture and pink have taken over consumer culture for girls, and examines how this relates to notions of traditional femininity in the post-feminist era.

enable her to “feel that she is in control of at least one day of her life” (222-225; 234). However, as well shall see in the following chapters, this control is ultimately just an illusion. Feminist scholars have frequently criticized the misogyny inherent in the institution of marriage, but few have addressed the wedding directly as its own entity. Naomi Wolf (1994) discusses her aversions to traditional marriage alongside her seemingly contradictory bridal yearnings, which she concludes could be the result of the desire to return to a celebration of the value of female sexuality. Lisa Walker (2000) acknowledges the relative lack of feminist scholarship on weddings in her response to Wolf’s essay, and describes her own conflicted bridal experience. Walker (2000) points out how ubiquitous wedding culture has become, noting that “the image of the bride is implanted at the level of deep psychological structure, and its appeal cuts across boundaries of age, size, race, sex, and sexuality” (222).

One need only look at the incredible amount of interest and media fanfare that surrounds celebrity weddings to see how significant the wedding has become in American society. If reality TV and, incidentally, social media have taught us anything, it is that “ordinary” people will go to extraordinary lengths to obtain fame and/or fortune. In this regard, wedding-themed reality programming is no different, albeit with a slightly tweaked version of fame. When the rise of reality TV and the desire for celebrity status is coupled with the staged spectacle that is the modern American wedding, a unique and seemingly utopian space is created which allows the ordinary person the opportunity to literally—albeit, briefly—become the star of her own show. This fleeting moment of fame is also connected to ideas about the bride as princess for a day.

Carol McD. Wallace (2004) traces the positioning of a bride as royalty on her wedding day back to Princess Elizabeth II’s 1947 wedding to Prince Phillip of Greece (168). Wallace

notes that the Cinderella connection did not emerge till the mid-1950s when *Bride's Magazine* ran a promotion in the Spring 1955 issue featuring a gown modeled after Leslie Caron's costume in the MGM musical *The Glass Slipper* (168). These associations culminated in the actual marriage of Hollywood and royalty when Grace Kelly married Prince Rainier of Monaco in 1956, a marriage which was documented and distributed by MGM as *The Wedding in Monaco* (Wallace 2004, 169-171). At this point, the socially acceptable "white wedding" functioned as confirmation of a couple's middle class status, so those of lower socio-economic status strove to attain this ideal (Jellison 2008, 209-210).

Though weddings took a more nontraditional turn in the 1960s and 1970s (like the rather offbeat 1969 wedding of Tiny Tim and Miss Vicki on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*), Lady Diana Spencer's wedding to Prince Charles in 1981 revived the wedding gown industry with a televised ceremony that drew 750 million viewers worldwide (Wallace 2004, 250). Around this time, middle class status had appeared to become universally attainable and was no longer seen as an accomplishment, so many Americans began to nurture upper-class aspirations (Jellison 2008, 212-213). This renewed focus on the big white wedding laid the groundwork for the eventual emergence of consumption-driven wedding-themed reality shows like *SYTTD*.

While the modern wedding industry is nothing new, and has in fact been around for decades, it currently "operates at a level of sophistication and with a degree of magnitude that makes the wedding industry of the 1950s seem quaint by comparison," and this carries with it a definite amount of internal and external pressure on couples to perform correctly (Mead 2007, 5-6). The term "wedding industry" refers not only to wedding-related service providers, but also to the wedding media (Mead 2007, 5). Current marketing strategies exhibit how the wedding has

surpassed the actual marriage, in both social importance and in its power to act as an agent of normalization, and has gained increasing cultural significance as a separate entity from the institution of marriage (Boden 2003, 19).³³

Reality television is uniquely positioned to use wedding-themed programming to influence potential consumers through its claims to realness—the couples are “real” couples, and their choices may therefore carry more weight than the average fictional character’s because they are supposedly just like the rest of us, which makes their choices appear attainable (Ouellette and Hay 2008). Current fan favorites include shows like *Amazing Wedding Cakes*, *Bridezillas*, *A Wedding Story*, *My Fair Wedding*, *Four Weddings*, and *SYTTD*. Wedding-themed reality shows have become popular programming formats, with many channels building their schedules around the sub-genre and becoming synonymous with bridal series (Littlejohn 2009, 19), which creates a distinct programming flow for viewers.³⁴

A *New York Times* article from May 1997 hints at the reasons behind the development of this connection between the wedding industry and the reality television industry:

The wedding is the closest most of us ever come to being the stars and producers of our own show. So it must be perfect. It is rehearsed, as few other things in life ever are. And when everything is just right, we have the photographer and videographer to record the moment as we would like to remember it.... The wedding, always a fanciful ritual, is moving closer and closer to being pure show biz, nothing to do with matrimony at all. And it may be time to discard the archaic connection between weddings and marriages. Those who enjoy weddings could then have as many as they could afford. (Bouchier 1997, LI15)

The sentiment expressed in this rather cynical and somewhat bitter sounding lamentation is not unusual, and nowhere is this cynicism more evident than in responses to the ever-growing push for consumption in wedding-themed reality television.

³³ This separation or rupture between the wedding and the marriage has been addressed elsewhere as well—see also Mead (2007, 7) and Freeman (2002, 4).

³⁴ For an explanation of “flow,” see Williams (2004).

Wedding-themed reality television as a sub-genre is still a fairly new phenomenon. Produced in a post-network era of niche audiences and narrowcasting (Lotz 2007), wedding-themed reality television relies on a target audience of relatively young and affluent female viewers, but the reach of these shows is immense and certainly not limited to those planning a wedding. Television has frequently utilized a wedding story arc in scripted series to boost ratings (Wallace 2004, 161; Otnes and Pleck 2003, 179; Ingraham 1999, 177-78), so entire shows dedicated to weddings and wedding culture is not far off. The Learning Channel's (TLC) *A Wedding Story* (1996 – present) was one of the first wedding-themed reality shows, and one of TLC's most popular programs to date (Engstrom 2007, 339). *A Wedding Story* also exemplifies the connection between weddings and normalization through consumption, solidifying wedding-themed reality programming as the logical successor of both makeover/self-improvement shows and the reality dating game boom at the turn of the twenty-first century (both of which rely heavily on policing boundaries through consumption) (Stephens 2004; Boden 2003). However, *A Wedding Story* was not actually the first wedding-themed reality show; the daytime television show *Bride and Groom* (CBS, 1951-1953, and later NBC, 1953-1958) featured “ordinary” people who wrote in to appear on the show and were married on air with goods and services paid for by the network.³⁵ One highlight of the show was that each couple received gifts to start their new life together, including housewares, appliances, etc., which illustrated the growing consumer culture at that time and the importance of having the “right” kind of products.

At least since the 1930s, as historian Roland Marchand (1985) notes, advertising for consumer products has played up the idea of shame, and that the consumer (most often female

³⁵ For a more in depth discussion of *Bride and Groom*, see Wallace (2004, 152) and Jellison (2008, 203-210).

and middle class)³⁶ should be ashamed if she is not performing her gender role properly (e.g., her floors do not shine, her children have dingy white clothes, she is not beautiful or married or well-dressed or skinny enough).³⁷ Products began to be positioned as the magical elixir that could eliminate shame, or prevent it from occurring altogether (Marchand 1985, 23-24). Today, that idea has spread throughout American society, and dovetails with the emphasis on competition among women and the current fascination with celebrity culture, both of which encourage women to buy the clothes, makeup, jewelry, and products that the stars consume in an effort to stand out from other women (Douglas 2010, 257-258). This link between wedding-themed reality programming and consumption is usually explicit, with the object of the consumption often appearing in the title (such is the case with *SYTTD*, where the entire show is based on the wedding dress shopping experience).

In a recent article on the wedding industrial complex for *The Hairpin*, scholar and cultural critic Anne Helen Petersen (2014) points out the extent of this drive toward consumption as exhibited through the marketing of engagement cell phone covers:

The ‘*He* asked; I said yes’ suggests just how little agency the (presumably female) partner has in [the] engagement scenario. She may get to plan the wedding, but she has little control over whether or not it’ll happen in the first place. She has decorating power, in other words, but no *actual* power. In this way, the cover functions as a precise condensation of postfeminism, in which the politics of feminism are traded for the bounty of consumerism—when the freedom to choose becomes the freedom to consume or, in this case, choose the color and design of [the] wedding dress, floral arrangements, and engagement phone cover. (3)

This statement illustrates how the constant push for increased consumption in wedding culture can effectively mask the harsh reality of the structural inequalities women continue to face.

³⁶ Advertisers have historically targeted women because they are reportedly responsible for the majority of household purchases (Marchand 1985, 66; McClain 2013).

³⁷ See Marchand’s (1985) explanation of the use of “scare copy” (14).

1.1.6 *Contemporary Interactive Media and Convergence*

As media technology continues to evolve, television paratexts and convergence practices are becoming more and more integrated into the viewing experience (Gray 2010; Ross 2008). Programming now asks viewers to extend their consumption by visiting the show's official website, entering/voting in various tangentially-related contests,⁵⁶ and engaging with multiple social media practices including sharing, tweeting, hashtagging, etc. Reality television in particular has been especially insistent upon the importance of paratexts and converged viewing habits; the focus on consumption blends well with the practice of directing viewers to share their purchases via social media (connecting these activities back to the primary text through the use of hashtags). Furthermore, network programming strategies that group similarly themed texts together into an officially-named block (like TLC's "Friday is Briededay" lineup, of which *SYTTD* is a part) extend older flow strategies that aimed to subtly encourage viewers to "stay" with the entire evening's lineup by extending this programming flow across platforms. TLC's "Friday is Briededay" lineup has its own page on their website (whereas other pages are devoted to single shows), comes with its own official hashtag for use on Twitter (#briededay), and connects social media activity to the programs by integrating viewers' pictures and tweets in the actual text. Reality television producers' ever-more-frequent engagement with Twitter in particular prompted its inclusion in the present study.

Reception studies and fan studies are important sites of scholarship in any project on identity. Fan studies developed in the 1980s and 1990s, and grew largely out of work being done in cultural studies and television studies. This early work focused mainly on the idea of the active audience and resistant readers, and frequently focused on texts that traditional media

⁵⁶ For instance, *Say Yes to the Dress* has sponsored a "Say Yes to the Dress Dream Wedding Sweepstakes" with department store J.C. Penney (www.shopyourway.com/DreamWedding).

scholars viewed as unworthy of study;⁵⁷ for instance, scholars such as Ien Ang (1985) and Jacqueline Bobo (2003) looked at the female audiences of *Dallas* and *The Color Purple*, respectively, and how they made meaning out of the texts. In *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*, Henry Jenkins (1992) looked at fan productivity in the form of such activities as fan fic, slash, filking, fan art, conventions, and reviews, and the field of fan studies was born. This new area of study was primarily aimed at examining the agency and participation of fans of media texts. Jenkins foregrounded the power and influence of the fans/readers in the production process, and positioned fans as producers as well as consumers. Jenkins goes on to address this and other themes of convergence culture in his later works, *Convergence Culture: When Old Media and New Media Collide* (2008) and *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers* (2006), noting that convergence speaks to both the convergence of roles (pro-sumers) and the convergence of different media platforms (fans will go across platforms to obtain information/content related to their object of fandom). Similarly, Sharon Marie Ross's (2008) *Beyond the Box: Television and the Internet* looks at how both fans and producers are responsible for creating this convergence content.

This struggle over the balance of power between producers and consumers is also discussed in Jean Burgess and Joshua Green's (2009) *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*, where they look at the history of YouTube and the different types of content (and interactions) present. Burgess and Green differentiate the traditional media available on the site from user-generated content, and also point out that YouTube is constantly being confronted with questions of authenticity and ownership. Jonathan Gray's (2010) work in *Show Sold Separately* also addresses this idea of paratextuality and the power of the fans in creating many pretexts themselves. However, in "Are We All Producers Now?" Elizabeth Bird (2011)

⁵⁷ Radway's (1984) work on romance novels is relevant here as well.

cautions against conflating the labels producer and consumer (into the hybrid “producers”) because this ignores the structural inequalities and unequal balance of power that is still present in the media industries today. Additionally, she also recommends that researchers not focus so much on online audiences and their activities that they ignore the many ways that viewers engage with the media off-line.

Fan studies and new media research have also begun to address the impact of social media,⁵⁸ and one area that has recently begun to draw attention is that of “trolling” in online communities. While few scholars have yet to engage with this relatively new practice, popular press sources have begun to recognize this new form of shaming as a unique component of virtual communities. In *The Wikipedia Revolution: How a Bunch of Nobodies Created the World’s Greatest Encyclopedia*, Andrew Lih (2009) describes trolling as “dragging issues through the community so as to incite a reaction or disruption” (170); similarly, in *Epic Win for Anonymous: How 4chan’s Army Conquered the Web*, Cole Stryker (2011) defines trolling as “the act of agitating or fooling people for fun” (94). Trolling is a concept that may help to explain or enlighten the discussion of celebrity reality TV weddings, especially in light of the massive online presence of the Kardashian family as discussed in Chapter Four. Similarly, in preliminary analyses of wedding-themed reality television, the act of shaming is one theme that seems to appear across multiple narratives, and so it will be reviewed here.

1.1.7 Shaming

How does contemporary American society police the boundaries of what it constructs as “appropriate” gender identities and behaviors for its citizens? In the days of the Puritans, social misfits were apprehended and placed in the stocks or pillories in the town square, or had scarlet

⁵⁸ See Mandiberg (2012) for a general study of social media, and also Hutchins and Rowe (2012) for a discussion of sports and new media.

letters sewn on their clothing.⁶¹ These very public forms of shaming and humiliation visually, physically and viscerally punished the accused and warned the populace of the consequences of doing likewise.

Shaming as a method of societal control is still very much with us today, despite American culture's purported support for individual freedoms and rights. The "town square" used in the past for controlling morals and identity now plays out in a thousand mediated versions—on television, in online interactions, in the press.⁶² As Althusser (1971) noted, the modern State maintains hegemony not only through violence in the form of such Repressive State Apparatuses as the police, the military, and the prisons, but also through ideology, which is created and maintained by Ideological State Apparatuses like the family, schools, churches, and the media (142-148). In contemporary American society, the dominant ideology, which is not all that much different from that of 350 years ago, maintains that gender identities and behaviors should follow patterns that are based on white, male, heterosexual, middle class dictates.

As children we learn how to construct and manage our identities in much the same way that we learn the dominant ideologies governing our society. By observing the media and popular culture, we learn early on what it means to be gendered, both by observing mediated representations of our own gender identity and by observing that of others. Those like us teach us what to do, while representations of gender identities we do not claim show us what not to do. In some instances we are confronted with examples of boundary transgressors, or those who (either deliberately or unintentionally) perform their gender in a socially unacceptable way. These boundary transgressors, such as young girls who refuse to perform their femininity by wearing dresses and playing with dolls and instead choose to play sports and are therefore

⁶¹ See Etzioni (1999, 48-50) for a detailed account of early American punitive shaming practices.

⁶² See Jones (2009) for an account of how the contemporary American media environment functions in much the same way as the public shaming/humiliation rituals of colonial times.

labeled “tomboys” for their deviance, reject the dominant ideology in favor of a negotiated or even oppositional identity. Such outlaws are frequently met with some sort of punishment or containment, often in the form of shaming.

Recently, the practice of policing gender boundaries and female sexuality through “slut-shaming” has generated a great deal of public debate (Tanenbaum 2000; 2015a; 2015b). As discussed above (and as we shall see in relation to Kim Kardashian in Chapter Four), post-feminist ideologies present a stark double standard: women should be sexy, but not too sexual. The “lady in the streets, freak in the sheets” rhetoric has long been promoted in popular culture representations of women. Women are frequently criticized for not conforming to the accepted (impossible) standards of beauty, but also demonized if they are perceived as being too sexually available (read: sluts). Tanenbaum (2015b) coined the term in the mid-1990s and defines “slut-shaming” as “a method of policing a girl or woman for being inappropriately sexual and deviating from normative femininity” (n.p.). Miley Cyrus’s now-notorious performance at the 2013 MTV Video Music Awards brought slut-shaming to the forefront in public discourse about female sexuality. Singer Sinead O’Connor even wrote an open letter to Cyrus and cautioned her against allowing the music industry to exploit her or convince her that it is okay or necessary to exploit herself; Cyrus responded via Twitter by mocking O’Connor for her past mental health problems, and the back-and-forth continued for three more open letters (Smith 2013a; Smith 2013b; Strecker 2013; Chung 2013). However, there has been a push-back against this sort of slut-shaming and Sinead O’Connor’s “open letter” specifically, with many claiming that O’Connor was actually *contributing* to the public shaming of Cyrus (Penny 2013).

Shaming the individuals in need of correction is intended to ensure that future boundary transgressors will think twice before engaging in similar acts of resistance in the future. Thus,

dominant ideology plays a large role in redirecting and limiting our gender identities and choices. It creates “socially acceptable” behaviors and beliefs that filter down to things like television shows, social interactions online, and press discourses.

So, what is the power of shaming today? What about performing the correct gender identity matters in contemporary US society? The current body of literature on shaming represents a very diverse collection of fields and methodologies, so a basic overview of the different conceptions of shame will help explain the entry point of the present study. In the most basic sense, shame is “a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behavior; a loss of respect or esteem; dishonor; used to reprove someone for something of which they should be ashamed; a regrettable or unfortunate situation or action; a person, action, or situation that brings a loss of respect or honor” (“Definition of Shame in Oxford Dictionary” 2013).⁶³ This definition addresses shame as an individual issue, which is often seen in work in the social sciences that examines issues such as the psychological and behavioral consequences of shaming,⁶⁴ shame as a means of crime-prevention and social control,⁶⁵ and work that seeks to prove a difference in consequences when shaming individuals versus shaming behaviors.⁶⁶ However, these works do not address the ideological power of shaming.

It is therefore necessary to conceptualize shaming that functions at a societal or cultural level. So, building on this concept, “shame culture” is commonly defined as “a culture in which conformity of behavior is maintained through the individual’s fear of being shamed” (“Definition

⁶³ For more on the meaning of shame, see Deonna and Teroni (2008).

⁶⁴ For more on the psychological and behavioral consequences of shaming, see Ahmed and Braithwaite (2004); Aslund, et al. (2007); Aslund, et al. (2009); Gilbert and Miles (2000); and Stuewig, et al (2010).

⁶⁵ For works advocating the use of shame in crime prevention, see Arneson (2007); Etzioni (1999); and Tittle, Bratton, and Gertz (2003).

⁶⁶ For work that speaks to the effectiveness of shaming behaviors rather than shaming individuals in bullying and crime prevention, see Ahmed and Braithwaite (2005); Losonczi and Tyson (2007); Murphy and Harris (2007); and Ttofi and Farrington (2008).

of Shame Culture in Oxford Dictionary” 2013). Work that addresses shame as a cultural phenomenon includes studies of talk shows as shaming rituals,⁶⁷ studies on the use of shaming to reinforce masculine identities in school-age boys,⁶⁸ and shaming as cultural activism.⁶⁹ Many studies that have addressed shame as an ideological tool and cultural phenomenon have come out of feminist media studies, and it is in this tradition that I hope to proceed. Based on the trends discussed above, I have identified three general categories of shaming—subtle shaming, containment/punishment, and acts of pseudo-resistance—that form the basis of my analysis. Along with the three major themes of post-feminist ideologies—pseudo-celebrity status, consumerism, and reinstating traditional gender norms—these three shaming strategies structure both the close-readings of the texts and the associated social media reception studies.

1.2 Methods of Analysis

Wedding-themed reality television programming is a perfect example of post-feminist ideology due to the intersection of consumerism, the desire for pseudo-celebrity status, and the reinforcement of traditional gender roles; however, unlike makeover/self-improvement shows, this genre is not often studied. Many scholars have discussed wedding-themed reality television programming in passing, but it is frequently mentioned in the course of an analysis of wedding culture more broadly (Boden 2003; Ingraham 1999; Jellison 2008; Mead 2007; Otnes and Pleck 2003; Stephens 2004; Wallace 2004). Erika Engstrom (2012) gives wedding-themed reality television programming the most attention by far in her most recent examination of the wedding industry, *The Bride Factory: Mass Media Portrayals of Women and Weddings*, but her study attempts to survey all categories of bridal media, rather than focusing more closely on one outlet,

⁶⁷ See Jones (2009); Grindstaff (2003); and Timberg (2002).

⁶⁸ See Phillips (2007) and also Renold (2004).

⁶⁹ See Locke (2007) and also Morris (1992).

as my study does. She also does not examine the effects of intersectionality on the portrayal of gender roles, nor does she address actual viewer responses and/or interpretations of the texts. Therefore, I have developed a study that enables me to extend the conversation surrounding wedding-themed reality television by focusing specifically on close readings of three texts and a discourse analysis of viewer engagement via social media. This targeted approach allows me to explore the deeper implications of this sub-genre by identifying the changing meanings at the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality in televised wedding culture.

Each chapter focuses on a text that represents a major strand of wedding-themed reality television programming: wedding dress shopping, bridal behavior, and televised celebrity weddings. I have selected *Say Yes to the Dress*, *Bridezillas*, and *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* because they are three of the most popular and widely recognized shows in this sub-genre.⁸⁰ Methodologically speaking, I will utilize a combination of textual analysis and social media reception study, based on feminist ideological criticism and the television studies approach.

1.2.1 Feminist Ideological Criticism

Feminist research and criticism grew out of many different fields and academic traditions. It first began to be viewed as a research method during the second wave of the feminist movement and started as consciousness raising, according to Catherine Mackinnon (Olesen 2011, 238), and looked at the absence of women in certain professions and certain aspects of social life. From there, research moved to examining women's roles and work in the

⁸⁰ It should be noted that *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* is actually an example of celebrealty, or what has become known as the "reality sitcom," following in the tradition of shows like *The Osbournes* (Kompere 2009). Despite the fact that *KUWTK* is not a wedding-themed reality television show, I have included the three wedding specials featured in the series because they are representative of a common trend across reality sitcoms to include a wedding special; other reality sitcoms which have featured at least one wedding special include *The Hills*, *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*, *Kendra*, *My Fair Brady*, and *Gene Simmons Family Jewels*.

domestic sphere, and also began to acknowledge the experience of black feminists and other women of color feminists who had previously been marginalized in the field. Feminist research foregrounds the intersectionality of issues of oppression, rather than viewing oppressions in isolation. Finally, feminist research emphasizes the importance of allowing people to speak for themselves, which is also the primary motivation of most work in the field of media reception studies.

1.2.2 Textual Analysis

Lindlof and Taylor (2011) define textual analysis as “analyzing material culture and documents” to understand how and/or why “material things become meaningful in our lives” (Lindlof and Taylor 2011, 217; 220). While textual analysis provides informational richness, it does not tell the whole story—in other words, objects/texts can be used and/or read in many different ways and the researcher can only speculate on the meanings of these artifacts without actually engaging in some type of reception study.

1.2.3 Social Media Reception Study

In order to understand how viewers understand and make meaning out of these texts, each chapter includes an analysis of the Twitter conversations that occurred on the original airdates of each program included in the sample. I selected Twitter over other social media platforms due to networks’/producers’ attempts to encourage audience engagement on this platform in all three shows included in this study. Additionally, preliminary analyses of multiple avenues for audience engagement via social media (including Facebook, official webpages, fan sites, etc.) revealed that Twitter is likely the most utilized platform for audience interactivity for the programs in the current sample. I would like to note that the social media discussions contained in this reception study are not necessarily representative of the audiences for these

three programs as a whole, but they do serve to illuminate viewer engagement and textual understanding via this particular platform. In particular, scholars have noted that the brief length of Twitter messages (tweets are limited to a 140-character maximum) and the relative anonymity of Twitter handles can encourage trolling, shaming, and other abusive behaviors online. For a study of shaming, Twitter provides examples of some of the most explicit instances of this sort of engagement.

In her recent examination of how audiences respond to makeover shows, Katherine Sender (2012) maintains the importance of recognizing the agency of the viewing audience, asserting that audiences “distinguished what they saw as necessary social shaming from cruel humiliation, sometimes distancing from candidates, at other times identifying with them” (23). Weber (2013) noticed similar patterns in her own friends’ engagement with wedding shows: “For some friends there’s an aspirational quality and appreciation for the fashion; for others, the shows offer a moment of affirmation, with a hint of *schadenfreude*: She paid how much for that dress? Or: She thought a circus theme was a good idea?” (34). These trends appear throughout the present study as well. An analysis of audience members’ social media discussions helps to illuminate the many ways in which viewers are interpreting and using these texts, especially in relation to shaming.

1.2.4 Television Studies Approach

Lotz and Gray (2012) state that television studies should not be synonymous with any study of television (or just television), but rather as a way of examining a media artifact. The television studies approach builds on Julie D’Acci’s (2004) “Circuit of Media Study Model” (which was based on Du Guy et al’s [1997] “Circuit of Culture Model”). The Circuit of Media Study Model outlines four key areas of analysis: program, industry, audience, and context. Lotz

and Gray (2012) maintain that a project that utilizes a television studies approach will look at “at least two” of these key areas (20-25). Though I attempt to provide some sociohistorical and institutional context, my study focuses mainly on the textual elements of the program as well as the audience response via social media.

1.2.5 Methodological Models for the Present Study

This approach is based on such examples of textual analysis and feminist ideological criticism as Susan Douglas’s (2010) *Enlightened Sexism*, Angela McRobbie’s (2009) *The Aftermath of Feminism*, and Ariel Levy’s (2005) *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, as well as studies that utilize a television studies approach, including D’Acci’s (1994) *Defining Women*, Becker’s (2006) *Gay TV and Straight America*, Levine’s (2007) *Wallowing in Sex*, and Johnson’s (2008) *Heartland TV*. Finally, in terms of research specifically addressing wedding culture, I hope to build upon and extend the work done by Erika Engstrom (2012) in *The Bride Factory: Mass Media Portrayals of Women and Weddings*.

1.3 Chapter Outlines

Every case study will address a different strand in wedding-themed reality television in order to explore the ways in which the sub-genre as a whole negotiates post-feminism and shaming. Each chapter begins with a description of the general themes observed in the textual analysis and the social media reception study, and concludes with an analysis of how these themes address and/or problematize the over-arching research questions. My first chapter, “The Wedding Industrial Complex, Or How We’ve Learned to Stop Worrying and *Say Yes to the Dress*,” focuses on the wedding-dress shopping experience show, *Say Yes to the Dress*, which deals with issues of consumption and the performance of traditional femininity. My second chapter, “Taming the Unruly Brides on *Bridezillas*: Can’t Talk to Her, Can’t Kill Her—Here

Comes Bridezilla!” will examine *Bridezillas* as an early and explicit example of shaming via containment in wedding-themed reality TV, comparing the “bridezillas” featured on the show to previous examples of “unruly” women.⁸³ Finally, my third chapter, “Why Are So Many Brides Worried about *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*?”, takes on three weddings (and the various reactions to those weddings) featured on the celebrity reality television show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* as they represent both the celebration of celebrity culture and the multiple layers of discourse surrounding branding and female labor.

2 THE WEDDING INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, OR HOW WE’VE LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND SAY YES TO THE DRESS

For the uninitiated, *Say Yes to the Dress* (hereafter referred to as *SYTTD*) is an American reality television show that airs on the cable network TLC. The series premiered on October 12, 2007 and is currently in its tenth season on the air. Original episodes air Friday nights at 9 pm and are typically 22 minutes in length. The focus of the show is the New York City bridal salon Kleinfeld Bridal, and storylines primarily include daily operations of the management team, the staff (both in alterations and the revered “bridal consultants”), and the salon’s customers. The consultants wear all black, which separates them from the bride, who is the only one allowed to wear white in this arena, and they typically stand off to the side with the rest of the entourage as the bride literally poses on a pedestal.

In addition to the many spionoffs discussed in the introduction, the *SYTTD* franchise has even spawned its own book; in 2011, fashion director Randy Fenoli released *It’s All About the Dress: Savvy Secrets, Priceless Advice, and Inspiring Stories to Help You Find “The One.”* The

⁸³ The concept of the unruly woman is based on work by Rowe (1995; 1997) and, later, Mellencamp (1997).

230-page book is basically an extension of the sort of advice given to brides on the show, complete with full color photos of wedding gowns and accessories.

2.1 Sociohistorical/Institutional Context

On *SYTTD*, wedding dress shopping is treated as the most important part of the entire wedding performance. In one episode, a consultant is seen conversing with the groom and jokingly—but seriously—refers to the dress as “the most important commitment,” before correcting herself and adding that it is the second most important behind the choice of partner (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2008, “Second Chances”).⁸⁵ In wedding culture, choosing the right dress has taken on an almost mythical status, and a poor choice indicates that the individual has failed to comply with this important social norm and is in danger of ruining the wedding, and perhaps even the marriage, altogether. The pressure does not end with dress selection. Wedding culture has reached an all-time high in our society, which can be seen in part in our recent fascination with wedding-themed reality television programming.

In this chapter, I examine how wedding-themed reality TV teaches women to be the perfect bride through a focus on consumption, a desire for pseudo-celebrity status, and the post-feminist reconstitution of icons of traditional femininity via a rhetoric of empowerment. To illustrate how this cultural work is being done, I have randomly selected one episode from each season of TLC’s *SYTTD* for analysis.⁹⁵ Relying on both examples from the text and various

⁸⁵ This is not the only instance where *SYTTD* likens choosing a dress to choosing a mate—Bride Julie-Ann, while looking at dresses for her vow renewal, likens the dress to a romantic partner when she remarks that she feels as if she is “cheating on the first dress” in the episode “Love Connection” (2010), and Fashion Consultant Randy makes this comparison even more explicit when he says that wedding dress shopping is “kind of like finding a husband—you need to kinda date the guy awhile” in the episode “Second Time Around” (2009).

⁹⁵ Season One, Episode Nine – “Second Chances” (2008)

Season Two, Episode Ten – “What A Bride Wants” (2008)

Season Three, Episode Twelve – “Second Time Around” (2009)

Season Four, Episode One – “Overbooked” (2009)

Season Five, Episode Seventeen – “Love Connection” (2010)

feminist media studies, I begin by exploring the link between wedding-themed reality television programming and consumption. Next, I explain how the bride is positioned as a pseudo-celebrity by the show, followed by a discussion of how wedding-themed reality TV reinforces traditional gender norms through shaming. I then describe the audience reception of the show via social media interactions on Twitter, focusing on the major themes exhibited in the sample. I conclude with a look at how the three major themes of post-feminist ideologies and the three different shaming strategies are reflected in both the text and the social media discussion of *SYTTD*.

2.2 Creating the Perfect Wedding through Consumption

This link between wedding-themed reality programming and consumption is usually explicit, with the object of the consumption often appearing in the title. Such is the case with *SYTTD*, where the entire show is based on the wedding dress shopping experience. The wedding dress is frequently positioned as the most important purchase a bride, couple, and/or their parents will make, and therefore is not to be taken lightly.¹⁰⁰ There is frequently an implication that the dress search should not be *too easy*—when asked if she is “saying yes to the dress,” Bride Kara responds “Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, I feel like it’s too soon, it’s too soon—I don’t know,” even though she clearly loves the dress in question (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2013, “You’re Making Me

Season Six, Episode Eighteen – “Happily Ever After, Sort Of” (2011)

Season Seven, Episode Two – “Fashion Police” (2011)

Season Eight, Episode Three – “Not Your Mama’s Dress” (2012)

Season Nine, Episode Six – “Beat the Clock” (2013)

Season Ten, Episode Ten – “You’re Making Me Blush” (2013)

Season Eleven, Episode One – “New Dress—New Beginning” (2014)

Season Twelve, Episode Thirteen – “Dazed and Gown-fused” (2014)

¹⁰⁰ This point of view is not without its detractors, however; Weber (2013), for instance, is openly critical of this growing trend, maintaining that “the singular focus on the dress promoted by such shows also contributes to the pressure many brides feel to have a perfect, and often elaborate, wedding ceremony; and to the desire some feel to be the focus of a single day, rather than focus on the years with a spouse that will follow. Often the women on the show talk about the dress as a big commitment, as something worth sacrificing for, as a decision that should involve the advice and support of loved ones, as something special and unique. It’s not bad advice, if you apply it to a marriage rather than a dress” (34).

Blush”). Similarly, Bride Shealynn admits at the beginning of her appointment, “I know they always say don’t fall in love with your first dress, but I love this one,” again implying the expectation that the dress search process is supposed to be extremely challenging (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2014, “New Dress—New Beginning”).

Budgetary concerns are depicted as irrelevant. As one father of the bride acknowledged, “I think it’s a little more than we were planning, [and] could put a challenge on our budget for other parts of her wedding, but it may be that the dress and how she feels and looks in it, is more important than some other things that we could spend money on as well” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2010, “Love Connection”). This statement is representative of the consumerist ideology *SYTTD* repeatedly champions.

The show often emphasizes the link between spending money and showing love, especially in the juxtaposition of lines like Bride Ashley’s excitement over her father’s willingness to pay for her pricey dress (“Daddy get out your checkbook!”) with her very next line, the tearfully proclaimed “I’m feeling very loved” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2010, “Love Connection”). The quick cut here illustrates not only how *SYTTD* depicts love as something that can be measured in dollars, but also how a woman’s happiness can be bought (and the use of “Daddy,” rather than “Dad” or “Father,” in this scene also reinforces the infantilization and subordinate position of the bride).

In a similar display, when Bride Afrodite begins to get discouraged by not being able to find a dress she likes in her \$3000 budget, her mother intervenes and raises the budget to \$5000—a moment which is depicted as a great display of love and affection (hugs and kisses are exchanged as the music swells) (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2012, “Not Your Mama’s Dress”). Though Afrodite offers a half-hearted attempt at resistance in her confessional-style commentary to the

camera, consumerism wins out and she leaves the store having ordered a dress courtesy of the increased budget. There are counter-narratives to this sort of consumerist ideology, however; Bride Katy actually balks at the expense, saying “It’s just so much money. I don’t wanna make a commitment and then later think that it’s horrible,” and then later, tearfully, “It just seems not right for me to take that much from my dad for just, like, one garment. I mean, my wedding should just be about me and my fiancé and I don’t wanna spend this much” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2014, “Dazed and Gown-fused”). Despite her father’s attempts to comfort and reassure her, she stands firm and leaves the salon empty-handed.

Furthermore, it is not only the parents who can buy the bride’s love and happiness, but the grooms too. Bride Norah describes her fiancé as “the perfect guy cause [he’s] willing to go out of his way to make me happy,” which entails “paying for everything, because that’s just how it goes in my culture—that’s what makes a man a man!” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2011, “Fashion Police”). This last statement illustrates how consumption habits in wedding-themed reality television programs are frequently linked to gender norms and traditional notions of masculinity and femininity.

2.3 The Importance of Femininity and Traditional Gender Norms

SYTTD did not initially emphasize the importance of maintaining traditional gender norms. In the early episodes of the series, the show focuses primarily on the staff, and their issues take center stage. However, as the show matures, the focus quickly moves to the brides, leading to a shift in storylines from discussions of practical matters (like price-points, sales numbers/goals, and commissions) to selling the “dream” and the experience of wedding dress shopping. While a typical episode begins with the search for the dress and ends with a purchase and a brief snippet about the wedding, the original episodes also include an interesting plot

device at the very end of the show: these early shows consistently make note of the newlyweds' family status (i.e., have they become pregnant, had a child, or plan to become pregnant). This afterward is so important to the conclusion of the episode that if no child is present or planned, a pet is frequently mentioned instead. This is an intriguing bit which does actually consider the marriage as well as the wedding. However, in later seasons this trend all but disappears, and the focus is ultimately placed firmly on the bride and her "big day," thereby eliminating any explicit connection between the wedding and the resulting marriage.

Throughout the course of the series, certain themes appear over and over and serve to renegotiate notions of traditional femininity and gender norms for the brides, including: the fairytale princess, the people-pleaser, the silly goose, and the damsel in distress. In addition, the show also features narratives of pseudo-resistance that ultimately serve to maintain hegemony as well: the nontraditional bride, the big girl, and the rebel. There is often a great deal of overlap in these types since they all work together to manage and maintain the image of the ideal bride. All of these types are a snapshot of the ideological compromise that is occurring, and each one shows how the pseudo-resistance works a little differently.

2.3.1 *The Fairytale Princess*

The bride is always portrayed as the center of the wedding, as evidenced by the *SYTTD* website, which states that its mission includes making the bride feel "like she is worth a million" and "like a star" ("Say Yes to the Dress | About the Show" 2001). The gap between consumption and femininity is bridged when words like "princess" and "perfect" are used over and over, whether it be in connection to a bride discussing her childhood fantasies about getting her "perfect princess dress, for the perfect day" (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2008, "What A Bride

Wants”) or in the way that others describe the bride.¹⁰¹ The standard is clearly and explicitly stated—nothing less will do. Such language reinforces the desire to achieve both celebrity status and the post-feminist fairy tale princess experience through consumption.

In the world of reality TV, this appears to deviate from the thematic norms in that the show does not claim to be about pleasing your man (or, in this case, groom), but rather about pleasing yourself. Every episode of *SYTTD* includes the consultant asking the bride, “How do you want to look on your wedding day?” and some variation of the following: “It’s really important for us to make sure that we get the dress that symbolizes exactly what that bride wants to say at her wedding” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2010, “Love Connection”). In the world of the show, the wedding is a statement and it is the bride’s statement. This appears to be a feminist move toward female agency. However, this rhetoric of empowerment is complicated by the fact that reality TV weddings do not actually deviate much from traditional gender norms of heteronormativity and hyper-femininity¹⁰²—for instance, the dress is non-negotiable—after all, it is not called *Say Yes to the Pantsuit*. So, no matter how many times a consultant reminds a bride that “it’s *your* day” or an omniscient voice-over reminds the audience that “it will take a bride that listens to her inner voice to find the gown that will begin her happily ever after,” there is always the unspoken qualification that her inner voice had better be calling out for some sort of white dress.

2.3.2 *The People-Pleaser*

Brides are often instructed to please themselves, but follow-up commentary seems to qualify the statement by adding “but only if that pleases everyone else.” In season six, a

¹⁰¹ This is indicative of the recent rise of princess culture (Orenstein 2007), as discussed in Chapter One.

¹⁰² This is closely related to Susan Douglas’s (2010) work on “enlightened sexism,” in which sexism is fostered by a sense of female empowerment because equality has supposedly been achieved; Douglas also emphasizes how reality TV reinforces the notion that “women are to be judged first and foremost by their appearance” (198).

consultant initially declares “it’s about what makes [the bride] feel beautiful and happy,” but the rest of the episode is devoted to placating the bride’s *sister*, Dana (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2011, “Happily Ever After, Sort Of”). To emphasize this point, later statements include: “I’m getting concerned that we’re not gonna find a dress that both of them are gonna love,” “The bride’s in love, but the one person who matters most is not” and “The design is a hit with the team, but it’s *Dana’s* opinion that really matters” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2011, “Happily Ever After, Sort Of”). When a dress is finally chosen, the narrator concludes “Everybody’s on board—including the bride,” which presents the bride almost as an afterthought (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2011, “Happily Ever After, Sort Of”). This sort of dialogue silences the brides and eliminates any agency they may originally have appeared to possess.

Brides are often complicit in their own silencing as well, and frequently express a desire to please everyone else—oftentimes at the expense of their own preferences. Countless brides are shown wishing that their mom, dad, sister, brother, grandmother, fiancé, friend, daughter, etc. will like the dress, and one bride even goes so far as to choose the dress her friends preferred over the one she loved (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2011, “Happily Ever After, Sort Of”). Over and over, *SYTTD* implicitly reinforces the idea that the wedding is not actually all about the bride, and that a bride must silence her own desires in order to please everyone else.

2.3.3 *The Silly Goose*

In addition to being silenced by the opinions and preferences of others and by themselves, brides are frequently portrayed as not *really* knowing what they want anyway. Individual preferences are clearly not to be trusted or privileged above the opinions of the seasoned consultant, whose job is to guide the “naïve” or supposedly confused brides through this all important process. Ideologically, this tells the audience that brides are not capable of

making their own decisions, and good brides should not even try. The viewer is encouraged to question Bride Bre's judgment from the start when her father starts off her appointment by saying "She *thinks* she knows what she wants" (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2009, "Overbooked"). Bre's incompetency in choosing her own dress is confirmed when the "beauty queen" and Miss Virginia runner-up attempts to steer away from dresses that feel too much like "pageant gowns," and Manager Joan has to step in and intervene. Joan remarks at the end of the episode, once the consultant has chosen a suitable, "pageant-y" gown for Bre, that "Bre's whole dilemma was that what she didn't want is in essence what works for her" (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2009, "Overbooked"). This example illustrates that being the perfect bride means listening and trusting the opinions of others, rather than oneself.

Indeed, brides oftentimes even deliberately and explicitly choose to defer to others, rather than speaking for themselves. Such was the case when Bride Kara was asked to clarify her dress style preferences and immediately turned to her friend and said "She can explain it," rather than even attempting to speak for herself (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2013, "You're Making Me Blush").

Season twelve features an entire episode devoted to confused and indecisive brides, framing such a predicament as quite commonplace:

Fashion Consultant Randy: "It's *so* easy for a bride to get confused because we have *so* many dresses, so many different styles, so many different fabrics—it's really *our* job to bring her back to what she's trying to say with her wedding dress. What *statement* is she trying to make? If we can get her focused, then she'll be able to find a dress." (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2014, "Dazed and Gown-fused")

This statement is especially telling in that it positions the bride as an over-stimulated, distracted child who is completely and utterly out of her depth. In this scenario, the bride cannot possibly fend for herself, so it is the consultants' job to steer her back on course like some sort of runaway ship.

2.3.4 *The Damsel in Distress*

SYTTD also insists that the bride is fragile¹⁰³ and in need of protection. Brides are often shown bonding with the consultant in opposition to the bride's often overly-critical entourage. The entourage functions as the external apparatus of control, mercilessly attacking any bride who dares to step out of line (or does so inadvertently). In a *New York Times Magazine* article, Andrea Seigel (2012) claims that *SYTTD*, like many reality television shows, is not actually about the dress at all, asserting: "The show is about the trouble with family (and here I'm including more symbolic families like groups of friends and sorority sisters), which is that psychological entanglement can keep loved ones from being able to separate their desires from your own" (58-59). One mother of the bride even went so far as to ask her daughter if she was dropped on her head because that is the only possible explanation she can see as to why the bride would choose a particular (wrong) dress. She explains that she wants the bride to "look the best she could possibly look" and that she is simply "tryin' to make the best out of a bad situation" (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2008, "What a Bride Wants").

If a bride is seen as especially fragile or delicate, she is portrayed as even more deserving and in need of protection. Season eleven premiered with an episode entitled "New Dress—New Beginning," which focuses on three brides who have "been through a tragedy and overcome it" (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2014, "New Dress—New Beginning"). Bride Ashley is a model who has survived cancer, Bride Shealynn is a former army medic who was severely injured in Afghanistan, and Bride Dana recently lost her mom to cancer and is going through the wedding process without her. Due to the difficulties they have each faced, these brides are depicted as very special (though the show is careful to point out that "every bride is special," extra emphasis

¹⁰³ Fashion consultant Randy even explicitly states this in the seventh season: "Brides are very fragile" (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2011, "Fashion Police").

is placed on the unique circumstances of these three women) and merit extra care and concern, so “all the consultants are focused on making dreams come true for [these] deserving brides” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2014, “New Dress—New Beginning”).

In some instances, overly-protective fathers feel the need to protect the bride due to a lack of faith in the groom: one father remarks that “It’s very scary giving away your daughter. Very. [I’ve been] taking care of her for 23 years and I want to make sure that he’s gonna take care of her” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2008, “What a Bride Wants”). This statement simultaneously expresses skepticism in his daughter’s choice of a partner, as well as a disturbingly old-fashioned belief that his adult daughter needs someone to take care of her, because apparently she cannot take care of herself. This theme of a lack of female agency is carried through to other episodes of the series; for instance, in season ten, Bride Tamara says of fiancé Edgar: “Edgar is one of my brother’s friends. *Edgar was respectful enough to ask my brother’s permission to date me*, and things just took off from there” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2013, “You’re Making Me Blush”; emphasis mine). For a genre that promises personal fulfillment and empowerment on what is resoundingly labeled “your day,” it is notable how little agency the bride is portrayed as having in this text.

2.3.5 *The Big Girl*

One of many oft-recurring themes in *SYTTD* is the pressure to fit the ideal body image and ideal beauty standard. *SYTTD* is obsessed with women’s bodies and fitting those bodies with the (often white) slender, idealized norm. Larger brides are often portrayed as a challenge for the consultants because of the lack of available dress options, which is framed as the bride’s fault for not being “sample size” rather than the industry’s fault for not making more dresses in extended sizes, or the store’s fault for not carrying more plus-size options. It is clear that those who do not

fit the idealized body image need to be corrected (if they are not, they cannot achieve the perfect wedding and participate in this cultural institution in the correct way). Laura S. Patterson (2005) discusses the connection between buying a wedding gown and the pressure to conform to an appropriate female body image, and how this can deeply affect a brides' self-esteem (244). This shows how the bride's wedding gown and general appearance on her wedding day is very closely tied to ideas about her value as a woman (Engstrom 2007, 345).

Sometimes adjustments can be made or the perfect dress can be found that helps the bride achieve the required ideal. One exchange between consultant and bride is especially revealing:

Bride Karah: "Elise is awesome. She really made me feel good about myself, you know. You don't—you don't—I didn't feel like I was some chubby girl in a wedding dress. She really made me feel like I was a beautiful woman. You know, she and Debbie both did a great job with that."

Consultant Debbie: "And you will look beautiful in this dress if you don't lose one pound. It looks beautiful on you." (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2008, "Second Chances")

It is clear from this commentary that it is the bridal consultants' job to help correct the less than perfect brides and legitimize their existence as complete beautiful women through the purchase of the right dress. Bride Susan remarks, "Putting on the dress this morning, I was surprised—I feel like I've really transformed into a bride" (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2009, "Overbooked"). Clearly, the dress is key in separating those who are the right kind of bride and those who are not.

2.3.6 The Nontraditional Bride

Body-image notwithstanding, *SYTTD* makes it most evident that not all brides are created equal, even while claiming that it does not even matter if this is not the bride's first wedding. As the narration says in one such episode: "Even if it's a bride's second time down the aisle...the dress has to be perfect" because "in the end, every bride deserves to look like a princess, even if

it's just for one day" and even if she is not a "traditional" bride (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2009, "Second Time Around"). Age is an issue as well. Although fashion consultant Randy assures the viewer that "every bride should feel special on her wedding day, no matter what her age" (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2010, "Love Connection"), the fact that he had to mention this at all leaves the viewer questioning the worth of the "nontraditional" bride. Being older or already having been married before challenges the highly revered virgin in white bridal tradition.

This subtle singling out of the nontraditional bride is nothing compared to the shaming that occurs at the hands of the show, the bride's family, her friends, her fiancé, and sometimes even herself. Brides are frequently described (and self-described) as picky and hard to please, but that is probably the nicest thing one could be called on the show. Other adjectives used to describe the bride and/or her choice of dress (in just the twelve episodes contained in this sample) include: Victorian, artichoke, drunk, dropped on her head, like a kangaroo pouch, frumpy, old, horrid, cake, cake topper, oompa-loompa, Christmas tree, mold, plain jane, muffin top, hideous, fish scales/mermaid's dress, stupid, big, doily, hand-me-down, cheap, tacky, hooker, and "looks like material threw-up all over the bottom of it" (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2008, "Second Chances"; *Say Yes to the Dress* 2008, "What a Bride Wants"; *Say Yes to the Dress* 2009, "Second Time Around"; *Say Yes to the Dress* 2009, "Overbooked"; *Say Yes to the Dress* 2010, "Love Connection"; *Say Yes to the Dress* 2011, "Happily Ever After, Sort Of"; *Say Yes to the Dress* 2011, "Fashion Police"; *Say Yes to the Dress* 2012, "Not Your Mama's Dress"; *Say Yes to the Dress* 2014, "Dazed and Gown-fused"). In one particularly brutal exchange, Bride Ashley's father expresses his distaste for her dress by saying "This top part here is like you're driving down the highway and you see a bad accident and you don't really wanna look at it, but..." (prompting Randy to remark in a mix of amusement and horror that his comment was

“like bullets”) (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2014, “New Dress—New Beginning”). There is no need to differentiate between the bride and the dress here because in this moment she *is* the dress.

2.3.7 *The Rebel*

An excellent counter example to the strict mandate for a white dress is provided when one unruly bride insists upon choosing a pink dress, exclaiming “It’s my day, so I’m gonna wear the color that looks best on me,” an assertion which is followed by a “ding” sound effect and an exasperated look from the consultant (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2011, “Fashion Police”). The combination of editing and sound effects used here shows the viewer that this bride has transgressed and that this type of rebellion is not considered acceptable behavior in the world of *SYTTD*. It is even more telling that there are barely any pink dresses in stock for the bride to try on, which serves to further emphasize the importance of the white dress. By the end of the episode the show has managed and incorporated this bride’s resistance into the larger narrative of traditional femininity by encouraging her to purchase a dress in “blush,” which is only *slightly* pink. This particular storyline is especially ironic when one considers the normally acceptable (and often encouraged) selection of pink as a representation of femininity; the ideological containment of the rebel in this instance speaks to the overarching importance of the perception of virginity over all things feminine.

However, even this small act of rebellion is eventually incorporated back into the dominant narrative. In season ten there is an entire episode devoted to brides who want colorful dresses. Fashion consultant Randy provides the framing for the episode: “Sometimes brides just don’t want to wear white—maybe it’s a cultural reason, or maybe they just don’t wanna look like everyone else” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2013, “You’re Making Me Blush”). All three brides featured in this episode arrive at the salon intent upon purchasing a non-white dress. Bride

Sheena is excused right off the bat when it is explained that she needs a non-white dress for her traditional Hindu wedding reception because white is normally reserved for funerals in Indian culture. Sheena ultimately selects a dress that can be ordered in an acceptable shade of blush.

Bride Kara, whose family already possesses micro-celebrity status as former cast members on *The Real Housewives of Orange County*, initially asserts her desire for a red dress, much to the chagrin of her future mother-in-law, who laments that “Everybody would be focused on the red dress and not her and not my son” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2013, “You’re Making Me Blush”). However, after also being discouraged by Randy (who immediately confronts her with “Here’s my question: what if somebody shows up at your wedding wearing a red dress?”), Kara ultimately decides on a more toned-down version of her vision and goes with a blush dress (acknowledging in her confessional-style commentary, “A wedding dress should be about what you want, but sometimes you have to think about other people”) (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2013, “You’re Making Me Blush”).

The third and final bride featured in this episode, Bride Tamara, represents the ultimate example of containment. Tamara left Kleinfeld’s having ordered a dress in blush, only to call back later and change the dress color to white (without ever having seen or tried on the dress in white). This change of heart causes her much distress over whether or not she will actually like the dress with this change in color, but, luckily, when she returns to the salon months later for her fitting, she is pleased and relieved to discover that she loves the dress in white. Balance is restored and the dominant order is reinforced when she proclaims at the end of the episode: “White makes me feel like a bride. I feel like a bride. I didn’t realize how important the color was until I actually got married” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2013, “You’re Making Me Blush”). Her

initial act of pseudo-resistance—choosing a color other than white for her wedding dress—is ultimately quashed by her own self-disciplining actions.

Another instance of rebellion occurs when brides refuse (or fail) to engage in the wedding planning process in the proper way. Episode six from season nine, “Beat the Clock,” is dedicated entirely to “brides that have waited till the last minute to buy their bridal gown” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2013, “Beat the Clock”). This episode serves as a cautionary tale that begins with a warning from Randy for all potential brides-to-be, advising them that they should purchase their gown “at least 6-8 months before the wedding, otherwise you’re gonna be stuck with either a sample gown, or you’re not gonna be able to get maybe a gown that you want” (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2013, “Beat the Clock”). Randy delivers this advice in such a way as to indicate the seriousness of the situation and the undesirability of ending up with the dreaded “sample gown” (the horror!). The responsibility is always in the bride as she is expected to be both aware of this important timeline requirement and ensure that she complies.

To further illustrate the significance of this wedding planning rule, the episode repeatedly shames the errant brides-to-be by emphasizing their lateness over-and-over through multiple avenues, including the voice-over narration (“Debbie’s tasked with helping a bride who’s left dress shopping to the last minute” and “with such a close wedding date, Debbie doesn’t waste any time calling for backup”); consultants’ interactions with brides (“so we really don’t have much time, do we?” and “it’s a really close date for us”); conversations among staff members (manager Dorothy to consultant Antonella: “you know it’s really difficult when you have a specific look and you don’t have any time to do it”); and consultants directly addressing the camera (Debbie: “Ebony is so disappointed, and I don’t know how to break it to her, but if you wait this long, your selection is very, very limited,” and Randy: “when a bride waits till the last

moment to go shopping, it looks like we can't do our job, so, that I take personally, 'cause I can do my job") (*Say Yes to the Dress* 2013, "Beat the Clock").

These examples illustrate how *SYTTD* encourages both hyperconsumerism and the desire for pseudo-celebrity/royal status, while reinforcing traditional gender roles and notions of appropriate femininity. Even brides who attempt to resist normalization are ultimately contained the moment they walk out the salon with a dress (regardless of color or style).

2.4 Audience Reception via Social Media

In order to get an idea of the audience reception of *SYTTD*, a sampling of tweets relating to the show were collected and analyzed for content. To make the sample more manageable and to remain in keeping with sampling method used when analyzing the text, tweets were collected from the original airdates of each episode included in this study. Using Twitter's advanced search function, a sample was drawn using the date restrictions and the following hashtags: #SYTTD, #sayyestothedress, #TLC, and #brideday. The results of this search were then analyzed for relevance, and any unrelated tweets were removed from the sample (e.g., tweets using the hashtag #TLC to reference the musical group of the same name or the WWE's pay-per-view event "Tables, Ladders, Chairs" match). The sample was also slightly limited by the fact that the earliest mention of the show using the previously established search terms did not occur till 10 April 2009, so the first two episodes discussed in this study had no associated tweets.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ The social media sample details are listed below:

Season One, Episode Nine – "Second Chances" (December 19, 2008) [0 / 0]
 Season Two, Episode Ten – "What A Bride Wants" (September 26, 2008) [0 / 0]
 Season Three, Episode Twelve – "Second Time Around" (June 5, 2009) [1 / 3]
 Season Four, Episode One – "Overbooked" (September 11, 2009) [4 / 11]
 Season Five, Episode Seventeen – "Love Connection" (July 23, 2010) [18 / 44]
 Season Six, Episode Eighteen – "Happily Ever After, Sort Of" (April 8, 2011) [243 / 845]
 Season Seven, Episode Two – "Fashion Police" (October 7, 2011) [789 / 1265]
 Season Eight, Episode Three – "Not Your Mama's Dress" (June 22, 2012) [1864 / 2635]
 Season Nine, Episode Six – "Beat the Clock" (January 11, 2013) [3288 / 4119]

In total, 13,383 tweets were collected and analyzed. 5,012 of those tweets were deemed irrelevant and eliminated from the sample. The remaining 8,371 tweets were examined via qualitative content analysis.¹⁰⁵ First I present a summary of the general trends observed in the sample, followed by a description of the sub-categories of both positive and negative tweets about the show.

2.4.1 General Trends

A few of the tweets included in the sample were official tweets from the network (@TLC), the show (@SYTTD), or the stars themselves. These tweets typically prompted viewers to engage with the text via Twitter or other social media outlets, such as Facebook, to access program extras and/or prizes, like the examples below.

TLC Network @TLC – 11 Jan 2013

Tweet @SYTTD a pic of your engagement ring and why you said "yes" for a chance to win #BrideDay #DCCupcakes! ow.ly/gIe0n

Say Yes to the Dress @sytttd – 21 Feb 2014

RSVP to the #BrideDay Facebook Party! We'll share exclusive details about the dresses from tonight's @sytttd premiere! ow.ly/tRrpo

In response to the network's tweet about the contest, one user responded to inquire whether contestants had to be engaged to participate.

susan @sjs410 – 11 Jan 2013

@sytttd do i have to be engaged to win this week's contest for #brideday ? I've been looking forward to trying to win @GTownCupcake all week!

Season Ten, Episode Ten – “You’re Making Me Blush” (September 20, 2013) [955 / 1985]

Season Eleven, Episode One – “New Dress—New Beginning” (February 21, 2014) [977 / 1675]

Season Twelve, Episode Thirteen – “Dazed and Gown-fused” (November 28, 2014) [232 / 801].

¹⁰⁵ Select examples of each theme are included in the analysis; for additional examples, see Appendix A. Please note: while this appendix contains further examples of these themes, the Tweets included do not represent all examples of these themes contained in the entire sample. In addition, all tweets included in this and subsequent chapters are reproduced exactly as they originally appeared, with no corrections made to users’ grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.

This illustrates how the role of bride (or, in this case, bride-to-be) is often utilized as a dividing factor in our society (separating those who are from those who are not).

Many other tweets included in the sample were just mentions without any additional context (i.e., “#sayyestothedress” or “#syttdd”). However, sometimes the mentions included a brief show of positive affect in connection to the show (i.e., “love #syttdd” or “#syttdd <3”). These tweets may have been intended to signal to other users that the author was currently watching the show, or merely to communicate their fandom of the program.

Beyond these general mentions, tweets also frequently alluded to the author’s viewing context. Users often established the fact that they were watching the show with their mother or with friends. Those who claimed to be watching with their mothers or friends frequently categorized this experience as female bonding time, even if they were watching with a friend who was not physically present, an act which was often accomplished by talking on the phone during the program.

Erica Lang @EriDL911 – 22 Jun 2012

Couple more minutes til #SYTTDD is on! Mom and I have our usual seats to watch. Friday night is our "bonding" night with #TLC

Daron Morford @daron_lynn857 – 11 Jan 2013

Even though @bizzyboo17 and I are an hour apart we can still enjoy #SYTTDD together! #bestfriendlove #feelmuchbetter #loveyou

Occasionally users mentioned viewing with a significant other or with other family members, but this was significantly less common. When these sorts of tweets did appear, they often made mention of watching the show with one’s father, and frequently expressed surprise that he seemed to be enjoying and/or engaging with the text.

Biddysaurus Rex @BiddysaurusRex – 8 Oct 2011

Lol “they all go in there knowing what they want.. whats ruching anyways” watching #sayyestothedress with pops. He gets so into it

Daniela Sabando @daniela_sabando – 22 Jun 2012

Watching #SYTTD with my daddy. The thing is...he actually likes it! Hahaha :)

Conversely, among those who claimed to be watching alone, this assertion was often accompanied by an expression of satisfaction at being able to have some “me time,” as in the examples below.

Ekateryna. @katyakb – 23 Jun 2012

I am watching TLC's #brideday on a Friday night. By myself. With a glass of wine and in my snuggie. #winning 🥰💍💎🔥

CourtAKnee @deck_er – 11 Jan 2013

My favorite blanket, favorite hoodie, a cup of coffee and the #SYTTD marathon. 🍷👧💍👉

As in the examples above, many of these tweets position the viewing experience as comforting and relaxing. Similarly, there was also frequent mention of watching the show while being ill or while recovering from a recent illness.

Taylor Rothwell @Tayyyyyy20 – 22 Jun 2012

#SayYesToTheDress marathon. Ahhhh pneumonia isn't so bad. :)

Abby Cox ☐ @YoitsAbbsC – 22 Jun 2012

There's one positive thing to being sick in bed all day..and that's say yes to the dress marathons! #sayyestothedress #tlc

Sarahbeth Waswick @sbw_10 – 11 Jan 2013

Nothing's better than #SayYesToTheDress when you're sick

Tweets about viewing the show in a time of illness appeared with surprising regularity and expressed a similar feeling of comfort found in the “me time” tweets.

Also, users often tweeted about engaging in what are frequently regarded as traditionally hyper-feminine activities, like doing one's hair, painting one's nails (or having either of these done by someone else), or scrapbooking/pinning.

Amanda Johnson @amanda_helene_j – 7 Oct 2011

#pinterest and @TLC #sayyestothedress. PERFECT AFTERNOON!

pe.ies @allthesarah – 22 Jun 2012

pedicures and bride day with my best friend @ellehcorlives :) #sytttd

Ashley Bredemus @AshleyBredemus – 11 Jan 2013

My Friday night #SayYesToTheDress #Cosmopolitan #BubbleBath
 instagr.am/p/UXWOUlt5M/

Alternately, some tweets alluding to a solitary viewing experience appeared to be a lamentation about the viewer's present social isolation. Some users seemed to be expressing genuine sadness (due to either having no one to watch the show with or having no significant other), while others seemed to be exhibiting a more humorous or even defiant position in relation to their solitary status. Tweets in this vein will be addressed later in the discussion of tweets displaying negative affect.

Finally, there was also frequent mention of eating or drinking as part of the viewing experience; for instance, drinking wine and/or eating ice cream were commonly discussed. This can be seen in many of the examples included above, as well as in the following tweets.

lyeisha @lyeisha – 7 Oct 2011

Cookies n cream ice-cream and #sayyestothedress peaceful friday night

Maryssa Chaplin @MChapster – 22 Jun 2012

Spending a quiet, rainy evening watching say yes to the dress and baking chocolate chip cookies #sytttd #yum #cozy

Beyond these general observations, tweets in the sample can be divided up into two major categories: those expressing positive affect and those expressing negative affect. Each of these general categories can then be discussed in terms of eight major sub-categories consisting of the most frequently observed themes.

2.4.2 Positive Tweets

One might assume that the sort of shaming that occurs on *SYTTD* would carry over into the social media discussion of the show, and to a certain extent it did. However, the amount of

negative comments actually paled in comparison to the number of positive comments recorded.

Major themes of these positive mentions include:

- General love of the show
- Love of the dresses
- Love of the narrative/emotional content
- Love of consumerism
- Love of the staff/guest stars
- Desire to go dress shopping/wear a wedding dress
- Desire to get married
- Desire to work in a bridal salon
- Sharing quotations from the show

Each of these categories will be explained below with specific examples from the Twitter sample.

2.4.2.1 General love of the show

Many users tweeted about their love of the program and frequently characterized this love as obsession or addiction. One of the tweets even went so far as to refer to the show as “wedding porn,” which conveys an interesting association with both stimulation and release, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

lorena koidl @lolo_koids – 11 Jan 2013

Friday brideday is my favorite day of the week #SYTTD 🛎️💍💒

Who Gave You The Mic @WhoGaveUTheMic – 28 Nov 2014

watching wedding porn (ie #SayYesToTheDress) just because it's AWESOME

2.4.2.2 Love of the dresses

Twitter users also expressed their love for specific dresses, styles, and/or designers featured on the show, sometimes even carrying this over to a desire to obtain said dress/style/designer’s work for themselves.

Chiquitita @SugarSpiceLife – 23 Jun 2012

LOVE the rose covered skirt on "Say Yes To The Dress." Expensive wedding gown. But gorgeous! #SYTTD

Kate Hutton @lovek8bby – 22 Jun 2012

I realllllly want a Pnina Tornai dress when I get married #SYTTD

2.4.2.3 *Love of the narrative/emotional content*

Another popular theme found in the sample is the enjoyment of the show's storyline.

This also appears in the form of acknowledging an emotional response to the narrative, which frequently takes the form of crying.

Hannah Dowdall @DowdallHannah · 11 Jan 2013

My favorite part of #SYTTD is when the brides talk about why they fell in love with their fiancées <3

Kate Klimowich @klim__shady – 11 Jan 2013

#syttdd never fails to make me shed a tear 😭 #stillloveitthough

2.4.2.4 *Love of consumerism*

Sometimes viewers expressed pleasure at witnessing brides select and purchase extremely expensive gowns. One major theme in this sort of response was a desire to be able to spend that kind of money on their own dress, or sometimes just a desire to possess that much money in general. Twitter users also displayed an association between spending money and showing love, as we saw earlier in this chapter. In rare cases, tweets in this category also engaged in shaming brides for their reticence to spend a large amount of money on one dress.

***MaNdY* @GLAMOUR_QUEEN9 – 8 Oct 2011**

Nice #sayyestothedress made her fiancé drop \$50,000 on her wedding and reception dress! #glitterswag off the charts

Lindsey Forbes @LindseyAForbes – 11 Jan 2013

\$16,000 Dress... 😭 I want a husband to love me that much ❤️ 💍 #SYTTD

Clarence Seal @cseal4 – 11 Jan 2013

You just flew to NYC from Egypt to shop at Kleinfelds and you want to complain about a \$3500 price tag? #givemeabreak #SYTTD #weddings

2.4.2.5 *Love of the staff/guest stars*

Users often discussed the Kleinfeld staff members featured on the show, either in general observations or in reference to declaring a favorite. High-profile guest stars on *SYTTD* were also mentioned in this context as well.

Librarian_Bree @Librarian_Bree – 8 Oct 2011

Yay! #sayyestothedress season premiere! Sales Directory Nicole looks amazing after having her baby!!

Emily Meyer @EmMiley7 – 21 Feb 2014

Kristin Chenoweth is on #SYTTD. I can't stop laughing

Interestingly, fashion consultant Randy's perfectly manicured eyebrows were frequently the subject of tweets about him.

Rachel Lawrence @rachelanne – 23 Jul 2010

Oh Randy. Your eyebrows are more well kept than mine 100 percent of the time.
#sayyestothedress

However, sometimes there is also some push-back against staff members, as is the case in the tweet featured below.

Chrissie Mac @chrissiema24 – 29 Nov 2014

Am I the only one who finds Randy #SYTTD to be so disingenuous? His whole "hi beautiful" drives me crazy! Just say hello #phonybaloney

2.4.2.6 *Desire to go dress shopping/wear a wedding dress*

Another major theme in viewers' social media responses is the desire to go dress shopping and/or have the opportunity to wear a wedding dress. Some users mentioned wanting to go shopping at Kleinfeld's specifically, while others actually expressed a desire to be featured on the show. The desire to purchase a wedding dress and have a *wedding* (but not a *marriage*) was commonly mentioned as well, further illustrating the disconnect between weddings and marriage discussed earlier.

TaraPick @teeeepick – 23 Jun 2012

I'm completely obsessed with #SayYesToTheDress. I cannot wait to go wedding gown shopping with my momma & sister someday. ❤️💍🔔💎👑

Xtina Marie @xtina_is_a_gee – 11 Jan 2013

Screw getting married, I just want a wedding dress! And a vacation. #SYTTD
#Confession

Brittany @BC_Barrier – 20 Sep 2013

Just sent in my application to be on #sayyestothedress #hopeful #fingerscrossed

2.4.2.7 *Desire to get married*

Though they were not as common, there were also tweets explicitly expressing a desire to get married. Like those tweets mentioned in the previous category, the desire to get married was sometimes articulated as a prerequisite to being able to get a dress.

Gabrielle T @tbow_xo – 22 Jun 2012

Watching #SYTTD gives me hope. If these girls can get a guy to marry them, than so can I.

Кеннеди Кидея @Kennedy_Nicole6 – 21 Feb 2014

I can't wait to get married so I can pick out a wedding dress. #SYTTD

2.4.2.8 *Desire to work in a bridal salon*

One less common theme in the sample was the user's desire to work in a bridal salon as a consultant, sometimes specifically mentioning Kleinfeld's by name.

Meme Ma @heyheyitsmeme – 7 Oct 2011

my dream job would be a bridal consultant at a high end wedding dress boutique like in #SayYesToTheDress on TLC.. i love weddings & dresses

2.4.2.9 *Sharing quotations from the show*

Finally, viewers occasionally tweeted specific quotations or scenes from the show.

Morg @MorgPartlow – 23 Jun 2012

"I do want to cover cleavage. It's a Catholic wedding. It's in a church. I don't want God to cry when she walks in" Mom on #SayYesToTheDress

Jessica Thomas @jess_icaLT – 22 Jun 2012

"There needs to be a line between bridal and brothel". I ❤️ Randy on #SYTTD

Julie Saunders @ohmissjulie – 21 Jun 2012

"The truth is, Mormons are just sexier than other people, so we kind of have to cover all this up." #SYTTD

These are the major topics of discussion that expressed some level of positive affect regarding the show. Now that the positive themes have been described, the most commonly occurring negative themes will be detailed below.

2.4.3 *Negative Tweets*

Though considerably less than the number of positive tweets, there were negative comments related to the show. Major themes of these negative mentions include:

- Criticism of consumerism
- Criticism of taste/dress selection
- Criticism of female body/physical attractiveness
- Criticism of behavior (brides)
- Criticism of behavior (entourage)
- Criticism of presence of fiancé
- Criticism of self for watching/self-loathing
- Reminder of single status (negative)

Each of these categories will be explained at length below with specific examples from the sample.

2.4.3.1 *Criticism of consumerism*

Of the negative evaluations of the show expressed on Twitter, criticism of the level of consumption occurring was by far the most common topic. Viewers typically displayed outrage over the amount of money a bride has spent on a dress, or on multiple dresses. Many tweets also compared the cost of specific dresses purchased on the show with other major expenses, such as homes, tuition, and cars, implying that a dress that will only be worn once should not be in the same category as these other purchases.

Cayla Rios @CaylaDuncan – 7 Oct 2011

This girl just dropped \$50K on a wedding gown! That's more than my student loans combined! #sayyestothedress

Enizzle @EnidMartini – 7 Oct 2011

OMG! He just paid over \$50,000 for her wedding dresses! I really hope that she is faithful and loyal to that man! #SYTTD

BEN-JAMIN' @RachelBenjamin – 7 Oct 2011

Omfg, 50 thousand dollars on two wedding dresses, you spoiled inconsiderate gold digging bitch! #sayyestothedress.

Penguin Princess @PinguinoBesos – 7 Oct 2011

her pussy cant be THAT serious #SayYesToTheDress

Lindy @Notyourlinda – 11 Jan 2013

#SYTTD 62 thousand dollars for a wedding dress... I could buy so many orphans with that and like save some lives or something#sry ...

2.4.3.2 Criticism of taste/dress selection

Another frequent target of criticism on Twitter is brides' taste and/or dress selection.

Viewers often express outrage over some brides' decision to wear a color other than white on their wedding day, while remarks concerning a bride's choice of accessories or dress style occasionally appear as well.

Karena B. @pearlStyle – 9 Apr 2011

A red wedding dress? No no tacktastic! #sayyestothedress @tlc

ck @ckam1kaze – 8 Oct 2011

Who gets married in a short dress?! #trashy #sayyestothedress

MaryBeth Mosley @ThatMosleyGirl – 22 Jun 2012

If you buy a wedding dress that costs half of \$10,000, please buy attractive shoes. Sincerely, people with fashion sense #SayYestotheDress

Meghan Reilly @mrei14 – 11 Jan 2013

Being able to judge women while they try on wedding dresses and their feelings won't be hurt #sayyestothedress

Mercade @MercadeSheena – 11 Jan 2013

this bitch wants a BLACK wedding dress?! for the love of god someone stop this woman. #SYTTD

Jessica Edwards @jessicaedwards – 10 Jan 2013

okay so liiike since when do you wear a pink wedding dress? wedding dresses are WHITE. this ain't prom, its your WEDDING. #SYTTD

Madison Reese @Madison_Reese – 10 Jan 2013

This lady is adamant on having a black wedding dress... I feel like that's just asking for a failed marriage. 😬 #SayYesToTheDress

Lexie Lou @LEXIEL0UL0U – 20 Sep 2013

@marissa_rae What bothers me is white is NOT traditional. Historically you wore your best dress, and white was a rare choice! #SYTTD

Dorothy Saintus @Chi_TownBoss – 28 Nov 2014

Why are you wearing a dress that costs more than 7K with Target flip flops? 😬 #rude #SYTTD

2.4.3.3 Criticism of female body/physical attractiveness

One topic of criticism closely related to brides' style choices is their physical appearance. Twitter users in this sample often commented on specific brides' appearances and mocked what they saw as their physical shortcomings. The examples included below are particularly brutal in their meanness, but it is important to note again that comments of this sort were actually fairly uncommon.

Andrene S. Dos Anjos @Drene_Sterr – 8 Apr 2011

NOOOOOOOOOO THIS CHICK DIDN'T RIP THE WEDDING DRESS..omg lolol you have no business being in it #sayyestothedress

bree @simply_girly – 8 Oct 2011

This woman on #sayyestothedress wants to look like a street hooker. Every woman's dream! But she's accomplished that. Looks like a whore. Yup

Hey Maid @TanyaFierce – 8 Oct 2011

This bitch on #SayYesToTheDress REFUSES to give up on these mermaid dresses. She shaped like Brian Urlacher tho -_-

Brianna @briannadawn03 – 8 Oct 2011

Ma'am, if you get anymore plastic surgery, you will no longer look like a member of the human race. #alienface #sayyestothedress

2.4.3.4 Criticism of behavior (brides)

Another theme of this sample was the criticism of brides' behavior both on and off the show. Some brides are ridiculed for the way they conduct themselves during their fitting, while

others are shamed for their life choices, such as being pregnant before/during the wedding. Additionally, brides are also chided via social media for not being interested in engaging in the wedding dress shopping experience, or for not performing these rituals in an “appropriate” fashion.

ShopEatandSleep @ShopEatandSleep – 7 Oct 2011

#sayyestothedress @Chloe_Hillard did this rachet just booty pop in her wedding gown

Jim Beam Queen @MusicHEROine – 7 Oct 2011

She said the dress fits wrong and its to tight, WELLLLLL maybe you shouldn't have gotten knocked up before the wedding. #SYTTD

Ginger🍷 @ginger_pierson – 12 Jan 2013

Bitch if you hate dress shopping, it was wrong to say yes to your fiance!
#SayYesToTheDress

AMY 🍷 @amybrooke_ – 11 Jan 2013

How could you be female and have never "dreamed of your wedding"? #SYTTD

2.4.3.5 Criticism of behavior (entourage)

The brides are not the only ones whose behavior is critiqued in this sample; the entourage that accompanies a bride to her dress fitting appointment is another frequent target of viewers' disdain. Although, in this category, users are usually criticizing the behavior of the entourage in a show of support for the bride, scolding those who accompany her for not supporting her choices or for trying to make the dress-buying decisions for her.

Heather @juanitam76 – 9 Apr 2011

OMG, this bratty little sister on #SayYesToTheDress. Why are these people giving her so much power STFD bitch! LOL

Rachel Hall @_Rachieach – 8 Apr 2011

I swear, if the people I go wedding dress shopping with treat me like crap. I will punch them. #sayyestothedress

ashhh. @Ashley_I_Am – 22 Jun 2012

Watching #SYTTD really pisses me off bc the families are so opinionated and want the dress they like instead of the dress the bride likes.

Chelsea! @ChelsMarlowe – 22 Jun 2012

#SYTTD Sometimes i feel like the moms take too much control.. Its your baby's big day.. Not yours!

☐RIP ABEL ☐ @MzStrader – 11 Jan 2013

I hate when parents on #syttdd use the fact that they're paying for the dress to push their opinion on the bride to be. HER DAYHER DRESS!!

2.4.3.6 Criticism of presence of fiancé

Another interesting area of critique is the presence of a bride's fiancé at her dress fitting appointment. Twitter users in this sample appeared critical of fiancés who accompanied their brides mainly because they ruined the sanctity of this traditionally female bonding ritual.

izzy @isabellabozzo – 11 Jan 2013

Going wedding dress shopping with your fiance is the STUPIDEST idea ever it just takes away from everything!! #tlcproblems #sayyestothedress

2.4.3.7 Criticism of self for watching/self-loathing

In what is perhaps the most depressing category of responses in this sample, users frequently alluded to a personal sense of shame over their viewership. Many alluded to the source of their shame being the quality or lack thereof of the program, while others implied that they should be doing something else with their time. Still others claimed that the show actually made them feel bad about themselves for some other reason.

Samantha Gabrielle @samanfina – 8 Apr 2011

Watching Say Yes To The Dress #TLC #guiltypleasure

UptownBitch @BitchWittClass – 23 Jun 2012

Why am I so obsessed with wedding shows? The thought of getting married terrifies me. #SayYesToTheDress

Sass Jordan @JabberwockyIAm – 11 Jan 2013

i watch #SYTTD so my mother issues seem manageable

quēēn @CyprusRotary – 11 Jan 2013

Katie is so pretty & skinny, kind of makes me feel bad about myself #SYTTD

a * @allyyyx3 – 20 Sep 2013

#brideday on #tlc is my Friday night 🎉👉 #partyofone #loser

Lexi R. @LexiLove14 – 20 Sep 2013

I see all these moms on #SYTTD happy for their daughters and I wish my mom was excited about my wedding :(

Michelle Aberle @michelle_aberle – 21 Feb 2014

Because I can't find a man myself I live vicariously through Bride Day on TLC #SYTTD

2.4.3.8 *Reminder of single status (negative)*

This category is closely related to the previous theme, in that users often mention how the show makes them feel lonely or ashamed of their single status.

Trina @TrinaTreens – 8 Oct 2011

Let's be honest #tlc you put on #sayyestothedress on Friday nights because you know it's only the sad single girls that are home to watch it

Brett Womack @bmwsooner1 – 12 Jan 2013

Watching #sytttd is depressing. It's never going to happen

Susie Pargett @soosykoosy – 12 Jan 2013

If anyone wants to hang out I'm sitting in my cat shirt eating cinnamon toast crunch watching #sayyestothedress #needalife #needaboyf

m a r i e l ☐ @mariel_lopez11 – 11 Jan 2013

Does anyone else just cry and slit their wrist while watching #SayYesToTheDress

erin @erinfreising – 11 Jan 2013

Me watching Say Yes to the Dress: I hope you get a divorce #imbitternow #sytttd #singlefollyfe

As we have seen, viewers are using, making sense of, and responding to *SYTTD* in many different ways. Many audience members appear to treat the viewing experience as a comforting activity and/or a time for female bonding, while others just expressed general enjoyment of the content and narratives of the show. Though greatly outnumbered by the positive response, there does appear to be some push-back from viewers, especially in regard to the more extreme displays of consumption as well as in the shame expressed by many for even engaging with the show at all.

2.5 Conclusion

Through a focus on hyper-consumerism, the desire for pseudo-celebrity/royal status, and traditional gender norms, *SYTTD* attempts to regulate female identities and behaviors. In the text itself, this is primarily enacted through subtle shaming and the inclusion of narratives of pseudo-resistance; however, audience response to the show via Twitter indicates some actual resistance through viewer critiques of the hyper-consumption displayed on *SYTTD*.

By focusing firmly on the wedding rather than on the resulting marriage, *SYTTD* perpetuates the notion of the bride as the star (or, at times, even the princess). The minimal amount of screen time devoted to actual wedding means that the groom is often invisible on *SYTTD*, frequently only warranting a passing mention at the beginning of the episode. In fact, men in general are largely absent from the program, with the exception of Fashion Director Randy, who is implicitly coded as gay. The only other exception to this rule is when men are needed for their purchasing power. Because *SYTTD* is based on encouraging materialism and consumption, the connection between spending money and showing love is an essential component of the narrative. The implicit message of *SYTTD* is that the lack of a big white wedding is equivalent to a lack of love, so for brides, failing to conform to this ideology is basically asking for your marriage to fail. Viewers expressing a sense of enjoyment of the lavish displays of consumption, as well as a desire to engage in such extravagant spending, confirm the effectiveness of the consumerist ideology of the show. While some audience members did express their shock and distaste for the pricey wedding gowns featured on the show, most were not critical of the decision to purchase a *dress*; their objections were only aimed at the relative expense. Similarly, viewers also tended to support the show's positioning of the bride as the center of attention on "her" special day.

Though the bride is positioned as the star and the focus of the wedding, this does not actually equate to power or control. On *SYTTD*, lip service is simultaneously given to the bride's power *and* to the opinions of others, with the opinions of others often coming out on top. Women in larger society are groomed to be agreeable from an early age, and *SYTTD* faithfully models this sort of behavior by having brides defer to the opinions and desires of others. Furthermore, by positioning brides as not really knowing what they want anyway, *SYTTD* reinforces the notion of women as child-like and in need of both guidance and protection. The infantilization of women is further enacted through frequent displays of male financial power, authority, and figurative ownership of women.

The message being sent to women on *SYTTD* is that if you are agreeable and obedient you can be a princess for a day and have a fairytale wedding. By performing the role of bride correctly, which cannot be done without spending a considerable amount of money, you will be rewarded by both praise and the chance to have a successful marriage. However, as illustrated in the cases of the big girl, the nontraditional bride, and the rebel, not everyone fits into this model. Some individuals choose not to conform (as is the case with the rebel), while others simply cannot, whether due to a failure to achieve the idealized body image, a prior marriage, or advanced age—but, importantly, these brides are all ultimately contained and their transgressions are incorporated back into the dominant narratives of the show. With the possible exception of women who leave the store empty-handed, all brides—whether they pick a short dress or a red dress—are only displaying *pseudo*-resistance (by buying into the wedding gown shopping experience in the first place) and are therefore reinforcing the importance of this particular trope of feminine performance.

While most of the shaming that occurs on *SYTTD* is subtle and indirect, there is one area that represents the more overt punishment which will be discussed in greater detail in relation to *Bridezillas* in Chapter Three. When brides are mocked by their families and friends for their dress selections, *SYTTD* positions the Kleinfeld staff members as the brides' only allies. Viewer response to *SYTTD* via Twitter shows that this specific audience segment is overwhelmingly sympathetic to the brides featured on the show, especially when the bride is positioned as being "picked on" by her family or friends. Such overt hostility seems to interfere with the way that many viewers read *SYTTD* as comforting (as seen through the associations with sweatpants, down time, sickness, and comfort food) and as a female bonding experience for both women on the show and for viewers. The "feel-good" aura of the show is emphasized in the majority of the tweets analyzed, many of which detail viewers' love of the dresses, the narrative, the staff, and the guest stars. This positive vibe is oftentimes marred by the perceived meanness of members of the brides' entourages, who viewers believe should be there to provide support for the brides rather than turn on them.

Though there are some tweets that appear to join in on the criticisms leveled at brides on the show, addressing things such as physical attractiveness, behavior, and/or taste, they are far outnumbered by the positive tweets. In fact, the most commonly appearing criticism in the Twitter sample was not directed at the brides at all, but rather at the viewers themselves for watching the show. Many *SYTTD* audience members expressed a sense of shame or self-loathing, especially in reference to their own single status. This shame was often translated into a desire to be able to be a bride one day, but not necessarily a wife. In fact, many viewers emphatically stated their opposition to being married, while still wanting a *wedding*. The fact that the desire to go dress shopping and/or wear a wedding dress is expressed much more often

than the desire to get married speaks to the separation between having a wedding and entering into the institution of marriage discussed in Chapter One.

As exhibited in these examples, the overarching theme of viewer responses via Twitter indicates a tendency to identify with the brides featured on *SYTTD*. Audience members appear to align themselves with the bride, sympathizing with their struggles and vicariously enjoying the wedding dress shopping experience. As we shall see in Chapter Three, this stands in stark contrast to the social media response to *Bridezillas*, in which viewers appear to identify instead with those surrounding the brides, mirroring the program's critical tone and participating in the shaming and ridicule.

3 TAMING THE UNRULY BRIDES ON BRIDEZILLAS: CAN'T TALK TO HER, CAN'T KILL HER—HERE COMES BRIDEZILLA!

In one of the earliest mentions of the term “bridezillas” in the press, a *New York Times* article in May 2001 quoted Carley Roney, editor-in-chief of the popular wedding website *The Knot*, using the label to describe those extra-high maintenance brides who obsessed over every single minute detail related to their wedding day (Tung 2001, ST1). A WE tv press release from 2004 defined a bridezilla as “a poisonous green-faced wedding-dress-adorned expletive-spewing fist-waving bride out of control” (Traister 2004). Engstrom (2009) builds on this persona, noting that “the notion of the typical bridezilla consists of three elemental qualities: (1) the need for perfection and high standards and expectations, (2) the aura of the ‘princess,’ especially in terms of the physical appearance of the bride, and (3) the bridezilla as ‘bitch’” (8). She goes on to state that “the bridezilla allows women who endorse this version of the bridal identity to hold on to traditional expectations of gender while experiencing—at least temporarily—a status of power

and control” (Engstrom 2009, 6). However, she admits that this sense of liberation is ultimately an illusion: “In terms of any feminist message in *Bridezillas*, one is hard pressed to find it empowering, even as it purports to show women in control and in power” (Engstrom 2009, 10).¹⁰⁷

Similarly, Samek (2012) asserts that *Bridezillas* is really an argument for feminine containment in that it “uses the monstrous to teach audiences about the boundaries of gender propriety, power, and the threats associated with feminism” (13).¹⁰⁸ Calling *Bridezillas* an example of the “postfeminist-grotesque,” she traces its origins to the monstrous feminine of Gothic literature and horror films combined with contemporary ideas about consumption and proper gender roles (Samek 2012, 19; 14-15). Operating under the assumption that any woman could potentially become a bridezilla, Samek (2012) notes that “the bridezilla concept ties together cultural notions of feminine perfection, consumption, and competition in the shape of the monstrous” (11).

Bridezillas frequently shows women violating accepted standards of female behavior, in a way not unlike Kathleen Rowe’s (1995) conception of the “unruly woman.” According to Rowe, “the unruly woman violates the unspoken feminine sanction against ‘making a spectacle’ of herself,” which can be seen “whenever women, especially women’s bodies, are considered excessive—too fat, too mouthy, too old, too dirty, too pregnant, too sexual (or not sexual enough) for the norms of conventional gender representation” (Rowe 1995, 410). Many of these

¹⁰⁷ Engstrom (2009), however, appears to have a little trouble making up her mind on how one can view the brides themselves. At first she calls the bridezillas “unsympathetic,” but then immediately says that their behavior is “excusable” and that “one can sympathize” with them (11). By the end of the article, she seems to favor the former position: “Given the cumulative effect of unflattering backstage glimpses of the bridezillas featured in the sample of *Bridezillas* I examined, I see the program as an excellent advertisement *against* weddings” (Engstrom 2009, 11).

¹⁰⁸ For more on the “monstrous feminine,” see Creed’s (1993) work on gender in horror films.

“violations” can be seen on *Bridezillas*, and the unacceptable behaviors are often met with both explicit and implicit instances of shaming.

In an era in which bridal magazines have been classified as “wedding porn” due to their tendency to function as something “illicit, eminently compulsive, and pathologically fantastical” (Mead 2007, 17), reality television has in some ways elevated mediated wedding culture from the terrain of soft-core erotica to much more graphic displays of hard-core exposure. In her study of daytime talk shows, Grindstaff (2002) equates the display of “raw, real emotion” in television talk shows with the “money shot” in pornography, implying that this moment is essentially the payoff for producers and audiences alike (72). Similarly, Pozner claims that when it comes to reality TV, “humiliation is their money shot” (2010, 56). She explains that the “money shot in porn flicks usually involves male ejaculation. In reality TV dating shows, it comes when cameras zoom in on the tear-soaked face of some woman shattered by romantic rejection” (2010, 55). Pozner frames these emotional displays as cautionary tales for single women: “That’s just the kind of anxiety reality TV hopes to inspire in female viewers. After all, as advertisers have long understood, it’s far easier to sell cosmetics and clothing—not to mention Match.com and Bally Fitness memberships—to insecure women scared of being alone than it is to self-confident people who believe they’re beautiful, lovable, and capable of being happy just as they are” (2010, 56). *Bridezillas* usually conforms to this logic; the climax of an episode frequently involves some sort of emotional display by the bride-to-be.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Engstrom (2009) confirms this logic, stating: “The inclusion of backstage scenes where brides cry, scream, and complain humanizes these characters and yet creates a image of not only stressed-out brides but of women in general as being immature, out of control, and, most important, not men. Rather than showing the brides as strong and confident women, this program actually demeans them” (11). That said, in contrast to the prevailing view of the “reality” of reality television, former brides featured on the show have claimed that their behavior was genuine and that they were not egged on by producers (Italie 2013).

3.1 Sociohistorical/Institutional Context

Bridezillas began as a documentary miniseries called *Manhattan Brides*, which was produced by September Films in 2001. The series later aired as a one hour special on Fox in 2004 and was then picked up by WE tv later that year. When the show was sold to Fox the title was changed to “Bridezillas” (Traister 2004). The series was re-formatted as 45 minute episodes, run in an hour-long timeslot with commercials, which originally aired on Monday nights; however, it was later moved to Sunday nights at 9pm EST for seasons two through nine, before it was moved again in the tenth season to compete with TLC’s “Friday is Briededay” lineup. *Bridezillas* season two was the highest rated original series in WE tv history (“Programming Briefs” 2005). Based on the success of *Bridezillas*, WE created a block of wedding-themed programming in 2007 on Sunday nights marketed as “WE Go Bridal”; WE promoted the programming block with a dedicated website (wegobridal.com) and through partnerships with Comcast and *Modern Bride* (Moss and Reynolds 2007, 20-21). *Bridezillas* ended its run with the conclusion of its tenth and final season in 2013. A spinoff series, *Marriage Boot Camp: Bridezillas*, premiered in 2013 and is currently airing its fourth season on WE tv (the “Bridezillas” tag was dropped from the title after the first season).

Season one focuses exclusively on the Manhattan bride, and places great emphasis on the unique circumstances surrounding a big budget New York City wedding, where the majority of the weddings featured are in excess of \$100,000. The voice-over narration for the first season is done in a *National Geographic*-worthy male monotone, and the soundtrack is a strange blend of classical-meets-elevator music. The production budget is clearly limited as there are minimal graphics and sloppy cuts at times. The September 11th terrorist attacks are frequently mentioned

in this first season, which is unsurprising considering both the Manhattan location and the fact that filming occurred in the immediate aftermath of this traumatic event.

The framing begins immediately at the start of each episode with an explanation of the term “bridezilla,” which is described as “a bride who mutates from a perfectly normal human being to an obsessive control freak when it comes to planning her perfect day” (*Bridezillas* 2004, “Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy”). According to *Bridezillas*, women are driven to the breaking point by the desire for perfection and the pressure to achieve it. However, none of the brides in this season are actually all that outrageous; in fact, the majority of the behavior being shown is assertive (or picky, at worst) rather than unreasonable or irrational.

By season two, the vibe of the show has shifted dramatically from subtle digs to much more overt shaming and deliberate jabs. There is more explicit snarky-ness and direct mocking of the brides. Additionally, the droll male voice-over narration was replaced with a much more expressive female voice actor. By season three, all brides are introduced with a rhyming before-and-after monologue from the narrator. Bride Marsha is described as having been “once an even-tempered church-goer” and now “a mean-spirited menace, a petty, spiteful, anything but delightful, *bridezilla*!” (*Bridezillas* 2006, “Marsha & Yoshie”).

Additional graphics and special effects were also added to give the show a more tabloid feel, including flames and pitchforks on the scene transitions, prices of wedding-related goods and services, and a countdown to the wedding day. One especially noticeable addition was a new “Bridezilla” label, complete with tiny devil tail running off the end of the letter “a.” This graphic is dramatically stamped across the freeze-frame image of each bride who is introduced on the show, followed by a montage of clips that show the bride engaging in “bad” behavior. This new feature appears to be intended to reinforce or justify the use of the “bridezilla” label.

There are also newly added “FactZilla” segments, which display tangentially-related facts about wedding history presented before or after commercial breaks. The program was also updated to include the frequent reality show staple: formal confessional-style interviews with the brides and their family members and friends.

There is an obvious shift in socioeconomic status from the brides in season one to season two as well; weddings in the second season fall largely in the \$20,000 to \$40,000 range and are no longer limited to Manhattan brides. The brides from season two on are no longer presented as extremely sophisticated or upper class like those in season one; these new brides are much more outrageous in their demands and are frequently mocked for their looks, choices, and behavior. Furthermore, there is considerably more foul language in later seasons, and brides are constantly described by others as bitches/bitchy.

In addition, whereas brides in season one were allegedly unaware of the negative direction the production team was planning to take (as evidenced by the reactions of multiple brides after the series was edited and renamed *Bridezillas*), later-season brides are clearly aware of the framing of the show at this point (Traister 2004).¹¹⁰ In season two, Bride Gretchen acknowledges that “if ‘bridezilla’ means controlling, neurotic, just worried, that would classify me as a bridezilla,” and later admits that she wants “ultimate control” over everything having to do with the wedding (*Bridezillas* 2005, “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia”).

In fact, many brides seem to embrace this theme of control, as well as the bridezilla label; Bride Patricia proudly refers to herself as a “dictator” and claims, “I’ve been demanding since I had an opinion,” and “I’m a drama queen; I’m spoiled; I’m stubborn,” which prompts her fiancé,

¹¹⁰ Bride Julia Swinton-Williamson sued September Films and Fox for \$136 million in October 2003 (Traister 2004). In contrast, rather than file a lawsuit, Bride Cynthia Silver decided to turn her anger into a one-woman show called “Bridezilla Strikes Back,” which tells the story of how she and her fiancé were suckered into participating in what they thought was a documentary series (Traister 2004).

Nicholas, to admit that you “pretty much have to let her have her way; it’s not no negotiation” (*Bridezillas* 2005, “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia”). In season three, Bride Yoshie calls herself “controlling” and notes: “I don’t like to be called bridezilla, but I don’t think it’s that bad,” while Bride Marsha refers to herself as “intense,” “incredibly demanding,” “the boss,” “nit-picky,” and “a perfectionist” (*Bridezillas* 2006, “Marsha & Yoshie”).

In season five, Bride Dona says “I’m very controlling, things have to be a certain way, and if they’re not my way, I’m not happy. If I want something done, I can’t wait to have it done, it needs to be done right then and there, and a lot of people don’t like that about me,” adding “I’m gonna be very pissed off if things don’t go my way” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). In season seven, Bride Ivy states that “it is *very* important for things to go my way on my wedding day—very important; it’s my day, and I can have whatever I want” (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”). This is especially telling in that Ivy works as a wedding consultant, so theoretically she is familiar with weddings and the associated routines.

In yet another example, Bride Kym insists: “I will push and push and push and push until it goes my way. If that still doesn’t work, then my Italian side comes out, and I start yelling and screaming and cursing. I’m willing to do anything to make sure that this is perfect. This is going my way no matter what” (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”). Her fiancé High affirms this statement, agreeing that “Kym wants everything her way. It *is* all about her” (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”). Bride Suzanne even takes this a step further and places the blame on those surrounding the bride in this stressful time:

When I hear the word ‘bridezilla,’ I think of a normal everyday girl who plans a wedding, listens to other peoples’ opinions, starts going crazy, becomes slowly more and more neurotic, and then just turns out to be psycho in the end, until, until her wedding day. I blame other people. Never blame yourself. (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”)

While she is making this statement, her image is accompanied by a graphic superimposed on the side of the screen, which reads:

Bridezilla

1.) Psycho

2.) Ignores sound advice

3.) See #1 (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”).

Bridezillas never misses an opportunity to position the brides as unruly in one way or another. Bride Bernadette also accepts the bridezilla label, explaining: “I need things to be a certain way. I am a bridezilla and I’m at peace with it. It is my wedding, and if wanting what I want, when I want it, where I want it, makes me a bridezilla, that is fine. Everyone—everything—is causing me the most stress” (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”). In season eight, Bride Gabrielle even addresses other brides-to-be directly when she says, following her wedding, “Bridezillas of the world, just know: it’s your day—whatever you want, get it” (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”).

The brides are not the only ones to embrace the bridezilla label; friends and family members use the term freely in seasons two through ten. Bride Gretchen’s uncle refers to her as “bridezilla personified” in a direct-to-camera address, and later, when Bride Patricia’s mother calls her a bridezilla to her face, it prompts Patricia to retaliate by jokingly calling her mother “momzilla” (*Bridezillas* 2005, “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia”). Bride Dona’s own fiancé, Carlo, calls her a bridezilla almost immediately after their introduction (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). In season three, Bride Marsha’s fiancé Archie describes her as “very aggressive” and “very, very outspoken,” which she confirms by saying “I basically get my way” (*Bridezillas* 2006, “Marsha & Yoshie”). In season seven, groom-to-be Armann says of his fiancé Shandra: “she’s a different person ever since these weddin’ plans have started, and I saw why everybody tells you ‘don’t get married’—I guess a lot of people have bridezillas” (*Bridezillas*

2010, “Shandra & Ivy”). Shandra confirms this statement, acknowledging: “when I hear the term bridezilla, it’s not a negative thing to me. As women, you need to know what you want, you need to enforce what you want—that’s the only way you’re gonna get what you need outta life” (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”). Armann concludes that “when Shandra flips out, I feel very bad for the people, but it doesn’t feel as bad as when she does it to me” (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”).

The network’s promotional efforts further supported the monstrous and threatening image of the bridezilla. WE promoted season two of *Bridezillas* by having twenty brides in wedding dresses dig through a giant wedding cake in Times Square searching for boxes containing raffle tickets; the winner received a \$50,000 prize (Haugsted 2005, 4). By season four, the prize had been lowered to \$25,000 and the event had become a cake eating contest, where brides-to-be ate as many mini-cakes as they could in two minutes, while wearing their wedding dresses (Tan 2007, 14). In order to generate attention for the season three premiere, WE tv attempted to build the *Bridezillas* brand through a broadband marketing campaign that featured a blog created by fictitious bride “Dillon,” along with animated web shorts detailing her struggles throughout the wedding planning process (Clark 2006, 26). Another marketing strategy from season three, “*Bridezillas* and the Bundle,” grew from a partnership of Women’s Entertainment, Cox Communications Inc., Cablevision Systems Corp., and Charter Communications Inc., in which the network used the actress from their *Bridezillas* promos to promote the other companies’ cable products (Haugsted 2006, 38). WE also promoted season four with a massive poster campaign in New York’s Grand Central Terminal, and even began product integration for new the program’s new sponsor, diet supplement brand NV (Reynolds 2007, 26).¹¹¹

¹¹¹ In season seven, WE claimed to have revamped the series by making the brides more relatable and sympathetic characters (Reynolds 2010, 8); however, this is not readily apparent when viewing later episodes.

The theme song for the show is very explicit in its positioning of the bridezillas as monstrous characters as well. The lyrics of the song are especially telling:

Got a gruesome tale to tell
 'Bout my best friend I thought I knew her well
 A body snatcher came and stole her body and it took control
 Now her wedding's putting us through hell.
 This perfect peaceful night in June
 Has got her howling at the moon...
 Look out!
 She's breathing fire.
 Bridezilla!
 Nothing'll satisfy her.
 Can't talk to her, can't kill her
 Here comes Bridezilla!
 Can't talk to her, can't kill her
 Here comes Bridezilla!
 Look out!

Because the show works so hard to construct the bridezilla persona, *Bridezillas* represents a much more explicit example of the ways that wedding themed reality television programming can work to shame women. In the following sections, major themes of the program are discussed in relation to the portrayals of gender, race, and class, followed by a discussion of audience reception of *Bridezillas* via social media.

3.2 Changing Portrayals of Gender, Race, and Class

After viewing the series, one episode per season was randomly selected for close textual analysis. Since the format of the program stays relatively consistent from the second season on, focusing on only one episode per season provides a reasonably representative cross-section of the show.¹¹²

¹¹² Season One, Episode Three – “Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy” (2004)
 Season Two, Episode Four – “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia” (2005)
 Season Three, Episode Two – “Marsha & Yoshie” (2006)
 Season Four, Episode Twelve – “Melisha & Suzanne” (2007)
 Season Five, Episode Seventeen – “Vanessa & Dona” (2008)
 Season Six, Episode Five – “Bernadette & Angela” (2009)

3.2.1 Socioeconomic Status

While season one emphasized the elegance and sophistication of the Manhattan brides, later seasons seem to go out of their way to point out just how unsophisticated and trashy brides can be.¹¹³ *Bridezillas* focuses on many perceived markers of a lower-class status, including a lack of taste, bodily excess in the form of explicit sexuality or displays of physical violence, and over-the-top displays of wealth (Bourdieu 1984; Williams 1991). Engstrom (2009), however, sees this shift toward greater representation across social classes as somewhat equalizing: “The bridezilla persona also seems to transcend class and financial status; any woman can be a bride and anyone can have a big wedding. In this sense, one can view the bridezilla as empowering, even egalitarian” (10). In the introduction to one episode in season five, the voice-over narration refers to Bride Vanessa as “country bumpkin bride-to-be,” along with “her corn-fed fiancé, Johnny” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). This is accompanied by a bluegrass-style instrumental piece in the background to signify to the viewer just how far we have come from the wealthy and stylish New York City brides of season one. Bride Adrianne in season ten is mocked for using duct-tape to construct CD cases for her wedding favors (the wedding coordinator says “we could do these in camouflage and hope that they would disappear”) (*Bridezillas* 2013, “Angela & Adrianne”). Bride Rochelle exemplifies this disconnect between the bridal role and extensive wealth and taste in later seasons, remarking: “The one thing I didn’t

Season Seven, Episode Two – “Shandra & Ivy” (2010)

Season Eight, Episode Three – “Gabrielle & Kym” (2011)

Season Nine, Episode Five – “Rochelle & Ashanti” (2012)

Season Ten, Episode Twenty – “Angela & Adrianne” (2013)

¹¹³ The classist tone of later seasons also conforms to Rowe’s (1995) conception of the unruly woman; in her analysis of comedian Roseanne as an unruly woman, Rowe states: “Rather than accepting the barrage of ads that tell women they can never be young, thin or beautiful enough and that their houses—an extension of their bodies—can never be immaculate enough, she rejects the ‘pollution taboos’ that foster silence, shame and self-hatred in women by urging them to keep their genitals, like their kitchen appliances, deodorized, antisepticised and ‘April fresh’. Instead she reveals the social causes of female fatness, irritability and messiness in the strains of working class family life, where junk food late at night may be a sensible choice for comfort after a day punching out plastic forks on an assembly line” (414-415).

expect to have on my wedding day would have to be the budget—Cinderella didn't have a budget, so why should I?" (*Bridezillas* 2012, "Rochelle & Ashanti").

Brides are often frequently criticized for their supposed lack of taste. Both Bride Kym's taste and the socioeconomic status of her fiancé High are mocked when the voice-over narration introduces High, who works as a manager at a local movie theater, as "the man of her *lofty* dreams" (the implications of this statement are reinforced when it is noted that they met in a pool hall, and when Kym later says that she wants her wedding to be "classic and romantic," only to add "the more I look like a hooker the better") (*Bridezillas* 2011, "Gabrielle & Kym"). Kym's lower socioeconomic status is further emphasized when she is shown explaining that "money has been my biggest obstacle in this wedding" (*Bridezillas* 2011, "Gabrielle & Kym"). This episode in particular is rife with classist digs, including references to Kym's makeup artist being "budget friendly, just out of beauty school" and her demand that High cut his hair in order to look more professional because, in her words, "professionals do not have long hair" (*Bridezillas* 2011, "Gabrielle & Kym"). The hair-cutting scene is even more poignant from a class perspective because High acknowledges that his reluctance to cut his hair is due in part to the fact that his mother used to cut his hair when he was younger and he was teased by other kids as a result.

Sometimes brides are ridiculed for supposedly lacking in intelligence as well. In season seven, Bride Ivy is mocked via the voice-over narration for not knowing the names of the famous Italian landmarks she wants to visit on her honeymoon, including the "sixteenth chapel" and the "leaning tower of pizza" (*Bridezillas* 2010, "Shandra & Ivy").

A lack of respect for tradition (and/or the decision not to conform to it) is another common target on *Bridezillas*. The voice-over narration in season three criticizes Bride Yoshi's choice of a pink dress and her decision to take photos with the groom before the ceremony as

bizarre because these departures are so “untraditional” (*Bridezillas* 2006, “Marsha & Yoshie”). Brides are also frequently criticized for being non-traditional in other ways as well; Bride Bernadette’s age (41-years-old) is emphasized because she is portrayed as being unusually old for a first time bride, and her fiancé’s “experience,” due to being married twice before, is also marked as significant (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”).

Another class marker is the discussion of sex and sexuality that appears in later seasons of *Bridezillas*. Bride Angela literally says “screw tradition” and decides to stay in the same hotel room with her fiancé the night before their wedding, openly violating the mythical construct of the virginal bride (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”). In season six, Bride Bernadette’s fiancé Eric lists Bernadette’s best qualities as “her butt and her ta-ta’s and her mind”; the fact that he lists them in this order shows where his priorities lie (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”). In a similar display in season nine, Bride Rochelle proudly claims: “I believe Nathan’s the one because he doesn’t just look at me on the outside for what I look like, he kinda just accounts for what’s on the inside as well,” a statement which is followed by Nathan’s description of Rochelle: “She’s hot, she’s like a tortilla fresh off the lil’ oven—she’s hot!” (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”).

Rochelle is also shown talking directly to the camera about how frequently they have sex, which is apparently very frequently, and later one scene is edited to make it appear as if Rochelle and Nathan resolve a disagreement not by talking but by having impromptu shower sex upstairs in her parents’ house, while both sets of parents are waiting downstairs (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”). Voice-over narration broadly hints at such an occurrence (“since talking things out appears to be off the table, Rochelle knows exactly how to get back in Nathan’s good graces”) as Rochelle follows Nathan into the bathroom, smiling over her shoulder at the camera

and closing the door behind her (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”). Nathan can then be heard saying “your whole family is down there,” followed by moaning sounds coming from behind the closed door; after a while, we hear them exchange an “I love you” and see Rochelle emerge from the bathroom, saying “what’s up” to the camera and sheepishly laughing (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”). It is also later implied that they have sex in the limo after the wedding, but not until after first sharing that they each need to “poop” (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”). Similarly, in season eight Bride Gabrielle gets drunk at her bachelorette party and it is implied by the voice-over narration that she engages in illicit activities with the stripper (named “Panther”) and “gives him a private glimpse of her own wild kingdom” (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”).

One final area in which class distinctions are made is in regard to physical violence. Threats of violence abound, as in season nine when Bride Rochelle tells her makeup artist “If you don’t get me there, I will karate chop you,” or, in the same episode, when Bride Ashanti tells one of her attendants “I’m gonna choke you with a stocking cap” (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”). However, these threats are mild in comparison to actual instances of contact. Brides often come to blows on *Bridezillas* for one reason or another; in season seven, Bride Ivy slaps fiancé Kenneth for supposedly looking at another girl while they are out at a club for their joint bachelor/bachelorette party and shrilly screams “*Don’t* look at her!” (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”). Bride Shandra expresses her anger at her sister Ceara for not helping more at her bachelorette party by shoving cake in her face (a gesture which her sister immediately reciprocates), and later, when Ceara has the nerve to complain that she is having to do everything because the other bridesmaids are not helping out more, Shandra tries to shove her out of a

moving car, which prompts Ceara to proclaim, “She is gone. It’s over Zilla, they need to have another name, like ‘psycho.’ She’s really psycho” (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”).

In terms of race and ethnicity, the episodes included in the current sample feature a relatively surprising amount of diversity. *Bridezillas* appears to be very inclusive as far as racial representation is concerned; episodes analyzed for this study feature couples representing a variety of racial categories/ethnicities, including: Caucasian, African American, Asian, Latino/a, and Native American. However, there was little variation in terms of age and sexual orientation; all episodes in the study sample featured relatively young couples (no one over age fifty) and all were presented as heterosexual.¹¹⁴

3.2.2 *The Value of Female Labor*

The narratives featured on *Bridezillas* say a lot about the value of female labor, especially in relation to the unpaid work a bride does to plan her wedding. Historically, women’s work (including domestic labor, childcare, and emotional labor) has always been undervalued (Hochschild 1989; McClain 2013; Tuchman 1978), and wedding planning activities are no exception.¹¹⁵ As the voice-over narration in season one reminds us, “planning a wedding is still mostly women’s work” (*Bridezillas* 2004, “Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy”). This point is made over and over again, as in season four when Bride Suzanne’s fiancé Justin is shown finishing the seating chart and place cards all by himself (a point which is emphasized by both the narrator and Justin), to which Suzanne replies “he has absolutely no right to complain” because she has “done absolutely everything for the wedding [herself], the past year and a half” while working and finishing law school (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”). Similarly, when fiancé

¹¹⁴However, *Bridezillas* has featured LGBTQ couples; the series referred to its first gay bridezilla as a “gayzilla.”

¹¹⁵ The value of female labor is a central theme in Chapter Three as well, particularly in relation to the work performed by Kim Kardashian to maintain her celebrity status.

Brandon is surprised at how much they have spent on the wedding, Bride Angela points out that if he were actually helping to plan it he would know how much it costs (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”).

The extent of the work required is also emphasized early on. In season one, Bride Miho’s makeup artist remarks that “planning a wedding is like having another part-time job,” to which Bride Miho responds: “Exactly. I’m lucky ‘cause I don’t work right now—I don’t have a work permit—but I really wonder how you do if you’re working. It’s like another job,” then she adds “well, if you have a wedding planner, you know, that helps, totally” (*Bridezillas* 2004, “Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy”).

Bride Amy’s fiancé Tim says Amy has done most of the wedding planning and preparations and that “the less I get involved, the better off I am,” later adding “in the beginning, I put my two cents in, and my two cents became half a penny, so I thought ‘much better to just say nothing at all than to be shot down every move,’ and it worked out much better that way; they’re much happier, and I was a heck of a lot happier” (*Bridezillas* 2004, “Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy”). Amy’s mother confirms this logic when she states that grooms are not part of the wedding planning process and that it is actually exclusively the purview of the bride and the bride’s family (*Bridezillas* 2004, “Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy”). Bride Yoshie’s fiancé John came to a similar realization: “I’ve tried to stay out of her way as much as possible, and maybe too much so, where I don’t give input where she’s asking for it, but I feel this is, again, her dream, let her plan it the way she wants to” (*Bridezillas* 2006, “Marsha & Yoshie”).

Even big budget brides are shown putting in an incredible amount of work in preparation for their wedding; Bride Yoshie crochets her own elaborate veil to go with her \$3600 dress for her \$100,000 wedding (*Bridezillas* 2006, “Marsha & Yoshie”). Bride Dona enlists her mother

and friend to help her make the centerpieces for her wedding, but is unhappy with the quality of their work, exclaiming in exasperation: “it has to be perfect!” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). Her mother immediately responds with “just like you,” and says later “Dona always micromanages; it has to be her way or no way” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). Some brides are woefully unprepared for the demands of the wedding planning process, and often times are portrayed as shamefully ignorant of the traditional requirements. Bride Angela attempts to run her own wedding rehearsal without the aid of a professional wedding coordinator, but realizes that she actually has no idea in what order the ceremony should occur, or when people should walk in, etc. (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”).

In contrast, some brides are content to leave all of the preparations entirely up to family members, oftentimes not even acknowledging the work that others have put in on their behalf. In season nine, Bride Rochelle is portrayed as completely ungrateful by her soon-to-be sister-in-law, who says: “If she appreciates this, there’s no way of knowing, because she doesn’t say thank you. It’s really rude, because we don’t have to be doing this right now. Without us, this would not be possible. And she’ll realize that—someday” (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”). Rochelle’s mother adds, “I don’t think Rochelle appreciates it enough to say ‘thank you,’ but that’s Rochelle” (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”). In fact, not only is Rochelle positioned as ungrateful, she is shown being openly critical of their efforts, at one point acknowledging that she was pleasantly surprised by the flower arrangements because she had expected them to be “way uglier” (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”). She also says she finds her mother “annoying” and “a huge headache,” actually complaining about the things her mother has done to plan the wedding because, in her words: “I haven’t been able to plan the

wedding of *my* dreams, like detail on detail. My mom is. She planned most of it, and did the decorations” (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”).

3.2.3 *Bridezillas as Unruly Women*

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, *Bridezillas* features many examples of female unruliness in both body and speech (Rowe 1995). *Bridezillas* attempts to shame and contain these unruly women by framing the narratives in such a way as to discourage any attempts to view the brides as empowered figures of resistance. Brides’ weight and general physical appearance are frequently framed as unacceptable, both to them and to others. In season one, Bride Brooke’s mother asks her: “what would you say is the least enjoyable part of doing a wedding?” to which Brooke immediately responds: “Ha. Losing weight. Hahaha. The diet is the least enjoyable” (*Bridezillas* 2004, “Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy”). Bride Suzanne also feels the pressure to lose weight to fit into her wedding dress, especially since she ordered it “two sizes too small as an incentive for weight loss;” she panics when she struggles to get into it three days before the wedding, but when she finally manages to get it zipped up with the help of her mother, she exclaims, “I’m so proud of myself—I’m so damn skinny!” (to which her mom echoes, “So am I”) (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”).

Other brides also feel the pressure to conform to a certain body image; Bride Gretchen says jokingly while being laced into her wedding dress, “it needs to be a little tighter—breathing is *so* over-rated” (*Bridezillas* 2005, “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia”). Similarly, Bride Yoshie is shown barely able to walk (let alone sit) in her form-fitting gown, but cheerfully asserts that it is “comfortable” and even goes so far as to say that “it’s easy to walk too” (*Bridezillas* 2006, “Marsha & Yoshie”).

In season four, the voice-over narration seems to take great pleasure in pointing out that Bride “Suzanne is so insecure about appearing without makeup that she doesn’t even enjoy her own facial” (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”). Suzanne admits that “it felt good when my eyes were closed, but then when I look at myself, I know I’ll look much better after I put makeup on,” and has fiancé Justin rush her home immediately afterward so she can reapply her makeup (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”). She covers her face for the majority of the car ride and tries to avoid the camera, despite her fiancé’s repeated assurances that she looks “fine” (she shoots back: “you only say that ‘cause you love me”) (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”).

However, over time the shaming seems to shift from self-discipline and internal pressures expressed by the brides themselves to a more overt and hostile shaming of the brides by the program itself. In season eight, a scene transition following Bride Kym’s trip to the salon is accompanied by the line “while Kym plans to make her *fat* head even bigger...” (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”). In a separate instance, it is later revealed that Kym has not washed or brushed her hair in at least two days, so her maid of honor Michele takes it upon herself to do it for her, with the help of another one of Kym’s bridesmaids.

Sometimes censure comes in the form of random harassment from the bride’s family. Bride Gretchen’s father is constantly “shushing” her for no apparent reason, which both he and the voice-over narration seem to present as a huge hilarious joke. However, Gretchen is clearly annoyed by it and at one point actually hits him with her ribbon-bouquet while walking down the aisle at her rehearsal (*Bridezillas* 2005, “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia”). Her father ultimately brings her flowers later that evening as a sort of apology, but then tells the camera crew in an aside that he will continue with his cruel behavior tomorrow. Even the voice-over narration

acknowledges that he has “spent all day torturing his daughter with his relentless teasing,” and his wife (Gretchen’s step-mother) claims that he wants to push Gretchen to the breaking point and only “once she breaks down” will he be happy (*Bridezillas* 2005, “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia”).

Bride Rochelle’s mother expresses concern for her daughter’s soon-to-be husband, saying: “We’ll see how Nathan survives. I guess, [since] he’s in the military, he’s battled much worse, I guess” (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”). By implying here that being married to her daughter can be compared to a combat scenario, Rochelle’s mother is effectively confirming the show’s positioning of her daughter as the monstrous and threatening bridezilla figure in need of containment.

Bride Ivy experiences conflict with a parent as well; upon learning that her mother has bought a white dress to wear to the wedding, Ivy immediately starts screaming at her, telling her that she is “the meanest mom ever” and ending with the following screeching command: “YOU’RE NOT WEARING THAT!” (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”). In response, Ivy’s mother throws a tantrum of her own, cursing and yelling that she is no longer coming to the wedding; she continues to shout and throw things all the way into the garage, where a now contrite Ivy catches up to her and attempts to talk to her, but not before a quick aside, in which Ivy states “I told you she’s crazy” (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”). Ivy and her mother both manage to calm down enough to apologize on the count of three, in an impressive joint display of extreme maturity, and then carry on as if nothing out of the ordinary has happened (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”).

However, the hostility is not limited to the bride’s family; the groom’s family is a frequent source of conflict as well. Bride Patricia discloses that she and her fiancé are “having

big in-law trouble” because her future mother-in-law told her “that she is not too happy about standin’ there next to her son and watchin’ him commit murder by marrying me” (*Bridezillas* 2005, “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia”). However, this pales in comparison to the criticism Bride Vanessa faces from her fiancé’s family, who love to point out—and do so on more than one occasion—how Johnny actually went home with Vanessa’s *best friend* the first night they all met, calling Vanessa his “sloppy-second” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). Furthermore, they insist that Johnny actually just “got stuck with her because he knocked her up” (Johnny and Vanessa now have a two-year-old daughter) (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”).

Later, Johnny’s family offers a continuous string of insults about Vanessa and Johnny’s relationship: his stepmother Raz says “his junk is in her handbag and he can’t get it back”; his brother says he has decided not to go to the wedding because “he’s not acting like my brother anymore, he’s acting like a puppet” and “maybe she’s drugging him”; later, on hearing that they have decided to have security at the wedding, Johnny’s brother jokes “maybe they’re having security so Johnny’s not a flight risk” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). However, the prize would have to go to Johnny’s sister, who finishes strong, albeit a little awkwardly, with this last parting shot: “She’s making a fool out of herself. She’s gonna feel like an even bigger idiot when her daughter sees this when her daughter grows up and her daughter sees what an idiot she is” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). However, the hostility is nowhere near one-sided; Vanessa asserts that her “biggest fear is having [Johnny’s stepmother] Raz come to the wedding,” followed by: “I hate her and I hope she dies” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”).

In season ten, Bride Adrienne is constantly shown engaging in some verbal and/or physical conflict with her fiancé’s brother and best man, Juwan. Apparently Juwan does not care for Adrienne and did not initially want to be a part of the wedding; Adrienne knows this and

makes her feelings on the matter perfectly clear: “he can kiss my ass” (*Bridezillas* 2013, “Angela & Adrienne”). Adrienne repeatedly gets upset with fiancé Waylon for not sticking up for her in her battles with Juwan, but Waylon wants no part of their bickering, calling them “two bulls” (*Bridezillas* 2013, “Angela & Adrienne”). In one of their many altercations, Angela and Juwan get into a fight over his and Waylon’s failure to help Angela out with the wedding preparations; in a bizarre twist, the fight escalates to the point that they each end up spraying each other with cans of spray cheese (*Bridezillas* 2013, “Angela & Adrienne”).

In the same episode, Bride Angela encounters similar issues with fiancé Eric’s family and his sister, in particular. After arriving at her own birthday dinner over an hour late, Angela proceeds to complain about the food being cold and the fact that everyone started eating without her. Upon receiving a birthday card from Eric’s siblings, she expresses her surprise and disappointment that there was no money included and tosses it aside in derision. At this point, Eric’s brother tells her to have some cake and smashes a piece in her face, causing Eric to take her outside for a “timeout” before she has a chance to retaliate. The hostility continues at her bachelorette party, which Eric and his friends crash against her wishes. When they refuse to leave, Angela turns on Eric’s sister for not backing her up, prompting a shouting match to break out between them. Eric’s sister is unsympathetic, saying: “Angela is just being too self-centered. She wants all the attention on her, and I feel like if one person looks away, all of a sudden, she gets insecure. I just think she’s being a selfish brat” (*Bridezillas* 2013, “Angela & Adrienne”). When Eric comes over to break up the fight, Angela demands that he choose between them (her and his sister), prompting Eric to state directly to the camera that Angela is “being really insane and unacceptable right now” (*Bridezillas* 2013, “Angela & Adrienne”). Later, Eric’s sister even goes so far as to stand up and object during their wedding ceremony, but the couple chooses to

get married anyway. This last example is indicative of an even more pronounced theme in the conflicts occurring on *Bridezillas*—hostility that occurs as a result of competition among women.

3.2.4 *Competition among Women*

As discussed in Chapter One, competition among women is a common component of post-feminist ideologies (Douglas 2010; Kipnis 2006). On *Bridezillas*, women are frequently portrayed as being in conflict with other women. For instance, in season one, Bride Brooke has been accused of “stealing” another bride’s wedding by booking all of the hotel rooms at the location that the other bride was also using the next day (*Bridezillas* 2004, “Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy”). One of the wedding planners from season one also addresses this female competition when she insists that New York City brides are not necessarily “more demanding” than other brides, but that the “competition is thick on whose wedding is better than whose” (*Bridezillas* 2004, “Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy”).

Sometimes the female competition originates closer to home, as in season seven when Bride Shandra is faced with sister Ceara’s attempts to “steal the spotlight” (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”). Shandra is extremely upset when her mother has to leave her (Shandra’s) dress fitting to go pick up her sister, who has apparently gotten a flat tire en route, and fretfully asks Ceara on the phone: “Do you understand that it’s *my day*?” (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”). In a confessional-style segment, Shandra sarcastically explains: “She’s confused about the wedding—she thinks it’s *her* wedding. She doesn’t get the picture that it’s *my* wedding,” later complaining that her mom has always favored Ceara and that she should at least be able to give her this time (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”). When she finally arrives at the dress fitting, Ceara makes no attempt to apologize or hide her lack of remorse, taunting Shandra “I told you

honey, you might be the bride, but I am the diva, so you better make sure you out do me, because I will—I'm gonna make sure I do shine" (*Bridezillas* 2010, "Shandra & Ivy").

In season three, Bride Marsha admits that her friends do not really know her fiancé because she does not trust them (and, by extension, him) out of fear that they may try to steal him or break them up (*Bridezillas* 2006, "Marsha & Yoshie"). This sort of insecurity on the part of the bride appears again in season four, when Bride Suzanne tells the technician giving her fiancé a facial: "watch where you put those hands" (*Bridezillas* 2007, "Melisha & Suzanne"). Bride Suzanne actually met her fiancé in high school while he was dating her best friend, but, in the words of the voice-over narration, "that didn't stop this determined diva from landing her man" (*Bridezillas* 2007, "Melisha & Suzanne").

Furthermore, Bride Marsha says that all her attendants are replaceable, thereby emphasizing the lack of strong female bonds in her life (*Bridezillas* 2006, "Marsha & Yoshie"). In a similar vein, Bride Yoshie does not even have any attendants because she does not think she needs them (*Bridezillas* 2006, "Marsha & Yoshie"). In season six, Bride Bernadette plays fast and loose with her bridesmaids as well; when many of the ladies are late to her bridal luncheon, Bernadette blames her maid of honor for not taking charge: "you're the maid of honor—you should have these bitches in check" (*Bridezillas* 2009, "Bernadette & Angela"). At this point, she has already kicked out one bridesmaid for wanting to bring a plus-one to the wedding; she goes from mad to tearful when she is relaying this exchange to the other bridesmaids, saying "I'm already a bitch without the wedding—why would you wanna fuck with me? ...Love ain't got shit to do with this—I will always be who I am" (*Bridezillas* 2009, "Bernadette & Angela").

Problems with bridesmaids is a recurring theme in *Bridezillas*, a scenario which often results in a revolving door of people being kicked out or let back in to the wedding party. In

season seven, Bride Shandra deigns to allow one friend back into her wedding party after the woman in question is the only one to show up to help her with the wedding favors, and in turn boots out another friend who made the mistake of showing up to her bachelorette party four hours late. She even gives the newly forgiven friend the other woman's bridesmaid dress (*Bridezillas* 2010, "Shandra & Ivy"). This theme continues in season nine when Bride Ashanti forces her bridesmaids to go lingerie shopping with her and then gets mad when they do not like her selections. The voice-over narration offers the following warning: "The first rule of bridezillas: always agree with the bridezilla. The second rule of bridezillas: always agree with the bridezilla" (*Bridezillas* 2012, "Rochelle & Ashanti"). After she has had enough of their criticism and laughter, Ashanti "fires" two of the three (saying "you're fired, bitch"), which leads one of the women to say: "She doesn't need lingerie; what she needs is a straitjacket" (*Bridezillas* 2012, "Rochelle & Ashanti").

One incredibly demanding bride in season nine, Bride Ashanti, asks her bridesmaids to "help" her throw a surprise birthday party for her fiancé; their list of tasks, delivered in the form of a contract, includes cooking and serving the food to her fifty guests. When asked why they are being assigned these tasks, Ashanti impatiently explains: "I went over budget, so now you guys are the caterers," followed by "that's why I'm having you guys so I don't have to pay for this shit" (*Bridezillas* 2012, "Rochelle & Ashanti"). When her demands are met with further resistance, Ashanti angrily silences all protests with "it's a special day, it's about me, so serve, and cook, and shut up" (*Bridezillas* 2012, "Rochelle & Ashanti"). Apparently Ashanti's "special day" gives her free reign to use and abuse her attendants for whatever purposes she sees fit from the date of their appointment through the conclusion of her wedding.

In season ten, Bride Angela attempts to force her bridesmaids to conform to her ideal body image by requiring them to lose weight to fit into the dresses she has ordered for them. One of the girls actually passes out from hunger (due to “juicing for the past thirty days”), and Angela tosses a glass of water in her face in an alleged attempt to revive her, angering her and the rest of the bridesmaids (*Bridezillas* 2013, “Angela & Adrienne”). Angela is unapologetic (“I needed to wake her ass up; she’ll get over it”) and continues with her relentless assault: “Do whatever you need to do—exercise, eat, make yourself throw up, I don’t give a shit. Get it right girls, that’s all I ask—is that hard?!” (*Bridezillas* 2013, “Angela & Adrienne”).

One particularly nasty exchange occurs between Bride Gabrielle and her bridesmaid Candace in season eight. Gabrielle is constantly finding fault with Candace’s every move; in Gabrielle’s eyes, Candace can do nothing right. Gabrielle criticizes Candace’s hairstyle (saying she looks “like she just got finished [giving someone a blow job]”), her makeup (wearing blue eye shadow with a blue dress is apparently a major “faux faux” in Gabrielle’s eyes), and even her exposed tattoos, commanding her other bridesmaids to “fix it” (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”). She calls Candace a “bitch” and tells her that she is “not walking” (meaning she is no longer in the wedding), before finally storming off and threatening, “If I see her I’m gonna punch her in her throat” (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”). She spends the rest of the scene complaining to anyone who will listen, while still in earshot of Candace, “You’d think Candace is getting married. People are doing your hair, covering up your tattoos—because she got these tramp stamps all over her. You should just peel her skin off. I hope you appreciate these girls, Candace” (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”). Finally, one of Gabrielle’s family members can take no more, and, in an attempt to put an end to this cruel tirade, interrupts: “It’s not fair—she’s not your whipping girl” (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”).

In rare instances, brides are even shown fighting with their wedding planners. Bride Gabrielle, featured in season eight, is constantly at odds with her wedding coordinator Curlinda. Gabrielle is never on time for their meetings and Curlinda is not willing to put up with such behavior, at one point telling Gabrielle: “Do you not understand that your lack of planning is not my emergency?” (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”). During one of their many arguments, things get so heated that Curlinda, fed up with Gabrielle’s outrageous behavior, calls her “Heffa” and threatens: “I’m gonna black both your eyes,” which is juxtaposed with Gabrielle’s confessional-style address to the camera, in which she alleges “she’s bipolar, I know she is” (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”). Curlinda’s decision to take a stand is just one example of the ways that people engage in some push-back against the “unruly” bridezillas.

3.2.5 *Bridezillas in Pursuit of Perfection*

As we have seen, brides are told over and over by society that their wedding must be perfect and that it should be the best day of their life (Bouchier 1997; Engstrom 2012; Jellison 2008; Mead 2007; Samek 2012); however, women who work relentlessly to achieve this impossible standard are then shamed for their excessive efforts. In season one, the narrator subtly mocks Bride Julia because “she’s dreamed about her wedding day since she was seven” (*Bridezillas* 2004, “Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy”).

Later in the same episode, Bride Amy emphasizes the importance placed on the wedding by noting that it is a “part of history” and that “everyone, when they get married, you know, you just think of having the wedding and [how] it’s a very big part of our society” (*Bridezillas* 2004, “Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy”). This pressure is evident in Bride Brooke’s displeasure at seeing the color of the fondant ribbons wrapped around her wedding cake when it was delivered and her order to have the wedding planner remove them before displaying the cake (*Bridezillas* 2004,

“Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy”). In season three, this importance is yet again emphasized by the voice-over narration, which notes that “Michael knows that, for Yoshie, even perfection can be improved upon” (*Bridezillas* 2006, “Marsha & Yoshie”). Even the voice-over narration stresses the ultimate importance of the big day, saying “with photographers capturing her every move, *Yoshie is the star*; and, in just a couple of hours, she’ll *also* be a bride” (*Bridezillas* 2006, “Marsha & Yoshie”).

This desire for perfection is often shown taken to extremes; Bride Bernadette purchases *five* different dresses for her wedding, with plans to change into all five at some point throughout the day (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”). Her dress shopping experience is fraught with drama as well; after trying on multiple dresses with no success and repeatedly whining about wanting a hot dog, Bernadette ends up sinking to the floor in the dressing room, complaining of being tired. She claims she is so exhausted and famished that she can no longer stand, but, after much encouragement and some physical assistance from her bridesmaids, Bernadette finally returns to her feet and manages to finish picking out the last three dresses that she “needs” (*and* gets the coveted hot dog when she leaves the bridal salon) (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”). The implications of this scene are interesting, in that it seems to juxtapose her inability to control her unruly body (i.e., her appetite) with her struggle to find and fit into a dress.

The stress caused by this impossible pressure is evident in the portrayal of many brides; Bride Antonella, who works as a hairstylist, laments that “everyday clumps of hair fall out—*clumps*—and it’s just from the stress,” while Bride Patricia sheepishly admits to being so stressed by her wedding preparations that she has started smoking again (*Bridezillas* 2005, “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia”). Bride Angela sums up the feelings of many brides regarding

this stressful time when she says “we just wanna get it over with” (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”). Other brides take their desire for perfection into surprising and unique directions; in an interesting twist for the wedding-themed reality television genre, Bride Suzanne is fixated on her career trajectory as an attorney in addition to her wedding; she even goes so far as to tell her fiancé that if she does not pass the New York State bar exam they are not getting married (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”).

3.2.6 *Caring for Others*

The pursuit of perfection is often interrupted when brides are forced to engage in the stereotypically feminine role of putting the needs of others before their own. Brides on *Bridezillas* are often shown caring for others in the days/hours leading up to their wedding, often to their own detriment. Bride Gretchen is shown dealing with an issue with her mother’s rental car on her wedding day; when the rental car company refuses to come out and fix a flat tire on the car, Gretchen takes charge of the situation and assertively stands up for her mom, demanding that the car be fixed as soon as possible so that her mother can relax and “enjoy herself” (*Bridezillas* 2005, “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia”). When two male rental car company employees come out to the house hours later, they end up getting into an altercation with Gretchen and her mother, and tell the camera crew, in regards to her impending nuptials and the soon-to-be groom, “God help ‘im” (*Bridezillas* 2005, “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia”).

Bride Angela deals with a similar situation in season six when the groom finds a hole in his tuxedo. After discovering that there are problems with the groomsmen’s tuxes as well, Angela is the one who calls the tuxedo shop to deal with the situation. She demands a refund, and, upon getting an unsatisfactory response, flips out, repeatedly telling the salesperson, “that’s bullshit!” (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”).

In a similar fashion, Bride Antonella is shown doing everyone *else's* hair for the wedding (*her* wedding), later saying that she does not even have time to get her own hair done and that she cannot wait for it to be over (*Bridezillas* 2005, "Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia"). However, rather than paint her in a more sympathetic light due to the current circumstances, the voice-over instead insists upon referring to her as "the high-strung bride-to-be" and "beauty school burnout" (*Bridezillas* 2005, "Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia"). This illustrates how brides are even mocked in their attempts to care for others.

Similarly, Bride Suzanne is called a "perfectionist" by the voice-over narration for making her fiancé get a facial in preparation for the wedding; this segment also provides some interesting commentary on gender norms and identity (*Bridezillas* 2007, "Melisha & Suzanne"). Her fiancé, Justin, protests because he feels that "it's not a very masculine thing to do," to which Suzanne responds, "Justin, let's not even talk—discuss what you do that's not masculine" (*Bridezillas* 2007, "Melisha & Suzanne"). In an attempt to offset this challenge to his masculinity, Justin presses the issue, suggesting that they "go to the demolition derby" after the trip to the salon, and surprisingly Suzanne relents, on the condition that he has only "light beer" in order to avoid consuming "too many calories" (*Bridezillas* 2007, "Melisha & Suzanne"). Throughout the appointment, Justin continues to complain about the "de-masculating" procedure which, he admits, "makes me feel a little low on the testosterone" (*Bridezillas* 2007, "Melisha & Suzanne"). However, when the facial is complete, Justin appears pleased, prompting Suzanne to gush happily: "He's so happy; I'm always right" (*Bridezillas* 2007, "Melisha & Suzanne").

In season ten, Bride Angela takes fiancé Waylon to the salon with her, allegedly to punish him for not standing up for her, as she admits to the camera: "I really hope his manhood is robbed," but he ends up actually enjoying the experience, later remarking, "Adrienne brought

me here to try to break me, but like an appaloosa, [I] can't be broken" and then, "Adrienne brought me here to try to punish me, but at the end of the day, I just look hot" (*Bridezillas* 2013, "Angela & Adrienne").

3.2.7 *Impossible Standards and Unrealistic Demands*

In the world of *Bridezillas*, brides are framed as unrealistic and impossible to please. If their demands are not met, or if tasks are not completed to meet their high standards, brides are frequently shown behaving in outrageous fashion. This theme is an extension of the pursuit of perfection, and is indicative of the positioning of the bride as monstrous (Samek 2012). Bride Angela makes it clear early on that, when it comes to her wedding, she means business: "The day of the wedding, I'm not going to ask, I'm going to tell" (*Bridezillas* 2009, "Bernadette & Angela"). In season two, Bride Antonella is furious when the bridal salon messes up her dress order, and vows to the camera, as she is driving to confront the salon, that she "can be a bitch just as well and ten times worse" (*Bridezillas* 2005, "Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia").

In another segment later in the same episode, Bride Antonella goes for a trial-run for her wedding day hairstyle. She prefaces her visit by telling the camera that she is obviously picky and difficult to please in this area because of her work as a stylist, so it comes as no surprise that she is unhappy with the stylist's work. She tells him that "it's hard for me to explain, but it's like, as a stylist, I think you should be able to like, kind of, pick up what I'm tryin' to say. There's something about it that I'm like, really not diggin'. It's not me. Totally not me at all" (*Bridezillas* 2005, "Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia"). The stylist is later shown telling the camera crew that "she seems like she needs to have everything her way, everything perfect, and she'd do anything in her power to make it so" (*Bridezillas* 2005, "Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia"). When Antonella leaves the salon, she addresses the camera directly and admits that

she wanted to “snap at him” and “tell him off,” but claims that she did not do so because “he’s got a mental problem” (*Bridezillas* 2005, “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia”). She then drives over to her salon and complains about the experience to her boss, the salon owner, and the other stylists.

In fact, hair and nail salons are frequent sites of conflict for *Bridezillas*. Bride Melisha spends her entire trip to the salon complaining about fiancé Justin’s bachelor party antics to anyone who will listen; later, in an awkward and bizarre exchange, she asks the manicurist if she can have his watch, and after that she admits to the same technician that she knows she does not have enough food to feed everyone at the reception but that she is really more concerned about the gifts she will be receiving anyway (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”).

In another salon-related incident, Bride Vanessa enters the salon and immediately tells both her hair stylist and her makeup artist exactly how she wants them to do their work; as expected, she is dissatisfied with the results of their work and ends up re-doing her makeup herself (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). In yet another example of a dissatisfied bride, Bride Kym does not like the results of her makeup artist’s work and claims that she does not understand how she could mess it up, considering how simple it is. She also makes sure that the makeup artist knows to do her bridesmaids’ makeup in shades of grey because she wants to make sure that they do not “stand out” (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”). Bride Rochelle has her makeup artist come to her house for her trial-run and is also portrayed as dissatisfied with the results; the voice-over narration frames her as unclear on what she wants and therefore impossible to please due to her contradictory request for “bright, neutral, non-stripper sparkle” (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”).

3.2.8 *Infantilization of Women*

Exemplifying the common post-feminist ideology of female infantilization (Douglas 2010; Wade 2011), brides are frequently portrayed as spoiled children on the verge of a tantrum. In season two, Bride Patricia has her sister assist her in trying on her wedding dress. When her sister tries to put the loop for the train over her wrist, Patricia emphatically and repeatedly says “I don’t want it on my hand!” in a childishly impetuous tone, even going so far as to threaten to tattletale to her mother if her sister does not stop (*Bridezillas* 2005, “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia”). Later, while shopping with her mother, the voice-over narration frames Patricia as an indecisive child who cannot make decisions without her mother’s approval or money, which is confirmed when her mom is shown purchasing some of the wedding accessories and okay-ing the flower order at the florist (*Bridezillas* 2005, “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia”). Bride Ashanti mirrors this scenario, addressing her mother as “Mommy” and sounding like a spoiled child when she explains her bad behavior thusly: “If I go crazy it’s just because no one was letting me have my way” (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”).

Other brides are framed as childlike in terms of their relative immaturity. In season nine, eighteen-year-old Bride Rochelle is referred to as “clueless,” “naïve,” and “nowhere near ready for marriage” (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”). Even her fiancé acknowledges that “Rochelle handles stress like a child, most times; she doesn’t handle it like a grown woman would” (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”). After the wedding, when, in the words of the voice-over narration, “Rochelle graduates from child to child bride,” she emphasizes her own relative immaturity when she states: “Things with my mom have gotten better, I’m pretty much starting my own life and I’m not gonna be needing her as much—I needed her for eighteen years

and now I'm kinda just going my own way *and relying on my husband*" (*Bridezillas* 2012, "Rochelle & Ashanti"; emphasis mine).

In season six, Bride Angela's future mother-in-law attempts to give her some advice regarding compromise in a marriage: "you have to give and take, give and take," to which Angela responds, "um, I take, and I take, and I take, and I take" (*Bridezillas* 2009, Bernadette & Angela"). She later mentions that Brandon wants kids right away, but discloses that she does not want them at all, with no indication that she will attempt to discuss—let alone resolve—this difference before the wedding. In fact, they are shown arguing over this issue immediately *after* the wedding has taken place, though an update posted at the end of the episode informs viewers that "although Angela didn't plan on hearing the pitter patter of little feet.... For once, Brandon got his way. Just six weeks after their wedding, Angela announced that she is pregnant" (*Bridezillas* 2009, Bernadette & Angela"). As if this were not enough to make viewers question her readiness for her impending nuptials, Angela offers one final statement: "I just don't wanna hear the term 'forever' cause that just sounds scary" (*Bridezillas* 2009, Bernadette & Angela").

In one bizarre case, a bride actually admits she views children as competition for the attention of others. In season eight, Bride Kym does not mince words in regards to her feelings about kids: "I hate children. They just get on my nerves and they take all the attention away from me and I don't like that" (*Bridezillas* 2011, "Gabrielle & Kym"). Kym takes her bridesmaid Michele and Michele's children with her to a last-minute cake tasting, complaining all the while: "I'm sorry that you have children. I don't, and I don't for a reason" (*Bridezillas* 2011, "Gabrielle & Kym"). She also complains directly to the camera, saying "Michele has to focus all her attention on them and we get nothing done" (*Bridezillas* 2011, "Gabrielle & Kym"). She even directs some of her bitterness directly to the children, at one point telling them to "shut

up” and whining that it would be better if Michele “smacked” her children so that she (Kym) would not have to threaten to do so (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”).

3.2.9 *Conflicts with Grooms*

The conflicts are not limited to brides and their families or friends; brides are commonly shown engaging in conflicts with their would-be grooms as well. In one particularly incredible scene in season three, Bride Marsha is bickering with fiancé Archie over the guest list when, exasperated, she turns to him and says “Are you worth all of this?” (*Bridezillas* 2006, “Marsha & Yoshie”). Archie gets upset and walks away, only to be lectured by the wedding planner, Lisa, who ends her speech with, “either you wanna marry her or you don’t” (*Bridezillas* 2006, “Marsha & Yoshie”). During this time, Marsha has stormed off and takes off in the car, leaving both of them stranded at the restaurant; Archie calls her and asks her to come back and get them, but when she finally does, Lisa has to step in and intervene to diffuse the tense situation (*Bridezillas* 2006, “Marsha & Yoshie”). Marsha ultimately sums up her displeasure by stating:

I think I’m mostly mad because I think that Archie should be on my side with every choice I make because after all this is my day, and I feel like whatever the choice I make instead of sitting up there like a knot on a log I think that he should pretty much agree. I don’t think that he has a right to be mad because it’s all about the bride not the groom. (*Bridezillas* 2006, “Marsha & Yoshie”)

Conflicts such as this one are typical for the couples presented on *Bridezillas*.

Bride Suzanne is also shown having an argument with her groom over guests; while working on the seating chart, Suzanne becomes increasingly upset over one friend who did not RSVP to the wedding or show up for the bachelorette party. When Suzanne calls her friend to get to the bottom of the situation, she makes her feelings very clear, telling Monica “that was very rude and behavior like this will not be tolerated”; she ends the call with a not-so-subtle threat: “I will make your life a living hell if you do not show up” (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha &

Suzanne”). In this scenario, the bride ultimately takes her frustration from her fight with the groom out on her friend.

In what is perhaps the most depressing example of conflict on *Bridezillas*, conflicts between the bride and groom are often shown taking an especially nasty turn. In season five, Bride Dona experiences a bizarre accident when her tooth apparently gets chipped for absolutely no reason and calls fiancé Carlo to ask him to find her dentists’ number for her. In a shocking display of callousness, Carlo is annoyed, belligerent, and downright unhelpful, acting like he does not really even believe her and telling her to call her mom for help instead (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). In season seven, Bride Ivy experiences some push-back from her fiancé Kenneth as well; after she tries unsuccessfully to grab his phone, he admonishes her with “you’re being a little *too* crazy, like really, it’s fucking annoying” (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”).

3.2.10 Temporary Insanity and Delusions of Grandeur

Brides are also frequently portrayed as just plain crazy (as a result of their drive to create the perfect wedding). Bride Vanessa comes right out and says as much in season five, admitting “I’ll go crazy if I don’t get exactly what I want, how I want it” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). Bride Melisha in season four is obsessed with being a queen; in her confessional-style on-camera interview, she asserts: “I pride myself on bein’ a queen. I don’t settle. I want things the way that I want them and I’m gonna go get them. I am the queen in every way” (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”). Bride Bernadette takes an opposite approach, stating the following at her bridal luncheon: “I wanna be a fabulous princess; I don’t wanna be the queen ‘cause the queen got too much work—I already do that” (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”). The voice-over gleefully plays up this obsession, at one point stating, “Melisha’s delusions of

grandeur are starting to spin out of control,” followed by a montage of her referring to herself as a queen (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”). Her royal fixation is further underlined when she goes to the jeweler to pick up the custom crown she has had made for fiancé James (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”).

Apparently Melisha’s bridesmaids are not on board with this royal fantasy because they actually stage a sort of intervention to try to check her domineering behavior after she calls them all “tacky” and tries to force a list of instructions on them (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”). Melisha is not the only one who expects a lot from her attendants; Bernadette goes so far as to create and distribute a “wedding party code of conduct,” along with the rather ominous warning for anyone who dares to step out of line: “You’re not gon’ get thrown out but I’m ‘on’ talk about you, to your face, behind your back, to everybody I know that you know, to everybody that you don’t even know—wherever we meet up to the day you leave this earth—that’s my promise to you—it’s not even a threat” (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”). One of her requirements is that she will need to smell her bridesmaids’ perfume before the wedding day, to ensure that it will not disturb her allergies or her asthma. She ends her pep talk by leaving her bridesmaids with the following command: “Make it happen for me—that’s your job—make me happy!” (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”). One bridesmaid, Barbara, makes the mistake of informing Bernadette that she and her children, who are also in the wedding, will have to miss the rehearsal, prompting Bernadette to lash out and attack Barbara’s alleged lack of parenting skills. Barbara later tells the camera that she thought she was letting Bernadette know early enough, but that there was clearly no point if she is still “gonna go bridezilla on me” (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”).

In season seven, Bride Ivy calls all of her bridesmaids before her joint bachelor/bachelorette costume party to see what they are planning on wearing; when she learns that one girl is planning on wearing a fairy costume—the same costume she has selected—Ivy orders her to change, asserting “I’m the bridezilla fairy” (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”). When she and Kenneth arrive at the club later, she spends the first part of the evening pouting because all of the girls are late, but when they finally arrive she quickly forgets about this and proceeds to get extremely drunk. She is also mad the following day when her bridesmaids are late for the rehearsal, in spite of the fact that she is actually late as well (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”).

Brides’ “crazy” controlling tendencies extend beyond just their bridesmaids; Melisha later explains that she makes her fiancé Justin get a “trip-slip” signed by her in order to go out. For the uninitiated, an on-screen graphic appears in order to explain the meaning of this term: “‘Zilla-tionary: Trip-Slip = a permission slip from the bride” (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”). Apparently Justin failed to obtain the required permission slip for his bachelor party, prompting a frustrated Melisha to call his friends “idiots” and complain that they further angered her by hiring three “dancers” (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”). This incident has led Melisha, who claims she previously tried to be nice to them, to decide she no longer likes them and does not care if they know it (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”).

In a similar argument regarding the bachelor party, Bride Dona tells fiancé Carlo “no strippers” and “no gambling,” ordering him to “behave” and “think of me” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). She then proceeds to try to take his debit cards, to which he responds “don’t threaten me, I’m allowed to have cash,” followed by “shut up” and “leave me alone” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). This scene was prefaced by the snarky voice-over

narration observation, “a paranoid Dona isn’t letting him go until she sets down a few rules” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). In season seven, Bride Ivy lays out similar rules for her fiancé Kenneth, declaring “Kenneth is not allowed to look at girls while we’re out, ‘cause I’m crazy jealous, ‘specially when I’ve been drinking” (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”).

Brides are shown attempting to control other aspects of their grooms’ lives as well. In season six, Bride Angela makes fiancé Brandon change his sandals because “they’re really embarrassing,” and then tells him he smells and asks if he took a shower (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”). She later makes him get a haircut, dictating exactly how she wants it done, which prompts Brandon’s mother, who is a hairdresser, to ask in amazement “Are you gonna let her do this to you?” (*Bridezillas* 2009, “Bernadette & Angela”).

In season nine, Bride Rochelle is frequently shown arguing with fiancé Nathan and stubbornly resisting even his attempts to help; at one point they are riding in the car together and Nathan gets frustrated after his repeated attempts to get Rochelle to stop texting while driving are unsuccessful, saying exasperatedly “fine, let’s wreck,” to which she replies “ok then, let’s fucking wreck—if we can’t be happy together, we’ll die together” (*Bridezillas* 2012, “Rochelle & Ashanti”).

3.2.11 Consumption, Love, and Control

Prices are sometimes shown on-screen, but designers and vendors are not emphasized on *Bridezillas* in the same manner as on much more explicitly consumerist shows like *Say Yes to the Dress*. In Bride Brooke’s wedding in season one, it is so extravagant that the prices for each component of the wedding are emphasized—but not the vendors/brands—to show just how high-priced a Manhattan bride’s wedding can be (*Bridezillas* 2004, “Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy”). Also, the emphasis on consumption and having a wedding over having a marriage appears in

Bridezillas as well; in season seven, Bride Ivy makes this point clear when she says of her fiancé Kenneth, “after I bugged him about wanting a wedding, he finally proposed” (*Bridezillas* 2010, “Shandra & Ivy”).

Bridezillas often emphasizes the same connection between spending money and showing love that is highlighted on *SYTTD*, though there are notable exceptions to this theme; in season eight, Bride Kym’s father refuses to assume any more of the wedding costs, despite his daughter’s pleas and her best attempt at fake tears (*Bridezillas* 2011, “Gabrielle & Kym”). In season four, Bride Suzanne proudly asserts of her fiancé Justin: “He gives me everything I want and spends every last dime that he has on me” (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”). This point is later driven home by Justin, who acknowledges purchasing not only her engagement ring, but also the *three* wedding bands she wanted to wear with it (*Bridezillas* 2007, “Melisha & Suzanne”). Other brides play into this theme, demanding that their fiancés spend large sums of money on gifts and other wedding-related purchases; Bride Angela in season ten wants her fiancé Eric to buy her a \$7,000 pair of earrings, saying “Don’t you think I deserve the best? *Happy wife, happy life*” (*Bridezillas* 2013, “Angela & Adrienne”).

These last two examples do double duty here in that they also show the link between men and financial control that is seen across wedding-themed reality television programming. In season five, for instance, Bride Dona, a 33-year-old financial specialist, is engaged to Carlo, a 30-year-old sales manager for a mortgage company (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). Though Dona is older and works in finance, she is portrayed as being extremely fiscally irresponsible and dependent upon Carlo; in one scene, she has no idea how much they have already spent on the wedding—she guesses \$30,000, but Carlo tells her that she is not even close (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). Despite being an adult woman, Dona is shown having to

convince Carlo to let her buy clothes for their honeymoon; when she tells him she needs to go shopping, he tells her to “shut up” and “don’t piss me off,” later scolding her for “starting a fight in front of the whole family” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). Even when she begs and says “please,” he mocks her and tells her to go to the thrift shop; she refuses, so he mocks her again, saying “I’m sorry you’re too good for that” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”). She turns to the rest of the family for help, but her mother had previously threatened to cut up her daughter’s credit cards, so the only one to take her side is Carlo’s mother. At this point, Carlo directs his sarcasm at both of them, saying “you’ve got *this thing* who’s gonna help you—” which leads his mom to tell the camera directly “my son, is a dick, okay, and he’s pickin’ on me ‘cause he can’t handle his bride” (*Bridezillas* 2008, “Vanessa & Dona”).

Now that we have seen the major themes exhibited in *Bridezillas* (which were largely negative in their framing and portrayal of women on the show), we will turn to an examination of the audience response to the program via Twitter to see how viewers reflected this mode of shaming back onto the brides.

3.3 Social Media Reception

In order to get a feel for the social media audience’s reception of *Bridezillas*, tweets from the original airdates of the episodes included in the textual analysis were collected. The search terms included the hashtags “#Bridezillas” and “#WEtv”, and tweets that were unrelated to the show were eliminated from the sample. All of the remaining tweets were then analyzed for content.¹¹⁶ The sample was also limited by the fact that the earliest mention of the show using

¹¹⁶ The social media sample details are listed below.

Season One, Episode Three – “Brooke, Miho, Julia, & Amy” (June 21, 2004) [0 / 0]

Season Two, Episode Four – “Antonella, Gretchen, & Patricia” (June 26, 2005) [0 / 0]

Season Three, Episode Two – “Marsha & Yoshie” (June 18, 2006) [0 / 0]

Season Four, Episode Twelve – “Melisha & Suzanne” (September 2, 2007) [0 / 0]

Season Five, Episode Seventeen – “Vanessa & Dona” (September 21, 2008) [0 / 0]

the previously established search terms did not occur till 10 February 2009, so the first five episodes discussed in this study had no associated tweets. In total, 2,135 tweets were collected and analyzed. 69 of those tweets were deemed irrelevant and eliminated from the sample. The remaining 2,066 tweets were examined via qualitative content analysis.¹¹⁷ It should be noted that this sample is significantly smaller than the samples collected for both *SYTTD* and *KUWTK*, which could be due in part to the relative lack of promotion from the network and producers, especially in relation to the other two programs.

A few of the tweets contained in the sample originated from the official WE tv Twitter account (@WEtv); there does not appear to be a separate account devoted entirely to *Bridezillas*, as there is for *SYTTD*. As opposed to the more savvy marketing style of *SYTTD*, WE tv (and, by extension, *Bridezillas*) does not seem to integrate social media into the viewing experience as aggressively as other networks. Although there is some mention of “Wedding Sunday,” this does not appear to have been promoted as an official hashtag, like TLC’s “Friday is Briededay,” and the “WE Go Bridal” marketing campaign is never mentioned.

In terms of viewing context, most of those who addressed this issue mentioned either watching with their mother or watching alone. In contrast to the more positive discussion surrounding *SYTTD*, the tweets about *Bridezillas* were overwhelmingly negative. As was the case with *SYTTD*, users frequently mentioned *Bridezillas* or referenced the fact that they were currently viewing the show with no associated content, as in the example below.

Alexandra Conrad @punkeymonkey529 – 13 Jun 2010

Season Six, Episode Five – “Bernadette & Angela” (July 5, 2009) [2 / 2]

Season Seven, Episode Two – “Shandra & Ivy” (June 13, 2010) [110 / 112]

Season Eight, Episode Three – “Gabrielle & Kym” (June 26, 2011) [245 / 252]

Season Nine, Episode Five – “Rochelle & Ashanti” (July 8, 2012) [1410 / 1432]

Season Ten, Episode Twenty – “Angela & Adrienne” (September 27, 2013) [299 / 337]

¹¹⁷ Select examples of each theme are included in the analysis; for additional examples, see Appendix B. Please note: while this appendix contains further examples of these themes, the Tweets included do not represent all examples of these themes contained in the entire sample.

watching #Bridezillas on #Wetv

Some also tweeted quotations from the show, often accompanied by some comment or evaluation, though this occurred less frequently in relation to *Bridezillas* than it did in relation to *SYTTD*.

Kari @kari2k10 – 27 Jun 2011

Girls hate on each other its normal-#bridezillas Lmao so true

Other than those expressing a general love of the show or those sharing quotations, most of the other mentions were critical of some aspect of the program—and some were even downright hostile.

3.3.1 *Major Themes*

After examining the sample, I generated a list of eight categories into which most of the tweets could be grouped; these categories are included below.

- Expressing empathy for the brides
- Positioning *Bridezillas* as a cautionary tale
- Assertions that the brides must be sexually skilled
- Criticism and/or amazement that men would marry these brides
- Criticism of class/taste/socio-economic status
- Criticism of brides' behavior
- Criticism of the female body and/or beauty
- Expressing a desire to inflict physical violence on the brides
- Expressing shame for watching
- Tweets specifically related to race/ethnicity
- Displays of extreme misogyny

Each category is discussed in detail in the following section, and this discussion includes examples of specific tweets that are typical of each theme.

3.3.1.1 *Expressing empathy for the brides*

In rare instances, viewers sometimes expressed empathy for the brides and understanding of the pressures that accompany the wedding planning process, as in the example below.

Ashton Kessler @amitygardens – 27 Jun 2011

I have realized why women go crazy on #bridezillas. Wedding planning is stressful, y'all!
Can someone make decisions for me?

3.3.1.2 Positioning Bridezillas as a cautionary tale

However, more often than not users were critical of the brides featured on *Bridezillas* and frequently alluded to their antics as cautionary tales (i.e., what not to do). In addition, viewers also acknowledged gaining a feeling of superiority when confronted with such outrageous behavior.

Tracie @traci loves ezra – 13 Jun 2010

I would never act like these crazy females on #bridezillas

Landry @ambermuses – 9 Jul 2012

I seriously watch 'Bridezillas' to feel better about myself. #guiltypleasure #bridezillas

Prĩñç€ ŠhønĐ™ @ShonBailey – 9 Jul 2012

I love to laugh at these brides on #Bridezillas

3.3.1.3 Assertions that the brides must be sexually skilled

One rather cruel and disgusting theme of the tweets included in this sample was the frequent assertion that the brides portrayed on the show must be extremely sexually skilled. This suggestion is implied to be the only explanation as to why a man would marry these women.

Dee @DeeRene – 13 Jun 2010

I'm gonna say it – these women on bridezillas must have great cooch/head. That's the only explanation

Meme Mancini @Mememancini – 8 Jul 2012

#bridezillas hot tonight!! This girl tripping!! Why this man such a push over? The nookie that good?

3.3.1.4 Criticism and/or amazement that men would marry these brides

In a related category, many users also expressed amazement that anyone would consent to marry these women after witnessing—and frequently being on the receiving end of—their

behavior. Most of the tweets seem to shame the women, but some also engage in shaming the men.

Laurentiius @Laurentiius – 8 Jul 2012

Is watching #Bridezillas. Unbelievable show about men (grooms) w/extremely low self esteem & the women who take advantage of them. :-P

Libra925 @Libra63Texas – 8 Jul 2012

Why do these men consent to marrying the crazy bitches! No wonder men cheat! #Bridezillas

Terrel Thompson @TerrelThom91 – 28 Sep 2013

Damn all these dudes have lost their balls, punk bitches, say NO lol weak #bridezillas

3.3.1.5 Criticism of class/taste/socio-economic status

Like the voice-over narration in later seasons, viewers also shame the women on *Bridezillas* by criticizing their taste and their apparent lower socio-economic status. This takes the form of jokes about their fashion choices as well as their behavior, particularly as it relates to their class status.

Bree @BreeLenny – 13 Jun 2010

I need the gas station to not be your local hangout spot. #bridezillas

Kelsey Woods @Kel_Woods – 26 Jun 2011

watching #bridezillas and laughing at how ghetto/witetrash it is

OG Baeco @beymagnifique – 8 Jul 2012

In the year of our Lord and Savior 2012, where are people finding Halloween orange bridesmaids gowns? #Bridezillas

Stephanie Becker @TaxiGoddess713 – 28 Sep 2013

Nothin like watchin “country bumpkin” #bridezillas on demand LOL

3.3.1.6 Criticism of brides’ behavior

Unlike the previous category, tweets in this section are critical of brides’ behavior without obvious connections to social class. Objects of ridicule for viewers include brides’ intelligence (or apparent lack thereof), their sexual escapades, and their general speech and demeanor. Tweets that fall under this theme also employ frequent use of derogatory labels for

women like “bitch” and include much more misogynistic language than tweets that criticize brides’ behavior on *SYTTD*.

Bree @BreeLenny – 13 Jun 2010

#thingsyoudontdo get drunk at your own wedding and pass out on a bathroom floor
#bridezillas

V.E.S.S.E.L TM @Destined2Be718

This trick on #Bridezillas is trippin!!! Ur bridesmaids are not ur indentured servants!!!!

angelmarie @itsanmarie – 8 Jul 2012

So did she just give him a blow job?! Wow! So just gone do that on national TV...ok.
#Bridezillas

Nala✦ @ItsNatiO – 27 Sep 2013

It’s because of #bridezillas that men don’t want marriage. Hell, I don’t even want it after watching these psycho bitches.

XX @Monsster10 – 27 Sep 2013

All these stupid brides are dumb rude bitches. #Bridezillas

3.3.1.7 *Criticism of the female body and/or beauty*

Like viewers of *SYTTD*, those tweeting about *Bridezillas* also engage in shaming women on the basis of their physical appearance. Nothing appears to be off-limits when it comes to discussions of the female body and standards of beauty.

#Gold @MorgxnAlexis – 27 Jun 2011

why are all these #bridezillas overweight?

Mitzy Gallifrey @GallowsHumor7 – 8 Jul 2012

Rochelle was an hour late for her makeup consultation. With that nose, and those under eye circles she should have been early. #Bridezillas

Lanette @Amadil – 27 Sep 2013

angela has teeth like a can opener #bridezillas

3.3.1.8 *Expressing a desire to inflict physical violence on the brides*

One of the most surprising themes that emerged in this analysis was users expressing a desire to inflict physical harm on the women portrayed on the show. Many of these tweets

advocate controlling female unruliness with corporal punishment, and some even blatantly condone domestic violence. It is impossible to know which users are expressing these ideas in earnest and which are engaging in sarcasm in an attempt to be humorous, but the statements are shocking regardless of the intent.

Esperanza Escobar @jennjones86 – 13 Jun 2010
Omg I'd suffocate this bitch in her sleep. #bridezillas

Jasmine Perez @JayyWeezie – 9 Jul 2012
#Bridezillas .. this show makes me wanna punch these girls in the ovaries so they can never have kids!!

Andrea Giurkis @tweetsby_ANDREA – 8 Jul 2012
I'm sorry but somebody needs to hit these girls... #showesomerespect #bridzillas

The Hun†ress @HuntressInSoCal – 28 Sep 2013
Domestic violence is bad, but after watching #Bridezillas I clearly understand why it happens

3.3.1.9 *Expressing shame for watching*

Like viewers of *SYTTD*, those tweeting about *Bridezillas* also frequently expressed a sense of shame for watching the program.

ツ♥TANIA♥ツ @Slanted_Soul – 13 Jun 2010
#bridezillas is my #guiltypleasure #dontjudgeme

Moogie O'Brien @moogieobrien – 27 Sep 2013
Sometimes you stay in on Fridays, do laundry, eat Thai food and watch #Bridezillas on #WEtv ... Then wonder why the hell you're #single.

3.3.1.10 *Tweets specifically related to race/ethnicity*

In an interesting departure from the similarities between social media discussion of *SYTTD* and *Bridezillas*, there were frequent references to race in this sample and an increase in the level of hostility. Viewers seem to associate brides' behavior with both racial identity and class membership, often making sweeping generalizations about specific groups. There is also a

discussion of interracial relationships contained in this sample, in which many viewers seem to both reference and rely on commonly held stereotypes about different racial/ethnic groups.

ChardeΩ @ChardeO_o – 27 Jun 2011

They nasty!!!! It's always the black people actin up! #Bridezillas

Garland@Thomas @GarlandAThomas – 26 Jun 2011

What is it about white women and alcohol. When they r drunk all they do is scream real LOUD. WOOOOOOO!!! #Bridezillas

Simon Gaynor @sigbigg – 26 Jun 2011

#bridezillas on weddingtv! Haha white American red necks are crazy

DENNiS ANUNNAKi @District20_ - 9 Jul 2012

#bridezillas. You fucking black ghetto bitch hope you die jeanime..

Alice Garcia @SweetAly90 – 27 Sep 2013

The native American brothers are so funny!! The oldest is super cute! #bridezillas

Shanique @sincerely_niq – 27 Sep 2013

First time I've seen crazy Asians on TV #bridezillas

3.3.1.11 *Displays of extreme misogyny*

Finally, there were some tweets contained in the sample that seemed to warrant a category of their own due to their extremely misogynistic nature. As mentioned previously, the language used to discuss *Bridezillas* was markedly different than that used to discuss *SYTTD*, especially in terms of perceived hostility to the brides. *Bridezillas* viewers frequently utilized extremely vivid language to shame the women appearing on the show and oftentimes the sentiments expressed appeared quite threatening in tone.

PolkPanther @polkpanther – 26 Jun 2011

I want to bang the #Bridezillas narrator. Her contempt for bitches turns me on.

Matthew Nothing™ @GodOfSupertown – 8 Jul 2012

Do ALL of the #brides on #Bridezillas realize that they are all world-class, fuckin' #CUNTS !?! 🤔

As we have seen, viewer response to *Bridezillas* is very different from the generally positive discussions surrounding *SYTTD*. The audience seems to have adopted the program's critical tone and mirrors the shaming practices utilized by the show, in some cases exhibiting much more extreme displays of hostility toward the brides.

3.4 Conclusion

While *Bridezillas* exhibits the same themes representative of post-feminist culture and ideologies found in *SYTTD* in Chapter Two—hyperconsumerism, a desire for pseudo-celebrity status, and the reinforcement of traditional gender norms—the emphasis appears to be less on encouraging consumption and more on policing unruly female behavior. Whereas *SYTTD* works like a how-to guide for consumerism and wedding etiquette, *Bridezillas* takes the opposite approach, presenting instead a cautionary tale depicting the sort of bridal behavior that should be avoided at all costs. Though both shows seek to control female behavior through shaming, *Bridezillas* represents a much harsher example in which the shaming is done overtly (the narrator's cruel tone and explicit mockery of the brides leaves little doubt as to how the program is framing the transgressions of these women).

Bridezillas also diverges from *SYTTD* in that it incorporates a classist narrative into the reinforcement of traditional gender norms. The shift in socioeconomic status from season one onward coincides with an increased intensity in the type of shaming that occurs on the show. Beginning in season two, *Bridezillas* is not only shaming women for their unruly gender performances, but for their lower socioeconomic status as well. The way in which brides perform gender in this program is inextricable from their class displays, which in turn are linked to their racial/ethnic markers as well. These connections are clearly evident in the social media

sample; tweets specifically related to the race or ethnicity of those appearing on the show were usually heavily laden with class markers and references to gender identity as well.

The classist dimension of gender performativity does not play out as explicitly on *SYTTD* because the brides featured on *SYTTD* are coded almost universally as “upperclass” (in terms of their perceived financial status), so the classist messages are embedded much more implicitly in the narrative. For instance, brides do not show up at Kleinfelds in Manhattan with the budget limitations portrayed on *Bridezillas*; in fact, the narratives on *SYTTD* frequently feature brides with *unlimited* budgets, and anything under \$5,000 is portrayed as tight. This also contributes to the stronger connection between consumption, love, and control in *SYTTD* versus *Bridezillas*; the financial stakes on *SYTTD* are much higher so there are more opportunities for extravagant spending. In contrast, the brides on *Bridezillas* are often shown spending beyond their means and do not have the financial resources or financial support network that *SYTTD* brides frequently possess.

The financial limitations facing brides on *Bridezillas* also correlate to the amount of work they are shown engaging in to plan their own weddings. While most women are depicted as being in charge of their wedding on wedding-themed reality television, many of the brides on *Bridezillas* are portrayed as being unable to afford to hire a wedding coordinator to assist them and help manage the details of this event. The labor that these brides engage in to plan their own wedding is oftentimes dismissed as trivial or not really work, a trend that is tied to larger societal tendencies to devalue female labor (which we shall see again in relation to Kim Kardashian in Chapter Four). This wedding planning labor is also portrayed as evidence of brides’ relentless pursuit of perfection. Trying to achieve the impossible ideal of the “perfect” wedding is driving brides “crazy” and contributes in part to the unrealistic demands they make of others.

For many of the women on *Bridezillas*, their everyday lives are far from fairytales. Their lower socioeconomic status is likely partly responsible for the drive for a perfect wedding, as well as the desire to be a “princess” for a day. Brides on *Bridezillas* are often shown working or caring for others (even on their own wedding day), which illustrates the potential appeal of being a celebrity or royalty and having others focus on *them* for a day. However, *Bridezillas* shames women for this desire, and that disciplining often occurs at the hands of the brides’ families and/or friends, who seek to contain the brides’ aspirations (or dispel their delusions of grandeur).

As we saw in Chapter Two (and as we shall see in Chapter Four as well), conflicts between brides and their families/friends are a staple of wedding-themed reality television. The competition among women is much more subtle on *SYTTD*, and rarely involves so much as a raised voice. This stands in direct opposition to the oftentimes explosive blow-ups that occur on *Bridezillas* where brides are consistently portrayed as monstrous and out-of-control, frequently screaming at anyone who stands in the way of their perfect wedding. This is the sort of unruly behavior that *Bridezillas* seeks to discipline and contain. The object of brides’ rage is not limited to other women, however; brides are also depicted as being in constant conflict with their grooms as well—a narrative arc which would *never* be featured on *SYTTD*. All of the relationships on *SYTTD* are portrayed as ideal—happy and healthy, with rarely even the hint of a disagreement.

The general climate of the social media discussions surrounding *Bridezillas* is much more hostile and misogynistic than what was observed in relation to *SYTTD* as well. Whereas Twitter users frequently mirror the behavior of the Kleinfeld consultants by empathizing and coming to the defense of brides on *SYTTD* by sticking up for them when they were being shamed by friends and family, more often than not the *Bridezillas* social media audience seems to relish the harsh treatment and oftentimes joined in on the act (again mirroring the shaming practices of the

program). Audience members criticize everything from brides' taste, class status, behavior, and physical appearance to their would-be grooms for choosing to marry them. Users frequently express amazement that anyone would want to marry the women featured on the show, even attributing this seeming disconnect to the fact that the brides must be sexually skilled, which speaks to the prevalence of slut-shaming in the contemporary post-feminist environment as discussed in Chapter One. Audiences took the shaming a step further than the program, however; the Twitter sample contains multiple examples of extreme misogyny, including a frequently expressed desire to inflict physical violence on the brides and multiple tweets suggesting that a bride's unruly behavior is a justification for domestic violence.

However, like the audience response to *SYTTD* in Chapter Two, many viewers also express a sense of shame for watching *Bridezillas*. This self-shaming stands in direct contrast to the social media discussions of *KUWTK* in Chapter Four, where Twitter users, who could potentially be classified as anti-fans, were often more concerned with shaming *others* for watching the show.

4 WHY ARE SO MANY BRIDES WORRIED ABOUT *KEEPING UP WITH THE KARDASHIANS*?

Whether it is the royal wedding of Kate Middleton to England's Prince William, the reality show dream wedding of Kim Kardashian to then-New Jersey Nets power forward Kris Humphries, or the highly guarded wedding of pop/R&B icon Beyoncé to hip hop mogul Jay-Z, celebrity weddings are always in the news, even when the couple involved claims a desire to keep the event under wraps. As Stephen Duncombe (2007) reminds us, we worship celebrities because they have the power and visibility we crave, and "while the roots of reality TV lie in the economics of inexpensive programming, its popularity speaks to the desire to move from no one

to someone” (108). The increased visibility of celebrities has also resulted in a higher level of scrutiny as compared to other brides-to-be, both in terms of their relationships and their weddings. One need only look at the incredible amount of media fanfare that surrounded Kim Kardashian’s recent marriage to controversial hip-hop artist Kanye West to see how significant the wedding has become in American society.¹¹⁸

Though their reality show is regularly heavily laden with product placements and endorsements, the Kardashian wedding episodes take branding and hyperconsumerism to a whole new level. They also offer a glimpse of a “normal” family that moved from being relatively unknown to controlling a reality television empire in the space of roughly ten years. The Kardashians are frequently referred to as American royalty, both by the show and by the press (Pramaggiore and Negra 2014, 84-85).¹¹⁹ In addition, Pramaggiore and Negra (2014) make the connection between the Kardashians and princess culture explicit by noting that many of the women in their fan base grew up during the height of the Disney Princess Collection marketing campaign, and they also point out that the “princessing” of American popular culture contributed to the rise of the bridezilla persona as well (85). This observation dovetails with Orenstein’s (2007) take on the rise of princess culture discussed in Chapter One.

Pramaggiore and Negra (2014) also point out how the sisters’ frequent references to their Armenian heritage have contributed to their being seen in the context of the immigrant American Dream narrative, as well as their sexualization as the exotic other (e.g., references to Kim’s large bottom are similar to those historically made about women of color ranging from Sarah Baartman to Jennifer Lopez) (86). The extreme “sexual candor” on *KUWTK* signals their

¹¹⁸ As of April 2015, Kim and Kanye are still married.

¹¹⁹ Fans also frequently express this view; one user in the present study sample tweeted:

Jenni Grimshaw @jengrim0117 – 9 Oct 2011

Ready for U.S. Royal Wedding tv premier @KimKardashian #KUWTK #kardashianwedding

connection to raunch culture, which is also a popular component of contemporary post-feminism (Pramaggiore and Negra 2014, 88; Levy 2005). Their shameless displays and discussions of their sexuality are not the only aspects of the series that speak to its post-feminist ethos; Pramaggiore and Negra (2014) highlight the “primacy of women’s self-commodification” that is frequently observed in relation to the sisters’ efforts to build the Kardashian Family Brand (90-93); this is very similar to the “internal critical gaze” discussed in Chapter One (Press 2013, 119), as well as the sort of self-commodification observed in *SYTTD* in Chapter Two and in *Bridezillas* in Chapter Three as well. Since reality television is one of the main vehicles for the creation of “second-generation celebrity,” the Kardashian family is now virtually inseparable from the business (90-92).¹²⁰

This chapter seeks to examine three reality television wedding specials featured on *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*: “The Wedding” (featuring the wedding of Khloe Kardashian to former L.A. Laker Lamar Odom), “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding: A Kardashian Event — Parts 1 & 2” (with Kim Kardashian and former New Jersey Net Kris Humphries), and “Kim’s Journey To The Altar” (with Kim Kardashian and musician Kanye West).¹²¹ I begin with a discussion of how the marketing and branding strategy of the Kardashian family functions in the context of the drive for hyperconsumerism in wedding-themed reality television. Next, I will explore the representation of gender identity and female labor in particular in relation to the construction and maintenance of the Kardashian family’s celebrity status. Finally, I will conclude with an examination of the social media discussions of *KUWTK* on Twitter to examine how audiences

¹²⁰ Their parents were good friends of O.J. and Nicole Brown Simpson; after the murder of Nicole and her friend Ron Goldman, their father, Robert Kardashian Sr., served as one of O.J.’s defense attorneys. In addition, Kris Jenner’s second husband, Bruce Jenner, was already well-known as a former winner of the Olympic decathlon when the reality show began.

¹²¹ Season Four, Episode One – “The Wedding” (November 8, 2009)*1hr26min
 Season Six, Episode Fourteen – “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1” (October 9, 2011)
 Season Six, Episode Fifteen – “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2” (October 10, 2011)*Monday airdate, 9pm
 Season Nine, Episode Twenty – “Kim’s Journey to the Altar” (September 1, 2014)*Monday airdate

understand the show as well as how shaming functions in this particular sub-genre of wedding-themed reality television.

4.1 Sociohistorical/Institutional Context

Keeping Up with the Kardashians is an American reality television show currently airing on E! Entertainment Television Sunday nights at 9 PM ET. The show began in 2007 and is currently in its ninth season on the air. *KUWTK* follows the lives of sisters Kourtney, Kim, and Khloe Kardashian. Their brother Robert, mother Kris, and step-father, Olympic gold-medalist Bruce Jenner, along with Kris and Bruce's younger daughters, Kendall and Kylie Jenner, appear on the show as well.

KUWTK has been a ratings winner for E!; more viewers tuned in to watch Khloe and Lamar's wedding special ("The Wedding") than AMC's *Mad Men* season finale (Oldenburg 2009, 1D), and the special became E!'s highest rated program at that time (Bruce 2011, 46-47). In addition, the premiere of "Kim's Fairytale Wedding" generated E!'s highest rated week of programming up to that point (Stetler 2011, C1). The success of the show has led to multiple spin-offs, all of which have aired on E!, including *Kourtney and Khloe Take Miami*, *Kourtney and Kim Take Miami*, *Khloe and Lamar*, and *Kourtney and Khloe Take the Hamptons*. The Kardashians have released numerous books as well, including *Kardashian Konfidential*,¹²² written by Kourtney, Kim, and Khloe Kardashian, *Kris Jenner...and All Things Kardashian*, written by Kris Jenner, *Dollhouse*, written by Kourtney, Kim, and Khloe Kardashian, and *Rebels: City of Indra*, written by Kendall and Kylie Jenner.

In addition, Kim Kardashian released her own mobile video game in 2014; "Kim Kardashian: Hollywood" has been extremely successful, generating over \$200 million in 2014

¹²² In an ironic twist, the updated edition of *Kardashian Konfidential* with photos from the Kim Kardashian/Kris Humphries wedding was released the day Kim filed for divorce (Stetler and Cohen 2011, C1).

(Curry 2014). The game is based largely on the act of consumption; according to Curry (2014): “The genius of Kim Kardashian: Hollywood is the transformation of consumerism itself into a commodity that can be bought and sold. A player can buy not only luxury goods, but the *potential*—measured in K-stars—to buy luxury goods” (n.p.).

4.2 Kim Kardashian and Female Labor

As discussed in Chapter Three, female labor is often dismissed and/or undervalued (Hochschild 1989; McClain 2013; Tuchman 1978). Though the Kardashians themselves often assert that they do in fact work to maintain their fame (McClain 2013, 4), their activities have often been dismissed as trivial. However, many in the media have started to defend Kim Kardashian’s “invisible” labor, which has helped her transcend this early notoriety as a sex-tape star (Curry 2014; Hughes 2015). Some have asked why Kim Kardashian in particular is subject to such frequent and intense criticism and shaming, often attributing this hostility to devaluing of female labor:

there’s something about Kim Kardashian and her fame, something specific, and specifically female, that make us uncomfortable.

People complain Kardashian is famous for being famous, but it’s more true to say she’s famous for being a hardworking and savvy businesswoman. Kim Kardashian—and maybe Kim Kardashian alone—has figured out how to make a fortune on the countless hours of emotional labor most women are expected to perform for free: smiling, looking pretty, being accommodating, being charming, being a good hostess. These are the skills a celebrity appearance entails. Anyone who’s performed them knows in their bones these activities are actual labor, and I encourage those who disagree to spend three hours sitting absolutely still in makeup chair and consider further. If wearing fully-styled hair and makeup at all times were actually effortless, a lot more people would do it, and I’d quit my job and buy stock in false eyelashes. Kim Kardashian is what getting paid for “women’s” work looks like. (Curry 2014, n.p.)

Curry (2014) goes on to state that:

Kim Kardashian, like many little girls, was bombarded with stories about beautiful princesses and fairytale weddings from birth. So shame on her, for taking this narrative at face value, and for attempting to live a life following this script, and every cultural cue

she's ever been given. Shame on her, because shaming or blaming the real culprit— patriarchal expectations and institutions— is just too feminist and scary.

Our culture pressures women to be available, to look good, to smile and laugh and make conversation, to marry and have babies, and Kim Kardashian has given it exactly what it wants. We asked for it, and we bought it, so who's the really shallow part of this transaction? Don't hate the player, hate the game. (n.p.)

Because such a large part of the program is dedicated to showing the Kardashian sisters and their mother at work, it is indeed telling that they are so often subject to criticisms regarding the value of their labor. In addition to the larger societal assumptions about female labor, some of the social media discussion surrounding this issue seems to imply that the perceived “reality” of *KUWTK* could also be affecting the way viewers understand the Kardashian women's work.

4.3 Emphasis on “Reality”

As discussed in both Chapter One and in the introduction to this chapter, reality television is often subject to debate about its authenticity. In light of this fact, *KUWTK* frequently includes scenes which serve to reinforce the “reality” of the show's narratives. No where is this more prevalent than in the depiction of relationships on the show.

When discussing her relationship with Lamar on her wedding episode, Khloe notes: “I've never had someone tell me so many times a day how pretty I am, and talk to me like that, and just make me feel like I *am* everything that he says I am,” and later: “I've never had someone be so honest with me about their life, and about their past” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). One point of commonality between Khloe and Lamar is that they each lost a parent to cancer at a young age; this shared sense of loss is positioned as a crucial factor in their bond.

They are shown discussing their wedding plans over dinner and emphasize the importance of the number twenty-seven (their intended wedding date is September 27th) in their

lives—they met on the twenty-seventh of August, Khloe’s birthday is the twenty-seventh, Lamar’s last flight from New York was United Flight 27, Lamar’s favorite number is seven, and there are two of them—implying that all of these are “signs” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”).

The show takes advantage of many other opportunities to reinforce the “realness” of their love; at one point Khloe admits to camera: “Honestly, I have never felt this way; I am head over heels in love, and Lamar’s head over heels in love with me—I just *know* it’s right” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). The dinner scene closes with Lamar’s emphatic declaration: “I promise you I’ll never leave you, no matter what” (followed by Khloe repeating the last part in agreement) (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”).¹²³

Later, Khloe and Lamar are shown engaging in an intense make-out session while having dinner with her mom Kris. Kris makes it clear that this is not normal behavior for Khloe when she says to camera: “I have never seen Khloe have this much PDA in front of me in my life. She barely *introduces* me to a boyfriend—maybe she’s finally found the right guy” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). Apparently the purpose of this dinner is to announce their intentions to marry (although Khloe, in a subsequent conversation with her sisters, refers to it in a much more traditional fashion as “he asked mom for my hand in marriage”) (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). Kris, though apparently shocked, appears happy and excited.

Khloe and Lamar’s actual ceremony is followed by direct-to-camera statements from members of the immediate family that seem to be once again assuring viewers of the realness of

¹²³ However, much of the efforts to prove the veracity of this relationship are undermined in the next scene, when Kourtney, Kim, and Khloe’s friend Malika are shown gossiping about how Khloe has been spending all of her time with Lamar, but has not really talked to any of them about her feelings for him or their relationship. They also emphasize the fact that Khloe and Lamar just recently met, seemingly questioning the legitimacy or perhaps the reliability of their strong feelings for each other (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”).

these events. Rob says: “For me, to see my sister so happy, and like, *finally*, she found someone—I definitely, definitely think that this will last” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). Kourtney confirms this sentiment, saying: “I’ve never seen Khloe happier, and I think that when it is true love, you just know” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”).

In an on-camera interview with Kim and Kris Humphries (who will hereafter be referred to as Humphries in order to avoid any confusion with Kim’s mom, Kris Jenner) featured at the beginning of their wedding episode, Humphries says: “Baby, every girl dreams about being married...to someone like me. And your dream came true” (followed by awkward laughter from Kim) (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). This introductory shot is followed by individual clips of Kim and Humphries talking about their initial impressions of each other, and their own assessments of their relationship. Kim says: “From the moment I spotted Kris, he was everything that I ever wanted and more,” while Kris gives a more old-fashioned response: “What made me realize Kim’s the one I wanna marry is just that I look at her and I see the mother of my children” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). This statement is followed by a clip of the proposal (as it appeared on a previous episode of the show) and a clip of Kim and Humphries arguing about how many kids to have (but they do both seem to be in agreement about wanting to have kids right away; Kim tells Kourtney and Khloe later in the episode that they want to get married as soon as possible so that they can start a family).

Humphries’s appearances on the show seem to show how vastly different he and Kim are, a point which Kim claims to see as a positive: “I think Kris and I are a really good match, like, we’re *so* opposite...” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding,

Part 1”). Humphries seems to be on board with their differences as well, stating: “I’m excited to be a part of this family now; despite all the drama and craziness they genuinely really care about each other” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). Kris Jenner appears to be pleased with the pairing; she tells Kim that she has “got a keeper” and that she “picked a good one” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”).

4.4 Emphasis on Material Goods

As discussed earlier in this chapter, *KUWTK* provides many opportunities for advertising and brand endorsement (not least of all for the Kardashian family themselves). The promotional efforts on *KUWTK* differ from that of *SYTTD* in that they rely on the Kardashians’ celebrity status to endorse brands and products. Not only do the wedding episodes generate advertising revenue from commercials, but they also promote the post-feminist ideology of hyper-consumerism as well. As mentioned in Chapter One, the ability to consume is framed as a form of feminine empowerment (Douglas 2010; McRobbie 2009; Tasker and Negra 2007), and the Kardashians blatantly encourage this ideology (McClain 2013). This encouragement can be seen in many examples from the text where the focus is placed on acquiring the material goods that are traditionally seen as being essential components in any wedding.

When Khloe tells Kourtney and Kim about her engagement, they appear quite shocked, especially in light of the fact that she is planning the wedding in nine days. They immediately assume that she must be joking and ask where her ring is; Khloe explains that they have not gone to pick it out yet. (The importance of the ring as a financial commitment is also emphasized when Khloe explains: “Bruce has never really been a fan of any of the men that I’ve dated and I know he won’t take any of this whole wedding stuff seriously unless Lamar proves himself, so

I'm not gonna tell him anything until I have a ring" [*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, "The Wedding"].) The absence of the ring, the traditional material signifier of engagement, coupled with the short planning period, is clearly the source of much distress for Khloe's mother and sisters; their shock over the lack of ring and planning time serves to illustrate Khloe's transgression when it comes to performing the role of bride correctly.¹²⁴

Kris reiterates this point further when she says "I just found out that Lamar wanted to propose to Khloe, and now she's telling me that she wants a wedding in *nine* days—I don't even know how to wrap my head around this" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, "The Wedding"). She continues to fixate on the difficulty of procuring the material goods required for the wedding when she starts listing all the things they need ("invitations and flowers and cake") Kourtney echoes this sentiment when she points out that "People usually get engaged for like a year" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, "The Wedding"). Kris's shock and distress definitely seem to be more about having to plan a quickie wedding, as opposed to the quick engagement.

While the rest of the family continues to express mixed emotions over the wedding, Kris focuses on just how important the actual wedding is to her, telling Khloe: "I've waited my whole life to give a wedding" before pointing out again how tight the timeline is (which will make her job even harder) but insisting that she will still make it "perfect" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, "The Wedding").

The countdown to the wedding continues to be shown in an on-screen graphic (again, emphasizing the limited prep time). However, one component of the wedding that is

¹²⁴ Later when Lamar produces an enormous diamond ring and formally asks Khloe to marry him in front of the whole family, it is implied that the presentation of the ring makes it official. Kim further emphasizes the importance of this material object when she says to camera that Khloe probably always wanted a big diamond ring, even though she apparently never discussed it.

traditionally seen as extremely important—the wedding dress—is one area that no one seems to be concerned about because designer Vera Wang just so happens to be a friend of the family and is more than happy to make a custom dress for Khloe. Kris even goes so far as to ask the designer to make all of the bridesmaids' dresses as well as a dress for her. She begins to criticize Khloe's color choice as well, but Khloe puts her foot down on this issue.

Even though she is largely unconcerned with the majority of the wedding traditions, Khloe does seem to be affected by this particular ritual. She calls her dress fitting “the moment of truth,” and acknowledges the significance of the moment thusly: “This whole thing is like a dream come true. I never really thought I was the marrying type, and so I never really knew the significance of what a wedding dress means, but, finally having one on, I feel like this is *amazing*, this is what a wedding's about—you have to find the perfect dress and I really feel like I found that” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). Khloe again references the importance of the wedding dress when hers is delivered to the house: “This dress is so beautiful, and every time I put it on I honestly feel like a princess. This is turning into my fairytale wedding and I'm so happy” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). It is evident from this remark that the viewer is supposed to believe that Khloe has now bought into the magical wedding fantasy.¹²⁵

Meanwhile, Kris continues planning other aspects of the wedding, selecting things based on her own preferences (like her favorite type of champagne), even when they do not match up with Khloe's taste (i.e., she picks steak for the wedding dinner despite the fact that Khloe apparently does not even eat steak). Rob (ever the voice of reason) tries to check this errant behavior, complaining to camera: “My mom is being *extremely* selfish. She says she's planning

¹²⁵ However, as they are all getting dressed on the day of the wedding, Khloe does express her frustration with one aspect of this tradition, calling veils “so ugly” and saying that hers makes her look like she is “going to go bee hunting” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”).

‘*Khloe’s*’ wedding, but, you know, she’s obviously planning *her* dream wedding” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). Kris does not help her case when she makes comments like “I’m gonna make sure that *my* daughter has the most *beautiful*, glamorous, delicious wedding in the whole entire world,” and later “It’s *every mom’s* dream having a wedding for one of my daughters. My vision for the *perfect* wedding is flowers by Mark’s Garden” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). This strategic brand endorsement is accompanied by both interior and exterior shots of the boutique, including a scene where the florist assures Kris that they have 5,000 roses for Khloe’s wedding.

The endorsement (and the takeover) continues with the creation of the wedding registry: “I have thought about this my *entire life*, so I choose Geary’s for Khloe to go register for her wedding gifts—just like, *my dream come true*” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). The footage inside the store shows Kris making all of the selections while Khloe attempts to resist her mother’s domination—especially when Kris chooses a place setting that retails for \$750 apiece. Khloe tries to put a stop to this whispering as discreetly as possible: “None of *my* friends could afford anything in this store,” but her protests apparently fall on deaf ears, as Kris continues to control the shopping trip (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). Finally, Khloe gives up, exasperatedly remarking to the camera that at this point she would really rather just cancel the wedding and elope to Vegas.

No endorsement opportunity is left unutilized, as even Kim and Kourtney’s trip to the adult store Pleasure Chest to shop for Khloe’s bachelorette party is chronicled. Kourtney refers to the location as “a famous sex store in L.A.,” and both the interior and exterior of the building are shown on camera (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). There is another opportunity for endorsement when the wedding party is shown having the rehearsal

dinner at The Lobster, which is “Lamar’s favorite restaurant in Los Angeles” according to Kris (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). The product placement continues when Khloe and Lamar are shown presenting Kris with a Cartier watch (the brand is clearly visible on the outside of the bag) to thank her for planning the wedding.

Unlike Khloe, who seemed largely uninterested in the details of wedding planning,¹²⁶ Kim makes it clear that she has put a lot of thought into her own wedding. She says to camera: “I have always pictured my wedding to be romantic and soft and just filled with love,” and later: “I just want, like, the most glamorous wedding you’ve ever imagined” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”).

Khloe recognizes Kim’s investment in the princess fairytale, telling Kim: “I feel like you’re a very Disneyland, like a Cinderella story, like very theme-y of like Cinderella” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). Kris is well aware of Kim’s wedding dreams as well; when Kim and Humphries told Kris that they want to get married in ninety days, Kris jokingly compared this to Khloe’s nine day wedding planning period, but that Kim will be harder to please because “Kim has had a pretty good idea of what she wanted for her wedding since she was a little girl. It’s *all* about everything being *way* over the top and spectacular. It’s gonna be a *whole* different thing than Khloe’s wedding, and I—I’m not ready for this right now” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”).

Later, while looking at sketches for her wedding dress from multiple designers, Kim again emphasizes how important this material ritual is: “This is something that I think *every* girl has dreamed of but it’s *so* hard to choose; there’s so many dresses” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). She ultimately decides to go with Vera

¹²⁶ At one point, Khloe even says: “Honestly, I could go to a courthouse and get—sign papers and be done. I don’t need a wedding” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”).

Wang (just like Khloe did for her wedding dress, a fact which Khloe is more than happy to point out). The fairytale princess talk continues when Kim goes to try on dresses; Khloe tells her she looks “like a princess!” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). At the fitting, Kim mentions that she wishes she could show Humphries the dress, and is immediately met with horrified looks and emphatic protests for even suggesting a desire to violate this wedding commandment. She ultimately selects three different dresses to wear (one for the ceremony, one for dinner, and one for dancing), saying excitedly: “It’s so dramatic to have three dresses—who does that?” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”).

At her second dress fitting for her custom gown, Kim says it makes [the wedding] “real” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”). Kris then presents Kim with a ring-bearer’s pillow her (Kris’s) grandmother made for her to use at her own wedding (though she makes no mention of Kim wearing her old wedding dress, despite trying to convince Khloe to wear it at her wedding). There are also many instances in the wedding episodes that highlight the connection (or, in this case, the disconnect) between masculinity and financial control on *KUWTK*.

4.5 Masculinity and Control

On *KUWTK*, the way in which gender is constructed is as much about framing the men on the show as it is about the women. Some of the associations between masculinity and control discussed in relation to *SYTTD* in Chapter Two appear in *KUWTK* as well. While discussing Khloe’s relationship with Lamar with Bruce, Rob frames Lamar’s merit in terms of his career accomplishments (a clothing line and an NBA championship), before Bruce cuts him off, saying “Who cares!? That’s the least I care about. I care about one thing: how he’s gonna treat

Khloe—that’s all” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). Bruce initially attributes his concern to the close relationship he and Khloe share (saying that he feels protective of her), but then also acknowledges that it stems from a lack of faith in her own judgment: “As she’s grown up I just have *always* questioned her judgment when it comes to men. Now Lamar—very questionable. He’s gotta, kinda, prove himself to me” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). He notes that, as far as he is concerned, Kourtney and Kim are no better: “I mean, look at all these girls—how many *losers* have they been with!? Khloe, before this—*losers*. I mean, I-I don’t have a lot of confidence in their choice of men,” to which Rob replies “I completely agree with you, but this guy is different” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). Bruce dismisses him by asking sarcastically “You’re just not sayin’ this ‘cause you want Laker tickets?” which elicits laughter from Rob

Bruce, who has been kept in the dark up to this point, allegedly finds out about the engagement when he hears about it on the evening news. He is portrayed as being very upset at both the sudden engagement and at being left out of the loop. When he confronts Khloe in front of the rest of the family, they all get into a shouting match before Bruce finally storms off yelling “Have a nice life—screw you, Khloe!” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). Kris continues to yell after him (she says “Oh, I guess you won’t be walking anyone down the fucking aisle!” despite the fact that Khloe has allegedly already decided to have her brother perform that role) until Rob once again intervenes, sticking up for Bruce by telling his mother to stop being “rude” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). As Rob goes off to find Bruce, Khloe tearfully commiserates with her mother and sisters over this unfortunate turn of events.

When Rob finds Bruce upstairs, Bruce is still smarting over being left in the dark, saying of Khloe: “maybe I’m not your ‘*genetic*’ father, but I am your father—I been here since you were five years old” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). However, after calming down a little, he then says to camera: “Khloe and I have had a really *good* relationship throughout the years and, uh, I don’t wanna lose that close relationship over this thing” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). He apologizes to Khloe for his behavior but immediately follows up by expressing his “fatherly” concern about her quick engagement (“You don’t know this guy”) (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”).

Later, Kris sits down privately with Khloe and attempts to smooth things over between the two of them, telling her:

You know, he made your dad a promise, when your dad was dying, that he would be the one to take care of you girls. He feels *so* responsible and that’s why he’s the tough one. And Khloe, he’s *just hurt*. He will come around, you watch and see. If I were you, I would go to him and ask him if he would walk you down the aisle—I know that’s what you want at the end of the day. (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”).

Khloe hears her mother out and appears to contemplate all of this silently.

Later, when Lamar arrives at the house for a family dinner, Khloe initially feels like Bruce is being rude, but she later perks up when she “overhears” them talking about various personal topics (like the fact that both Lamar’s mother and Khloe’s father passed away after battling cancer, where they each grew up, and what it is like being an athlete). Next thing you know, Bruce is toasting Khloe and Lamar and welcoming him to the family. However, he does qualify this somewhat when addressing the camera later, noting that he still does not really know Lamar and still thinks it is too soon for them to marry, though he now “respects” him (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”).

There is another pointed display of masculinity at the rehearsal dinner as well; Bruce stands up and gives an emotional speech about how he promised Khloe's father, Robert Kardashian, when Robert was dying from cancer that he would always take care of Khloe. Then, he turns to Lamar and jokes, "Now she's your responsibility," adding "good luck" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, "The Wedding"). This scene echoes the traditional origins of marriage, when fathers essentially transferred ownership of their daughters over to their new husbands. Apparently Khloe is touched by display, and asks Bruce to walk her down the aisle, who readily agrees (saying he "would be nothing but honored" to do so) (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, "The Wedding").

Similarly, when Kim plans to marry Kris Humphries, her mother makes a comment about Humphries not currently being signed with any team (in other words, he is unemployed), implying that this is a negative. In reality, Kim makes so much money that one would think Humphries' financial status would be irrelevant—it is not as if she needs him to support her. However, *KUWTK* gives a nod to traditional notions of masculinity by including this discussion of Humphries' suitability as a husband and provider, despite the fact that the Kardashian/Jenner family dynamic subverts this theme.

Another central feature of this matriarchal family is an alleged competition among the female family members (a theme that also featured prominently in Chapter Three's discussion of *Bridezillas*).

4.6 Female Competition

The Kardashian sisters are often depicted as being in competition with one another, a theme which appeared in relation to *SYTTD* in Chapter Two and *Bridezillas* in Chapter Three as well. For instance, while brother Rob appears to be entirely supportive of Khloe's decision to

marry Lamar, (and at one point even chastises Kim with “Don’t be a hater” when she criticizes Khloe and Lamar’s decision to marry so quickly), the wedding is framed as something that leads both Kourtney and Kim to compare Khloe’s relationship status to theirs. Kim, however, is portrayed as having a slightly more selfish concern when it comes to Khloe’s impending nuptials; while on the phone with a friend, Kim reveals that part of her problem with the marriage is her jealousy:

I just really think I’m gonna need a Xanax during the wedding...I mean, I’m gonna be standing there crying like a zombie, like ‘this was supposed to be me, this was supposed to be me!’ Like, I think, you know, like what if I have a nervous breakdown when they’re like ‘Does anyone object?’ and like, what if I’m like ‘THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE MEEE!’ like, in a dream? (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”)

She follows this conversation by emphasizing the material aspects of the wedding in relation to her bitterness when petulantly telling her mom, “Well since I already planned my wedding and I know what I want my cake to look like, and I know what I want my flowers to look like, and I have it all planned out and cut out, I could give it to Khloe...maybe it’ll be useful for someone” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). She then returns to criticizing the situation, saying “I just, like, don’t know, like, three weeks after meeting someone—I really don’t know if this is such a good idea—” before Rob, who apparently can take her self-centered rambling no more, finally cuts her off with “Okay, Kim, we get it—that’s how you feel, but it’s gonna happen next week, and that’s it, and it has nothing to do with you” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”).

Kim then insists that she does not want people to think she is jealous and states emphatically that she is not, adding that “He’s so tall, I couldn’t even...” (implying that she is not jealous because she would never be romantically interested in Lamar) (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). This final statement appears to really set Rob off; he

scolds her for “bashing” Khloe and Lamar, which in turn makes both Kim and Kris turn on him for being “rude” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). Kim lashes out, claiming that Rob’s behavior is why he and his girlfriend broke up, which prompts the two to trade insults for a while until Kris finally tells them both to stop, pointing out that they are each struggling with their own relationship issues and disappointments at the moment. Kim confirms this fact when addressing the camera directly, and their fight appears to end for the time being.

However, this break in the competition is short lived. During the wedding dress fitting, Kris pulls out her old wedding dress ostensibly to see if Khloe wants to wear it (though one would think she would have asked before commissioning Vera Wang to create a custom gown). This is apparently a moot point though, because Khloe responds to this request by calling the dress “ugly,” thinking that this is just another way that her mom is trying to make the wedding “all about her” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). Kris immediately tears up, causing Khloe to apologize. Then, in a move that surprises absolutely no one, Kim tries on her mom’s dress and begins dancing around the room saying “I wanna get married” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). Kris then says to camera: “Well *Khloe* doesn’t wanna try my dress on, but *Kim* looks *beautiful* in it and it fits her like a glove” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”).

This is not the only instance when Kim shifts the focus onto herself; later, as the family is preparing for their first big family dinner with Lamar, Kim interrupts her mother to say “Mom, F.Y.I, I’m getting a [Rolls Royce] Phantom with a driver to take me to the wedding” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”). There is no obvious explanation as to why Kim thinks this is the proper time to make this declaration.

In another scene, this time at Khloe's bachelorette party (which Khloe says she did not actually want), they all decide to tell stories about Khloe, but Kim's story is about Khloe going on a trip with Kim and her boyfriend at the time, NFL player Reggie Bush. Continuing the competition theme of this episode, Kim is constantly shown saying how happy she is for Khloe, though that does not actually appear to be the case. She is constantly making everything about her and her sadness over her failed relationship with Reggie, almost in the same breath as she talks about this being "Khloe's time" and insisting it is not about her [Kim].

This episode continually emphasizes just how unusual the present circumstances are in the lives of the Kardashian sisters—in other words, that Kourtney is pregnant, Khloe is getting married, and Kim is (inexplicably) single (and shown emphatically telling the camera for the millionth time just how happy she is) (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, "The Wedding"). While everyone is getting their hair, nails, and makeup done, Kim asks Khloe: "How does it feel to be, like, queen of the day?" to which Khloe half-jokingly responds: "I feel like this would be your dream. I really don't care. You, like, wish you were queen of the day" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, "The Wedding"). The camera then zooms in on Kim, and after a slight pause Kim says in a strange tone of voice "No I don't, honey" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2009, "The Wedding").

This theme continues in Kim's wedding episode with Kris Humphries when he tells Kim about the confrontation he and Khloe had at their engagement party, adding: "I feel like it's all a competition with you and your sister" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1"). The fact that Humphries attributes Khloe's issues with him to feelings of jealousy is telling—it does not seem to occur to him that maybe she just does not like him. Kim is very upset about this revelation and claims to be especially hurt because she supported Khloe

and Lamar when they announced their engagement. When she confronts Khloe about it, Khloe is unapologetic, maintaining that she just said openly what everyone else had been saying in private. She also tells Kim what Humphries said about her marriage to Lamar, but Kim does not appear to be swayed by this news; she continues to blame Khloe for the conflict and tells her she no longer wants her to come to the wedding.

The implied competition among women is also reflected in the way that the *KUWTK* wedding episodes address issues related to the stars' physical appearance.

4.7 Body Image Issues

As we saw in Chapter One, post-feminist ideologies often promote consumption as a means of achieving current idealized standards of beauty and connect this endeavor to female empowerment (Douglas 2010; Marwick 2010; McRobbie 2009; Tasker and Negra 2007). *KUWTK* supports this logic by continually highlighting the importance of one's appearance (as well as the lengths that the members of this family will go to to ensure compliance). In one prominent example, Kris seems worried that she may not have enough time to have plastic surgery before Kim and Humphries' wedding. She says to camera: "Kim's wedding is the biggest event I have *ever* planned in my entire life, so I only got a couple months to get my neck done. Right now time is not on my side" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1"). Her focus here seems to be on herself, rather than her daughter. Apparently her insecurities about her body are deeply rooted, as she continues to discuss them when going for her surgery consultation.¹²⁷ Despite the fact that she is clearly extremely

¹²⁷ In an ironic twist, Kris and the rest of the family seem determined to instill body image issues in Rob, who has put on a little weight before the wedding. They appear to take turns shaming him about his lack of self-control and teasing him about not fitting into his tux at the wedding. Khloe even goes so far as to install an alarm on the pantry door to catch him snacking. Rob claims that his snacking problems are due to Lamar's influence, since he allegedly did not have this problem before moving in with them. Later, Rob apparently moves in with Kourtney and Scott in

apprehensive about the procedure, she insists upon going through with it. (There are also multiple mentions of the name of Kris's plastic surgeon, Dr. Garth Fischer, to ensure sufficient brand endorsement.) While they claim to be concerned for their mother, the sisters are depicted shooting a cover for Lucky magazine while Kris is having her surgery.

Later, the family gathers for the big "reveal" so that Kris can show off her new face (leading Khloe to remark "*Everything* in this family is an extravaganza," to which Kim, never one to pass up an opportunity to turn the discussion back to her, replies "I would like to think of myself as the biggest extravaganza of them all") (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1"). At this point Kris emerges, asking what they all think of her new look, and Khloe responds with "Like, your neck doesn't look like leather anymore" and "I was afraid you were gonna look like Catwoman but you just dress like a cat" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1"). In the wake of this rather harsh assessment, Kim immediately comes to her mother's rescue, telling her: "You honestly look great. You look exactly like yourself, just fifteen years younger" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1"). Kris, apparently touched by Kim's affirmations, emphasizes to camera how great and supportive Kim has been, unlike her other children.

In another example during the lead-up to Kim's wedding to Kanye West, her sisters have some concerns over the fit of their bridesmaids' dresses. The dress fittings take place at Kanye's Paris apartment and he appears to be directing the entire process (mostly by commenting on the fit of the dresses and suggesting what he sees as the necessary alterations). At first, Kim is not even in the room, and only enters when she is explicitly asked. The first major issue presented is

an attempt to lead a healthier lifestyle, but ultimately returns to Khloe and Lamar's house when he realizes he cannot curb his excessive snacking even in that environment.

Kourtney's concern over how the cut of the dress seems to expose her baby bump (at the time of the wedding, no one outside of the immediate family knows she is pregnant). As they are discussing this issue, Khloe, Kendall, and Kylie arrive and immediately begin their dress fittings as well. After Khloe expresses concern over the fit of her dress as well, Kim says to camera:

I can tell that the girls aren't loving their dresses. It is really, really hard to find a dress that will fit all of my sisters' body types. Every single person has a different shape, height, whatever, and when we first ordered these dresses I had no idea Kourtney would be pregnant. I want everyone to feel really comfortable and just love what they have. It's *really* hard. (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, "Kim's Journey to the Altar").

The scene ends without any clear resolution to the problems with the dresses.

Later, there is a second bridesmaids' dress fitting, which Kim and Kanye arranged by getting another designer to create a second dress style. Kendall tries on the new dress first and the rest of the group discuss the dress on her like she is a dress dummy (comments include a discussion of the sheer bodice that exposes her nipples, and a request by Kanye to have the high front slit sewn up because he thinks it is too "risqué") (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, "Kim's Journey to the Altar"). Eventually they all agree that someone else should try the dress on because Kendall's body is "perfect" (according to Kourtney) and "probably not the best example" (according to Kim) (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, "Kim's Journey to the Altar"). Khloe is the bluntest of all in her assessment, saying "Yeah Kendall, fuck you. Take the dress off" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, "Kim's Journey to the Altar"). Though the girls all like the high slit, Kanye apparently has the final say and decides that the slit will be removed because it is "distracting" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, "Kim's Journey to the Altar"). Ultimately, though, everyone seems to be on board with the new dresses (in spite of the loss of the slit).

In that same episode, when Khloe fails to attend Kim's final dress fitting (which takes place at Givenchy Haute Couture Salon), Kim rather insensitively describes Khloe's feelings by saying "She was feeling really ugly" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, "Kim's Journey to the Altar"). In addition, Rob decides at the last minute not to attend the wedding. Kim explains to camera that he read "some nasty comments" that had been made in the press regarding his weight and did not feel like being around all of the people at the wedding (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, "Kim's Journey to the Altar"). She calls this turn of events "heartbreaking," but says: "I don't even wanna think about it, I don't wanna talk about it; today is my wedding and I don't wanna cry; I just wanna, you know, have it be a happy day with amazing memories and we'll talk about Rob when we get home" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, "Kim's Journey to the Altar").

4.8 Wedding Day Details

In keeping with the format of most wedding-themed reality television programming, the wedding episodes of *KUWTK* do not devote a great deal of time to the actual wedding. Like *SYTTD* and *Bridezillas*, the wedding planning is often the focus of these specials, and pre-wedding family conflicts are frequently highlighted as well.

For Khloe's wedding to Lamar, the lead up to the actual ceremony includes shots of the many famous celebrity guests arriving, with their names shown on-screen along with a title in some cases. An abbreviated version of the wedding ceremony is shown, including the processional, the vows, the exchange of rings, and the kiss. The scene then shifts to the reception and the first dance (revealing that Khloe has changed into a different dress for this part of the evening). Khloe and Lamar continue to engage in very intense public displays of affection

throughout the evening, even during a rather awkward toast delivered by Kourtney and Kim that included the slightly uncomfortable exchange:

Kim: “When you date one of us, you kind of date the whole family”
 Kourtney: “And Lamar’s excited to be dating all three of us” (*Keeping Up with Kardashians* 2009, “The Wedding”).

This exchange is met with cheers from the crowd and a standing ovation from Lamar. Later, when it is time for the bouquet toss, Khloe deliberately throws it directly at Kim. The episode closes with an on-screen graphic of “The End” which is followed immediately by another graphic that says “The Beginning” with fireworks in the background.

Like Khloe’s wedding, Kim’s wedding to Humphries also features many celebrity guests (whose names are again displayed on screen in case viewers do not recognize them). Another point of commonality is that short clips of Kim’s wedding are also shown (including the processional, Bruce giving Kim away, the vows, the exchange of rings, and the recessional). There are a few more awkward moments before the episode draws to a close; as they are leaving the ceremony, Humphries says to Kim: “Baby, you’re my wife now,” to which she responds “How weird is that?” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”). He follows this with: “Now you’re stuck with me—forever,” as Kim replies: “Perfect” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”). Later, after Kim changes into dress number two, Humphries rushes to try and to pick her up when he sees her but she immediately wards him off so he does not mess up her dress. Once she changes into her final dress of the night, Kim says to camera: “I’m eager to show off my Old Hollywood, sexy satin look,” and then proceeds to the dance floor for the first dance (to a song by sung by Robin Thicke) (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”). The episode ends with one final statement by Kim: “This was, honestly, such a dream come true—it

really was my fairytale wedding” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”).

However, Kim’s wedding to Kanye West gets the shortest screen time by far. While the girls are shown getting their hair and makeup done, Kim is working on a “selfie book” for Kanye (which apparently consists of nothing but pictures of Kim that she has taken herself). She explains this activity to camera, stating: “I love to make selfie books for Kanye, and for his birthday I made him a selfie book and he *loved* it, so for our wedding I made him a new one. I hope he likes it” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, “Kim’s Journey to the Altar”).

Kim makes a few final tweaks before the ceremony, asking that the bouquets be made smaller and that her hair be redone because she thinks that the part is slightly off to one side. Kim is not pleased that her sister has not changed her hair, but claims she is not going to worry about it: “Kylie’s hair is still blue, and she promised me she would put extensions in to cover it. It’s just not worth a battle and I’m just gonna let it go and she has blue hair at my wedding” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, “Kim’s Journey to the Altar”). She then attempts to put on her veil, but worries that it is so cumbersome that it might make her trip and fall. She says in a voice-over, “It’s time to walk down the aisle; I can’t keep people waiting. It’s taking forever to put this veil on; it’s *so* heavy,” but, in the end, she sticks with this important component of bridal attire in spite of the physical discomfort it causes (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, “Kim’s Journey to the Altar”).

Finally, before going outside to start her walk down the aisle, Kim says: “It’s crazy that, you know, Kanye and I have been so close for so many years...I finally feel like, you know, I’m marrying my best friend” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, “Kim’s Journey to the

Altar”). The episode (and the season) ends with Kim walking out the door, and viewers are not shown any part of the wedding or the reception.

4.9 Family Drama

As was frequently the case on *SYTTD* and *Bridezillas*, there is no shortage of family conflict on the wedding episodes of *KUWTK*. Kim’s apparently rocky relationship with Kris Humphries is focus of most of their wedding special. The first hint of conflict between Kim and Humphries appears when he shows up to visit her at her home in L.A. with his two dogs in tow. Kim is visibly unhappy with having the dogs in the house, saying to camera that she “loves” pets “from afar” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). Apparently, one of her major issues is the messiness that comes along with having pets: “I’m *such* a neat freak that I don’t even know how I’m gonna live with *him* let alone two dogs” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). Humphries does not seem to be phased by her discomfort, but rather goes up to hug her, exclaiming “Baby I’m so excited to *be* here!” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). Unfortunately, Kim does not seem to share his enthusiasm in the moment because she recoils squealing “Babe, you just picked up dog poo. Eww, wash your hands!” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”).

They continue to have small conflicts throughout the episode (Humphries sleeping on Kim’s side of the bed, getting toothpaste on her bathroom mirror, letting his dogs sleep in the bed, etc.). Having the dogs sleep in the bed appears to be a huge issue for Kim, who even buys crates and dog beds to try to convince Humphries to make the bed off limits. He continues to resist, however, telling her: “You just wanna fight me on everything. At some point you need to

just let go and live life” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”).

The conflicts are not limited to Kim and Humphries; the rest of the Kardashian/Jenner family seems to have some issues with him as well. Khloe, in particular, appears to be put off by him; at one point in the episode, they get into a verbal skirmish in front of the rest of the family that includes her calling him “Frankie” as in Frankenstein. Khloe makes her feelings clear when she says to camera: “I don’t know Kris Humphries. I haven’t *bonded* with him. He typically isn’t someone that I would gravitate to” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). She tells Humphries: “What you’re gonna learn really fast in this family is the men have no say whatsoever,” followed by “Your dick is gonna be gone the day you get married; this is how this family works” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”).

Khloe becomes even more candid about her feelings for Humphries as the episode continues; she later says to camera:

I am worried about Kris Humphries. I do not know where his intentions lie. He sees Kim, who is this beautiful trophy wife, who has a ton of money, works her ass off, great personal[ity]—like Kim has so many amazing things and Kris has nothing to lose if he marries Kim and he gets a divorce. He has everything to gain.” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”).

Khloe and Humphries are shown engaging in continued conflict; at one point he criticizes her appearance while she asks him about his ex-girlfriends and his STD status.

The tension between Khloe and Humphries appears to come to a head at the engagement party Khloe throws for the couple. There is a public moment of awkwardness between Khloe and Humphries when he makes comments during Kourtney and Khloe’s toast to the couple, prompting Kim to say to camera: “I don’t know what it is between Khloe and Kris, but I just

hope that they get over it and they don't bring any of this drama to my wedding" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1"). Kim's stated concern is for a conflict-free wedding day, rather than the long-term relationship between her sister and her soon-to-be husband.

Later on that evening, Humphries walks in on Khloe and a friend while Khloe is discussing her issues regarding Humphries. The two of them start arguing and Khloe calls him "opportunistic"; when he attempts to protest, Khloe then says "But you *have* come up off of Kim," which causes him to remark in frustration "Wow, I'm gonna kill this girl" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1").

Humphries then says to camera: "Khloe's questioning my motives with Kim; I feel like she's one to talk—she got married in three weeks, trying to shock Hollywood, basically" and says to Khloe: "How dare you question someone else's marriage? Are you sure you're not just using Lamar? He's a Laker, he's got championships—how often are you gonna find like a tall, successful guy to have kids with?" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1"). Khloe then asks: "You think I married Lamar because he's tall and a Laker?! That's am—that's really fab. Listen, Kim has been my sister for twenty-seven years; Kim is someone who falls in love heavy, and when she falls in love she loves hard. Do I believe that every time she's been in love she believes it? ...I'm hoping because Kim's a hopeless romantic and Kim has the best intentions in the wo—" at which point Humphries interjects to point out that Kim has actually been married before while he has not, so if anything, "maybe [he] should question *her* intentions" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1"). At this point the show goes to commercial break, so the viewer is left hanging as to how this particular scene plays out.

When Humphries goes to play golf with Scott, Bruce, and Rob, Scott attempts to offer him some advice. Scott says to camera: “You know, I had to make quite a bit of changes to get along with everybody in the whole Kardashian clan, and you know one wasn’t cheap, I actually had to surgically remove my penis. I have a lot of advice for Kris—first and foremost: shut your mouth” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”).

Humphries does not appear to be open to this advice though, telling Scott “I can’t be in this family if I can’t be me” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). Bruce, too, recognizes that Humphries will need to make some adjustments: “He’s *really* controlling. Can’t be *that* in this family” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). (Though Scott did make a rather classist jab at Humphries expense; when Humphries calls to say he is running late because he did not have appropriate golfing attire, Scott says “Who doesn’t have a *polo* shirt? Only somebody from Lake Minnetonka” [*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”].)

Even Kris is not immune to the conflict; she accompanies Kim on her shopping trip to Geary’s to register for gifts (the same location she took Khloe for her registry), and appears to be very upset that Humphries shows up late and then has the nerve to disagree with her selections (which include the same Hermes china patterns she tried to talk Khloe into): “Kris is late, and *then*, he has the nerve to *really criticize* my taste and Kim’s taste,” adding “I *really* like Kris, but I wanna strangle him right now” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). She seems to focus here on Humphries’ opposition to *her* choices, only adding in Kim as an afterthought.

At the next vendor appointment, Humphries is conveniently absent. Kim and her mother visit Mark’s Garden to look at flower arrangements (the same florist featured in Khloe’s wedding

special), and the hyper-consumerism continues (at one point, Kris asks the florist “I love this—are these real diamonds?” to which he replies “They could be”) (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). However, because Humphries really wants “to be involved,” Kim insists upon skyping him in for a planning meeting with her mother and all of the wedding coordinators (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). He immediately disagrees with her choice of color scheme (allegedly because he does not “want it to be too girly”), and suggests a casino theme for the reception, which everyone else quickly shoots down (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”).

Kim continues to attempt to make Humphries feel involved, but does not really seem to be willing to relinquish much control, explaining to camera: “A wedding is like the *bride’s* day; I definitely want him to have his say, but—don’t get crazy with it” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). Kris emphasizes the importance of the bride, joking to Humphries: “We’re gonna build the Church of Kim,” which prompts him to respond that it is crazy that they do not want him to be involved in planning his own wedding (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”).

In yet another example of Humphries being relegated to a supporting role in the planning process (and another source of conflict), when Kim is unable to attend a subsequent meeting with the wedding coordinator, she sends her mother in her place to meet Humphries there and prevent him from changing any of her selections. Kris happily complies, negating and even ridiculing all of Humphries’ suggestions, which he obviously does not appreciate. The tension between them continues when Humphries finds out that Kris has arranged for luxury cars and drivers to take

Kim's side of the family to the wedding, but neglected to arrange anything for his parents and sister.

However, the last straw for Humphries appears to be when he finds out that Kim and her mother pick the wedding location without his input. Kim does not even appear to factor him in on this decision, saying to camera: "My mom and I *absolutely* love it. It's perfection" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1"). Kim and Humphries are depicted as barely on speaking terms when they meet at menswear store Ermenegildo Zegna for the tuxedo fittings. In fact, Humphries seems surprised and perturbed that Kim shows up with her stylist in tow to make decisions about his tuxedo, complaining to the other men present that this is a "guy moment" and that Kim has been "*so* controlling throughout this process" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1").

As Kim and her mother continue to make all of the decisions, Humphries says exasperatedly to Kim: "You guys should just marry each other" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1"). Kim attempts to defend herself (and, by extension, her mother), telling him: "Babe, I seriously have been planning this dream wedding since I was ten years old; like, it's such a girl thing," to which Humphries quickly responds, "Yeah, and you could just slot any guy into it" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1"). On that note, the show breaks for commercial.

When the episode resumes, Kim appears to have had a change of heart: "I've made Kris feel like the wedding is just about me and I feel bad. This is definitely *our* wedding and he needs to have a say on major decisions" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1"). However, this new-found clarity seems to be short-lived, as Kim then adds: "Now I really just need to take Kris to Santa Barbara to see [the wedding location] and have him

just fall in love the way I did” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). This leads the viewer to believe that perhaps Kim is still just interested in making Humphries *think* he has a say in the process, while she and her mother continue to direct the event.

Fortunately for Kim, Humphries appears mollified by her show of contrition and ends up liking the location she originally selected. Kim, feeling vindicated, smugly remarks to camera: “Now, I think he can understand why I chose it and maybe he can start to understand I *know* what I’m doing here” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). However, she dutifully apologizes to Humphries again, and he admits the real reason behind his desire to be involved in the planning process: “I just don’t wanna end up like Scott and Bruce, like not having any say, and just basically living life in the passenger seat—not even the pa—the back seat...that’s my biggest fear” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). He later confirms just how much this gender dynamic disturbs him when he tells Kim: “You’re just like a different crew, like it’s, it’s like there’s no men in your family. It’s just really weird.... I mean it’s just so female-dominated. [I] feel like I gotta get like four women to fall in love with me” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”).

Later, the stress of the wedding process causes Kim to remark to Humphries: “I almost want like the wedding to be over so we can just enjoy our lives”—the key word here being “almost” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”). This statement is indicative of the feelings of many overwhelmed couples in that it emphasizes the perceived importance of the wedding ritual—one must go through with it (and, in fact, one wants

to go through with it) in spite of the incredible amount of (emotional and financial) stress it can cause.

4.10 The Importance of the Family (Brand)

Whereas brides on *SYTTD* and *Bridezillas* wanted to obtain pseudo-celebrity status and dreamed of being royalty on their wedding day, the Kardashians already maintain a high-profile media empire and are therefore often depicted as being concerned with protecting the family brand. Before Kim's wedding to Humphries, Khloe approaches her mother (and manager) Kris about the status of Kim's prenuptial agreement, saying that she wants to make sure their "companies" and their "brand" are protected (which is an interesting rhetorical choice, in that she is talking about the ensuring the security of their material interests rather than the welfare of her sister) (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1"). Kris confirms that all is well by calling and checking with their attorney, and at this point Khloe concludes the conversation with her first mention of Kim's (albeit, financial) well-being: "she'll thank us all later, when she still has a place to live" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1").

One major area of contention for Kim and Humphries is the issue of her last name. The discussion first occurs when Kim jokes that the "H" in Hermes actually stands for "Humphries" which she says means he needs to buy her more Hermes to match her new last name. Humphries claims that he does not believe she will actually change her name (though he clearly wants her to), and proceeds to try to guilt her into it by pointing out that Khloe took Lamar's last name. At this point Kim says she will, prompting Humphries to state in satisfaction: "that just shows you how down you are for your man, and how traditional you are" (to which Kim responds, "I'm a down ass bitch") (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2").

However, this issue is apparently nowhere near resolved; Kris becomes extremely agitated when she overhears Kim telling her friends at her bridal shower that she intends to change her name and immediately sets out to stop her. Kris says determinedly to camera “There is *no way* that I’m letting Kim change her name,” and then pulls Kim aside to try to convince her otherwise (her main arguments are in relation to Kim’s business affairs: “You are incorporated—Kim Kardashian, Inc.”) (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”). Kim does not appreciate her mother’s interference and tells her that she is being “selfish” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”).

Kris has no intention of giving up so easily though; later, she even tries to enlist the help of Kourtney and Khloe, but she is unsuccessful. In a last ditch effort, she has a bunch of mock-ups created that promote “new” products using Kim’s intended new last name; the products include a jump rope called the “Hump Rope,” a new fragrance simply called “Hump,” and a set of breast implants called “Hump-plants” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”). Apparently Kris’s “marketing pitch” does the trick, as Kim later sits down with her sisters to inform them that she has decided not to change her name after all (citing branding issues in addition to their mom’s mock-campaign).

Before she has a chance to tell him about her decision, Kim and Humphries encounter other issues. Although she previously tried to exclude him from much of the process, Kim claims that she is getting frustrated because she does not feel like Humphries is pulling his weight with the wedding planning duties. Her main complaints stem from one instance where he is shown playing with a toy helicopter instead of helping her make some wedding-related decisions, and another time when he apparently took too long to get back to her on an urgent question. Her anger continues to build later on, though, when she informs him that they are 150

people over the seating limit at their venue. Despite having already sent out the invitations, she tells Humphries that they must retract some to reduce the size of their party, but he resists, saying to camera: “I think the focus should be about the ceremony, the love, and the union we’re forming and less about everything else” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”).

They seem to reach a breaking point when she later informs him that she has decided not to change her name. The discussion becomes rather heated, with the following exchange taking place:

Humphries: This is not your family’s decision; this is your decision. ...I just think you let your family make decisions for you. ...You’re thirty years old—grow up.

Kim: Grow up?

Kim (to camera): I think Kris is just really upset, but my last name has become my business.

Humphries: We’re partners, and, like, you gotta understand that like *I* have to be your best friend, *I* have to be the one you talk to. You can’t just run off to your *sisters* and—‘specially decisions that we *should* be making together.

Kim: Sisters listen to each other, we talk to each other—your best friends are your *dogs*.

Humphries: I feel like I’m just a roadblock on your highway to ‘Kim’s Perfect Wedding.’ I just wish that you would be a little bit more down to earth about the wedding process.

Kim: I live in a different world. I was definitely raised in a different world than, like, yee-haw Minnesota, and that’s why—

Humphries (interrupting): Kim, four years ago you sold clothes in a boutique in the Valley, and now, like, all of a sudden you’re Miss Princess.

Kim: You knew what you were getting into—

Humphries: With what?

Kim: ...with my work ethic, with everything that I do—

Humphries (interrupting): ‘My work ethic’ (laughing)

Kim: Yeah—keeping my Kardashian name is a business decision. If you don't understand that then that's a problem for me.

Humphries: Okay, well then maybe we have a problem. (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2")

At this point, the scene ends, leaving these ominous words hanging in the air.

In spite of these issues, the countdown to the wedding continues. There are more opportunities for brand endorsement at the rehearsal dinner; the location of the rehearsal (the Montage Hotel in Beverly Hills), the dinner (Scarpetta) and the bridesmaids gifts (custom clutches by Judith Leiber) are clearly displayed and emphatically noted. Kris is upset when Humphries shows up with a mustache (which he later refers to as a way to "send a message to Kim") (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2").

Meanwhile, the couple continues to argue, with Humphries whispering to Kim: "Still gonna scream at you when I get a chance," to which Kim responds: "Go for it—I'll fuckin' slice you" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2").

While they are rehearsing, Kim jokes about running away and not going through with the wedding, which causes further awkwardness. Afterward, Kim has to try to resolve some issues with the seating chart, which Humphries refuses to deal with at that time, prompting her to say sarcastically, "Let me handle everything, as always" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2"). Humphries says to camera: "I'm just annoyed because the closer the wedding gets the crazier Kim is getting" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2").

The awkwardness continues at the dinner, where Kim tells her friends that she and Humphries "hate each other" right now, and jokingly asks if that is normal (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2"). Humphries goes to sit down with his

friends, rather than in his reserved spot next to Kim, but later joins her for the toast. Bruce again references the transfer of male ownership of women (as he did at Khloe's rehearsal dinner) when he says to Kim: "it's not gonna be easy on Saturday to give you away"; he then turns to Humphries and says "Kris you have no idea what you're getting into but you're learning" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2").

The last name issue is discussed one final time when Kim and Humphries sit down to fill out the marriage license. Though she alludes to an internal struggle ("I'm honestly really torn between changing my last name for my future husband, but then, I think it'll be like such a mistake business-wise, so I don't really know what I'm gonna do"), Kim ultimately decides to keep her name (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2"). Humphries is very unhappy with this decision, saying to camera: "At this point, I feel like I'm not even getting married, and I just don't care" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2").

However, the episode does not let this conflict appear to continue into the actual wedding. After seeing her brother Rob later in his tuxedo and noticing how much he resembles her late father, Kim begins to get emotional about her father's absence. She decides to have a piece of his clothing sewn into each one of her wedding dresses as a way of feeling him with her, but breaks down in tears while trying to select one of his old shirts for this purpose. Bruce tries to comfort her, as she tearfully remarks "It's like I'm forgetting what all of this is supposed to be about," and "I hate that like, on the outside it's all about like, the material things" and says that this is "not who we are" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2"). Kim tells Bruce that she did not want to be this emotional around Humphries, which leads Humphries to say to camera later that he did not think about "her missing her dad," and

acknowledging that “maybe for now she should keep her last name and at least always have that part of him” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”).

4.11 Class Conflicts

While *SYTTD* evaded explicit discussions of class status and *Bridezillas* utilized brides’ lower socio-economic status to shame women, *KUWTK* rarely makes overt mention of issues of social class, but there are exceptions. Kim displays a rather elitist attitude when she visits Humphries at his home in Minnesota and criticizes his décor, calling it “hideous” and “heinous” and claiming that it looks like something one would win on *The Price Is Right* (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”). Kim continues to comment on the differences between her everyday life and Humphries’ when they go grocery shopping, saying “Even the grocer carts in Minnesota are weird” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”).

While in the store, they see a tabloid with a cover story on Kim’s alleged “war” with Khloe which claims that the sisters are competing over who will have the better wedding. Kim and Humphries proceed to discuss the feud, noting that Khloe’s initial response to the announcement of their engagement was to ask “Is this real?” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2”). Kim remarks that Khloe may be concerned about them trying to take her “shine” (in other words, take the attention away from her), and points out that she even said she would never come to visit them in Minnesota.

Kim’s final classist jab comes when she buys supplies to give Humphries a pedicure. She insists that this is necessary, telling him: “your feet gross me out” and tries to convince him by stating: “my brother gets a mani/pedi once a week,” to which Humphries responds, “And people

question your brother's manhood" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2").

However, Humphries gets his digs in on Kim too; he notes to camera that Kim is "laid back" and "down to earth" in Minnesota (as opposed to the lifestyle she lives in L.A.) (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2"). After they return to L.A. and encounter a mob of paparazzi while trying to go out to eat, Humphries expresses his discomfort with the situation, telling Kim that he wants her to move to Minnesota with him and "start pumpin' out babies" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2"). This appears to put Kim off a little, and she tells him: "I think the reason I fell in love with you is 'cause you could handle my career...my career wasn't an issue for you"; however, Humphries stands firm, saying he finds all the paparazzi attention "annoying" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2").

At a tasting for the wedding with Wolfgang Puck, Humphries apparently violates some social norms of behavior, causing Kim to admit to camera: "Definitely one of the things I love about Kris is that he always acts like a big kid. But, on the other hand, it's like the thing that annoys me about him" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2"). Humphries then proceeds to tell Wolfgang Puck that he should give Kim cooking lessons (to which Puck replies, "You know what I tell every young bride is she should spend more time in the bedroom than in the kitchen") (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2"). This is not the first time his relative immaturity has come up; in part one, one of Humphries' friends reels at the thought of him having a child because "he's still a kid," to which Kim agrees, laughing, "He really is" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 1").

Meanwhile, in another potential allusion to social class, Kris takes Bruce on a trip to the adult store Pleasure Chest (yet another store that was featured on Khloe's wedding special) to shop for Kim's bachelorette party. Apparently this task was supposed to be Khloe's, but she asked her mom to take over in light of her fight with Kim. Bruce appears to be uncomfortable, and wears a baseball cap in order to avoid being recognized. In an earlier scene, Bruce had claimed he had never been to a "sex store" and Khloe and Kris reacted like it was the most shocking and unbelievable revelation they have ever heard. Bruce's alleged lack of familiarity with this venue serves to position him as being more in line with accepted traditional norms of behavior and therefore more respectable (as opposed to Khloe and Kris, who are now positioned as being less respectable by comparison). Kris allegedly asked Bruce to accompany her so she did not have to go alone; however, once inside, Kris appears to be quite comfortable; she can be seen trying on some of the accessories in the store and ends up spending \$150.51 on the items for the party, prompting Bruce to remark, "sex ain't cheap, is it?" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2011, "Kim's Fairytale Wedding, Part 2").

There is additional class commentary in Kim and Kanye's wedding special. At a girls' dinner with friends and family, those in attendance all decide to share stories about Kim. Most of the stories emphasize how long Kanye has allegedly been "in love" with Kim, but one story, from Kim's friend LaLa (who is married to NBA player Carmelo Anthony), contains some interesting class commentary, as well as some awkward references to Kim's relationship struggles pre-Kanye. LaLa says:

I mean, one thing I could say about Kim is that it's not a friendship that you would *think*, because we come from completely different backgrounds—you know, I grew up in the hood, you grew up in Beverly Hills—it's something completely different but she's *so* generous and caring. I've been there through a lot of ups and downs with her. For a long time, I got so used to talking to you when things were crazy and chaos and...now, it's just so calm and it's great but it's just great to see you so happy. (*Keeping Up with the*

Kardashians 2014, “Kim’s Journey to the Altar”).

When the camera cuts to Kim, she appears to be uncomfortable. However, the show does not include any discussion from Kim or the rest of the group following this comment, so viewers are left wondering as to Kim’s reaction to these points.

4.12 Kanye West

The third and final wedding to be featured on *KUWTK* (thus far, anyway) is the wedding of Kim and musical artist Kanye West. On the surface, this episode differs somewhat from the first two in that this wedding does not appear to be at all under the direction of Kris Jenner.¹²⁸ Whether or not this is actually the case is difficult to ascertain, but the storyline seems to imply that Kanye is the primary decision-maker in the wedding planning process (which would represent quite a departure from the ultimate control exercised by Kim and her mother in planning Kim’s wedding to Kris Humphries)¹²⁹. In addition, this wedding appears to have an entirely different tone than the first two; whereas Khloe’s wedding and Kim’s wedding to Humphries both appeared to be decadently over-the-top and largely in keeping with the fairytale princess theme that is so popular in bridal media, Kim and Kanye’s wedding is kept much more under wraps and neither the ceremony nor the reception is featured on camera (though viewers do get a glimpse of Kim and Kanye’s daughter North on the show for the first time).¹³⁰ Because Kanye West’s celebrity brand exists independently of the Kardashian empire and functions

¹²⁸ The only apparent commonality is that Kim and Kanye employ the same wedding planner who coordinated Khloe’s wedding and Kim’s wedding to Humphries.

¹²⁹ Kim does make two specific requests in relation to the appearance of those in her wedding; she asks her sister Kylie to cover up her blue hair (by using either “dark spray” or “clip-ins”), and she asks her stepfather Bruce to cut his ponytail. (Incidentally, neither of them comply with her requests, though Bruce does consent to allowing Kim to pick his hairstylist and makeup artist for the wedding. Kris makes it clear that she does not approve of his decision to stick with the ponytail, saying in front of everyone, including Bruce: “He looks like one of those guys from the Marie Antoinette days” [*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, “Kim’s Journey to the Altar”].)

¹³⁰ Kim emphasizes how important this is to her: “You know, the fact that we can have our daughter in this memory with us is so so so special” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, “Kim’s Journey to the Altar”).

outside of the realm of reality television, he frequently appears to chafe at some of the more intrusive reality show conventions.¹³¹

This wedding special clocks in at around 43 minutes, making it the shortest of the three by far (as compared to the one-hour-and-46-minute specials devoted to Khloe’s wedding and to Kim’s wedding to Humphries). However, there is one thing that remains consistent across the Kardashian wedding specials—the blatant brand endorsement for designers, locations, and vendors. In the course of the episode it is revealed that the wedding will actually take place in Italy, a closely guarded secret which was a surprise to even Kim’s family. However, by way of explaining this move, Kim describes how she and Kanye fell in love in Paris and conceived their daughter in Florence, and therefore want to take everyone on their “full love journey” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, “Kim’s Journey to the Altar”). There is certainly no shortage of endorsement here, as the family is shown having brunch at designer Valentino’s “Chateau” and then spending the evening at Versailles. After arriving in Florence (via private jet), the family then travels to the wedding venue, Belmond Villa San Michele.

Now that I have described the major themes of the wedding episodes on *KUWTK*, I will discuss the major trends observed in the social media response to the show via Twitter.

4.13 Social Media Reception

In order to analyze the social media response to the wedding episodes of *KUWTK*, a reception study was conducted using tweets collected from the original airdates of each of the three wedding specials. The search terms included the following hashtags: #KUWTK, #KeepingUpWithTheKardashians, #Kardashian, #Kardashians, #KimKardashian,

¹³¹ After the opening vignette, the following message appears on screen: “This episode was shot by the friends and family of Kim and Kanye” (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, “Kim’s Journey to the Altar”). The absence of the full camera crew (and the fact that Kanye is not miced) suggests Kanye’s reluctance to participate in the show.

#KhloeKardashian, #LamarOdom, #KrisHumphries, #KanyeWest. Unlike other data sets for previous chapters where tweets could be ruled out when they were obviously irrelevant (like when #TLC was used in reference to the music group TLC or the WWE pay-per-view event “Tables, Ladders, Chairs” Match rather than the cable network “The Learning Channel”), all tweets in the *KUWTK* data set displayed intentional use of the relevant hashtags. However, some users appear to be using the Kardashian name to capitalize on their massive social media following to generate attention for whatever brand/cause/event/interest they are promoting. Unfortunately, it was frequently difficult to tell if this was the case, so all tweets in the sample were analyzed for content.¹³² In total, 24,950 tweets were collected and analyzed via qualitative content analysis.¹³³

4.13.1 General Trends

Like viewers of *SYTTD* and *Bridezillas*, some viewers emphasized their viewing context in their tweets. Many users describe watching with others or expressing a desire to watch with others, while others mention watching while snacking and/or indulging in some “me” time.

Heather Trask @Heatherette211 – Sep 1

My nana and I are eating dinner, drinking wine, and watching Keeping up with the Kardashians. #KUWTK

Joanna @wee_jo – Sep 1

New episode of #KUWTK, face mask, candles, bubble bath, trashy magazines and loads of food... I'm not even sorry 🙄

¹³² Select examples of each theme are included in the analysis; for additional examples, see Appendix C. Please note: while this appendix contains further examples of these themes, the Tweets included do not represent all examples of these themes contained in the entire sample.

¹³³ The social media sample details are listed below:

Season Four, Episode One – “The Wedding” (November 8, 2009)*1hr26min [372]

Season Six, Episode Fourteen – “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1” (October 9, 2011) [6514]

Season Six, Episode Fifteen – “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 2” (October 10, 2011)*Monday airdate, 9pm

Season Nine, Episode Twenty – “Kim’s Journey to the Altar” (September 1, 2014)*Monday airdate [18064]

In addition to the tweets about viewing context, many tweets in the sample simply express a general love for the show and/or the stars/characters.

Missy Oliver @missemmons – 11 Oct 2011

I would just love to hang out with @KimKardashian @KhloeKardashian and @KourtneyKardash for one night! They're hilarious. #Kardashians

Stephanie Clark @xstephanieclark – 10 Oct 2011

no you're not i do too! RT @DelevenTruly Am I the only one who actually feels apart of this damn family #kardashians #KimKWedding ??

lyshhh @AlyshaKearney – Sep 1

I'm so jealous of Kim Kardahsian, her life is the definition of perfection #letmebeyou #KUWTK 🥰💜

There were also quite a few tweets expressing sexual desire and/or attraction to the Kardashian sisters.

Ryan Salvatore @Nemz253 – 8 Nov 2009

im juss sayin the three #kardashians can get impregnated by yo boy lol

Spencer Loveless @clayco15 – 10 Oct 2011

@CLuke55 I wish the #Kardashians would fall on my dick lol bitches are fine #exceptthefatone

However, derogatory tweets appeared with as much regularity as favorable ones and frequently criticized the show as well as the stars themselves (and in extreme instances, some even express a desire for the Kardashians to come to harm).

Deja La'Ray ♥ ♻ @_loveLaray – 10 Oct 2011

I wish all of the #Kardashians would kill they self . #Golddiggers .

JerryBats @Jerbur33 – 10 Oct 2011

I hope the #Kardashians get murdered tonight. Kris Humphries can live only if he changes his first name to Chris and not 'Kris'

5+y13 4190r1+hm @stylealgorithm – 10 Oct 2011

I have very conflicted feelings about the #kardashians. On the one hand they're making \$\$\$ on the other the've sold their souls.

Many users who criticize the Kardashians do so by denigrating Kim for her perceived sexual availability and/or activities, which is indicative of the prevalence of internet slut-shaming discussed in Chapter One (Tanenbaum 2015a; 2015b).

Mark B @JadedParadox – 9 Oct 2011

Am I the only one who remembers the #kardashians are famous for kim banging #RayJ & being friends with #parishilton the entire fam = #scum

Sancho @ProvokingPoetry – 10 Oct 2011

Who the fuck wud marry #KimKardashian<knowin Reggie bush skeeted in her mouth in frnt of the world !?! #ImJustSaying

B. Rad @Mr_USAF – 9 Oct 2011

For all of my whores out there. Cheer up, because you too can have a fairytale wedding. Just ask #KimKardashian

Mark B @JadedParadox – 9 Oct 2011

@markzane - could not agree with you more! you can't turn a whore into a housewife #kardashian #slut

iAM DaViE DaVe @DaV1E_DaVe – 9 Oct 2011

#KimKardashian is getting married. Why buy the cow when u get the milk for free? Ask 9,136 others. #SourMilk lol

Some even acknowledged an enjoyment of hate-watching as their motivation to view the show, with specific emphasis being placed on instances where Kim is crying (which aligns with Pozner's [2010] discussion of the reality television money shot discussed in Chapter Two).

☂QuietStorm☂ @FeliciaDontCare – 9 Oct 2011

Of course im gonna watch it i love laughing at how dumb and lamely fancy they are. #Kardashians

Katy @katyyyh6 – Sep 1

Kardashian episodes with Kim crying are the best. #KeepingUpWithTheKardashians

Allie Thompson @alliecatme0w – Sep 1

Kim's crying face always makes me laugh hahaha #KUWTK

Many viewers talk back to the show and discuss the events depicted as if they are truly unscripted. Comments frequently express sympathy and/or outrage for the people on the show,

while others claim to want to be a part of the Kardashian family or to lead a similar lifestyle. Though many fans appear to take *KUWTK* at face value, others acknowledge the use of staged storylines and carefully constructed narratives.¹³⁴ Many social media discussions surrounding *KUWTK* do not address the “reality” of the show at all, but focus instead on the perceived personality traits and/or physical appearance of the show’s stars (much like the tweets about *SYTTD* and *Bridezillas*). Users also frequently expressed shame or self-loathing for watching the show (which could also be seen in the samples for Chapter Two and Chapter Three).

GA @saddi80 – 8 Nov 2009

wasting my life watching this #kardashian wedding special

Melissa Brandeis @MBrandeis – 10 Oct 2011

The #kardashians are my guilty pleasure. #kimkwedding

Finally, many viewers used Twitter to shame others for watching the show and/or being a fan of the Kardashians in general.

Ed Roberts™ @edlover2k – 9 Oct 2011

I bet every woman in twitter watching the #Kardashians wedding right now lol.

Ricky Chu @RikDaddy – 11 Oct 2011

If you actually watched the #Kardashian wedding on TV, I’m going to have to reevaluate our friendship

4.13.2 Self-Promotion

The Kardashians all maintain an active social media presence as well, which includes personal blogs, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook accounts, and their personal publicity efforts are largely successful;¹³⁵ Kim Kardashian has an impressive 30.2 million Twitter followers as of March 2015. As illustrated in the sample, the Kardashians (as well as E!, Ryan Seacrest, and

¹³⁴ These tweets confirm Sender’s (2012) claims about audience agency and reality television literacy discussed in Chapter One.

¹³⁵ The success of the social media branding strategy employed by the Kardashians has been discussed by McClain (2013) as well.

Bunim-Murray) engage in an incredible amount of social media promotion for the show; a few examples of their promotional tweets are included below.

Ryan Seacrest @RyanSeacrest – Sep 2

What'd u guys think of the #kuwtk finale?

Kris Jenner @KrisJenner – Sep 1

So sweet @kimkardashian #kanyewest #MadeInAmerica #Yeezus #amazingperformance
instagram.com/p/sZNpXrGHX/

Khloé @khloekardashian – Sep 1

Love ya dolls!! Do you have tonight's episode of #KUWTK on your to do list?

Kylie Jenner @KylieJenner – Aug 31

Woooo West Coast, #KUWTK starts in 30!

Kim Kardashian West @KimKardashian – Aug 31

Excited to share with you an all-new #KUWTK! Only one more hour to go!

Kourtney Kardashian @kourtneykardash – Aug 31

Get the popcorn ready West Coast! #KUWTK starts in one hour!

The Kardashians' publicity push is so extensive that some Twitter users even comment on it directly, often expressing distaste for the sheer amount of plugs or simply the shameless self-promotion.

KandiMadeFreshDaily @Kandilovespink – 9 Oct 2011

#kimkardashian is on twitter hustling this wedding hard; football's my focus though

Rachel Mann ☼ @MissRachelWMann – Sep 1

Ok Kardashians I know it's Sunday. I know to tune into #KUWTK. Lay off already! We get it! #hotdamn

4.13.3 Questioning the Reality

Despite the assurances of the show's stars, viewers repeatedly questioned the probability for the success in Kim's marriage to Kris Humphries via social media (though the episode initially aired prior to the divorce filing).¹³⁶

¹³⁶ After Kim filed for divorce, subsequent airings began with the following message printed on screen:

MarshaSonette @MarshaSonette – 8 Nov 2009

Awwww, even if its fake, that was a beautiful Wedding ::tears:: #Kardashians

The veracity of other parts of the show is a frequent topic of discussion as well, as illustrated by the tweets below. Many of these examples display an engagement with the narrative that seems to suggest that at least some of the viewers take the events depicted at face value (and perceive them to be “real”).

Michelle My Belle @Chelley_Bee – 8 Nov 2009

Damn the #Kardashians new season looks good! Less scripted.

T.Kindred @Yayforsunshine – 8 Nov 2009

Why is Kris always getting caught in a lie?? #kardashians

Dear Ashley... @asj519 – 8 Nov 2009

I feel so bad for Bruce knowing last....#Kardashians

However, many users question the authenticity of the program outright:

Danbo Girl @Danbo_Girl – 8 Nov 2009

Is #Khole #Kardashian 's weeding is a reality stunt???

TJ @TJKelly10 – 10 Oct 2011

. @a0k Actually good question, how forced do we think the #Kardashian #WeddingEvent is? #Tweeps ?

Jenny/Ben @The_GreenArrow – Sep 2

@Uptomyknees I meant to ask you about that, is she real? Like, are they real people... or are they... actors? What are they? #kardashian

Tanjy @TanAkther13 – Aug 31

i feel like #KUWTK is scripted and planned idk is it just me

Adriana Menendez @AdMen501 – Aug 31

I wonder if Kourt & Scott sleeping in separate rooms is just their storyline? If not, don't understand Kourt's relationship. #KUWTK

On October 31, 2011, Kim Kardashian filed for divorce from Kris Humphries. She released the following statement: “After careful consideration, I have decided to end my marriage. I hope everyone understands this was not an easy decision. I had hoped this marriage was forever but sometimes things don’t work out as planned. We remain friends and wish each other the best.” *Kim Kardashian (Keeping Up with the Kardashians 2011, “Kim’s Fairytale Wedding, Part 1”)*.

This is the only mention of the divorce; the episode then carries on as usual, beginning with a clip montage as a lead-in.

It is clear from these comments that audiences view *KUWTK* in shades of gray and that the real-life relationships of the family serve to complicate viewer understanding, making it difficult to distinguish fact from reality.

4.13.4 Value of Female Labor

The Twitter comments regarding Kim Kardashian and her business ventures contained in the sample were frequently unkind.

bambi @HossaiJabary – 10 Oct 2011

I wish I could get paid to do absolutely nothing #Kardashians

ari 🐼 @arianaliaa – 10 Oct 2011

why are the #kardashians even famous? they get money for not doing anything!
#wishiwasthem

There are some audience members who have acknowledged the labor that has gone into developing the Kardashian family brand. Users frequently credit Kris Jenner, however, positioning her as the mastermind behind the family media empire (as opposed to acknowledging the work done by the Kardashian sisters); one user even went so far as to suggest that Jenner herself engineered the “leak” of Kim’s sex tape to increase her fame and notoriety).

Ebony Wilkins @msebony72 – 9 Oct 2011

Say what u want bout those #kardashians, but @keepinupwkris is one hell of a manager!!! Amazing where she took her whole family.

Sam Cunningham @Cunnyyy – Sep 2

Wouldn't put it past Kris Jenner having told Kim to release a sex tape #Kardashian
#EvilGenius

4.13.5 Advertizing and Product Endorsement

KUWTK is the highest rated show ever to appear on E! (McClain 2013, 5), and the wedding episodes have proven extraordinarily popular. Thirty second ad spots during *KUWTK* normally run \$5,000, but that rate was bumped to \$15,000 for Khloe’s wedding special, and over \$100,000 for Kim’s wedding to Kris Humphries (Bruce 2011, 46-47). While *OK! Magazine*

paid \$300,000 for exclusive rights to Khloe's wedding photos, and \$100,000 for Kim's bridal shower photos, they ultimately lost their bidding war for the rights to publish Kim's wedding photos (*People Magazine* allegedly paid a whopping \$1.5 million for the pictures) (Bruce 2011, 46-47).

In the aftermath of the divorce, Kim and Kris Humphries' wedding has largely been written off as a publicity stunt, especially in light of the money that was allegedly generated by the event (Pramaggiore and Negra 2014, 77; 81).¹³⁷ According to the *Hollywood Reporter*, Kim reportedly received her \$10,000 invitations, \$6,000 cake, \$2,000 per night stay at the Palazzo Hotel in Las Vegas for her bachelorette party (which Tao nightclub paid her \$50,000 to host at their facility), and \$20,000 Vera Wang gown for free, along with receiving her 20.5 carat Lorraine Schwartz engagement ring at a steep discount (Bruce 2011, 46-47). The product placement and brand endorsement has not gone unnoticed by viewers; many of the tweets in the sample addressed this issue.

Nicky Enriquez @nickylibs – 10 Oct 2011

Watching the #Kardashians that was a shameless plug for livingsocial. I know this is fake reality, but come on!

ユメロマン @raqbboona8543 – 9 Oct 2011

Don't let these folks fool u all this stuff they are getting for free in exchange for publicity don't be ignorant #Kardashians

The Kardashians are by no means the first people to profit from a televised and sponsored wedding. The first wedding-themed reality show, *Bride and Groom* (which was discussed in Chapter One), couples were treated to the entire wedding experience complete with bridal shower, ceremony, and honeymoon, all paid for by the network. Wallace (2004) details the format of the show in *All Dressed in White: The Irresistible Rise of the American Wedding*:

¹³⁷ Despite the fact that Kardashian and Humphries reportedly donated the money for the wedding gifts (which allegedly totaled over \$50,000) to charity (Harel 2011, ST18).

Real-life engaged couples wrote to the network, telling their courtship stories. If they were chosen, they went to New York to be wed on the show. The host interviewed them, then they were married by a minister (brides often wearing gowns loaned to them by the network) on the air. CBS picked up the cost of the honeymoon and gave each couple substantial gifts like furniture, silverware, and appliances. The whole show lasted for fifteen minutes and was sponsored by companies like Betty Crocker and Pontiac. (162)

However, many of today's viewers are likely unfamiliar with such early examples of endorsement on American television and therefore have not made these connections.

Despite many viewers' skepticism about the "reality" of the Kardashian marriages, some audience members are a little less hostile to the Kardashians' constant overt displays of hyperconsumption and brand awareness, and even appear to envy it. While some social media users expressed envy at the Kardashians' purchasing power, others claimed to find it gauche.

GiGi @p0is0nivy4 – 8 Nov 2009

I so wish I had Vera Wang to personally make my wedding dress! #kardashians

Lauren Stodola @StodolaL32 – 10 Oct 2011

Shes wearing 3 dresses for the wedding? #spoiled #unnecessary #kardashians

When referencing the celebrity personas of Kim Kardashian and Kanye West, Kingston (2014) states:

As a marital brand, Kimye exists as an alternative-universe Brangelina. There are no visits to Bosnian refugees, no UN speeches. Yet there's a refreshing realness to them, at least, compared to the impossibly virtuous Brangelina, and the impossibly airbrushed Jay Z and Beyonce. The union can be seen as a performance piece, showcasing the vacuity—and mesmerizing distraction—of conspicuous consumption, a public service in itself. They're the modern-day Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI, an antidote to grim global news. (82-83)

By addressing the "performance" of Kim and Kanye, Kingston hints at the identity management required to maintain their celebrity status, a fact which has been largely overlooked until recently.

4.13.6 *Criticism of Male Stars*

In the Kardashian family, Kris Jenner rules. She is not only the matriarch, but is also the head of the business empire (McClain 2013, 12). This fact is often discussed in social media and is frequently translated into a commentary on the perceived femininity of the men connected to the family. In the study sample, Twitter users regularly express a lack of respect for Bruce, Scott, and Kris Humphries, as illustrated in the examples below.

Julia Gray @JulesAGray – 8 Nov 2009

why are all of the men associated with the #kardashians such unbelievable douche bags? (cept Bruce-he's kinda cool)

MicG @alldaymicg – 8 Nov 2009

Scott is full of smarmy buzzwords and Brill Cream and not much else. #Kardashians

Strega Nona @shamama – 8 Nov 2009

Dear Bruce; Maybe you should borrow some balls from Kris? Seems like she can spare a few. #kardashians

Elle Boogiee @elleboogiee – 9 Oct 2011

I'm starting to think that Chris humphries is a Bridezilla #kardashians

The alleged family/relationship conflicts discussed on the show appear to have been played for maximum effect in the promotional efforts of the production team; Ryan Seacrest even asked viewers via Twitter who they sided with in the battle between Khloe and Humphries (the social media audience largely sided with Khloe).

Melissa Krisniski @misssmeliss_ – 10 Oct 2011

I hope the tabloids are wrong and @KimKardashian and #KrisHumphries aren't actually getting a divorce! :(#KimKWedding

iolastar @iolastar – 9 Oct 2011

RT @RyanSeacrest: Are u team @KrisHumphries or team @KhloeKardashian??
Who's crossing the line more btwn the two of them? #Krishumphries!

Audience criticism of male cast members extends to the newest edition to the show, Kanye West, as well.

While there is no explicit discussion of who is making the final decisions in the wedding planning process, Twitter users are overwhelmingly under the impression that Kanye is the one calling the shots, and many are unhappy with this perceived power shift. This speaks to the earlier discussion of perceived financial power and cultural capital regarding Kim's decision about keeping her last name; Kanye is apparently seen as the bigger celebrity brand and is therefore in the dominant position. Incidentally, Kim changed her Twitter name to "Kim Kardashain West" shortly after her marriage to Kanye.

J.M. @journeymee – Sep 2

The only thing #KeepingUpWithTheKardashians episode confirmed about #KimYeWedding was #kaynewest is COMPLETE CONTROL FREAK!
#DudeGonnaSnap

Amber @mspopularartaste – Sep 2

Kanye is directing this wedding to the point he is making decisions on the bridesmaid dresses #KUWTK

CHOMyGod @CHOMyGod – Sep 1

I appreciate Kanye letting us witness these special moments but would a professional film crew really have killed him #seasick #KUWTK

KeepingUpWithJodie™ @MissJodieMarie – Sep 1

Can't believe Kim Kardashian is guna quit #KUWTK on Kanye's say so, I'd have no man telling me what I could an couldn't do when it's harmful

Janelle @Janelle4009 – Sep 1

Kim k needs to leave #KUWTK she doesn't show her personal life or family. Kanye is now in control of the show. Kim=Boring

4.13.7 Criticism of Physical Appearance

Based on some of the social media discussion regarding the family, it is no surprise that people are self-conscious of their appearance. The examples below represent only a small portion of the comments made about the physical appearance of members of the Kardashian/Jenner family.

Turn Specialist @Shayla_Nicole – 8 Nov 2009

Bruce looks like what a barbie doll would look like if they made old man barbie dolls
#kardashians

Julia Gray @JulesAGray – 8 Nov 2009

#khloe #kardashian in her wedding dress--looks like 2 pigs fightin' under a blanket

eu ♡ @LovesEunice – 9 Oct 2011

Rob is a fatty #kuwtk

Regina @DMakiva – Sep 2

I hate looking at kylie's blue hair and Bruce's horrible hair. What's wrong with those two.its Kim's day and they should listen #kuwtk

Joshua Davis @Joshdaviscomedy – Sep 1

I feel bad for the fat ugly brother, Khloe #KUWTK

These tweets are illustrative of the shaming that often occurs via social media regarding the physical appearance of “regular” people and celebrities alike.

4.13.8 Name Change Issue

The audience to response to debates over the importance of the Kardashian family brand is fairly mixed, especially in regard to Kim’s decision to keep her name after her marriage to Kris Humphries. While there are supporters and detractors for each position, some of the more interesting comments discuss the issue in terms of the perceived power of each individual.

Eva Rebecca @erhodgdon – 11 Oct 2011

I never once would have even thought about NOT changing my last name...#kardashian

TheBoyWithTheGrayCat @JohnnMorales – 10 Oct 2011

Kim is older than Kris. Kim is richer than Kris. Therefore, Kim should keep her Last name. :] #Kardashian

—Fabian Morales @PapiRidezClutch – 11 Oct 2011

#KimKardashian REALLY thinks she's like royalty or something.... Like really bitch you won't even change your last name for your man! WTF

Rain @wtfrain – 10 Oct 2011

Get over it Humphries, Kim doesnt want your wack ass lame name that meant nothing until you met her. Just sayin'. #kuwtk

Cameron Felix @cameronfelixxxx – 10 Oct 2011

Everyone wants to be a #Kardashian no one wants to be a fucking #Humphries

These tweets illustrate a tendency to associate the decision about whether or not to change one's last name with one's position of power or dominance in the relationship. Kim is perceived as possessing more cultural capital and financial power, and is therefore positioned as the dominant partner. This perceived dominance can be seen in the way that social class is addressed on *KUWTK* as well.

4.13.9 Wedding Culture

One final topic of note that appeared in the social media sample was the depiction of wedding culture on the wedding episodes of *KUWTK*. Twitter users expressed a range of opinions about the manner in which the Kardashians have chosen to navigate common wedding traditions, especially in relation to perceived violations. Many viewers mocked Kim's decision to wear white (which, as discussed in Chapter One, is traditionally seen as a sign of the bride's virginity) for both her second and third marriages. In addition, there was a large amount of discussion surrounding the fact that she had been married more than once, with many commenters implying that second (and third) marriages should not be grand, over-the-top affairs. Some examples addressing these issues are included below.

Just Hate @justhate – 10 Oct 2011

Proof that we are all allowed to wear white at our weddings #kimkardashian

Eat_Shop_Gossip @Eat_Shop_Gossip – 9 Oct 2011

The way #KimKardashian is carrying on about planning her wedding since she was 10, you'd forget this is actually her second wedding.

The selfie book that Kim gave Kanye as a wedding present generated a lot of discussion on Twitter as well; some of the viewer comments appear below.

Louise Coyne @bantasaurus_rex – Sep 1

Stop trying to make selfie books happen. Its not going to happen. #KimYeWedding #KUWTK

amour @msamourali – Sep 1

Kim and these damn selfie books for Kanye like he's doing 25 to Life in some prison. #KUWTK

In light of these and other similar comments, most of the Twitter users appear to view Kim's selfie book as a decidedly narcissistic gesture. These are just a few of the ways in which appropriate bridal behavior is discussed in relation to *KUWTK*.

Based on the Twitter comments included in the sample, many audience members felt cheated by the lack of wedding coverage featured in these episodes.

CARMEN ANITA KEELS @Sleekchild – 10 Oct 2011

So the wedding is five minutes long?! Smh 2nights #watching and she hasn't even started getting dressed yet!!! #Kardashians

'My Beyhive' @YoncexNicki – Sep 2

Pissed that they didn't even show any of the wedding, if it was just 'friends of Kim and Kanye filming' they could of filmed some :(#KUWTK

Richy @riskyparachute – Sep 1

KIM SHOW US YOUR WEDDING YOU FUGLY SLUT #KUWTK

4.14 Conclusion

The wedding episodes featured on *KUWTK* showcase yet another way in which the post-feminist ideologies of celebrity, consumption, and traditional femininity play out in wedding-themed reality television. By engaging in the labor of being watched, the Kardashian women have successfully built a media empire based on their encouragement of hyper-consumerism, careful brand management, and savvy use of social media. Unlike *SYTTD* and *Bridezillas*, which feature “normal” (non-celebrity) women who are only allowed pseudo-celebrity status for one day (on their wedding day), *KUWTK* positions its celebrity stars as being just like everyone else when it comes to their wedding day. Their personal engagement with their fans via social media, when coupled with the fact that they have become famous for ostensibly being

themselves, makes them appear somehow more relatable for the average viewer in that their lifestyle could potentially be attainable (which in turn enables them to sell a range of products).

KUWTK constantly features narratives designed to emphasize the legitimacy or “reality” of the show, which was not a common practice on either *SYTTD* or *Bridezillas*. This move could be due to the fact that viewers frequently question the reality of *KUWTK* via social media, a point of discussion that rarely seemed to occur in reference to the other shows. Judging from the content of the Twitter samples collected for *SYTTD* and *Bridezillas*, viewers seem to be assuming that the events depicted on those two programs are somehow more real. In fact, comments suggesting that *KUWTK* is actually scripted are framing this as a negative in that it would make the show, and by extension its stars, fake. Audience members oftentimes appeared to want to believe in the reality of the show because they would otherwise feel as though they were being tricked or misled. This is one area of subtle shaming that appeared in the social media response to the show; Twitter users frequently mocked or derided the Kardashians for presenting what they perceived to be a “fake” version of reality, or for not showing every aspect of their lives (as evidenced by the backlash aimed at Kim and Kanye for deciding not to show any of their actual wedding ceremony or reception).

Furthermore, another common theme of the show is the emphasis that is placed on the labor performed by various members of the Kardashian family and Kim in particular. Kim’s “work ethic” is frequently mocked by the social media audience, and she is regularly shamed for profiting from either “doing nothing” or alternately from her overt displays of sexuality as well as her (actual as well as alleged) sexual activities, which is just another form of “slut-shaming” as discussed in Chapter One. In light of these views, *KUWTK* may highlight Kim’s busy work schedule in order to offset some these criticisms. No matter how much they engage in this sort

of framing though, audiences still seem to devalue her activities, which speaks to the larger issues surrounding the perceived lack of value of female labor as discussed in Chapter Three.

By extension, many social media users also criticized the Kardashian's business ventures and branding activities for their heavy emphasis on the promotion of material goods, in much the same way that many viewers critiqued the hyperconsumerism of *SYTTD*. In fact, the family brand is frequently depicted as the most important aspect of Kim Kardashian's individual identity, as observed in the hoopla surrounding her uncertainty over whether or not to change her name when she married Kris Humphries. By deciding not to take his last name, Kim effectively resisted traditional gender norms and expectations, and this prompted an incredible amount of discussion and debate on social media. Audience members were fairly split over whether or not they agreed with her decision. Many saw this as a sign that Kim was not fully committed to her marriage, while others saw it as an indication of her greater power and celebrity status in relation to Humphries. Those who viewed her power and status in a positive light seemed to think she was justified in her decision, while others took this as an opportunity to mercilessly mock Kris Humphries for his perceived lack of masculinity and control (which is a frequent topic of discussion in relation to almost all of the male cast members featured on *KUWTK*, especially Bruce Jenner).

Conversely, viewers frequently complained about Kanye's perceived dominance over Kim, a belief that is constantly encouraged by the framing tactics of producers. The fictional world of *KUWTK* is consistently portrayed as a matriarchal society where the women are in charge and the men stay out of the way, and Kris Jenner's real-life position as the head of the Kardashian empire reinforces this component of the narrative. However, the fact that the sisters are often depicted as being in competition with each other does weaken this image of

empowerment as it mirrors the post-feminist ideologies that pit women against one another (Douglas 2010), as we saw in both *SYTTD* and *Bridezillas*. Furthermore, while the allegedly female-dominant familial/financial structure challenges traditional gender dynamics, the wedding episodes of *KUWTK* actually work against the narrative of female dominance. When Kanye enters the picture, many viewers express concern over rumors that he will allegedly “force” Kim to quit her role on the show in favor of a less visible and therefore more private personal life.

In an interesting twist, though the show does reinforce unrealistic beauty standards for women, it also does so for men. In fact, the men on the show are frequently portrayed as struggling with body image issues of their own, and Bruce Jenner in particular has had multiple cosmetic procedures, both before and during the show’s run. Audience members are frequently unkind when discussing cast members’ physical appearances and actually appear to criticize the male stars almost as much as the female stars. This sets *KUWTK* apart from the other two case studies in that the majority of the shaming that occurs on both *SYTTD* and *Bridezillas* is directed almost exclusively at women.

However, there is one area in which the women on the show receive an inordinate amount of blame, and that is when they are not performing correctly according to the dictates of “traditional” wedding culture. Like some of the wedding etiquette boundary transgressors on *SYTTD* and *Bridezillas*, the women on *KUWTK* are shaming for not performing the role of bride correctly or not adhering to wedding traditions. Finally, as observed in the social media response to *Bridezillas*, Twitter users frequently shamed *others* for watching *KUWTK* much more often than viewers expressed a sense of personal shame for viewing the program.

5 CONCLUSIONS

As a distinct sub-genre of reality TV, wedding-themed reality television programming exhibits many of the traits that characterize the genre as a whole. Both *SYTTD* and *KUWTK* exhibit the explicit connection between consumerism/commercialization and claims to real-ness that Murray and Ouellette (2009) point to as a definitive marker of the genre, and all three of the programs discussed here rely almost exclusively on non-union (and non-celebrity) talent and labor (Madger 2009; Raphael 2009). Though *KUWTK* is considered a celebrity reality sitcom, the Kardashian family's celebrity status increased dramatically as a result of their reality show participation. Furthermore, both *KUWTK* and *SYTTD* are excellent examples of the use of product placement and brand integration which typifies the reality genre, and all three shows exhibit media convergence by encouraging cross-platform viewer engagement (Madger 2009; Murray and Ouellette 2009). In addition, all of the wedding-themed reality TV shows in the sample both model and advocate voyeurism, surveillance, self-discipline, and the potential for drama (Murray and Ouellette 2009). Self-discipline in particular is an integral part of the wedding-themed reality TV sub-genre, and this is frequently encouraged via shaming.

Through my analysis of three distinct tropes of wedding-themed reality television, I have uncovered many subtle differences in the way that both post-feminist ideologies and shaming function today. By analyzing the advocacy of hyperconsumerism and the renegotiation of icons of traditional femininity on *Say Yes to the Dress*, the policing of female behavior and perceived unruliness through *Bridezillas*, and the devaluing of female labor in celebrity culture through the three weddings featured on *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, I have attempted to explore the hidden mechanisms of gender identity construction and management.

I began by examining how three key post-feminist ideologies—hyper-consumerism, the pursuit of pseudo-celebrity status, and the reinforcement of traditional gender norms—were deployed in the programs themselves, and then looked at how shaming was utilized to promote conformity and the normalization of these values. Each theme was displayed differently in each of the three case studies, but all three were ultimately represented in one form or another. As I got deeper into my analysis, it became apparent that the sort of shaming that occurred varied from program to program as well, and those subtle differences were also reflected in the social media discussions surrounding each show. Audience members frequently mirrored the framing presented in the shows. Three major shaming strategies emerged in the course of this research, including: a subtle discouragement seen primarily in *SYTTD*, a harsher discipline and containment that featured prominently in both *Bridezillas* and *KUWTK*, and a theme of pseudo-resistance that traveled throughout all three texts.

On *SYTTD*, the sort of shaming that occurred was very subtle and indirect, and it was oftentimes delivered in the form of self-discipline by the brides themselves. Though the bride is positioned as the star of the wedding, she lacks any real power or control, and is frequently shown deferring to others, being infantilized by her entourage and the staff alike, and always in need of guidance and protection. When members of the staff appear to stand up for the bride in the face of criticism from an overbearing entourage, viewers often mirrored this behavior in their tweets. Men are largely absent on *SYTTD*, except of course in those circumstances in which they are required for their perceived financial power and control, and they are then utilized to reinforce the dominant consumerist message of the show which equates spending money with a show of love. The hyperconsumption displayed on *SYTTD* is not without its detractors, however; viewers regularly pushed back against the excessive spending featured on the show, displaying

one of the few observed instances of actual resistance to the normalizing directives of wedding culture. The women featured on *SYTTD* who do not and/or cannot quite fit the image of the ideal bride still ultimately conform to the expected norms by purchasing a dress (therefore only displaying pseudo-resistance), so the only other instance of real resistance observed on the show is modeled by the women who actually leave the store empty-handed rather than participating in the expected rituals of consumption. Despite the limited displays of real resistance (or perhaps because of these limits), viewers still largely find *SYTTD* to be comforting viewing experience; those who do not appear preoccupied with feelings of shame and sadness over not being married or having a wedding (a theme of self-shaming which occasionally reappeared in the social media discussions concerning *Bridezillas*, and one that stands in direct contrast to Twitter users' tendency to shame *others* for watching *KUWTK*).

Bridezillas shifts the focus of the wedding-themed reality programming narrative from one of hyperconsumption to one based on policing unruly female behavior through the explicit use of shaming on the show. In addition, *Bridezillas* manages to punish not only unacceptable gender performances, but also shames women on the basis of their lower-socioeconomic status as well as their racial/ethnic identity. The narratives employed on the show also regularly devalue female labor, especially when it is performed in pursuit of the "perfect" wedding; women are consistently shamed on *Bridezillas* for trying to achieve the fairytale wedding fantasy they have been socialized to both desire and expect. Brides' efforts are frequently met with hostility from their families, friends, and even their grooms, and this behavior is mirrored in the audience's harsh responses to the show via Twitter. In fact, there is a near-constant stream of overtly-hostile behavior exhibited on *Bridezillas*, and it often involves conflicts and/or

competition among women, a theme indicative of the present post-feminist climate discussed in Chapter One.

The three weddings featured on *KUWTK* present an alternative example of how wedding-themed reality television programming has influenced the narratives featured on celebrity reality sitcoms (as well as other reality TV sub-genres). As opposed to the previous two case studies, the narratives featured on *KUWTK* frequently make explicit claims to emphasize the realness of the show, which may be due in part to the large amount of viewer skepticism concerning this issue displayed via Twitter and other social media outlets. Another topic frequently subjected to debate via social media is the validity and value of female labor as it is depicted on *KUWTK*. Because the Kardashian women are primarily famous for performing and engaging in the typically female labor of being watched (in addition to their extensive social media engagement with fans and careful brand management techniques), their “work” is often dismissed in both social and traditional media outlets as illegitimate and/or nonexistent. The debate over the value of the Kardashian’s labor also contributes to viewer critiques of their consumption habits (much like the viewer criticism of seemingly-excessive spending on *SYTTD*).

In addition, the female-centric world presented on *KUWTK* (and mirrored in their real-life business empire) has sparked many debates over the portrayal of gender roles and identities on the series. These debates focus on issues ranging from critiques of the performance of masculinity and the alleged lack of control wielded by the male cast/family members, criticisms of both the male and female cast/family members’ appearances, and the Kardashians’ perceived failure to conform to accepted conventions and traditions of wedding culture. One prominent Twitter discussion concerning the portrayal and performance of gender on *KUWTK* dealt with Kim’s indecision over whether or not to change her name after marriage, a topic which has

generated extensive discussion more broadly in the post-feminist era. Audience members were fairly evenly split over the issue and many equated the correct choice with the amount of perceived financial and brand power wielded by each individual in the couple.

It is also worth noting what is not present in these three examples of wedding-themed reality television programming; these exclusions can be just as telling as what is actually represented. Most wedding-themed reality programming is aimed at a primarily female, heterosexual audience and seems to gloss over the current debates concerning gay marriage, which is obviously also part of the containment/normalizing process. When queer relationships are addressed on these shows, it is almost always in reference to lesbian couples who are carefully and deliberately implied to be in a monogamous, “committed” relationship, and the white dress is, as usual, an essential component of the narrative. This speaks to the idea that lesbian couples are frequently portrayed as the most normative queer relationships, and *SYTTD* essentially promotes hyperfemininity over heteronormativity in this case. The move to start casting lesbian couples on the *SYTTD* could also be the result of the increasing rise in profitability of the same-sex wedding industry (Henneman 2004, 56), or simply as an opportunity to sell two dresses instead of just one.

Other markets and demographics are being targeted for economic reasons as well. The recent spinoff of the *SYTTD* franchise, clumsily named *Big Bliss*, is just one example of the way in which the wedding and television industries are attempting to target the plus-size female demographic. However, this sort of tactic has been criticized as well for the particular way in which plus-sized brides are being represented (Patterson 2005, 245). These issues serve to further challenge notions of the right kind of wedding and the process of achieving this through normalization.

The incredible emphasis placed on the importance of the wedding dress has resulted in many women's reluctance to give it up after the wedding is over. According to a 2012 article in *Maclean's*, brides have recently begun creating events to wear their wedding dresses a second time; one woman explained in the article: "It's not just a way to re-enact your princess moment," but rather "It's a way to enjoy the dress without the stress of the real wedding day. The pressure's off" (Latimer 2012, 79). This speaks to the growing tendency to view the wedding as separate from the marriage it is intended to inaugurate as discussed in Chapter One. The decision to wear a wedding dress in any context outside of the wedding can potentially be seen as an act of resistance. As is evident here and in brief moments in the narratives on *SYTTD*, there are exceptions to the adherence to the norms of wedding culture and not everyone bows to the pressures to conform; this sort of resistance can be seen both inside and outside of the boundaries of these shows as well.

Kourtney Kardashian's emphatic decision to forgo marriage (while still maintaining a long-term relationship that has produced three children up to this point) stands in direct contrast to the multiple opulent televised weddings of her sisters. After observing all of the preparations for Kim and Kanye's wedding, Kourtney's partner Scott is shown remarking to Kendall Jenner that the pressure of a wedding is too much and that it is part of the reason why he and Kourtney have not done it. Kris Jenner then looks at him and says, "This could be you, Scott," but, without missing a beat, Scott says emphatically "No thanks" (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians* 2014, "Kim's Journey to the Altar"). Kourtney and Scott's alleged resistance to wedding culture and traditional marriage illustrates a refusal to conform to societal normalization.

Authors Goltz and Zingsheim (2010) used their own decision to participate in a "gayla" rather than the traditional wedding ceremony as the basis for their article on queer resistance and

normative recuperation, explaining “Rather than construct a false dichotomy between sincere romantic love and political protest, we conceived the Gayla as always already both, a sincere politicism of love” (295). This sort of resistance illustrates that it is possible to exist outside of the heteronormative confines of traditional wedding culture. However, there are relatively few examples of this sort of resistance in the wedding-themed reality TV sub-genre, as most shows conform to the dominant post-feminist formula.

So how do we deal with this overwhelming pressure to spend, smile, and star? Anne Helen Petersen (2014) suggests we resist the urge to shame other women and focus instead on the larger societal mechanisms that have created these ideologies:

When it comes to the wedding industrial complex, it’s tempting to blame the brides who are its most visible exponents, breaking down on *Say Yes to the Dress* or posing ridiculously in yet another set of engagement photos on your Facebook feed. But this is what happens when modern capitalism meets patriarchy, and the last 200 years have been a slow march to this logical conclusion.

In the end, the engagement phone cover says less about our specific cultural moment and more about the unyielding resilience of patriarchy and the industries that support it. The solution isn’t to ridicule these cases and the women who buy them, but to continue the much more difficult, frustrating, yet absolutely necessary work of challenging—and illuminating—the often invisible systems that produce them. Alternately, get on Etsy and start designing the feminist phone case of your choice: you may have to put ‘I asked, He Said Yes: Soon to Be Life Partners in the Eyes of the State’ in smaller print to get it to fit on the case, but just think how loudly it would speak. (6)

Directing our collective ridicule at individual women only serves to reinforce the very system that created them.

So what might an alternative wedding program look like? Perhaps it would resemble the now-defunct indiebride.com, a website which featured non-traditional wedding and commitment ceremony ideas, advice, discussion, and resources. However, perhaps the fact that indiebride.com no longer exists, and, in fact, “merged” with *HuffPost Weddings* and now contains no hint of the alternative mindset that originally set it apart from other wedding sites,

speaks volumes about the current state of the bridal media market. Perhaps it is impossible to separate wedding culture and the hyperconsumerism with which it has become synonymous.

A few feminist scholars have resisted this urge to dismiss wedding culture completely and maintain that alternative options can and do exist. Walker (2000) acknowledges the push-back that such a notion would generate, stating that “It is certainly arguable that the notion of ‘alternative’ bridal fashions is merely a consumer mythology designed to keep the ‘modern’ bride firmly ensconced within the wedding industry, which brings in over thirty billion dollars annually in retail sales” (226), but she ultimately refuses to surrender to such a cynical viewpoint:

Any discussion of fashion and subjectivity invokes a consumption-based model of agency, but recent feminist analyses of fashion suggest that stopping with a critique of the fashion industry as exploitive may be stopping short: a moralizing reading of fashion’s capacity to commodify women’s desires, alienate them from their bodies, and manipulate their insecurities about their social, political, and economic identities does not address the complexity of fashion as a symbolic system, a language that is not only riddled with but enacts contradictory messages about female subjectivity. (228)

Walker (2000) concludes by emphasizing just how complex and difficult these issues are: “At the moment, my analysis of bridal beauty leaves me at an impasse. As it stands, there is no version of bridal beauty that does not implicate feminists in the social hierarchies that uphold dominant ideals of female beauty.... For those women (biological and otherwise) who are compelled by the desire to live the fantasy, to abandon it for the sake of principles would be to capitulate to a culture of deprivation produced by the threat of ‘false consciousness’” (229).

It is my hope that the present study will open the door to further research on wedding-themed reality television programming. Future studies could potentially extend the work done here by introducing evidence of producer and/or network intent regarding the way in which women, and brides in particular, are framed on these programs. This extension could help to

address differences in the sort of shaming exhibited in each text, as well as variations in audience reaction to those texts. Another potential entry point would be to examine audience interaction via other internet/social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, official/network webpages, fan forums, etc. Additional reception studies might illuminate new themes of audience responses to the shows or different types of interactions among audience members. There are also additional programming tropes within the wedding-themed reality television sub-genre that warrant in-depth examination, including shows that focus exclusively on wedding cakes, wedding competition shows, wedding planning shows, etc.

Furthermore, future research could also focus on network branding strategies to investigate how TLC and WE tv successfully shifted their already-established brand identities to center on wedding-themed reality programming. I briefly touched on some of the promotional efforts utilized here, but further investigation could extend the research already being done on branding in other reality TV sub-genres by addressing the specific methods employed in crafting an identity based on wedding-themed reality television programming. For instance, one example of the relative success of wedding-themed reality television's promotion of cross-platform audience engagement via Twitter is the recent rise of the wedding hashtag. This relatively new convention illustrates the ubiquitous nature of social media sites like Twitter and Instagram as well as the influence and pervasiveness of converged viewing habits. A recent article on the *HuffPost Weddings* site even goes so far as to offer tips for newly engaged couples on how to create and promote the most effective hashtag to chronicle their wedding. This and other emergent trends present exciting new avenues for research on wedding-themed reality television programming as well as the reality TV genre as a whole.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Additional Examples for *Say Yes to the Dress****General Trends*****mason barnes. @Maysunn23 – 7 Oct 2011**

#sayyestothedress with my mom.. See through dress? Classsy.

Maria Thede @marythede – 7 Oct 2011

#sayyestothedress with mommy :) loveee being home!

Meghan Watts @meghanjamie – 23 Jun 2012

Love fridays with my best friend watching #brideday on tlc

VANESSA♥ @_BlondAsian – 23 Jun 2012

watchin #sayyestothedress with my sister

Caroline Parker @carooolinee93 – 22 Jun 2012

Watching Say Yes to the Dress with my mom <3 #sytttd

Stephanie Lauble @steph_lauble – 22 Jun 2012

Watching #SYTTD with Caileigh trough the phone :)

Caitlin Johnson @caitjayyy – 22 Jun 2012

Brideday Friday on TLC wiff mommy is making me feel mucho better. #SYTTD

jen bocti @jeenbocti – 22 Jun 2012

#sytttd bonding time with mama bear :)

Kellie Michaels @kamichaels303 – 11 Jan 2013Watching #SYTTD with @McNurly_Pantsonly 661miles apart! #desmoines
#cleveland**Khertzy @Karlyhertz54 – 11 Jan 2013**Bride Day Friiiiiiday!! Woohoo #love #TLC @britt_holzli #gonnabeagoodtime
#movies #nails #girltalk #boytalk #bestfriends #forever**Zωή @_gypzee_ – 20 Sep 2013**

Girls night in with the madre Mac and cheese, Ben and Jerry's, and say yes to the dress 🍷🍷💕 #SYTTD

Stacie Gooch @stacieleigh37 – 22 Jun 2012

so thankful to be able to just rest and watch wedding shows! 🥰 #SYTTD

Carina Gerlings @carinagerlings – 22 Jun 2012

So excited that I have the house to myself and that it's #brideday on #TLC !!

Heather* @HeatherMarie129 – 12 Jan 2013

Snuggled up on the couch watching #SayYesToTheDress with a freshly washed blanket that smells amazing #itsthelittlethings

Marielle Wakim @mariellewakim – 12 Jan 2013

Sweatshirt, sweatpants, and #SYTTD. Not mad about it.

Marya @meowyaaa – 9 Apr 2011

GIRLS DAY #sayyestothedress #personalday #manicures

Whitney Middleton @WhitneyMidds – 22 Jun 2012

Haircut w/my fave stylist followed by #SYTTD, wine, and putting together outfits = what I do when husband is out of town on a Friday.

maggie ♥ @VintageandBlush – 12 Jan 2013

Can't get more girly than scrapbookin while watchin #sayyestothedress

PacificCoastWeddings @PacCoastWedding – 12 Jan 2013

A glass of wine, #sayyestothedress, and wedding planning. Sounds like a good night to me! #bridetobe #weddingplanning

Christin Powell @xoxochristin – 11 Jan 2013

#SYTTD and painting my nails 🧑💅🏻

West Coast Bitch🖤 @WesttCoastBitch – 11 Jan 2013

Watching #SYTTD and sitting on Pinterest planning the wedding I'll never have.

H @WestCoastSass – 11 Jan 2013

Thank god tomorrow is Friday so I can do my Friday night ritual.. #SYTTD and painting my nails

Jess B @Seeka89 – 8 Apr 2011

#wine and #sayyestothedress with @Teeny01. Gooooddd Friday night.

Melanie Kellen @MelanieKellen – 7 Oct 2011

A Friday night in watching #SayYesToTheDressmarathon in a snuggle with Pillsbury Halloween cookies #smalljoys

Alex George @AlexGeorge5 – 22 Jun 2012

Say Yes to the Dress and a bottle of wine #SYTTD #TGIF

Taylor Provow @SweetTAYtors – 22 Jun 2012

#BrideDay on TLC, my cat, pasta, and maybe some wine are getting me through this lonely Friday night. #ForgetSummerClassesForNow

Positive Tweets

General love of the show

Jenny Mayhugh @JennyMayhugh – 22 Jun 2012

Say Yes to the Dress 💍 I could watch this show forever 💙 #LoveThisShow #SYTTD

Hayley Rappa @hayrappa – 12 Jan 2013

This show is like crack and I'm addicted. #SayYesToTheDress

Caroline @_Carolinekp – 10 Jan 2013

I have a serious addiction with #SYTTD

denise @TheNiece04 – 21 Sep 2013

Friday is #BRIDEDAY #TLC IM OBSESSED with Say Yes To the Dress 🎀💕
💋

Love of the dresses

Sabrina S. @NurseSabrina88 – 22 Jun 2012

I love Maggie Sottero wedding dresses! #SYTTD

caylencantrell @waylenelanor – 10 Jan 2013

You best believe my wedding dress will have pockets. #sytttd #pockets

Love of the narrative/emotional content

Abby Sjögren @misssjogren – 8 Apr 2011

Ive already almost cried three times during #sayyestothedress #pathetic

KEEA @MissKeea – 8 Apr 2011

Saddest #sayyestothedress has me in tears

Kaitlyn Krofchick @KaitKrofchick – 8 Oct 2011

I swear I cry once every episode!! The dads up here tear me up! So sweet! #sayyestothedress

Monica @MonStaarr – 22 Jun 2012

Watching people cry when they find their wedding dress makes me so happyyyyyy #SayYesToTheDress #iLoveWeddingShows

NomansRoni @NomansRoni – 12 Jan 2013

S/o to the Bride that lost 130lbs. before her wedding. #SYTTD #YouGoGirl!!!
#Proud

MamaSmith05 □ **@tkmca05 – 21 Feb 2014**
#syttdd you always make me cry. Love this show!! ❤️

Love of consumerism

G.O.O.D H.E.A.D. @StepEliseVII – 7 Oct 2011
I wish I had the money to spend 24,000 on a wedding dress. #SayYesToTheDress

Brittany Fink @brittyjoyf – 12 Jan 2013
I wish I could spend \$34,000 on my wedding dress. But that's twice as much as my car cost. #brokegirlprobs #inmydreams #SYTTD

Michelle Elaine @MEWeddingsInc – 11 Jan 2013
A wedding gown IS expensive but sometimes It's ok, you only marry your prince charming once :) #SYTTD

Judith @JUDYwit_daBOOTY – 11 Jan 2013
Daaaaaamn! Did anybody else just see that rock on shawty's hand!? 💍💎
#SayYesToTheDress

Love of the staff/guest stars

T. Stevenson @tstevens312 – 8 Apr 2011
Where is Keisha on #SayYesToTheDress?

Janine B. @JRheneeb – 7 Oct 2011
#NW #SayYesToTheDress and I see @ChrisetteM. Reason number 5326 that I love this show.

Richey Hayes @Richieygrl – 7 Oct 2011
Watching @KellyRipa working her tush off and doing a great job for her bride on #SayYesToTheDress

Sierra Teresa @Ms_ESPN87 -7 Oct 2011
Old Vera don't make mistakes lol #syttdd

Kara Merideth @karamichelle412 – 11 Jan 2013
Can I please have Randy pick out my wedding dress? #SYTTD

Sarah Beccio @littlebird22 – 21 Sep 2013
Watching the gorgeous @karakeough on #SYTTD

Rachel Cross @RachelJCross – 20 Sep 2013
Dawn Harper, Olympic gold medalist in track&field, is on #SYTTD!

Big Pompa @CallMeBigPompa – 21 Feb 2014

#WhiteGirlConfession I only know the drummer from The Roots on #JimmyFallon because his sister was on #SYTTD

Regi @MagicCityRegi – 21 Feb 2014

Cannot believe I just saw @sethmeyers on #SYTTD too cute 😂

Carly Jarvis @carjar89 – 10 Jan 2013

Randy seriously has the nicest eyebrows #sytttd

♡pammy♡ @pamkerim – 21 Feb 2014

Why does randy from #sayyestothedress have better eyebrows than me 😞

Desire to go dress shopping/wear a wedding dress

Kayla Melton @KMelt3 – 9 Apr 2011

#Sayyestothedress makes me really want a wedding dress... oh and really nervous that Im never going to get married

Amaziah Z @AmaziahZ – 8 Apr 2011

I wanna go to Kleinfelds and look at wedding dresses #sayyestothedress

Ash_LeyG @Ash_LeyG – 8 Apr 2011

I would only get married just to have the party & the dress- #lovedoesn'texistinmyworld & watching #sayyestothedress haha

Josie Adams @imanormalgirl – 8 Apr 2011

Watching #sayyestothedress and now I want to go dress shopping! #Wheresmyring

Kate @KateHacia – 7 Oct 2011

I swear, I just want to get married for the dress #sayyestothedress

Lauren Milus @laurennkaylaa – 7 Oct 2011

When I get married, I WILL get my dress from Kleinfeld. #sayyestothedress

Kristyn Boston @KristynnMariee – 23 Jun 2012

Already dreaming about my wedding dress and I don't even see myself getting married #sayyestothedress

† Sylvia Monique ♥ @SemperFi_Wife09 – 22 Jun 2012

I'm getting my wedding dress from Kleinfelds New York. #SayYesToTheDress love this show.

Jessica Purcell @GrecoJessica – 22 Jun 2012

watching #SYTTD while on the computer always seems to lead to doing imaginary dress shopping. sigh. #notokay

Kayla King @kaylaking21 – 22 Jun 2012

Watching #syttdd which one of my favorite shows BUT...everytime I watch it I want to go drag out my own gown and parade around in it <3

princess koriiii @KoriiMichelle – 23 Jun 2012

i'm watching #syttdd and i can't wait too get married theres so many beautiful dresses.. but honestly, i don't ever wanna be tied down. ha

Kelly Hall @kellydeehall – 11 Jan 2013

I want to have a wedding but I'm not feeling the whole "marriage" thing...
#SayYesToTheDress

Desire to get married

Steffanie @SugarPixieXO – 23 Jun 2012

Watching #sayyestothedress I can't wait until I meet my #prince and have the #perfect #wedding

Haley Mathieu @halesstorm_ – 22 Jun 2012

Watching #SYTTD makes me want to get married.... To bad i dont have a boyfriend #singlegirlprobs

Negative Tweets

Criticism of consumerism

Miss Tina (Insert Symbol – pg 19/68) @r8princess – 8 Apr 2011

\$14,000 for a dress you are only gonna wear once??? Seriously?!? That is just obscene!! #SYTTD

Kim @ispellkonfusion – 8 Oct 2011

\$50K for a ceremony dress and \$24K for a reception dress? People disgust me.
#sayyestothedress

Vontrail Preston @1stLadyPreston_ - 7 Oct 2011

\$50,000 on a wedding dress?? Wow, I coulda passed out just then... that's like 2 or 3 cars, or a down payment on a house! #SayYesToTheDress

Jessica Jewell-Barr @Jessica_Jewell – 7 Oct 2011

I don't make \$24,000 in a year...I don't think I've ever HAD that much money!!
#syttdd

Tales of Robin Hood @ThatLaddChick – 22 Jun 2012

Who pays 1300.00 for a piece of lace ?? #sytttd

LadyE @1KlazzzyDiva – 22 Jun 2012

Wait this fool paid \$5400 for a wedding dress #SYTTD

Heather Gallagher @HeathGal07 – 22 Jun 2012

Women who spend thousands of dollars on a wedding dress amaze me. Call me crazy but the elaborate wedding fairytale isn't for me #SYTTD

MEGATRON @megozzy2995 – 11 Jan 2013

The fact that brides spend over \$25,000 on a dress they'll wear for one day is reedick. #sytttd

Princess Casey @DancingAngel95 – 11 Jan 2013

There's NO point to having 3 wedding dresses that just makes it less special :(#sayyestothedress

Francesca @yoimfrankie – 11 Jan 2013

If your budget is over 6,000, your parents are paying for it, yet you ask for more money, I AM JUDGING YOU HARDCORE. #SYTTD

Ikram Internationale @Ikramhd – 11 Jan 2013

Shows like #SYTTD are just brainwashing young girls telling them that to be happy, u need a BIG wedding with a BIG dress, and SPEND MONEY.

Deahna Ortiz @DeahnaOrtiz – 11 Jan 2013

\$30,000 budget for a wedding dress?! Is that normal? #sytttd #sike #never #putthatmoneytowardsthering

Joy Luster @LadyDi___ – 10 Jan 2013

Seeing people spend the equivalent of my tuition on wedding gowns... #sytttd

Criticism of taste/dress selection

Jordana @jschiralli – 8 Apr 2011

This 50 year old woman is WAY too old to be wearing that dress..... #sayyestothedress

Tara D'Epifanio @TheTaraBianca – 8 Apr 2011

I can't believe some of the dresses girls pick on #SayYesToTheDress

Emma_Goal_Digga @Fash_em – 7 Oct 2011

I HATE short wedding dresses!! #puke #sayyestothedress

Brittany Lee @loveebuggg – 23 Jun 2012

Why would anyone say they want their wedding dress to be slutty? Who are you? #sayyestothedress

MP @MPeeezzy – 22 Jun 2012

The bottom of her dress looks like a comforter I used to have. Lol #SYTTD

Chastin Radford @DeendaBreezy69 – 22 Jun 2012

#SYTTD don't do the mermaid style dresses, you look like a spaceship.
#wehaveleftoff

Jordan Hudelson @JordanHudelson – 12 Jan 2013

Black and red wedding dresses?? I'm more of a traditional girl myself #SYTTD

MJP🍷 @MayraJayy – 12 Jan 2013

A black wedding dress? No. Hell no. #SayYesToTheDress

Amanda Jeckell @AmandaGirrl – 11 Jan 2013

Your one chance to wear a beautiful white dress, and you buy a black one. These brides are crazy. #No #SYTTD

makennaaa☐ @makennanicolee – 11 Jan 2013

why would you get a wedding dress with sleeves? #ugly #justno
#SayYesToTheDress

Into The L Woods @3L_Woods – 11 Jan 2013

I'm sorry but these women on #syttdd are so tacky. Just because its expensive does not mean its looks good.

Kaitlin George @GeorgeKaitlin – 11 Jan 2013

It makes me so mad when girl's want a red wedding dress. #no #itsnotthesame
#SYTTD

Ann Diamantopoulos @Nikosmommy – 10 Jan 2013

Srsly, who doesn't wear a veil or at least some sort of headpiece accessory when they get married? #sayYesToTheDress

Criticism of female body/physical attractiveness

Alisha Khamphilavong @O_oALISHA – 7 Oct 2011

She said her 15k dress looks cheap. SHE looks cheap wit her teal eyeshadow
okayyyyyyyyyy this ain't Tiffany&co eye shadow. #sayyestothedress

Alisha Khamphilavong @O_oALISHA – 7 Oct 2011

I can't look at her face and not stare at that gap tooth #sayyestothedress

E B @MyKissyFace – 7 Oct 2011

Wedding dresses and a body full of ugly tattoos looks crazy as hell to me...
#SayYesToTheDress

Old Bae @_sarah_smile – 7 Oct 2011

If she's gonna wear a short wedding dress, Imma need her to not walk like a Clydesdale. #SYTTD

GemDream @geminidreaming – 7 Oct 2011

\$10K wedding dress budget yet not a dime has gone to a dentist to fix ur busted teeth? #icant #sayyestothedress

Mrs. Briette @TINGLEmeBAD – 7 Oct 2011

This fat bitch ripped her dress on #sayyestothedress

Kai @Kailoli – 23 Jun 2012

man, I feel bad for these flat-chested girls on #SYTTD ...those dresses can only be pulled off with bigger boobs #gimmethatdress

Leticia Lopez @LLTrey5 – 23 Jun 2012

This bitch is so fucking skinny and shes crying cuz she looks dat.... I swear shes like 100 pounds 😞 #SayYesToTheDress

Katelyn Cato @Katelyn_Cato – 22 Jun 2012

This girl on #syttdd can't find a dress to cover her tattoo. Probably should've thought of that before getting a huge dragon on your body....

mechelle @DAISIA__Vu – 11 Jan 2013

Why do big girls always want to wear strapless dresses with their fatty arms hanging all over the place? #SYTTD

Phoebe @WriterPhoebe – 11 Jan 2013

that moment when the bride looks like an orange creamsicle because their skin is SO FUCKING ORANGE #sayyestothedress

klj. @MahatmaThottie – 11 Jan 2013

the black woman's momma looks like spike from the land before time. tell me I ain't lying! #SYTTD

deelitefuldd @WhatADeelite – 11 Jan 2013

Deborah your boobs look not just saggy, but horribly saggy in that dress. I'm so sad that nobody told you. #SYTTD

Emster @e_pL4MzZ – 11 Jan 2013

princess ballgowns are for young brides #notsorry #syttdd

Brittany Smith @xo_bns – 11 Jan 2013

This lady on #SYTTD realllly needs to dye her hair! #BadRoots

Caitlin F.H. @caitiann14 – 21 Feb 2014

If you bleach your hair + wear hot pink lipstick you can't say you have expensive, classy taste and hate cheap looking things 🤔🤔 #SYTTD

Criticism of behavior (brides)

Linda @misswhisk – 6 Jun 2009

Wondering if the bitchy brides they make fun of on #SYTTD ever watch themselves on the show in horror. LOL

Nat @raspynat – 8 Oct 2011

LOL autumn is such a hooker name #sayyestothedress #tlc

Kayla @KaylaSalass – 23 Jun 2012

Watching #SayYesToTheDress and a lady is buying a dress, THE DAY OF her wedding! and I thought I was a procrastinator... #ridiculous

Becca! @becccccaaaa15 – 11 Jan 2013

Like you've been engaged for 3 years; and you never thought of going dress shopping?! That's the first thing I'll do. The heck? #SYTTD

ebe26 @emilyyybaird – 11 Jan 2013

I don't get how brides can hate dress shopping!! #SYTTD #yourenotnormal #dressupfordays

Sara P @ariake89 – 11 Jan 2013

Geez this lady is obsessed with Princess Diana. Please, get your own life lady and stop imitating a dead royal. It's creepy... #sytttd

Steffa @steffaheffa8 – 11 Jan 2013

This bitch needs to be punched in the face #SYTTD

RachelLauver🚗 @rlauver7 – 11 Jan 2013

Drink every time you hear "I feel like a princess" #SYTTD

Keep Dreaming Kiddo @nawals25 – 10 Jan 2013

Why are you calling yourself a hooker ... you might as well just pee on your own face okay cool thanks. #SayYesToTheDress

Rhonda Turner @obsessiverhonda – 20 Sep 2013

Who has 22 bridesmaids?? Are they her 22 "closest" friends?! #SYTTD

Rachel Welsh @RachelLWelsh – 20 Sep 2013

Oh hell no. There will never be a "groomsmid" in my wedding #SayYesToTheDress

Molly @mcawiezell – 20 Sep 2013

wtf this girl on #sytttd is 17 years old. literally all I was worried of at that time was if my fake would work to buy keystone

Rawhide & Velvet @rawhidevelvet – 19 Sep 2013

Watching 89 pound girls trying on wedding dresses and bitching about not looking good in them has seriously depressed me tonight. #TLC

Kara Kirkpatrick @K_Kirkpatrick3 – 19 Sep 2013

Watching #SYTTD w a 22 yr old bride who just got a boob job and now has DDs..."I want my girls to be the center of attention" #youreawhore

Nancy Wright @Nancybay1 – 21 Feb 2014

I can't stop watching Say Yes to the Dress even though it makes me weep for humanity. Focus on the marriage, people. #sytttd

Criticism of behavior (entourage)

Jessica Jewell-Barr @Jessica_Jewell – 7 Oct 2011

If MY entourage does that, imam #bitchslap them around... #SYTTD

ShopEatandSleep @ShopEatandSleep – 7 Oct 2011

#sayyestothedress Keep your wack ass friends at bay when searching for a dress!

RebeccaJaimeeKunkle @rebeccajkunkle – 23 Jun 2012

This girls sister (who is not even dating anyone) told her ENGAGED sister that she calls dibs on a dress? #sayyestothedress #neverinmylife

AshleyHardee @ashleyhardee1 – 12 Jan 2013

I hope my family won't be mean to me like these poor brides families. Too many opinions. #benice #sayyestothedress

Arianne Young @Bettykiss – 10 Jan 2013

Brides: ALWAYS go with what you like. In gown, in plans, in everything. Ignore all negativity. #willcutabitch #SYTTD

Jaylee @Jay_Lee101 – 21 Sep 2013

Patently awaiting the day a girl just turns around & tells her Mom if she doesn't like her dress, don't come to the wedding then. #SYTTD

RhymePhile @RhymePhile – 28 Nov 2014

Alexa's father needs to shut up. It's not his wedding. She's an adult, and she needs to act like it #SayYesToTheDress

*Criticism of presence of fiancé***Melissa Marin @FrancesHouseman – 8 Oct 2011**

#SayYestoTheDress bride... Your husband might be a pimp. Look at your unlimited budget – and his suit. Just saying.

BLAKE @BlakeVonD – 7 Oct 2011

What is this big *ss hoop earring in her fiancé's ear? He looks exactly like the genie in Aladdin. Spitting image. #sayyestothedress

Michelle @chelleb7 – 7 Oct 2011

Why would you take your fiancé dress shopping? Dumb #sayyestothedress

*Criticism of self for watching/self-loathing***Colleen Gully @Gettin_Gully – 8 Apr 2011**

its my secret obsession RT @vantonyan: #SayYesToTheDress

Allie Smith @onlyafs – 7 Oct 2011

Is it sad that my night got ten times better when I saw new #sayyestothedress episodes on my dvr?

smilingcharlee @Smilingcharlee – 7 Oct 2011

I have a date with a flat screen. #KitchenNightmares, #SayYesToTheDress, #FourWeddings. #dontjudgeme

Anna Wastle @AWastle – 7 Oct 2011

Watching #sayyestothedress makes me feel like a #loser but I don't stop watching.

alley @alleyjordan13 – 23 Jun 2012

You know you watch #sayyestothedress too much when a bride comes back on for her fitting and you can remember when she came the first time..

Sweet Southern Sass @ImSouthernYall – 23 Jun 2012

I feel so lame right now. I'm emotional eating in my pjs on the sofa watching other people live out my dream. #SayYesToTheDress #FML

☐McKenzie☐ @k3nziii3 – 23 Jun 2012

You know you have no life when you're watching #SayYesToTheDress at almost 2 in the morning. #Nolife

Bethany Cook @bethjcook – 23 Jun 2012

#SYTTD FTW. Alone on Fri night w/ large diet coke and snack size mcflurry, but still better off than the single gal calling dibs on dresses.

Jonathan Drabot @JonathanDrabot – 23 Jun 2012

im such a loser watching #randytotherescue and #SYTTD

□ **Danielle** □ @**Danielleeee_10** – 23 Jun 2012

My Friday nights consist of work then Going home to watch #SayYesToTheDress. I'm such a rebel. #INeedToGetOutMore 😊😋

IDFWU @___**niquemilly** – 22 Jun 2012

Watching say yes to the dress alone on a Friday night >.< . Yupppp this is living #sarcastic #tlc

Chelsea Phillips @**HowellPhillips** – 22 Jun 2012

I think I'm addicted to watching #syttdd :) #judgeme

maddybrown @**brown_maddy** – 22 Jun 2012

First night of the summer is spent cuddling with my dog and watching #SYTTD #littlesad #overit

kristen @**quiffharrysquad** – 22 Jun 2012

#syttdd cause I have no life :)

Ashley Harmon @**ashley_harmon** – 11 Jan 2013

Say Yes to the Dress Marathon until 2am?!?! Not leaving my couch! Good thing I don't have a herd of cats or this'd be sad... #SYTTD

Jessica Maday @**JessMaday** – 11 Jan 2013

#SayYesToTheDress really knows how to make me feel like a loser

Meggan Nicole Bullis @**mnbullisss** – 20 Sep 2013

I've watched 5 episodes of #SYTTD... What's wrong with me?

Chelsea Haley @**Shell_Sea213** – 20 Sep 2013

I am at home watching #SYTTD with my dog.... I'm probs the coolest person ever.

Tanya Hubley @**TanyaHubley** – 21 Feb 2014

TLC really knows how to suck a person into watching a marathon. #SYTTD

Reminder of single status (negative)

Jennnnnn @**Jennnnnn_xo** – 7 Oct 2011

Watching #sayyestothedress makes me sooo jelousss. #ijustneedsomebodytolove...aaaand love me back. Lmao

Gabrielle Bonner @**Yo_Gabby_Gabba** – 23 Jun 2012

Watching #SayYesToTheDress like I'm getting married sometime soon.... #foreveralone 😞

Avi □ @aviperez_x3 – 22 Jun 2012

Nobody else in my house enjoys my love for #SYTTD 😊 so I'm alone on Friday nights but it's whateva 🙄

Jordan Turner @jordiinicole – 22 Jun 2012

I used to enjoy watching #SayYesToTheDress, now it's just depressing..
#alwaysabridesmaid

BoyFriendProblems @AnnoyedGF – 11 Jan 2013

Watching #SYTTD makes me sad knowing I won't have that "ahhhh" moment with my momma. 🙄

Leigh Clevenger @loveleigh_c – 11 Jan 2013

Seeing girls my age on #SYTTD makes me feel like I should be getting married soon..... #SingleProblems #IFeelOld

stuntbeast♠ @Jules_Cheer – 11 Jan 2013

I love watching #sayyestothedress but then again I hate it because it reminds me that I'm still single... #ohdear #single4life

Amanda Olson @aolson16 – 11 Jan 2013

Watching Say Yes to the Dress just makes me depressed #foreveralone #SYTTD

Chandler Alteri @ChandlerAlteri – 21 Feb 2014

Why does @TLC play #SYTTD on Fridays? Seeing people settling down is the last thing I want to see when I'm dateless on a Friday night.

Meghan Clements @mclem729 – 28 Nov 2014

TLC's #brideday makes me sick, i hate them all #jealous

Monique Clark @mclark5428 – 28 Nov 2014

Watching Say Yes To The Dress alone makes me miss my girls and spending Friday's with them watching the show. #SYTTD

Appendix B: Additional Examples for *Bridezillas*

Major Themes

Positioning Bridezillas as a cautionary tale

Christine Morgan @msChristineMo – 9 Jul 2012

#Bridezillas makes me feel so much better about myself. I can't wait to elope

Vessel of Protection @_noahsark12_ - 9 Jul 2012

#Bridezillas have the craziest people ever...I know I'm bad...but these females worse than me

Susan Glenn @The_Lovely_BRS – 9 Jul 2012

This chick on #Bridezillas taught me something. Won't let my pride and bad attitude have me at the bus stop in a wedding gown.

Michelle @seechells85 – Jul 2012

I watch #bridezillas so my fiancé can see how fortunate he is! Lol

alliee @allie_vogus – 8 Jul 2012

watching #Bridezillas makes me feel better about myself.(:

Criticism and/or amazement that men would marry these brides

sflanford @sflanford – 5 Jul 2009

Who in the world actually marries these #bridezillas

Rebekah @AtHomePundit – 13 Jun 2010

Who marries these women? #bridezillas

LoverOfGod @Cue_Tee_Py – 9 Jul 2012

@GabrielleDennis A lot of those grooms on #bridezillas are nothing to write home about so it makes a little sense...Lol

Josh @Was53787 – 8 Jul 2012

#bridezillas run dude!!!!

K i m b e r l i n @hallkimberlin – 27 Sep 2013

I just don't understand how these guys put up with these girls!! #Bridezillas 🙄

Criticism of class/taste/socio-economic status

Laurentiius @Laurentiius – 27 Jun 2011

These women R spending big money on their #weddings & they don't have a "pot to piss in," & never will. #warningsighs #Bridezillas on #WeTV

♥Alexis♥ @mostRIHquested – 8 Jul 2012

I don't agree with teenagers getting married personally. #Bridezillas

Bree♥ @BREEcoachedhim – 8 Jul 2012

Leave it to the black girl to have a \$8,000.00 wedding budget, like girl,whats \$8,000.00 gon do !? #Bridezillas

Michael McClead @MichaelMcClead – 8 Jul 2012

#Bridezillas are the result a society that is ignorant of the biblical definition of marriage #weneedbridezillasermons

Yadira Juarez 🖤 @lukitasmom – 28 Sep 2013

I hate matching bridezillas dresses #bridezillas

Jayyyyyyy @jayyy_duh – 27 Sep 2013

It's the day of this lady's wedding and she HASN'T EVEN BROUGHT HER SHOES YET!!! 🙄 #bridezillas

Criticism of brides' behavior

Holly Story @HollyStory – 13 Jun 2010

Watching #bridezillas with my mom. These people are crazy!

PolkPanther @polkpanther – 26 Jun 2011

Most of these #Bridezillas can plead temporary insanity, but the white chick on now is just a detestable human being.

Shantae F. Baby @BamaBeauty86 – 26 Jun 2011

This chick on #Bridezillas is bipolar

Laurentiius @Laurentiius – 27 Jun 2011

IMHO: If a bride can't behave b4 the wedding then she doesn't deserve a wedding B/c what's she going 2B like after the wedding? #bridezillas

PR Works @PRWorks1 – 26 Jun 2011

Who curses like that #BRidezillas?

VA^VX^N @VA_GT – 26 Jun 2011

These heffaas acting a pure fool lmmfao #bridezillas

Candace🍷 @cupcakeshake – 9 Jul 2012

Her body looks amazing in that gown too bad her attitude is anything but amazing #Bridezillas

Michael J @ZhemJZ – 8 Jul 2012

This show is a perfect example of why certain people should not be allowed to procreate is.gd/qQaQCE @GetGlue #bridezillas

Orlando Diaz @orlandodod71 – 8 Jul 2012

Watching #Bridezillas. Should a drinking game. Take a shot when these crazed brides to be say “ It's my day.” And “I wanna be a princess.”

syl @SylviaCheyenne – 8 Jul 2012

“Someone should invent a chastity belt that doesn’t come off until a certain amount of IQ points are reached” – My mom. #Bridezillas

KB @SouthSiderKB – 8 Jul 2012

These women are why most men are terrified of marriage. Scary!!! #bridzillas

Rodneyka @NeiykaBabyyy – 8 Jul 2012

Chicks on #Bridezillas are crazy. They need some serious therapy and a lot of strong medication!

Alexandra @Alexandra0326 – 8 Jul 2012

Watching #bridezillas is like watching a car wreck. You can’t help but watch! These bitches are looney!!

Kenndra heyward✧✧ @kendravelli – 8 Jul 2012

Hell no. Bitch just said “Yes I love you, but I love myself more” #Bridezillas #SheRatchett

Bill Kneass @phillyfreedm – 8 Jul 2012

What’s 14+14? One bird with two stones or two birds with one stone? These are #Bridezillas but obviously not brainzillas. @WEtv

Nicole Pitchford @nicolarola27 – 8 Jul 2012

Watching #Bridezillas. These Bitches are #crazy

Aura Harewood @auraluvsu – 8 Jul 2012

#bridezillas is such a ridiculous show. I can’t believe people really act like this and allow it to be filmed

5.1.1.1 Criticism of the female body and/or beauty

Esperanza Escobar @jennjones86 – 13 Jun 2010

Omg she’s SO ugly. #bridezillas

Eugenua Berg @blk_dahlia2 – 26 Jun 2011

#Bridezillas #ugh she hasn’t washed or brushed her hair, how disgusting. What kind if woman is this?

Im da Wizard Bitch @MrHennessyBlack – 8 Jul 2012

Why on #BRIDEZILLAS da #UGLYHOES do da fuckin most like bitch u lucky u getting #Marries smh ungreatful bitch

THE Haitian Diva @nounoush06 – 8 Jul 2012

Rochelle needs a nose job BAD! #bridezillas

Ms.Do It All @Mizz_do_It_All – 8 Jul 2012

This chick on #bridezillas is ugly. She can’t even say headache right.

marreshia hunley @reeshdadia – 8 Jul 2012

Why do the bridezillas be ugly, ghetto, white trash girls that swear they're pretty.
Notttttt lol #bridezillas

Expressing a desire to inflict physical violence on the brides

Mika D @Miss_MikaD – 13 Jun 2010

Lookin at #bridezillas wantin to slap one these broads

Mrs. Kasie Sanderson @KSandMom4 – 27 Jun 2011

Ummm anyone else ever feel like smacking the shit out of those #Bridezillas ?

Amanda Farkas Mough @PeachLovesYoshi – 26 Jun 2011

I want to punch this stupid fat bitch on #Bridezillas right in the face.

Wild Flower³ @soul_occupance – 8 Jul 2012

One day this man is going to kill her in her sleep #bridezillas hoooooOoly fuck

CharFlowersAlways @CharCaramelBaby – 8 Jul 2012

#bridezillas I wanna choke this bitch Rochelle. You know the problem is that he parents didn't take the fist to that ass.

LO @Iam_LOUISA – Jul 2012

I want to drop kick this girl on #Bridezillas

Alexandra @Alexandra0326 – 8 Jul 2012

Watching #bridezillas these bitches are fucking nuts and need to be high fived in the face, with a chair!!!

Angela Imburgia @stravsgirl – 27 Sep 2013

#bridezillas I wanna slap the shit out of this bitch!

Expressing shame for watching

Diana @DiANNe0985 – 26 Jun 2011

@HistoryDiva25 same here so don't tell anyone lol #Bridezillas

Lady Yoshi @HistoryDiva25 – 26 Jun 2011

OMG new #Bridezillas tonight too! How could I forget? That's my guilty pleasure :)

Tweets specifically related to race/ethnicity

Just Call Me Kee @Made_InCALi – 9 Jul 2012

Hell yeah...white boy put your foot down #Bridezillas tell that hoe to stfu!!!

Airman Sanders @Pura_Verita_89 – 9 Jul 2012

How you fuck up marrying a white man though#Bridezillas

بَـيـبـيـةـ Naya ٲ_(ツ)_/ @nayabby – 8 Jul 2012

This girl on #bridezillas is putting horrible spin on interracial relationships (White men and black women)

asha @aye_wilson – 8 Jul 2012

Why is this nice white guy marrying this loud, aggy ass black girl on #Bridezillas?! Omg. I don't even know her & she's pissing me off.

Elegant_Beauty @Fresh_Beauty104 – 8 Jul 2012

#Bridezillas like ani other triflin black person she shows up late

Coca Got Bandz @TrapGod3sss – 8 Jul 2012

Watching #Bridezillas. Ha , these bitches got some ghetto ass names. Shadarrell , Lakesha , & Sharea.

XX @Monsster10 – 27 Sep 2013

This Asian hoe pisses me off. Her fiance doesn't deserve this! #Bridezillas

Ryan Mac @RyMac818 – 27 Sep 2013

These Asian hoodrats on #Bridezillas are cracking me up #WeTv

Displays of extreme misogyny

Melanie Jones @bluegemini87 – 8 Jul 2012

I wish one of the grooms would curse their bride out. That would b a hilarious episode #bridezillas

Paul @florespd85 – 28 Sep 2013

@WEtv Angela has to be one of the biggest cunts ever #bridezillas #totalbitch

Appendix C: Additional Examples for *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*

Self-promotion

Ryan Seacrest Prod. @RSP – Sep 2

West coast, let's wrap this up right... the season finale of #KUWTK starts now!

Khloé @khloekardashian – Sep 2

It's officially SHOWTIME!!! #KUWTK

Kris Jenner @KrisJenner – Sep 1

30 minutes West Coast!! #KUWTK #FINALE on E!
instagram.com/p/sbZdHFmCM/

Kim Kardashian West @KimKardashian – Sep 1

#KUWTK again tonight! West Coast, are you watching?

Kourtney Kardashian @kourtneykardash – Sep 1

It's about that time West Coast. Watch the new #KUWTK on E! at 9/8 C.

Khloé @khloekardashian – Sep 1

What do you have planned tonight? Don't forget about part 2 of the season finale of #KUWTK...

Kourtney Kardashian @kourtneykardash – Sep 1

Part 2 season finale #kuwtk [instagram.com/p/sbJEXIk1jv/](https://www.instagram.com/p/sbJEXIk1jv/)

Ryan Seacrest Prod. @RSP – Sep 1

East coast, it's that time! Tune in now to watch the season finale of #KUWTK!

Kylie Jenner @KylieJenner – Sep 1

Get ready east coast!!! Turn your TVs to #KUWTK in 5 minutes!

Khloé @khloekardashian – Sep 1

15 more mins till #KUWTK, East Coast!! Who's ready...

Kim Kardashian West @KimKardashian – Sep 1

One hour left, East Coast! #KUWTK

Khloé @khloekardashian – Sep 1

Bible you guys, you won't want to miss tonight's episode of #KUWTK!

Kourtney Kardashian @kourtneykardash – Sep 1

Just a couple more hours East Coast. Part 2 of the season finale of #KUWTK airs tonight on E!

Kourtney Kardashian @kourtneykardash – Sep 1

Keep up with the craziness on #KUWTK! New episode airs tonight on E!

Kourtney Kardashian @kourtneykardash – Sep 1

Don't miss tonight's episode of #KUWTK!!

Kim Kardashian West @KimKardashian – Sep 1

Part two of the season finale of #KUWTK airs on tonight! Be sure to watch!

Kourtney Kardashian @kourtneykardash – Sep 1

What was your favorite part of last night's #KUWTK? Catch another new episode tonight on E! at 9/8c...

Kourtney Kardashian @kourtneykardash – Sep 1

End your family's Sunday night with mine! Watch #KUWTK tonight at 9/8c

Khloé @khloekardashian – Sep 1

Part 2 of the #KUWTK season finale airs TONIGHT! Catch the new episode at 9/8 C on E!

Kourtney Kardashian @kourtneykardash – Sep 1

Good morning ladies and gents. Catch part 2 of the season finale of #KUWTK tonight at 9/8c on E!

Khloé @khloekardashian – Sep 1

Happy #KUWTK day, round 2!!!!

Kylie Jenner @KylieJenner – Sep 1

Morning guyss!! Catch the part two of the season finale of #KUWTK tonight at 9/8 C on E!

Kris Jenner @KrisJenner – Sep 1

#MadeInAmerica #Yeezus #KanyeWest @kyliejenner Great night I love you Kylie!!! Xo [instagram.com/p/sZNHrnGG6/](https://www.instagram.com/p/sZNHrnGG6/)

Kris Jenner @KrisJenner – Sep 1

#JesusWalks #madeinamerica #Yeezus #KanyeWest [instagram.com/p/sZMfUHGGT/](https://www.instagram.com/p/sZMfUHGGT/)

Kourtney Kardashian @kourtneykardash – Sep 1

Tune in right now for part 1 of the season finale of #KUWTK on E!

Khloé @khloekardashian – Sep 1

You ready West Coast!? It's your turn to watch part 2 of #KUWTK season finale...

Khloé @khloekardashian – Aug 31

Almost your turn West Coast!!! So excited for you to see tonight's #KUWTK!!!

Kris Jenner @KrisJenner – Aug 31

Finally off to Paris!! You're up next, West Coast!! One hour! #KUWTK on E! ✈️ [instagram.com/p/sYxJgaGD0/](https://www.instagram.com/p/sYxJgaGD0/)

Bunim/Murray @BunimMurray – Aug 31

East Coast, you ready?!? Switch to E! NOW to watch the dramatic lead-up to the wedding of the year!! #KUWTK

Kourtney Kardashian @kourtneykardash – Aug 31

Okay East Coast, tune into #KUWTK now!!

Kylie Jenner @KylieJenner – Aug 31

Hey East Coasters, #KUWTK starts in 10 minutes!! Hope you are all tuning in!

Khloé @khloekardashian – Aug 31

Only 15 mins left UNTIL #KUWTK is on in the EAST COAST!!!

Ryan Seacrest Prod. @RSP – Aug 31

Don't forget, tonight we kick off the 2part season finale of #KUWTK! 9/8c on E!
instagram.com/p/sYcfYQGBh/

Kim Kardashian West @KimKardashian – Aug 31

Only one more hour until a new #KUWTK! Tune in East Coast!

Josh Hayden @JoshHaydenJH – 11 Oct 2011

10.5 Million Viewers For @KimKardashian's Wedding Special bit.ly/nwU01Y
RT@RyanSeacrest #KimKardashian

General Trends**Duaine @Bamboomx – 8 Nov 2009**

I absolutely adore the #Kardashians <3

Bea @Beatriceisme – Sep 1

Eating cheesy garlic bread chips and watching #KUWTK 🍷

B. RAY 🍷 @JusAlilBritt – Sep 1

All I want is a best friend who I can watch #KUWTK with all day and eat tons of junk food.

ëBbîĒ™ @SnacksOver_Love – 11 Oct 2011

Out of ALL the #Kardashians I like @KhloeKardashian the most. She speaks her mind frequently lol.

Robin Ford @_robin_ford – 10 Oct 2011

I love my second family, gorgeous wedding! #kardashians

Brooke Weidenfeld @beejhayy – 9 Oct 2011

More excited for the #KimKardashian wedding than i was for the royal wedding.
#priorities

Marla Rose Walker @Mstudammuch – 9 Oct 2011

Put ur TV on E Rae Rae so u can see what a REAL wedding looks like u fuckn hoodrat... I got ur royalty bitch... #Bridezillas #KUWTK

sach. @quicksachets – Sep 2

ahh Kardashian wedding episodes are my absolute favorite *~* #KUWTK

Sonali @So_Narly – 10 Oct 2011

I'm gunna start saying "Bible" now #kardashians

Sabrina Ricciardella @_sabrriinnaa – 10 Oct 2011

ADOPT ME #kardashians

Joyce Holder @joyciemarie – Sep 1

In love with the fact that we finally got to see north on #kuwtk

caitlyn o'connor @caaitoconnorr – Sep 1

Watching #KUWTK is going to make me cry I love @KimKardashian and @kanyewest so much together 🥹❤️

Keepingupwithj @Jalenwashere – Sep 1

From me to go from ratchet #lhhatl to classy #KUWTK idk how this is going to work

Sarah May @saarahmay – Sep 1

Maybe I have high expectations of people because I wish everyone was a Kardashian 🤔 #KUWTK

Antionett @AntionettJ – Aug 31

Scotts my favorite and he's not even a kardashian. #KUWTK #scottdisick #lorddisick

Dulce @dulce_twit – Sep 1

Wonder if Kanye thinks about Kim's vagina visitors #kuwtk

IG: 1_Hunnid @RonnJMo_816 – Sep 1

Wonder if Kendall & Karlie had sum dick yet #IJS #KUWTK

Samuel Green @SLGreenJr – 8 Nov 2009

3. This whole thing is a joke and fluke! #whack #doneforratings #Kardashians

Samuel Green @SLGreenJr – 8 Nov 2009

2. Lamar has just lost all credibility for his appearance on this show and him getting married to this chick like this...#kardashian

Samuel Green @SLGreenJr – 8 Nov 2009

1. This is sooooooooooooooooooooo disgusting #Kardashians

Jeff Furois @ImNotFurios – 11 Oct 2011

what a magical #kardashian wedding! anyone know when the 2 hr Kardashian divorce special is set to air?

Alexandra Stamou @aleinmexico – 10 Oct 2011

#Slavoj #Zizek 's media-hungry side is rather annoying. He is quickly becoming the #KimKardashian of modern philosophy.

Meagan Stallcup @MeaganStallcup – 10 Oct 2011

I'm honestly surprised Kim was still married when they aired her wedding...
#kimkardashian

Andy P @andytheaggie – 9 Oct 2011

#Kardashian wedding show on tv. Honestly surprised the marriage lasted long enough for it to air.

Kristyn @kriselise_ – Sep 1

I'm watching #KUWTK and honesty it sickens me. They're just famous for being famous. Kim got noticed for her sex tape that's all.

Nessie @MeowKitty – Sep 2

Feeds about #KUWTK I JUST WANNA SCREAM STFU. Ppl watch but then talk shit about it If you don't like it stop watching & following. #Dicks

David @DMart4 – Sep 2

Is Kanye really relevant? He talks a lot of shit. It's almost as if we should be happy he walks the earth. Hey Kanye no one cares #KanyeWest

Kristin @myscarsRsexy – Sep 2

Interesting #KUWTK cant keep the wedding a secret but complain about paparazzi yet Brad and Angelina actual celebrities can marry on the dl

Allison Botello @allisonbotello – 11 Oct 2011

Can't decide who's dumber @KimKardashian or #krishumphries.....or me for watching this wedding. #marriageisajoke #dontdoitkimmy

Daniel Rossi @coachrossi10 – 10 Oct 2011

Watching the #Kardashian wedding. Prepared to cry, vomit, want to kill myself, etc for the next hour, hour + a half.
#vomitbowl
#gunloaded

Trish (Queen Bossy) @ExPoleDancer – 9 Oct 2011

Yeah, I'm watching #Bridezillas. At least I can justify that guilty pleasure. Can't do that for the #Kardashian wedding.

Sloane Cannon Simon @SloaneC – 10 Oct 2011

A tweet ab #kardashian from someone means an automatic unfollow for me. Sorry to all who I unfollowed tonight, it was an unfollow massacre.

mufasa @noelpaige_ – Sep 2

I'd say being obsessed with #KUWTK was a guilty pleasure but I'm not guilty or sorry for it at all so

Madmoizelle @madmoizelle420 – Sep 1

Why does @DIRECTV list the #kardashian show as documentary/reality? it should be listed as fiction/horror! Still watching it #LoserLife

Mike Kraft @MichaelTheKraft – 9 Oct 2011

i think im the only guy who watched #kimkardashian fairytale wedding and idc. awesome!

Greg @peeceofmind – Sep 1

I am a mature, half-ass intelligent, grown ass man yet I find Keeping Up With The Kardashians quite intriguing. #KUWTK

Advertising Revenue**Darcy Stackhouse @Darcy_Joelle – 10 Oct 2011**

oh my god the #productplacement for #livingsocial during the #Kardashians is obscene hahahah You're not fooling anyone kris

Jamie Stone @ItsJamieStone – 11 Oct 2011

I wonder how much @livingsocial paid for that plug on #KUWTK ???

Danielle @_daniellekay_ – Sep 2

No need to blur out that coffee logo, Kris Jenner is holding. I know it's Starbucks! #kardashians #starbucksexpert

Tim McCann @TimJMcCann – Sep 1

I like how every brand name is blurred out on #KUWTK because nobody wants to be associated with them. Yes, it's on my TV right now 📺

“Emphasis on reality”**Superstar Lines @Ms_Nikki2 – 8 Nov 2009**

LMAO wow! #KUWTK I would've died if I was @KhloeKardashian and I had to tell my stepdad that I was engaged after he heard it on the news.

lyssa @alybabe123 – 8 Nov 2009

Of course they are really happy after a month of dating. Real question is will they be happy in a few years. #Kardashians

A @MrsAshNorris – 8 Nov 2009

Um this all seems so staged... #keepingupwiththekardashians or #KUWK that was easier

Ali Halbert @aligriff10 – 10 Oct 2011

My guilty pleasure is the #kardashians but Kim's wedding show thing seems fake.

Mindy Joy Media @MindyJoyM – 9 Oct 2011

Um, because it's a fabricated reality show? RT @huffpostwedding: Why are the #Kardashians so dramatic? #KimKWedding

DruggyBear @DruggyBear – 9 Oct 2011

is there any part of the #kardashians that is not scripted with fake drama? these people are terrible actors btw #KimKWedding

We Know City @weknowcity – 9 Oct 2011

#spoiled #kardashians how ur mom go into surgery and 1 out of 6 kids visits and takes care of you? giving the look.

UBERZEN™ @YallKnowJayP – 9 Oct 2011

The #kardashians are on one. I can't believe her momma gon' go get plastic surgery be4 the weddin'! Wtf. Whose weddin' was it?

Kristin Marie @KristinB720 – 10 Oct 2011

Say what you want about the #Kardashians, but you can't deny how much they love eachother #familyfirst

kay min @kayymin – 9 Oct 2011

#kimsfairytalewedding is not a fairytale! I love the #kardashians

ebonye bee. @ebonyebec – 9 Oct 2011

um KRIS JENNER ITS NOT YOUR WEDDING! WHO GIVES A DAMN WHAT UR FUNKY TASTE IS #Kardashians

T Dell @tdell_ – 9 Oct 2011

unlike other reality images.. They have morals and value whats most important in life.. LOVE, JOY, and FAMILY. #kardashians

Sheena Patton @RoxyRello – 10 Oct 2011

I definitely like Kloe and Lamar way better. So real. :) #KUWTK

Shamontiel @Maroonsista – 10 Oct 2011

is watching the wedding for #KeepingUpWiththeKardashians thinking "She wants the wedding more than the marriage." I hope I'm wrong though.

MATT RUIZ III @MDOOGY3_DA_DB – 10 Oct 2011

Why would you air something on tv if it makes you look bad... #kardashian

Lee Pam Odom @LeePam – 10 Oct 2011

Watching #kardashian wedding! Not sure if there is real bride and groom drama or staging for tv moments. Perceived drama, maybe?

Janett Martin @janettmrtn – 10 Oct 2011

but on #kuwtk theyve showed that what is on the magazines is mostly false which i dont like _

Janett Martin @janettmrtn – 10 Oct 2011

since #kuwtk i dont really trust magazines anymore i thought they were always true because theyre magazines they would always get the scoop

☆Jedi Master☆ @PCChamp54 – 10 Oct 2011

"@briiiiiiiiana: Every time #kimkardashian cries it looks like she's faking it. She cries like a 4 yearold." Bc its script'd

Maggie Ortiz @Maggie__Ortiz – 10 Oct 2011

Bahahaha love this fake drama #KUWTK

Daniel @danandhisbass – 10 Oct 2011

@KhloeKardashian acts soooo effen stupid on her show, #KUWTK. But i bet shes not so bad in "real" life.

Rika♥ @LovelySwisha – 10 Oct 2011

Kris Jenner treats kim better than Khloe & Kourt ,they didnt do all this for khloe's wedding #kardashians

...Just CHEW!... @aPrettiBiGDeaL – 10 Oct 2011

Awwww..Kim was doin her boo feet..hm..maybe she really does love him for more reasons than being black & a basketball player.. #Kardashians

R.I.P Shiz Lkp @SexyEbPA – 9 Oct 2011

They marriage is not gonna last I'm sorry #Kardashians

Roxanne Michelle @Roooxanne – 10 Oct 2011

Bawling my eyes out over watching #KimKardashian dealing with the emotions of not having her father there for her wedding :(#KimKWedding

Caesar @ImYellowBRO – 10 Oct 2011

i wannaaa relationship likee #KimKardashian & #KrisHumpries <3

shariah . @elysexo – 9 Oct 2011

I think #KrisHumphries and @KimKardashian marriage is juss a publicity stunt . i love you kim but im sorry you guys chemistry together is NO

Ivy Dickens @MsIvyDickens – 9 Oct 2011

Good god this #Kardashian wedding special is so scripted and fake. More so than everything else they have on tv #unreal

Kenisha A @nisharose – 9 Oct 2011

Khloe is the only one who understands about being a wife between these 3 girls.
#KUWTK #kimsfairytalewedding

Qae @ThatKidz_Q – 9 Oct 2011

Rob is a fuckin bum yoOooO ..are you really moving back and 4th between ur sisters home? #KeepingUpWithTheKardashians

Hey Christina! @ChristinaDior08 – 9 Oct 2011

Really tho....y'all get a jillion tacos and burritos and leave the evidence in the trash can on top...smh amateurs lol #KUWTK

Qae @ThatKidz_Q – 9 Oct 2011

Khloe and Lamar have real love. I can see it
#KeepingUpWithTheKardashians

Christina Marie™ @Center_OfAttn88 – 9 Oct 2011

Kris b showing too much favoritism towards kim.. She b makin me mad!!
#KUWTK

Yenifel @YENiFEL – 9 Oct 2011

Lmaoo. Scott Is Such An Asshole. I Love It #KUWTK.

Brittney Cottingham @bbcott – 9 Oct 2011

When will people learn not to mess with @KhloeKardashian? Have they not seen every other season of #KUWTK...

Cam. @cammno – 9 Oct 2011

Favoritism. RT @FrasaChick: Kris just said kims wedding was the biggest event she's ever planned o__o what about khloes wedding #KUWTK

Chelsea @Chel_C_G 9 – Oct 2011

Ok #kimkardashian, ur marriage isn't even real and u still get a show about it, that's gna rerun 10000x's?? #SoOverKim #AllAboutScott haha

Angelica Barredo @ABarredo – 9 Oct 2011

Of course kris jenner has to make kims wedding about her too by wanting the plastic surgery right before it..#keepingupwiththekardashians

sharona inkpen @Sharona_Andre – 9 Oct 2011

Watching #KUWTK were @KhloeKardashian gets married to Lamar its amazing they pulled it off in what 9days such an amazing family x

Samantha Siegel @SamSiegs – Sep 2

Catching up on #KUWTK. My heart breaks for #khloekardashian and Scott. Can't help it. So real (for reality TV). Stay strong.

Johnny Vaught @JohnnyVaught – Sep 2

This Episode Is Awesome, Kris Is Feeling Real Left Out Of Having Input On The Wedding.

"Do You Want My Input?"

"Not Really"

jajaja

#KUWTK

manda fraga @ydgmandy – Sep 2

Am I the only one who thinks Kim's "selfie book" for Kanye is literally the most selfish gift in the world? #KUWTK

KayKi @itsKayKi – Sep 2

Kanye is smitten & why did I tear up listening to the stories about how long he's tried to love on her on last nights #KUWTK?

Jessica Geranio @jgeranio – Sep 2

I love when @kanyewest is on #KUWTK he waited years to be with @KimKardashian and she is the only person he follows on twitter. #truelove

Joshua DeLeo @DeLeoJoshua – Sep 2

@RyanSeacrest Why is the show 6 months behind? We know what's going on in the tabloids then half a year later we see it on #KUWTK

Kristen @KrisMarcelle – Sep 2

It's clear that Bruce dislikes Kris now. #KUWTK

Brittany Christine @BColl210 – Sep 2

@khloekardashian lol that hangover was the real deal. Been there!! You look amazing and are such a great person and role model 😊 #KUWTK

1XoticBeauty @Im_Authentic34 – 9 Oct 2011

Okay Kim is going to bed with a full face on.....#kimkardashian

LIZZ @lizzzjizzz – Sep 1

With every new #KUWTK episode it becomes more & more obvious that it's scripted & it's annoys the hell out of me

WorthyStyle @worthystyle – Sep 1

Is anyone watching tonight's #KUWTK ? Season finale, wedding episode. Probably one of the most genuine eps this show has ever shown on E!

Paul @The_Paul08 – Sep 1

Kim's using the same wedding planner as she did with Kris. #awkward #KUWTK

Robin @chalklet_gyrl – Sep 1

#KUWTK every season finale either Kim gets married or Kourt has a baby

SheIs CheyenneNDN @SonyakayR – Sep 1

#KimKardashian knows dam well she didn't care that #RobKardashian didn't show up #BishDontGiveNoFuksBoutNE1else #KUWTK

Khadijah Nicole. ☐ @KhadiBugg – Sep 1

Scott needs to marry Kourtney or stop getting her pregnant! It's not fair for her to raise 3 kids by herself & he won't committed. #KUWTK

☐ @reMARKablyF1RST – Sep 1

And although Kris doesn't ahe to pay for anyone to go to Paris, it was a petty move to pay for 2 of his kids and not all of them. #KUWTK

capri lee @riridawg – Sep 1

The scene on #KUWTK where the guy "grabs" @KendallJenner butt is so staged and the worst acting ever. @BrodyJenner @khloekardashian

♣️🍷ocha♣️ @libra3408 – Sep 1

Scott's parents just died. Give him a break. He clarified seasons ago he doesn't want more children. #KUWTK

Tara Brady @trendingtara – Sep 1

Ya know what #KUWTK is missing? Reunion shows. I'd love to see Brody calling Kim out over this wedding stuff.

Mona @MonaKhan123 – Sep 1

Time for my weekly dose of the #kardashians - the only form of scripted television to look forward to!

the zen mogul @VernaLane – Sep 1

Are @KrisJenner & Bruce so clueless at parenting or just 4 #KUWTK show? SHAMEFUL how they treat @BrodyJenner He should disown them (&Kim).

Olivia LaBorde @OliviaLaBorde – Sep 1

Ok this scene when kourtney told Scott about the baby is too fake #KUWTK

WifeandWife @WifeandWifeTV – Sep 1

Everytime the kids get too old to nurse & can sleep in their own room, she gets pregnant. Anything to keep Scott in the guestroom #kuwtk

Oy Caroline @OyinkanSxo – Sep 1

Lol Scott is a dick! How can he act like this to Kourtney being pregnant? Did she get herself pregnant, idiot #kuwtk

kathy B @katidid7 – Sep 1

it is almost as if tonight's episode of #KUWTK was filmed AFTER the wedding? #creativeediting

Лясеќстая☆ @MissCobain22 – Sep 1

I love how in every episode of #KeepingUpWithTheKardashians there's a lesson that they learned at the end 🍷

Jay @pistachio_dot – Sep 1

Scott's totally hurting... You can see it #KUWTK

Danielle McClure @Daniemy77 – Sep 1

I know we aren't getting the whole story, but I think Brody has a right to be upset from what we are seeing #KUWTK

Amber @mspopularartaste – Sep 1

Come on, we all know even if Scott wanted to leave Kourtney he couldn't b/c it would hurt the family brand if she was a single mom #KUWTK

#IDGT @Drugufied – Sep 1

Scotts pull out game is weak af #KUWTK

lisat tant @lisatant47 – Aug 31

#KUWTK o.k if you can invite the cameras, invite the girlfriend of Brody, he is family

Shannon Johnson @scjohnson2728 – Aug 31

If kourtney has trust issues with Scott then why is she still with him and have 3 kids with him? It's all just for the show! #KUWTK

♪Jessicka Oshman & @gessicka_ – Aug 31

Kim Kardashian is that much of a shallow cunt she is makin people change thier hair for her wedding. The fuck does she think she is? #KUWTK

Leslie Bonham @LmBonham15 – Aug 31

Why is Scott mad that Kourtney's pregnant like TF YOU THINK WAS GONNA HAPPEN YOUR PULL OUT GAME IS WEAK SON #KUWTK

Jamey_Giddens @Jamey_Giddens – Aug 31

This Brody thing was a scripted plot point for drama. It worked, obviously, since I'm tweeting about it! LOL #KeepingUpWithTheKardashians

Zurg @coviib – Aug 31

All this kourtney and Scott #KUWTK stuff is made up conflict for tv

♥□Mia @_BellaSkR – Aug 31

Scott acted like them niggas when their sidechicks say she's pregnant 🙄😂

#KeepingUpWithTheKardashians

a s h l E Y □ @_youASHy – Aug 31

kourtney need to get her tubes tied 🙄she been pregnant these last three seasons 🙄

#KUWTK

Llemay Azralag @Yummerson – Sep 2

Not sure how I'd feel with my fiancé looking at my sister's nips. #KUWTK

daniella @simplydaniellag – Sep 1

It's cute how kim added kanye's music in the background during the scenes

#KUWTK

BGC @Brittany_Geneva – Sep 1

Kim just put the hammer down on those bridesmaids dresses. Well alright Miss West #KUWTK

Emphasis on Material Goods

Sofie C. @so_fieeee – 11 Oct 2011

WOAAAAA!!!!!! 20.5 carat diamond ring-please take note future husband.

#KimKardashian #lifeoftherich&famous

Kate Teevens @teevs44 – 11 Oct 2011

3 wedding dresses wow only #KimKardashian

Shannon Incledon @Shanneee29 – 11 Oct 2011

Ok.. who owns \$75,000 earrings? What a ridiculous waste of money!

#KeepingupwiththeKardashians

Frances Key @FMK88 – 10 Oct 2011

NO ONE NEEDS THREE EFFING VERA WANG DRESSES AT THEIR WEDDING. #UGH #kimkardashian #spoiled

Diana B @sIMpliamazing – 10 Oct 2011

Y do u need real diamonds in a bouquet???? #kuwtk

♠ @AyamNotHere – 10 Oct 2011

Can't wait to see how many years of love and happiness \$10million can buy

#kimKardashian

Real Housewives @Real_Housewives – 9 Oct 2011

ok ok Kris H prob got a huge discount.... #Humphries #Kardashian

Kevin Tomlinson @miamibeach – 9 Oct 2011

@Real_Housewives I read he was given a major discount for him to pimp out the diamond co. (of course) #kardashian

Real Housewives @Real_Housewives – 9 Oct 2011

I don't care if my hubby to be is poor I will NOT buy my own ring #Kardashian
#Opinion

Marissa Gallagher @Marissa_Marie4 – 10 Oct 2011

need a fairytale wedding. #getrichordietrying #kardashians

Kaycee Holmes @kayceeholmes – 9 Oct 2011

Not interested in the #kardashian wedding drama. Please get back to the gift registry, florist, venue, etc. Thanks

Paula Edgar, PGE LLC @PaulaEdgar – 9 Oct 2011

Oh. This is one big #Kardashian Kommercial

Nothing Is The Same @kikij104 – 9 Oct 2011

Is it me or does the #Kardashian wedding seem like Sex in the City 2-A lot of product placement

Masculinity and Control**iMariela @iMariela – 11 Oct 2011**

I think was so funny how Chris Humphrey was bitching about wedding details when he's didn't pay a dime for it #kuwtk

AG @splash_gee – 11 Oct 2011

#KrisHumphries holy control issues & hidden agenda batman! How many ways can a "man" show they're insecure?! Money on 2 years tops!

Paula Edgar, PGE LLC @PaulaEdgar – 10 Oct 2011

Poor Kris, repeatedly emasculated on Kim's Fairytale Wedding: A #Kardashian Event #kimwedding

kendis dunn @kendiddydis – 10 Oct 2011

I love #KrisHumphries because he doesn't let those bitches run him over.

Aaron Bruce @aaronbruce11 – 10 Oct 2011

Is #KrisHumphries trending because he's a good basketball player (his other job) or because he's #KimKardashian's accessory?(For now)...

JoshuaBolden.com @JoshuaBolden – 10 Oct 2011

"But you have come up off of Kim." —Khloe Kardashian to BBall Kris #Truth, because I had no clue who dude was before #KUWTK.

□□□ @AprilDiam0nd – 9 Oct 2011

WAIT ! so kris isnt even signed to a team...hmmm..i smell a golddigger *SNIFF
SNIFF* ..#KUWTK

G.B.E. Fam @zwagfajajaja – 9 Oct 2011

Any guy married to a #kardashian got no back bone them chicks just fun them

March 7th. @Beautydoeskill – 9 Oct 2011

Never wife a hoe. #krishumphries

Ryan Morris @AzSOONER1985 – 9 Oct 2011

Damn the #Kardashian women are way too spoiled and opinionated. I don't know how @KrisHumphries and @ScottDisick made it...I'd kill myself

IG: deandreawalker @itsDe_Andrea – 9 Oct 2011

#KrisHumphries is really acting like the girl version of 'Kris'..I see why his parents decided to use a 'K' rather than a 'C' _

Darth Lord @TheDarthLord – 9 Oct 2011

Since when has it been a fairytale to marry a #NewJerseyNet? #kimkardashian

Jade @jtinibaby – 9 Oct 2011

It takes strong men to handle the #Kardashian women. There a little much. But I still love them.

Yolanda McDonald @CuzImTheRealest – 9 Oct 2011

#KrisHumphries seems like a douchebag.. Hope @KimKardashian got that solid #prenup cause this man is clearly looking for #fameandmoney

Keya N. ♥♥♥ @JadoreLaMode215 – Aug 31

It's kinda weird seeing that for once Kim's man is way more into the details and fashion than she is. #KUWTK

JUDAH @JUDAHontheBEATS – Aug 31

The Kardashian women are ruthless when it comes to respecting men. It's their way or no way. #KUWTK

Body Image Issues

Boujee & Broke @boujeeandbroke – 10 Oct 2011

Its official the #Kardashians butts are real b/c Rob kardashian's got a big butt #DWTS

niCcc @nLepard – 10 Oct 2011

Your scared of the surgery ur getting but it's not necessary it was ur own choice #ridiculouscelebs why do I watch this crap #kardashians

Becca @deccabavis – 11 Oct 2011

"ROBERT! A moment on the lips is a lifetime on the hips! GIVE ME THE FRUIT ROLL UP!" @KhloeKardashian #keepingupwiththekardashians

Teri Hart @TeriHart – 10 Oct 2011

@RobKardashian has a booty just like #kimkardashian. Not sure it's as hot in a boy. #DWTS

Joanna Brenner @JoannaBrenner – 9 Oct 2011

WHY WHY why would E! show the nitty gritty of the neck surgery?? #disgusting #kardashian

Derrin Brown @sarcastic_nature – 9 Oct 2011

She crazy she don't need no facelift she's gorgeous for her age #kuwtk

▣▪ Steel Town Girl▪ @vlbasile - Sep 2

#KUWTK I want to smack that blue hair right off Kylie. That's just wrong to do in someone's wedding.#rude#selfcentered#attentionstarved

KK @kaylarkelly – Sep 1

Brody and Rob don't even show up, Kylie dyes her hair blue...why are these people so selfish! I'd be so angry if I were Kim. #KUWTK

FOLLOW ME JUSTIN @BieberGomezFood – Sep 1

Kylie should have just added the extensions for the sake of Kim cause this is her day. #KUWTK

Shawn @Euphoric98 – Sep 1

Rob drawing more attention to himself by NOT showing up because everybody already knows the reason. It's really tiresome #KUWTK

Kellie Schreibvogel @itskelliebetchh – Sep 1

Rob Kardashian is a bitch, get over being fat like suck it up honestly #KUWTK

RiRiNavy @RebelJuan – Sep 1

Rob needs to stop bitching about his weight and do something about it #KUWTK

Justice▣ @_JLovee – Sep 1

I feel so bad for Rob .. He really needs to get it together tho . You can't sit and be depressed forever bruh . Move on #kuwtk

Srdan @Hamiltonman – Sep 1

Than we ask why BruceJenner wanted to became a oposite sex.All that estrogen...#KUWTK

Lauren @ljohnson2006 – Aug 31

#Brucejenner is a woman with a deep voice. #KUWTK

Larry Bird @mairamaria123 – Aug 31

@KrisJenner "should a bride really be eating a baked potato?" Wow! what a bitch. What kinda mother says that #KUWTK #kardashians

Olivia Wernecke @OliviaWernecke – Aug 31

Bruce Jenner looks like a lesbian. #KUWTK

LIVE LIFE FULLY MAN! @HeAboutPop – Aug 31

LOL Bruce is SO gay ! #KUWTK

Limited Time Devoted to Actual Wedding Day

8th Maison @8thMaison – Sep 2

Even though this ep was shot by friends and family. I'm loving it, loving the backing track & slow motion edits. Great ep. #KUWTK

Tameera ☺ @VoodooPrincess_ – Sep 2

Why were people expecting to see Kim's wedding on the show? Everyone knows she wanted to keep it as private as possible #KUWTK

Deidre Behar @HerNameIsDeidre – Sep 2

It's a reality show. Why not show the wedding ceremony/reception? RT @RyanSeacrest: What'd u guys think of the #kuwtk finale?

Renee Cole @ReneeColeNYC – Sep 1

I loved that the @KimKardashian wedding episode didn't actually show it. It's hard to have a private life being a celeb. Well done! #KUWTK

Deborah Asham @AshamDeborah – Sep 1

What a waste of time. Maybe @KimKardashian fourth wedding show will be better. #KUWTK

Jamela @JaamBam – Sep 1

its pretty lame how for the past several years the kardashians have been so transparent now they want to censor things #KUWTK

Blue Ivy Stan @L1S4C1M – Sep 1

#KUWTK I HATE KANYE IT WAS BECAUSE OF HIM WE DIDN'T GET TO SEE THE WEDDING

☐☐ @ILikeItMyWay – Sep 1

I'm hoping Kim & Ye lied and they actually filmed the wedding #KUWTK

Family Drama

Trinease @Naturally_Kinks – 10 Oct 2011

Kris tryin to change shit on the #Kardashians... His bitch ass need to shut up sometime & go w/ the flow. @KhloeKardashian Was Right!!

Kelsey Duckett @KelseyDuckett – 11 Oct 2011

Love the #Kardashians. But after watchin these wedding episodes, I have no idea why @KimKardashian, @KrisHumphries r hitched #canusaydivorce

Meredith Sharma @Meredith756 – 11 Oct 2011

Kim Kardashian's wedding was completely gorgeous and perfect. I loved everything about it. Everything except #KrisHumphries. #KimKWedding

Jessica Roberts @Jessica__Ruth – 11 Oct 2011

@jonchadmckenzie I agree...i was so much more a fan of the #kardashianodomwedding not a fan of #krishumphries at all

Chelsea Bell @chelseabellll – 11 Oct 2011

I still prefer @KhloeKardashian's wedding. #KUWTK

Sarah-Beth Graham @ChekotaQueen – 9 Oct 2011

#KhloeKardashian I FREAKING LOVE HOW TOUGH YOU ARE BEING ON #KrisHumphries! @KimKWedding

Lana R. @LanaCottonCandy – 9 Oct 2011

Okay safe to say I am now a @ScottDisick fan. Dude is trying to help Kris out but I don't think he's listening! #KUWTK

KrislloydFashion @KrislloydFash84 – 9 Oct 2011

#think b4 u open ur mouth #krishumphries bcuz the stupdiest shit falls out!! but I think he's hamming it up for TV..whomp whomp!!

Richard Walker @Richardwalkerja – 10 Oct 2011

#krishumphries is #sketchy i hope @KimKardashian will be fine. That #prenup better be #solid

The Importance of the Family (Brand)

RoniGeeBo ☼ @RoniGeeBo – 11 Oct 2011

why is the discussion of whether or not you're gonna change your last name JUST happening weeks before your wedding? #Kardashians

ProudMommy♥ @GottaLuv_BLAQUE – 11 Oct 2011

Its Her Name She Can Change It If She Want To #Kardashians

frugalnotcheap @frugalnotcheap – 11 Oct 2011

"4 years ago you were folding clothes at a boutique in the valley. And now you're Miss Princess." Tell 'er, Kris! #Kardashians

Juel McGhee @juelmc – 10 Oct 2011

Is it me or why tha hell didnt kim and khris talk about the name change bfore now #kardashians

Elissa @keepitclassy87 – 9 Oct 2011

So all the #Kardashians sign prenups protecting their brand. That's so smart!!

Kathyria Burgos @NLBKathyria – 9 Oct 2011

Can't lie, the #kardashians are smart bitches. They make their \$\$\$.

IamRogerCobbs @iamrogercobbs – 9 Oct 2011

The #Kardashians really know how to market their #brand #respect the #hustle i will build my #brands the same way.

Bianca Danello @biancadanello – 11 Oct 2011

kris jenner onceee again all about the #kardashian brand... literally all she cares about is making her 10%

Jove Meyer Events @JoveMeyer – 11 Oct 2011

@huffpostwedding If I was a #Kardashian I would not change my last name, I mean why would you? Maybe a hyphen could work...

Phyll @missicylips_ – 10 Oct 2011

so #kimkardashian gets 3 wedding dresses,perfect weddin nd keeps her last name....lucky bitch #badmind

Angie martinez @AngieMartinez22 – 10 Oct 2011

I love how @Krishumphries ended up seeing that #kardashian is a part of her dad and wanted her to keep that part of him #kimkardashian

Kami Kurisu @RaemonVip – 10 Oct 2011

I could've sworn Kim said she's keeping her last name because of business. Now she's using that sorry ass excuse about her dad. #KUWTK

Paula Edgar, PGE LLC @Paula Edgar – 10 Oct 2011

Mrs. and Mr. Kim #Kardashian! #kimkwedding

Bobby Bollywood @BobbyBollywood – 10 Oct 2011

kris humphries should be the one changing last names. #kimkwedding #kimkardashian. This guy can't be for real.

Jarryd Willis ABD MS @OFA_Jarryd – 10 Oct 2011

So @KimKardashian, in a way, chose money over marriage. A business decision vs her husband's 'greater' love. Pathetic #KUWTK @ScottDisick

Nyela Yumn @YumnHair – 10 Oct 2011

KIM WISE decision keep that name #kardashian is a BRAND NAME. Face Humphries.

andrew @AndyMerkMelon – 10 Oct 2011

#kimkardashian change your last name triq

Teyoncè @TeyonceKnows – 10 Oct 2011

Why get married if you're not gonna change your last name? #KimKardashian

Anthony Martin @aj_onyx – 10 Oct 2011

bitch dont change ur last name! lmao u trip pen #Kardashian

Tavleen. @tavadilpickle – 10 Oct 2011

"Four years ago you were selling clothes in the valley. Now you're a huge diva" #burn #getoveryourself #keepingupwiththekardashians

The Fashion Fiend @_fashionfiend – 10 Oct 2011

#kuwtk What do you guys think? Is Kim a bridezilla or is Kris just being difficult?

kelsey ✱ @kelsbeeler – 10 Oct 2011

#smh at #kimkardashian for allowing the "importance" of her last name come before the love and feelings of her fiancé.

Chels @purple_chill – 10 Oct 2011

Oka when u get married u suppose to take ur husband last name. They are doing the most #kardashian

Queen Ashley @Md2be_93 – 10 Oct 2011

i mean if i get married im not changing my last name so i dont see the big deal and plus her last name is part of who she is ! #Kardashian !

Lynn Jabs @lynnjabs – 10 Oct 2011

@KimKardashian Why could you not change your last name & then have Kardashian as your business name???? #KUWTK

Ravinn @PaleAfriican – 10 Oct 2011

Fuck a Kardashian! They have to live there own life. There mom needs to chill TF out. Nobody new who she was 2 yrs ago. #kuwtk

Natalie I. @hawkeyenat – 9 Oct 2011

Not a fan of Kris Humphries at all! Will he hurt the #Kardashian brand?
#KimKWedding

Paula Edgar, PGE LLC @PaulaEdgar – 9 Oct 2011

RT @frugalista: OK, Kris is doing the most. He's trying to promote his Dad's Five Guys business... <- So he *is* a #Kardashian!

Class Conflicts

Brown Mona Lisa @MonaLisaStylez – 8 Nov 2009

These #kardashians are ghetto I'm sorry!

Brandon @branorexic – 8 Nov 2009

are the #Kardashians black? lmao

Milan @Mizz_R0yal_T – 10 Oct 2011

I didn't know Kris dad was Black.... I guess she couldn't completely Leave the chocolate alone #Kardashians

Taylor Leonard @Tayleooo – 10 Oct 2011

Lol complaining about taking a normal plane? oy must be nice being super rich. #kardashians

Sophie Emmanuel @snowflake2902 – Sep 2

#KanyeWest needs to shut up already! Jeez! He's not the first black man to marry a white woman

Chris Steele @ChrisSteele1 – Sep 1

The #kardashian made it acceptable and cool for white women to be with black guys, they should get an award from @BET

VICTORIOUS @royalcaribbean_ – Aug 31

Maybe kourtney is actually Hispanic #babyboomers
#KeepingUpWithTheKardashians

Introduction of Kanye West

Alison Zamora @alisonzamora – Sep 2

My soul is at peace knowing @kanyewest really put his foot down on those dress slits. #KUWTK

Kelly Ann Dollard @kdolllll – Sep 2

Oh kanye gon be mad if Kim doesn't wear that veil #KUWTK

Paige Skinner @paginaskinner – Sep 2

This #KUWTK episode is all subtitles because Kanye is too big of an idiot to allow a real camera crew. "We'll just our iPhones!" #no

blue. @brittanyericaa – Sep 2

i love how the crew didn't record kimye's wedding & their friends/family did. that was a good idea. #kuwtk

Robbinmykia @Robbinmykia – Sep 2

My BFF Kanye was def in control of this episode of #kuwtk

Celina Rodriguez @CeliinaR – Sep 2

I love how opinionated Kanye is with the girl's wedding looks. Lol #KUWTK

TBlack @TBlackGoHAM – Sep 1

Wait...Sooo Im watching #KUWTK & Like...Sooo....Does Kanye Even Have On A Microphone...I Aint Hear Him Say Shit YET!

birthdayqueen ☐ @SmilezAllDay – Sep 1

This episode is basically a movie #KUWTK..

Myleeza Kardashian @MyleezaKardash – Sep 1

This episode is like a motion picture tho. #KUWTK

E @TheRealEricLeon – Sep 1

Everything @kanyewest says on #KUWTK is subtitled ... And it's the best part of the show

DVO @awesim123 – Sep 1

"This episode was shot by friends and family" the e network is family ?
#KUWTK

puchi. @machucartier – Sep 1

E! says this episode was shot by "friends and family" when already on the first shot you can tell there's professional lighting. #KUWTK

KeepingUpWithJodié™ @MissJodieMarie – Sep 1

Kim may well and good quit the show but it wont be what she really Wants to do, poor her letting a man rule her married or not #KUWTK

Wedding Culture**Zeir @iamzeir_ – 11 Oct 2011**

watching kim &kris's wedding makes me want to get married. ;) #kardashian

NP @Nicoleeporep – 11 Oct 2011

Just watched #Kardashian wedding. Makes me have marriage fever...

Katrina Mosher @KTrinaLynn – 10 Oct 2011

#Kardashian wedding party with my ladies @Courtney_Rudd @JennyIrey & more. Plastic crowns, ring pops, cheese&wine. Life is good. #ohyeswedid

Dominique Medler • • • @lovedomm – 10 Oct 2011

RT @iLUSH_don: #KimKardashian RT @MillionDollaMal A lot of yall bitches don't wanna b married yall jus want a wedding .." lmaoo !

faithyg @faithyg – 9 Oct 2011

Tell her Kris H...the one thing I can agree with her sliding anyone into the fantasy #kuwtk

Enizzle @EnidMartini – 9 Oct 2011

I hate when women say they've been planning their "dream" wedding since they were lil girls! #KUWTK

Slim @SaiSlim – 9 Oct 2011

Kris let it go!...He's whiny 2 me!...Seriously what guy really gets involved in planning a wedding! #KUWTK

Mariorl Calderon @_ForeverMC – 9 Oct 2011

I can't have a fiancée like #KrisHumphries. Fuhh that, it's MY wedding. My guy will have an opinion, not ultimate say!

Kailee @Kailee_McDonald – 9 Oct 2011

Kris Humphries might be the only male in the U.S. to throw a hissy fit when it comes to not being involved in his wedding #growapair #kuwtk

Qae @ThatKidz_Q – 9 Oct 2011

Chris bitching about the location lmfaooo gay I tell ya. I'm gay and I wouldn't care. #KeepingUpWithTheKardashians

bradlea @bradleakaye – 9 Oct 2011

#Krishumphries is a DICK.. dude get over it its a GIRLS special day!!! What we dream of..

Miss Amber Dawn @Luv4everAmber – Sep 2

Watchin the #KUWTK wedding epi! @KimKardashian looks simply gorgeous! Im so happy this princess got her fairytale ending! She so deserves it

Yessi ԁ @YessiAGonzalez – Sep 2

Whoever is saying this is not magical because this is her third wedding, you obviously haven't finally found the love of your life. #KUWTK

Lawanda Stevenson @mslawanda – Sep 2

Watching Kanye & Kim's wedding makes me really consider having a wedding. Married for 18 yrs but no ceremony. #KUWTK

Felicia @feliciambadillo – Sep 1

#KUWTK episode tonight just made me add way more things to my wedding board on Pinterest 🧡

▪ Steel Town Girl▪ @vlbasile - Sep 1

#KUWTK who the hell dresses their bridesmaids/mother of the bride in white? With Kim's huge ego, I'm surprised that was her choice

Tasha Hilton @TashaHilton – Sep 1

I always found weddings boring but watching #KUWTK I fell in love. I how much Kanye loves Kim. And I died twice over her dress and veil!!

FloridianBelle @FloridianBelle – Sep 1

Kim, you have a child. Do you not get the whole meaning behind a veil? And wearing white? #petpeeve #oldfashioned #KUWTK

Tony Haerr @Haerr33 – Sep 1

Kims dress for her wedding is longer then her relationship with kris humpries #KUWTK

Kaitlyn Frey @kaitaroni – Sep 1

come on Kim, we all know you wanted your sisters to be in the ugliest bridesmaid dresses so you could be the superstar #KUWTK

Anita Elizabeth @anitaelizar – Sep 1

Only the bride wears white to a wedding, not the bridesmaids. Didn't Kim do this for her second wedding too? #kuwtk

stephanie @idigdabiebs – Sep 1

WHEN KIM TRYs ON HER DRESS, IM SERIOUSLY CRYING, SHES SO BEAUTIFUL, IM SO INLOVE @KimKardashian #KUWTK

Dayna Vilardebo @DaynaCV – Sep 1

Tonight kimk marries the (3rd) love of her life. #KUWTK #finale

Jam Rockah @jam_rockah – Sep 1

I watched #KUWTK today. Look I'm all 4 Kimye but why is everyone acting like this is Kim's 1st wedding? It's not even her 1st televised one

Eye Candy @Kardashlovatic – Sep 1

@KimKardashian you look like a PRINCESS in your wedding dress Kim!! #KUWTK

Sandi Girl @SandiGirrri – Aug 31

#KUWTK Like how many dream wedding dresses can you have. You had 3 at your last wedding....

Soleil Santana @xoSoleil – Aug 31

When you're on marriage #3, I don't think a bridal shower is needed. #KUWTK

ILANA ANGEL @ILANA_ANGEL – Aug 31

Does E! understand this is wedding #3 for #KimKardashian? We do not care. These promos are laughable. She is just a talentless porn star.