

Bride Wars and The Wedding Planner

Love Versus Consumerism

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In modern day society there has been a huge shift in wedding planning from the actual romance in the relationship to consumerism and is evident in the films, *Bride Wars* and the *Wedding Planner*. During the 1990's, weddings provided the main theme for box office hits around the world. Modern consumerism has developed somewhat because of the 'romantic' component in society (Wilding, 374). Again, this idea is shown greatly in *Bride Wars* as well as a little in *The Wedding Planner* along with the chaos weddings can cause.

Bride Wars, newly released in January, was directed by Gary Winick and stars Kate Hudson and Anne Hathaway. It is merely a love story among two women which is put into the perspective of a romantic comedy. This includes a distinctive friendship that is tested with obstacles that get in their way, but gives the viewer laughs along the way with an uplifting finale (Smith, 50). This movie gives us a clear insight on how the wedding industry has drastically changed over time. This bridal industry is said to have begun in the 1920s and 1950s (Mead, 5). *Bride Wars* begins with a series of items in shallow focus consisting of white lace, a bride and groom, a box of "Wedding Things", and a large diamond ring. Amongst all of the items, two little girls are playing as 'bride and groom' under a small made-up canopy.

As women we are expected to be boy crazy when we are younger, as if it is our main goal in life above all other desires. If we listen and follow our pop culture it continually tells women that we should be either looking for a man, with a man, or getting over one (Valenti, 131-132). This beginning of the movie portrays to young girls that they should think about their wedding at a very early age, and getting a boy to fall in love with them should be a top priority throughout their lives. The young girl acting as 'bride' comments that she will have six babies and a house for their family, while the other young girl acting as 'groom' says "I always knew my wedding day would be the happiest day of my life." This sets them up to think that nothing better than

their wedding day will happen until that day, which is a lot of time for disappointment and not-as-exciting days of their life. This scene also sets up Liv and Emma's friendship and we see how their closeness. As the narrative, or the wedding planner in the movie, goes through the storyline of the girls in the New York's Plaza Hotel, we see their dreams of an over-the-top wedding begin as young girls. These ideas are put into girl's minds at a young age and it is what they live by and desire when the time comes to get married.

Time quickly turns to years later, and the two young girls are all grown up, both living with their boyfriends and still best friends. Not surprisingly, we see them for the first time grown up, at a wedding. In this scene we first see the 'boyfriends'. The boyfriends and other men in this movie do not appear often. *Bride Wars* focuses primarily on the friendship and the comparable marital relationship between the two girls. Liv, played by Kate Hudson is a successful, rich lawyer. She is very controlling, especially in the girls' friendship and always has to win and be perfect every moment of every day. Emma, played by Anne Hathaway is a mediocre, teacher who does not stand up for herself but is extremely sympathetic. She continuously does another character favors and takes over her tasks. She later explodes and stands up for herself when she finds out Liv is ordering her save-the-date cards before they talked about who was switching their venues. This is the turning point in the film from curiosity and idealistic to the 'war'. Before this scene, we see each girl patiently waiting for the other to call; however, after this scene all hell breaks loose. The girls start a ridiculous fight, with Emma's bright orange spray-tan, Liv's blue hair that resembles cotton candy, the bedazzling of Liv's dress, the rescheduling of Emma and her fiancé's fake dance lessons, and Emma giving Liv lots of anonymous treats so she would gain too much weight to fit into her wedding dress.

Showing these two different personalities gives the viewer the idea that women are either extremely controlling or can not stand up for themselves. These personalities also differ from several traditional wedding and stereotypical women traits. Liv becomes jealous of Emma because she gets engaged first so Liv bombards her boyfriend and practically forces a proposal out of him. After Emma and Liv begin fighting they sort of switch personalities after their period of hate and rivalry towards one another. Emma begins to stand up for herself, while Liv becomes more sympathetic and cries a lot. It took losing each other to realize that Liv did not have to have it together all the time and Emma could let her hair down and be a little crazy at times, which also led to the break off of her wedding. At the end of the movie, they use costuming to show this change in the girls. Emma lets her hair down, looking messy and frizzy; her dress is torn from her and Emma's fight. Emma, on the other hand, is neat and tidy; her hair is pulled back in perfect curls.

Another theme that occurs in movies is the sudden realization of love (Wilding, 378). In contrast to *Bride Wars*, *The Wedding Planner* is about a woman named Mary, who knows everything possible to make any wedding a spectacular event. While *Bride Wars* deals with the actual conflict of the brides, *The Wedding Planner* shows a woman who solves any of those problems. This movie begins with a bride and a groom Barbie, white lace, and one little girl who makes conversation among the bride and groom Barbie saying the bride will take care of the groom and make him bologna sandwiches, a stereotype of women taking care of the household. That little girl later turned into a wedding planner. The idea of a woman becoming a wedding planner rather than a man is also stereotypical, including the character's name as 'Mary' (marry). Many people believe that she must lead such a romantic life being a wedding planner; however, she does not lead the lifestyle she works at all. We see a sequence of shots with Mary at her

home eating dinner, cleaning, and going to bed, all alone. We later learn that Mary became a wedding planner to help other brides have a better experience than she did. She was previously engaged and caught her fiancé cheating on her the night of their rehearsal dinner. Mary is portrayed as a very smart and educated individual, being very organized and successful with her wedding planning career and being a member of a scrabble club.

At the beginning of the movie, Mary's new Gucci shoe gets stuck as she is walking, and she is saved by Eddie when a dumpster almost ran her over. They end up going to an old movie together that night in which the scene is an irresistibly romantic set up. They are out on a lawn at nighttime, an old romantic movie is playing, and couples stand up and begin slow dancing around them. Love continually pushes them together throughout the movie with different scene set ups. Mary was waiting for her prince charming for so long, but it does not turn out how she wants it at all. Eddie ends up being one of Mary's client's, planning his and Fran's wedding. Dancing was sort of a motif throughout the movie that drew Eddie and Mary together. They danced together at the beginning at the old movie and then again when they met up for Fran and Eddie's dance lessons, where Mary and Eddie ended up dancing together. Throughout the movie, an old friend of Mary's, Massimo, comes back and wants her hand in marriage. At the end of the movie she reluctantly agrees to marry him by spelling out 'ok' on a scrabble board. She was unable to verbally say 'yes' or 'ok' showing uncertainty in her decision. She decides to marry as her mother and father had; an arranged marriage. She knew it worked out for her parents so it could work out for her. Since she was not in love and doing this as an arranged marriage, she did not have the extravagant wedding that she might have dreamed of because it is not true love. The film shows the basics of their wedding and it is extremely different than what she does for a living and what the bridal industry stresses so much today. Their wedding was

held at the court house with her father and two friends, wearing her mother's t-length, cream gown. Then the scene cuts to Eddie trying to find her, so we assume she married Massimo. However, they did not. At the end of the movie, after Eddie and Fran called off their wedding, Eddie met Mary at the same park and asked her to dance again. This time he says he wants to dance with her, and they finally have their kiss with the music climaxing and building in the background. In the middle of the film, we see an intimate scene of Eddie and Mary by the fireplace. In this scene we see their affection for one another, before anything is said. They share a deep conversation about Mary's past and Mary's face is lit up by the fire, showing her inner self being brought out in the light. They use shallow space, low key lighting, and shoulder framing to show the closeness at this moment.

The Wedding Planner goes against the grains of the wedding industry and *Bride Wars* in many ways. There are parts in which the women do all of the planning. At the beginning, Fran mentions that grooms are NID, not into details, and while the women do the planning, Eddie and Massimo partake in male bonding or athletic activities. On the other hand, Fran leaves for business later in the movie without telling Eddie, and has him and Mary do the planning for the entire week. Mary's wedding contrasts greatly from the big, expensive wedding that she advertises as her job. She was not in love when she agreed to marry Massimo and she wore a short, cream dress rather than a long, white dress. *The Wedding Planner* shows that a bride cannot handle a wedding without a wedding planner, but they also do not go crazy like they do in *Bride Wars*.

A bride is supposed to buy into the wedding industry, knowing her fairy tale will come true in her princess dress and tiara. In both movies, it is clear that money is no option when it comes to a girl's wedding day. An average of 72 billion dollars is spent on weddings per year

(Valenti, 133). This is expressed everyday to women who are planning weddings. It is said that it is our 'one day' to shine and to spend as much as we want because we will only celebrate it one time. In *The Wedding Planner*, the father tells Mary to give his daughter whatever she wants, at whatever price. In *Bride Wars*, even Emma who is only a school teacher and who has been saving since she was little to get married in the Plaza, feels that money is no option even though her life savings will be going to her one-day wedding. The girls also find a Tiffany box in the closet, which proves to be one of the most popular and expensive jewelry stores in the country. Brand names such as these will drive people crazy with money spending, even if they cannot afford it. A simple one carat engagement ring from Tiffany's is around \$11,000 where a simple Zales brand engagement ring of the same carat size is around \$2,000. The comparable quality of each is questionable but the name 'Tiffany' adds more money to the ring than it is actually worth. When Emma calls Liv and exclaims that she is engaged, they immediately talk about the ring and nothing else: the cut, color, and karat. This idea occurs again when Emma and Liv are out shopping for wedding dresses. It is clear they are located in a very ritzy shop because they are drinking champagne in beautiful glasses. Of course, the dress they swoon over is a Vera Wang. Both girls fall in love with it, even naming off each high-quality feature of the dress. Emma, the school teacher, loves the dress but has already made the decision to wear her mother's dress, thus Emma tries on the dress and buys it. However, as she is contemplating on purchasing the dress, Emma makes a comment "Do they make anything better than Vera Wang?". Vera Wang dresses cost around 5,000-20,000 dollars and beyond (Mead, 92). This is a huge amount of money that is spent on only one small aspect of the wedding. It was said that in 2006, the wedding business was worth \$161 billion to the United States Economy. This number not only includes what people spend, but also the advertisements and the selling of weddings as a

fantasy. It gives people a dream about the wedding day and the marriage that follows (Mead, 10).

In both movies, weddings are shown at their extreme. They show the fast-pace and hard work that it takes to plan a wedding in only three months. The average engagement lasts about sixteen to eighteen months. Bridal magazines and the industry promotes that a bride should be the center of attention the entire time of these months (Mead, 8). In *Bride Wars* Emma and Liv's friendship turns into a huge fight because they are both not the center of attention. Neither girl was willing to switch their dream venue in order to save their friendship, so it affected their entire wedding and planning. The men are finally brought into the planning when Emma and Liv aren't talking to one another. At the beginning, Emma and Liv made all of the decisions together, completely without their fiancés. Later we see them helping with the save the dates and the rings, where we usually see them playing video games or going to work out. The girls also have to 'hire' a maid of honor for themselves, being incapable of planning their wedding on their own or with their fiancé. Liv even turns to her male office assistant to be her man of honor. The way one marries reveals a great deal about their love, hopes for their marriage, and their role as a family (Mead, 7). The bridal industry tells girls that their wedding is the one day that they must present themselves in the best way. They must be better dressed, more beautiful, wealthier, and make the wedding their own, all in one package.

The wedding industry puts the idea in women's head that they need to and must get married. As little girls, the idea of falling in love and being obsessively focused on all relationship-oriented things is pushed into our brains through magazines, books, movies, and other advertisements (Valenti, 131) The tossing of the bouquet at the beginning of *Bride Wars* shows the tension and need to get married in Emma and Liv's faces. Also when the girls go and

see the famous wedding planner Marian St. Claire, she tells them that they were dead before now and will only be partly alive until the wedding day. This tells viewers that until you are engaged or married, you are not fully alive. This sends a message to all women that the key to life is to get married. In *The Wedding Planner*, Fran and Eddie's marriage falls apart because they were not in love anymore like they thought. They thought it was something they had to do in their relationship, so Eddie proposed. Massimo also makes a comment saying "Love is just love, it isn't always perfect." Women get the idea of a perfect wedding in their head and the idea of love and the actual relationship of the marriage is easily forgotten. A quote on *Bride Wars* says, "There's a pressure on brides to look perfect for the wedding day". Liv gains five pounds throughout the first part of the movie and does not fit into her dress, where she says her wedding day will be destroyed if she can not fit into it! Both girls also go crazy when one's hair is dyed to blue and the other's skin is spray tanned orange. We also see both girls frequently working out throughout the movie.

"The one person you can count on for a lifetime is the one person who's been standing beside you all along." (Smith, 50). This quote is said at the end of the movie as a voice over. Falling in love is great, but it is not the key to life. Many people have had a perfectly wonderful life focusing on friendships and their happiness rather than love. However, this quote also makes a good point that whether it is a friend or your fiancé, they have stood by you thus far and they will stand by you. Sometimes, it is a new love or an old friend but money cannot buy happiness when it comes to a wedding that will lead to the rest of your life.

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Be sure to cite all of the sources on the Works Cited page in-text.

Kaitlin - Overall, this is good work. You make very interesting points about the films in your analysis. There are areas, however, where you could improve the unity & coherence. Make sure each P makes one clear point and all information in the P supports that main point. There are also some areas where you need to provide more discussion and make more connections between the examples from the film & wedding culture. I've so enjoyed having you in the class this semester, and I hope you have enjoyed it as well. Have a great Christmas!

Joe

(BT)