Representations of unmarried women in the Hong Kong reality television series *Bride Wannabes*

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Abstract

Over the past decade, with the increasing gender imbalance in Hong Kong, unmarried women in their 30s and 40s are often stigmatised as 'leftover women'. Despite being a popular media topic, this phenomenon has attracted little scholarly attention. My research illuminates this under-researched topic by unmasking ideologies through which unmarried women are stigmatised and the media's role in reproducing such ideologies.

Informed by feminist theories, especially Gill (2007a, b), and critical discourse studies, especially van Dijk (1998a), I examine representations of unmarried women in the Hong Kong reality television series *Bride Wannabes* (all ten episodes), in which five single women look for a boyfriend under some 'experts'' guidance. First, I look at how they are talked about in relation to how they are referred to and the types of actions involving them using van Leeuwen's social actor framework (2008) and the transitivity system in systemic-functional grammar (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014), respectively. Second, I investigate how they talk about themselves in terms of self-appraisals using Martin and White's appraisal framework (2005). Last, I explore how they are talked to in terms of impoliteness using Culpeper's impoliteness model (2011).

The analysis demonstrates that the series characterises the participants as different kinds of women and shapes views on them vis-à-vis their marriageability. The only participant who could find a partner in the show is characterised as a 'hyper-feminine' woman and a success story, whereas the other participants, who deviate from traditional femininity differently, are represented as undesirable for men. Concerning how unmarried women talk about themselves, while some mainly express their worries about their marriage prospects or problematise themselves according to traditional gender expectations, some articulate resistance to traditional gender norms. As regards

how unmarried women are talked to, the analysis indicates that impoliteness is mainly used by the 'experts' to transform the participants. However, *Bride Wannabes* is exploitative in that only several participants are targeted for humiliation, and the show seems to deliberately include only impolite exchanges leading to the participant's submission, in which case impoliteness also functions to foster traditional femininity and promote the beauty centre involved.

The findings suggest that representations of unmarried women in *Bride Wannabes* are underpinned by the ideologies of patriarchy, postfeminism and ageism. While egalitarianism can be identified in the self-representations of the participants higher on the socio-economic ladder, it is clearly suppressed. The programme fosters sexism against social changes favouring women. I think the stigmatisation of unmarried women in *Bride Wannabes* relates to (1) women's shrinking 'marriage market'; (2) the enduring force of the conventional heterosexual life script, despite its waning influence; and (3) the impact of cultural globalisation.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis is my own work, and has not been submitted in

substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

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List of abbreviations

(1) Cantonese grammatical categories

ADV	adverbial marker
CL	noun classifier
CONT	continuous aspect
DEL	delimitative aspect
EXP	experiential aspect
LP	linking particle
PFV	perfective aspect
PM	prenominal modifier
[PM]+[N] construction	[prenominal modifier(s)]+[name] construction
PROG	progressive aspect
SFP	Sentence-final particle
VTIP	Verbal particle, topic particle or interjection

(Adapted from Matthews and Yip, 2011, p. xxiii)

(2) Others

ATV	Asia Television Limited
CDS	critical discourse studies
CWMS	Chinese women's makeover shows
FTA	face-threatening act
FCDA	feminist critical discourse analysis
MP	Members of Parliament
PM	Prime Minister

PMQs   Prime Minister's Questions

SCA   sociocognitive approach to critical discourse studies

SFG   systemic-functional grammar

TVB   Television Broadcasts Limited

VAW   violence against women

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This research project starts out from the problematisation and stigmatisation of single women[1] in Hong Kong who are considered no longer young (often those in their 30s and 40s). One realisation of that attitude is the emergence of a list of ideologically loaded references to this group of women over the past decade, which are commonly used in the media and online, e.g. 剩女 (*sing neoi*; literally and hereafter 'leftover woman'), 盛女 (*sing neoi*; a seemingly less negative derivative of its homophonous expression 剩女; literally and hereafter 'blossomed woman') and 敗犬 (*baai hyun*; literally 'defeated dog' and hereafter 'underdog' (see E, 2010)). It is noteworthy that single women who have reached the suitable age for marriage are similarly labelled with various derogatory references in other societies. In fact, 'leftover woman' and 'underdog' originated from China and Japan, respectively. A similar phenomenon also exists in some Western societies. For example, the English term 'on the shelf' similarly refers to single women who have passed the marriageable age as being unwanted by men and hence left with no chance to marry. However, in recent years, some terms have emerged which reflect a change of attitude towards single women. For example, in Australia, the term 'TWITS', i.e. 'teenage women in their thirties' (Taylor, 2012, p. 40), is used to criticise single women choosing to enjoy their freedom like a teenager at the expense of setting up their own family; similarly, in the UK, the term 'freemale' refers to women who choose to be single so as to spend their time and money freely (ibid, p.

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[1] I do not take a binary view on relationship status as either 'single' or 'married'. In this research, I use the term 'single women' or 'unmarried women' to refer to women not in a relationship, including never-married, divorced and windowed ones.

40). These references do not stigmatise single women as unwanted by men, but condemn their choice to be single.

The problematisation of unmarried women who are considered no longer young can also be seen in the way they are represented in the media. In recent years, this group of women has become a popular media topic, most noticeably on television. For example, in 2010, the newscast *Tuesday Report*[2] dedicated an episode exploring as a social issue the increasing number of single women and women's difficulty in finding partners. There have also been reality/dating series which aim to help single women find partners, e.g. *Bride Wannabes* (2012) and *To Woo a Dame* (2014). These shows are based on the premise that women's singleness is undesirable and problematic. The official programme overviews of the two shows suffice to give a glimpse of this. For example, the programme overview of *Bride Wannabes* explicitly states *香港剩女問題嚴重 (The leftover woman problem is serious in Hong Kong)*,[3] which presupposes that single women who have reached the suitable age for marriage are a problem. In the case of *To Woo a Dame*, marriage is emphasised as a pressing issue for women and prolonged singleness is represented as something women should take precautions against: *女士們的終身大事豈能耽擱,為免日後被冠上「剩女」稱號,必須在芳華正茂時未雨綢繆 (How can women's marriage be delayed? In order not to be labelled as 'leftover women', they must take precautions when they are still young)*.[4] It is against this backdrop that I have decided to conduct a feminist critical discourse study on representations of unmarried women in the reality series *Bride Wannabes* (see Chapter

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[2] The 'Tuesday' in its name refers to the day it is broadcast; if it is rescheduled to be aired on another day, e.g. Monday, its name will be changed to 'Monday Report' accordingly. The newscast provides an investigative report of a specific social issue every week. See Subsection 4.1.2 for more detail about the newscast.

[3] See http://programme.tvb.com/lifestyle/bridewannabes/

[4] See http://programme.tvb.com/variety/towooadame

4 for my rationale for selecting this programme). My objective is to identify and challenge ideologies through which unmarried women are stigmatised and to unveil the media's role in sustaining unequal gender orders.

In the remaining chapter, I will first generally introduce the background to my topic in terms of the socio-political and economic changes relating to women's status and the present status of gender equality in Hong Kong. Next, I will more specifically describe the context of my research in relation to the conventional heterosexual life script and single women in Hong Kong. Lastly, I will present my research questions and outline the structure of my research.

1.2. Socio-political and economic changes in relation to women's status

Gender roles in Hong Kong have been shaped by the interplay of traditional Chinese culture, the 156 years of British colonial rule (1841-1997) and various global and local forces. This section will give an account of different socio-political and economic changes relevant to gender roles in Hong Kong since its colonial time.

Gender roles in Hong Kong are strongly tied to traditional Chinese culture, which is very much family-orientated and patriarchal. As Lim (2015) observed, traditionally, 'the male parent, as the head of a definite household, was invested with power over every member of his family. In turn, every member merged his or her individual existence into the family' (p. 21). In the past, women were confined to the domestic sphere and were expected to abide by the Confucian doctrine of 三從四德 *(three obediences and four virtues)*. More specifically, they were expected to obey their father before marriage, their husband in marriage and their son(s) in widowhood (Taylor, 2005) and to have the virtues of 婦言 *(meekness)*, 婦德 *(chastity)*, 婦容 *(modesty)* and 婦功 *(domesticity)* (see Littlejohn, 2011, p. 35; Hiramoto and Teo, 2014). Most women

did not receive schooling and their intellectual capability was not valued, as reflected by the familiar saying 女子無才便是德 *(the virtue of a woman lies in her lack of talent)* (To, 2015, p. 50).

Despite the British colonisation of Hong Kong in 1841, Chinese patriarchy persisted in colonial Hong Kong. For one thing, Britain implemented a non-interference policy relating to Chinese customs and practices so as to lower resistance from local Chinese and entice mainland Chinese traders to Hong Kong (Lim, 2015, p. 20). For another, it adopted an elite co-optation governance strategy, i.e. incorporating local Chinese elites into the colonial regime. As the local elites were predominantly men, women's voice was excluded from the policy-making process and improving women's status was barely on the government's agenda (Lee, 2003). As Lee (2003) rightly commented, 'the colonial state can be regarded as patriarchal insofar as it has perpetuated women's subordination through its public policies, actions and inactions' (p. 3-4).

Women's status has gradually improved since the 1970s, due to a number of socio-economic changes and the women's movement in Hong Kong. Central to women's improving status were their increased educational opportunities brought about by the introduction of nine-year compulsory free education in 1978. Another important driving force behind women's improving status was the shifting social needs following economic restructuring. Hong Kong's economy mainly relied on manufacturing in the 1950s-1970s, and it particularly flourished in the latter two decades. The fast-growing economy meant a growing demand for labour. This provided women with a chance to join the workforce, mainly as factory workers (Lee, 2003). In the 1980s, the manufacturing industries were phased out and the service and finance industries expanded, and in the 1990s, Hong Kong successfully restructured from a manufacturing

to a capitalist and knowledge-based economy, and became a global city. Since Hong Kong was getting wealthier and people tended to have fewer children, girls enjoyed expanded educational opportunities (Mak, 2012). Given the rapid economic growth and women's better education, a group of independent career women emerged (Ho, 2007a).

Apart from the above-mentioned socio-economic changes, various women's pressure groups also contributed to the improvement in women's rights. Early women's activism (1950s-1970s) featured groups of expatriate women and wives of local elites fighting for women's rights via legislative reforms (see Tam and Yip, 2009, 2012; Choi, 1998, 2012; Lim, 2015). The activism successfully pressured the government into abolishing concubinage and putting the 'equal pay for equal work' principle into force in civil service, irrespective of one's sex or marital status (Tam and Yip, 2009, 2012). More feminist groups were formed in the 1980s by local women. They distanced themselves from early activists, who were the privileged minority in society, and stressed that they 'represent[ed] the voices of Hong Kong women, especially those who were oppressed' (Lee, 2003, p. 14). These groups represented different social classes and showed rather different concerns, e.g. reproductive rights, tax reform and childcare (Tam and Yip, 2009). The achievements of the activists included e.g. women's abortion rights and maternal welfare (Lee, 2000).

Women's rights activism achieved substantial achievements in the 1990s and early 2000s, which indirectly resulted from various drastic socio-political changes. In 1984, China and Britain came to an agreement on the transfer of the sovereignty of Hong Kong from Britain to China in 1997, and the adoption of the 'one country, two systems' principle, which guaranteed Hong Kong a high level of autonomy for at least 50 years. This caused widespread unrest in Hong Kong society. The situation further worsened following the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing. Under local and

international pressure, Britain took a range of measures to restore the collapsed confidence in Hong Kong's future, including the enactment of the Bill of Rights Ordinance in 1991 to protect human rights and the speeding up of the democratisation process (Tsang, 2007, p. 250). It is under such circumstances that the public became aware of the importance of human rights and equality (Lim, 2015, p. 40). In the first direct election of the Legislative Council in Hong Kong in 1991, some women's rights activists ran for office or took part in different electoral activities, which brought women's issues onto the political and public agenda (Lee, 2003). The 1990s and early 2000s witnessed the enactment of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (1995) and the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (1997), the extension of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to Hong Kong (1996), and the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission (1996) and Women's Commission (2001) (Choi and Cheung, 2012; Tam and Yip, 2009, 2012). Today, the women's movement continues, fighting for not only women's rights, but also those of sexual minorities (Choi, 2012).

After discussing how women's status was influenced by various socio-political and economic changes from 1950s to the early 2000s, the next section will proceed to the present situation.

1.3. The present status of gender equality

This section aims to give a glimpse of the present status of gender equality in Hong Kong by reviewing official figures and recent research. A survey conducted by the Hong Kong Women's Commission (2009) revealed that 58.9 percent of its respondents expressed satisfaction with the gender equality status in Hong Kong, with only 12.1 percent being dissatisfied with it. The area of education has witnessed the most notable

improvement in gender equality (Mak, 2012). According to the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department (2016a), despite women's lower educational attainment in the whole population (in 2015, excluding foreign domestic helpers, approximately 29.6 percent of women reached the post-secondary education level, compared with approximately 34.2 percent for men), younger women attained higher educational levels than their male counterparts. For example, in the 2015/2016 academic year, 54.3 percent of the students enrolled in government-funded higher education programmes were female (ibid). In terms of labour force participation, in 2015, there was still a rather wide gap between the figure for women and that for men, namely 50.8 percent and 68.7 percent, respectively (ibid). Moreover, higher-ranking jobs are still dominated by men. For instance, in 2015, there were about 137,000 women holding managerial or administrative positions while the figure for men was about 275,200 (ibid). Cheung and Lee (2012) also pointed to the low representation of women in politics, government, the judiciary and leadership in the corporate sector and in tertiary institutions. For example, in 2012, only 18.3 percent of the legislators were women, which was lower than the average proportion of women in the national parliaments in Europe (24.2 percent). As Francesco and Shaffer (2009) comment, while women can achieve success in their careers, they need to put in more efforts than their male counterparts.

Despite women's increasing status in many spheres of life, traditional gender norms persist in the family. Nowadays, it has become the norm that both the husband and wife work and support the family (Choi *et al.*, 2012). However, 50.1 percent of the respondents in the Hong Kong Women's Commission's (2009) survey thought that women should prioritise their family over their career. Another survey by the Hong Kong Women's Commission (2011) indicated that although many men shared some housework, women were still the main homemaker, especially relating to childcare (see

also Ting and Lam, 2012; Choi and Ting, 2009). The division of labour in the family is also impacted by the common practice of employing domestic helpers, especially in middle-class families, which further widens the gap of men's and women's contribution to family duties. Choi and Ting (2009) pointed out that the practice 'may have relieved women in these families of some household tasks and child care, but has simultaneously created invisible tasks for women [e.g. training and managing domestic helpers] and enabled the almost complete withdrawal of husbands from domestic work' (p. 166). According to Ting and Lam (2012), the uneven distribution of family duties between men and women is more to do with time availability and bargaining power than traditional gender expectations. This relates to the deeply entrenched belief that women should marry up, i.e. hypergamy, despite its gradually diminishing influence. Their survey results revealed that only 12.8 percent of women had a higher income than their spouse in marriages taking place in the 2000s (*cf.* the figure in the 1970s being 4.5 percent). As far as decision-making in family matters was concerned, both the Hong Kong Women's Commission's (2011) and Ting and Lam's (2012) survey results pointed to the slightly higher power of men in deciding important financial matters e.g. buying a flat.

Another indicator of unequal gender orders in Hong Kong is the persistence of sexist media representations. There are not many studies of gender and the media in Hong Kong (Fung and Yao, 2012), but according to the existing ones, gender stereotyping is still widespread (ibid; Saidi, 2015; Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission, 2009). Women are still commonly represented as sex objects. A telling example is that in 2006, a radio programme set up an online vote for 'The Actress whom You Most Desire to Assault' (Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission, 2009, p. 22). Another finding is that gender stereotypes are often reinforced in the media. This

can be seen in Cheng and Leung's (2014) examination of health-related public service announcements in Hong Kong. A long list of stereotypes was identified. For example, while men dominated most authoritative roles, had the final say and corrected misconceptions, many women were portrayed as ignorantly asking questions and seeking advice; while men were depicted in various occupations, women were mostly in those traditionally feminine ones, e.g. nurses and housewives. Another study pointing to the serious gender stereotyping in Hong Kong is Prieler *et al.*'s (2015) comparative study on gender representations in advertising in Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea. In terms of the findings about Hong Kong, they found that the advertisements under investigation most often featured young women, but middle-aged men; women were more likely to be suggestively dressed and portrayed as users of body-based products, e.g. toiletries and cosmetics (see also Young and Chan (2002) for the same finding). This was despite the fact that the gender representations in the Hong Kong dataset proved to be less stereotypical than those in Japan and South Korea.

While many traditional gender portrayals can be identified, the Hong Kong media is under the influence of some global trends (see Section 2.1 for a description of postfeminist media culture). For instance, Lee's (2014) study on advertisements for beauty products in a Hong Kong women's magazine revealed that despite the persistence of traditional portrayals of women as submissive and passive sex objects, they were also represented as empowered consumers purchasing different beauty products/services and indulging themselves. The Hong Kong media also emphasises the surveillance of the female body. In particular, it accentuates the significance of a slim body for women and promotes a slimming culture (Lee and Fung, 2006, 2009). This can be seen by the falling trend in Miss Hong Kong Beauty Pageant contestants' body mass index from 1975 to 2000 (Leung *et al.*, 2001).

After an overview of the status of gender equality in Hong Kong, I will discuss what this means to men and women. As is clear from above, Hong Kong is undergoing a shift of gender roles; this means that both traditional and transitional ideas exist in gender expectations (Choi *et a*l., 2012), which has led to difficulties for both men and, especially, women. Commissioned by the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission, Choi *et al.* (2012) interviewed men of different age groups and examined gender stereotyping and its impact on men. Most informants were bound by the cultural norm of 'men as breadwinner', ideally the sole, but at least, the main breadwinner, and saw paid employment as the most salient part of their masculine identity. Nevertheless, they admitted that high property prices and living costs rendered this cultural ideal largely unachievable. In those circumstances, they tried to be the main provider for the family. Many saw their wife as a competitor – if she earned more and played a more important role in supporting the family, their self-esteem would be affected. The study concluded: 'while gender stereotyping on women has been challenged, gender stereotyping on men persists' (p. 45). This challenge, however, does not mean that women are free from gender stereotyping. Another study which has illuminated the effect of the changing gender roles on men is Leung and Chan's (2014) investigation on men's sources of pressure in Hong Kong, which yielded consistent results as those in Choi *et al.*'s (2012) study. Leung and Chan (2014) interviewed different age groups of adult men and found that work was the most important source of pressure for the respondents with a higher income whereas for those with a lower income, it was their financial income, and that up to 64.9 percent of the respondents strongly agreed/agreed/moderately agreed that the husband should support the family while the wife should be the family carer. They suggested that the respondents' concern about their work or financial condition resulted from their attempt to maintain their masculine identity as the family breadwinner.

Another finding was the respondents' negative views on women's shifting gender roles. Up to 67.8 percent of the respondents strongly agreed/agreed/moderately agreed that women posed a threat to men's social status. The in-depth interviews even showed that most respondents thought that successful career women disrespected their husbands. It is obvious that many Hong Kong men still hold very traditional views on gender roles and perceive pressure because of women's improving status.

Different groups of women are also facing different problems brought about by the often conflicting traditional and transitional ideas in gender expectations. An example is the marginalisation of less educated women in the present knowledge-based society. As Lim (2015) notes, less educated middle-aged women are often discriminated against in the workforce owing to their age and low educational level (p. 32). Middle-aged housewives are also subject to marginalisation. Middle-aged women who 'live their lives according to "conventional," heterosexual life script' (Ho, 2007a, p. 255) are often labelled as 師奶 *(si-nai)*. In this label, the character 師 literally means 'teacher' and the character 奶, literally 'breast', is a metonym for the motherly character. Ho (2007a,b) discussed how socio-political and economic changes in the past decades have shifted its meaning. In the 1950s and 1960s, apprenticeship played a key role in society. Apprentices, often children from poor families, addressed their master's wife as si-nai, 'a term of honour and respect' (Ho, 2007a, p. 257). In the 1970s and 1980s, following the rapid economic development, si-nai lost its positive meaning and became a term for housewives in local communities. At that time, people were often valued in terms of their salary, and si-nais were therefore marginalised and considered men's burdens. In the 21st century, the growing number of financially independent women means a further denigration of si-nais. All sorts of stereotypes surrounding them have appeared, e.g. uneducated, overweight, 'pennywise but pound foolish' (ibid).

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On the one hand, less educated middle-aged women and middle-aged housewives are problematised because they conform to traditional femininity and cannot keep pace with the changing society; on the other, some women are negatively judged through the lens of traditional femininity, e.g. highly educated career women. As Nakano (2016) notes, in Hong Kong (as well as Tokyo and Shanghai), 'when women take advantage of educational and work opportunities, they find that they are disadvantaged in marriage markets' (p. 368). This argument is supported by various research findings. For example, against the backdrop of the deep-rooted expectation of women marrying up (Ting and Lam, 2012), highly educated career women appear undesirable to Hong Kong men, who mostly prefer women whose educational and career accomplishments are lower than theirs (Choi *et al.*, 2012; Kang, 2013). The male informants in Leung and Chan's (2014) research, as mentioned, also thought that women's changing gender roles threatened men's social status and that successful career women did not show respect for their husbands. Therefore, highly educated career women are facing conflicting expectations in the public and private spheres. Apart from highly educated career women, single women who have reached the suitable age for marriage, i.e. the group of women my research is looking at, are also problematised owing to their perceived inability to achieve the conventional heterosexual life stage of marriage, as realised, for example, by the emergence of various derogatory references to them (see Section 1.1). I will discuss this more closely in Section 1.5.

The above discussion shows that even though women's rights are protected by laws and their status has improved remarkably, equal opportunities have not been achieved yet, especially in the family and media. While both women and men are now

facing conflicting gender expectations, women especially are facing a no-win situation, either as housewives or single professionals.

After this broad description of the present status of gender equality in Hong Kong, I will narrow down my scope to the immediate context of my research, i.e. with respect to the attitude to the conventional heterosexual life script and single women in Hong Kong.

1.4. The conventional heterosexual life script

The problematisation of unmarried women must be understood in the context of the social attitude towards the conventional heterosexual life script. This section is specifically dedicated to this issue.

The conventional heterosexual life script does not seem to be upheld as strongly as it used to be. In terms of the social institution of marriage, two trends can be identified in government figures: late marriage and the increasing divorce rate. According to the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department (2016a), while men's and women's median age at first marriage was 27.0 and 23.9, respectively, in 1981, the figures for 2015 were 31.2 and 29.3, respectively. The crude divorce rate also rose from 1.1 per 1,000 people in 1991 to 3.1 in 2013 (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2015a). Another indicator of the waning influence of the conventional heterosexual life script is the declining fertility rate. In 2015, the fertility rate was 35.0 live births per 1,000 women, compared with 37.4 and 62.0 in 1996 and 1981, respectively (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2016a). As Ng and Ng (2009, 2013) note, the fertility rate in Hong Kong is among the lowest in the world. The trends of late marriage, the increasing divorce rate and the decreasing fertility rate all show that Hong Kongers do not follow the heterosexual life path as strictly as in the past.

After reviewing government figures, I will now proceed to research findings concerning attitudes to marriage, singleness and having children in Hong Kong. My discussion is based on the Hong Kong Women's Commission's study (2011) on women's status at home and Koo and Wong's (2009) investigation of family changes in Hong Kong. Considering the similar scope of the two, I will review their findings in parallel. Both studies pointed to a fairly high level of acceptance for singleness. In Koo and Wong's (2009) study, 67.4 percent and 66.9 percent of their informants found it acceptable for men and women to be single, respectively; in the Hong Kong Women's Commission's (2011) survey, 42.3 percent of men and 42.5 percent of women were happy with their own singlehood and had no plan to marry, while those who did not accept being single only accounted for 31.4 percent and 32.3 percent, respectively. As regards cohabitation, in the Hong Kong Women's Commission's (2011) study, 53.6 percent of men accepted long-term cohabitation whereas the female respondents exhibited a much lower level of acceptance (38.2 percent). In Koo and Wong's (2009) study, 47.1 percent of the respondents thought that there was nothing wrong with cohabitation, as opposed to 30.5 percent who were opposed to it; this was despite that fact that only 2 percent of them reported cohabiting with their partner and 15 percent reported cohabiting with their spouse before marriage. Koo and Wong (2009) also pointed out that many of the informants disagreed with long-term cohabitation; instead, cohabitation was just considered 'a kind of temporary arrangement that act[ed] as a prelude to marriage' (ibid, p. 29). The findings about non-marital childbirth provided a clearer picture that long-term cohabitation is not widely accepted in Hong Kong. According to Koo and Wong (2009), among the 1,217 informants who had one or more children, only three were cohabiting and eight were single parents. In terms of the attitude to non-marital parenthood, 63.6 percent of them agreed with the statement that

'parenthood should go with marriage'. In the same vein, the Hong Kong Women's Commission (2011) found that large proportions of men and women disapproved of childbirth out of wedlock (45.6 percent and 53.9 percent, respectively). Lastly, in relation to the issue of having children, Koo and Wong (2009) found that most informants accepted childless marriage (65.5 percent), and that women, especially highly educated ones, tended to express higher acceptance for long-term childlessness than men. This finding, however, was incongruent with that of the corresponding result in the Hong Kong Women's Commission's (2011) survey, which revealed that having children meant more to women than men: 44.7 percent of women thought that they would feel empty if they did not have a child in their life, compared with 37.9 percent of men who thought so. It is clear from the above findings that on the one hand, the conventional heterosexual life script is weakening; on the other, many traditional ideas are still entrenched. As Koo and Wong (2009) comment, nowadays, while people have increasing freedom to choose whether to move forward on the heterosexual life path, e.g. remaining single and not having children, deviation from the path, e.g. cohabitation and non-marital parenthood, is still widely unaccepted.

Following this brief account of how the conventional heterosexual life script is partially upheld, the next section will more closely look at the topic of single women in Hong Kong.

1.5. Single women in Hong Kong

I will first try to understand the topic of single women in Hong Kong by looking at relevant government figures. According to the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department (2016a), the female-male ratio dropped drastically from 1,000 to 1,048 in 1996 to 1,000 to 931 in 2015 (excluding foreign domestic helpers). A significant cause

of this is the increasingly close ties between Hong Kong and mainland China since the 1990s and hence the rise of cross-border marriages (Lin and Ma, 2008), which are much more popular among Hong Kong men than Hong Kong women. In 2015, there were 16,154 cases of Hong Kong men marrying mainland Chinese women, compared with 7,136 cases of Hong Kong women marrying mainland Chinese men (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2016a). This gendered marriage pattern has led to a huge inflow of mainland Chinese immigrant women joining their husbands in Hong Kong and affected the sex ratio (ibid). Many Hong Kong men seem to prefer mainland Chinese women, perhaps because they are often considered more conservative and submissive than Hong Kong women (Kang, 2013; Choi *et al*., 2012). Apart from the change in sex ratio, the number of never-married women aged 15 or above also surged by 62.4 percent from 1986 to 2015, compared with 13.7 percent for the corresponding figure for their male counterparts (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2016a). A point worthy of attention is that these figures included the 340,380 foreign domestic helpers staying in Hong Kong on a temporary basis, 335,088 of whom were women (ibid). The number of local never-married women did not increase by such a large degree. As shown above, the gender imbalance and the growing number of single women both point to a shrinking 'marriage market' for women. However, while it seems undebatable that single men are in greater demand than single women, I think single women's difficulty in finding partners might not be as serious as the government figures seem to suggest. The rationale is that some women might make alternative life choices to the conventional heterosexual life script, e.g. by choosing to remain single or to cohabit with their partner.

Only a handful of studies on Hong Kong single women can be found in the literature, including Nakano's (2016) comparative research on single women in Hong

Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo, Ng and Ng's (2009) research on single working women, and Ng and Ng's (2013) on single working mothers, with the former two being more relevant to my study. Nakano (2016) interviewed a total of 110 single women aged between 25 and 50 from diverse social backgrounds in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo and found that among the three Asian cities, Hong Kong single women faced the least pressure to marry; more crucially, marriage was just seen as 'a lifestyle choice rather than a requirement' (ibid, p. 375), and singlehood was actually preferred by some of her informants, who expressed their openness 'to living with a partner or exploring alternatives to marriage' (ibid, p. 377). As regards Ng and Ng's (2009) study, 19 middle-class single women[5] were interviewed and their singlehood and career were juxtaposed. It was found that most informants saw single women positively and associated them with independence, freedom and high education levels. To most of them, their career formed a central part of their life. All never-married informants reported that they were not subject to unfair treatment in the workplace because of their singlehood; on the contrary, they saw their marital status as an advantage and found themselves in a better position than working mothers. For example, an informant commented, '[I face] no real discrimination [against single workers]. I wonder if it's the other way round. Those women who have family may not be thought of as being able to devote so much time to work' (ibid, p. 123). In terms of their marriage views, most did not resist it, but only when they met the right person would they consider marrying. Another finding was that although most informants were childless, they did not consider their life incomplete because of that. Ng and Ng (2009) concluded that remaining single and childless is increasingly seen as an alternative life choice for financially

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[5] Ng and Ng (2009) referred to 'single women' as women not in a cohabiting relationship, including those in a romantic relationship with a non-cohabiting partner. Their informants are not exactly the group of women I am interested in.

independent women in Hong Kong. Nakano's (2016) and Ng and Ng's (2009) findings were in agreement with the wider trend of the increasing acceptance for being single and childless in Hong Kong as discussed in Section 1.4.

Whilst Nakano (2016) and Ng and Ng (2009) have certainly contributed to research concerning single women in Hong Kong, I think that their studies only show a partial picture of the situation. First, as Ng and Ng (2009) pointed out, the research topic was often considered too intrusive and personal, and a number of single women declined to take part in the interview; therefore, the informants in their study were relatively self-confident and comfortable with their singlehood. Given this, I believe there exists a group of single women who are unhappy with their singleness. More importantly, both studies only approached the topic from the angle of single women themselves. There are many other ways to address the topic, e.g. how they are represented in the media. As Ng and Ng (2009) observed, '[a]lthough a statistical minority, the rising numbers of never-married women have become a subject of much interest and concern' (p. 30). There is clearly a knowledge gap as to why and in what ways single women have become a cause of social concern.

Unlike the case of Hong Kong, the single woman has been a fast-growing research area in the mainland Chinese context in recent years, especially relating to the stigmatisation of this group of women (e.g. Wang and Abbott, 2013; To, 2013, 2015; Gaetano, 2014; Gong *et al.*, 2015; Fincher, 2016). Considering the strong ties between mainland China and Hong Kong, I think that those studies based on the mainland Chinese context serve as a useful reference point for my research. I would like to briefly review findings on 'leftover women' in mainland China and discuss the findings in relation to the Hong Kong context. As mentioned in Section 1.1, this derogatory reference to single women is commonly used in Hong Kong, and its referent is exactly

whom my data, *Bride Wannabes*, problematises. Originating in mainland China, 'leftover women' is officially defined by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2007) as 'urban professional women who are over 27 years old who have high educational level, high salary, high intelligence, and attractive appearance, but also overly high expectations for marriage partners, and hence are "left behind" in the marriage market' (cited in To, 2015, p. 1). As shown by the definition, 'leftover women' are often stereotyped as 'picky' and problematised as responsible for their own singleness. According to Fincher (2016, p. 30) and To (2015, p. 27), this is the mainland Chinese government's propaganda to stigmatise successful career women who have reached the suitable age for marriage but who remain single in an attempt to urge them to marry and give birth to children of 'high quality', and lessen the problem of the ageing population. The state-run All-China Women's Federation and state-owned media outlets play an active role in the propaganda (To, 2015, p. 1, 27). Despite the different socio-political context, as mentioned, the term is widely used in Hong Kong as well. There are both incompatibilities and compatibilities in the aforesaid definition of 'leftover women' in the Hong Kong context. In terms of the referent, the term refers to a slightly different group of women in Hong Kong. Although there is no official definition, the term is often thought to refer to women aged 30 or above, rather than those in their late twenties (see Tan, 2013). While it is still strongly associated with women with high educational and career accomplishment, it is sometimes used to broadly refer to single women in that age range (ibid). Besides, attractive appearance does not seem to be a necessary feature of 'leftover women' in Hong Kong. However, the negative meanings conveyed by the definition seem transferrable to the Hong Kong context. Single women in Hong Kong, especially those with high educational and income levels, are often stigmatised as 'potential spinsters'. In addition, this group of

women is also blamed for their 'pickiness'.[6] As Ng and Ng (2009) suggest, they are often told to be 'reasonable about their expectations' for their future partner because of the sex imbalance and their mainland Chinese 'rivals' (p. 111), who are often thought to be more submissive (Kang, 2013). There is apparent gender inequality here: while men can be selective in their choice of partner, women cannot. Another interesting finding is that in Hong Kong, albeit not being part of a state propaganda exercise, women are similarly held partly accountable for the ageing population. According to Ng and Ng (2009), the media often imputes the ageing population to either 'the reluctance of married couples to procreate' or 'the reluctance or inability of single women to find marital partners to procreate with' (p. 112). As mentioned in Section 1.1, the Hong Kong media actively problematises single women who have reached the suitable age for marriage. It is obvious that single women in Hong Kong are also similarly problematised like their mainland Chinese counterparts, and the media plays a key role in it.

Before closing this section, I would like to stress that despite similarities between the phenomena in Hong Kong and mainland China, the stigmatisation of single womanhood in Hong Kong should be studied in its own right. Hong Kong is a quasi-country with its own government and laws, and its socio-political context is vastly different from that of mainland China. An obvious example is that there has never been a one-child policy in Hong Kong; as mentioned, the female-male ratio in Hong Kong was 1,000 to 931 in 2015, whereas that of mainland China was 1,000 to 1,060 in 2016 (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.). Research findings also seem to suggest mainland China is a much more patriarchal and conservative society than Hong Kong. For instance, highly educated women are found problematic insofar as female PhDs are

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[6] See Jones *et al.* (2012) for the same phenomenon in Singapore.

described as the third gender, as shown by the following statement 'The world has three types of humans: Men, Women, and Female PhDs' (Gaetano, 2014, p. 126). The conventional heterosexual life script is also strictly upheld in mainland China. For example, single women are under tremendous parental pressure to marry insofar as many parents actively arrange matchmaking for them (To, 2015, p. xvi, 6 and *passim*), and non-marital childbirth is illegal (Fincher, 2016, p. 24). These significant differences explain why it is necessary and worthwhile to investigate the stigmatisation of single women in Hong Kong, despite the large body of relevant research in the mainland Chinese context.

This brief overview of the immediate context of my research shows that while it seems increasingly acceptable to be single and some women actually choose to be single, they are still associated with negative stereotypes, e.g. unwanted and picky, and are problematised, particularly in the media. My research on how unmarried women are represented in *Bride Wannabes* aims to contribute to the research gap on single women in Hong Kong and provide a case study on how women's singleness is problematised in the media.

Following a depiction of the background and context of my research, in the remainder of this chapter, I will describe my research questions and outline my thesis.

1.6. Research questions

My study seeks to explore representations of unmarried women in *Bride Wannabes* from three perspectives, namely how they are talked about, how they talk about themselves and how they are talked to, which will be addressed in terms of social actor and social action representations, appraisals and impoliteness, respectively.

Corresponding to these three parameters, I have formulated the following three research questions:

RQ1. How are unmarried women talked about in *Bride Wannabes*?

- How are they represented as social actors?

- What types of actions are they associated with?

RQ2. How do unmarried women talk about themselves in terms of self-appraisals in *Bride Wannabes*?

RQ3. How are unmarried women talked to in terms of impoliteness in *Bride Wannabes*?

The findings in RQs1-3 form the basis of the next three research questions:

RQ4. What discourses surrounding unmarried women can be identified when they are talked about, when they talk about themselves and when they are talked to?

RQ5. What ideologies are expressed through the discourses identified?

RQ6. How are the discourses and ideologies surrounding unmarried women related to the social contexts in Hong Kong?

Informed by critical discourse studies, I am not interested in language *per se*, but how it is used to sustain power asymmetry, in my case, unequal gender orders. To link the micro-level of language use to the social macro-level, I will identify some discourses surrounding unmarried women based on the textual analysis findings in RQs1-3 (RQ4),

through which I will interpret various ideological beliefs relating to unmarried women (RQ5). I will then link the findings to the broader social contexts in Hong Kong (RQ6).

Other than the above empirical questions, I also address a methodological research question:

RQ7. How can Cantonese data be analysed in terms of social actor

representations, appraisals and impoliteness using English-based

linguistic frameworks?

My data is in Cantonese while all the linguistic frameworks I employ are English-based. Considering the substantial differences between the two languages, e.g. in terms of syntactical structures and word classes, it might be problematic to apply English-based linguistic frameworks to Cantonese data. RQ7 deals with how this can be done in terms of social actor representations, appraisals and impoliteness.[7]

1.7. Outline of the thesis

After introducing the background and context of this research and presenting my research questions, I will now briefly describe the structure of this thesis.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical background of my research. I will review key theories that influence my research including feminism and postfeminism, critical discourse studies and feminist critical discourse analysis, as well as the theorisation of genres. I will also explain in what ways these theories inform my research.

Chapter 3 is formed of two parts. In the first part, I survey the literature on postfeminist media representations of women, focusing on two themes: singleness and

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[7] Although I also employ the transitivity system in systemic-functional grammar, I deliberately exclude it here because it has been widely applied to Chinese data (see Subsection 5.1.2).

romance as well as ageing. The second part is a literature review of the genre of my data, reality television, including its generic features and various empirical studies on how single women are represented in reality television.

Turning to the empirical part of my research, Chapter 4 will give an account of my primary data of *Bride Wannabes* and my auxiliary data of online forum posts about the programme, justify my choice and describe my data collection procedures and issues relating to my data transcription and translation.

The three data analysis chapters that follow form the core part of the thesis. In these chapters, I will explore how unmarried women are talked about (Chapter 5), how they talk about themselves (Chapter 6) and how they are talked to (Chapter 7) in terms of social actor and action representations, self-appraisals and impoliteness, respectively. All these chapters follow the structure of first, a delineation of the corresponding analytical tools employed, followed by a description of the methods of analysis and finally a report of the findings.

Chapter 8 relates the textual analysis findings in Chapters 5-7 to the broader social contexts in Hong Kong. I will first synthesise the major textual analysis findings. I will then discuss some discourses that can be identified from these findings and some gender ideologies articulated via the discourses identified. Lastly, I will interpret how the discourses and ideologies pertain to the social contexts in Hong Kong.

Finally, Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by drawing implications from the findings, discussing some contributions and limitations of this research and suggesting directions for further research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical background

This chapter provides the theoretical background of my research. I will start by reviewing the two key theories that form the foundation of my research, namely feminism and postfeminism, and critical discourse studies (CDS). Next, I will discuss how the two strands of research are combined in the literature. After that, I will shift my focus to the theorisation of genres. Finally, I will explain how the above theories are relevant to my research and justify my theoretical framework.

2.1. Feminism and postfeminism

My research is profoundly influenced by feminist and postfeminist scholarship. In this subsection, I will give an overview of the two in turn. Feminism is social and political activism, as well as an ideology. hooks (2015a) defines feminism as 'a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression' (p. 1), which is underpinned by the belief that women are socially oppressed owing to their sex (Whelehan, 1995). The development of this movement is often depicted using a wave metaphor. It can be broadly divided into three waves. The first wave refers to the political movement for women's suffrage in the US and Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006). The second wave movement, beginning in the 1960s, resisted the dominant traditional views on women's roles and broadened the scope of the activism to a range of issues, e.g. abortion rights and access to the workplace (Whelehan, 1995; Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006; Mills and Mullany, 2011). The third wave emerged in the 1990s following the widespread criticisms against second-wave feminists' focus on White, middle-class women's concerns and lack of attention to the diversity among women. A key critic was hooks (2015b). She described the then feminism in the US as 'a bourgeois ideology' (p. 9) that marginalised the struggle of Black, working-class

women, and criticised that many White, middle-class feminists treated feminism as a woman-only movement and turned a blind eye to their own class privilege over many working-class men. In view of this, she called for a more inclusive movement involving both women and men and fighting against not only sexist oppression, but also other forms of group oppression. Third-wave feminism therefore expanded the scope of feminism and took into account the intersectionality of gender with other social factors, e.g. race and social class, as well as sexuality (Whelehan, 1995; Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006). After this historical account of feminism, I find it necessary to stress two points. The first is the continuity of the movement (see Harnois, 2008). Second, there are various strands of feminism, e.g. liberal feminism and women of colour feminism (see Tong, 2016). Despite their different concerns, they share the core values of autonomy and equality, and the ideological goal 'to fight against male dominance, and against the discrimination and degradation of women and of the tasks predominantly performed by women' (Dahlerup, 2013, p. 24).

Postfeminism is a concept intricately linked to feminism. It refers to 'a set of assumptions, widely disseminated within popular media forms, having to do with the "pastness" of feminism, whether that supposed pastness is merely noted, mourned, or celebrated' (Tasker and Negra, 2007, p. 1). More specifically, it draws on feminist ideas and stresses the success of feminism and hence its increasing irrelevance today (McRobbie, 2007). McRobbie (2009) argues against the success of feminism and sees postfeminism as a form of 'faux-feminism' (p. 1). Focusing on the UK context, she suggests that despite the political and institutional incorporation of feminist elements and the seeming empowerment, agency and freedom of women, women are still under patriarchal power. She also points to how postfeminism is working to undermine or even undo the gains of the feminist movement. In the same line of argument, Gill (2011,

2014) even makes explicit links between postfeminism and sexism. She sees sexism as 'an agile, dynamic, changing and diverse set of malleable representations, discourses and practices of power' (Gill, 2014, p. 115), and argues that however old-fashioned sexism is considered in contemporary Western culture, it has not disappeared, but has been reproduced in new forms. This kind of new sexism, or 'postfeminist sexism' (ibid, p. 110), often works by appropriating key tenets of feminism to mask its sexist agenda:

> Practices that might once have attracted critique from feminists are 'repackaged' by postfeminist culture as the 'autonomous choices' of empowered postfeminist subjects: cosmetic surgery is about 'confidence', surgeons' posters inform us; pole dancing makes you powerful, gym websites reveal; whilst advertisers proclaim that waxing and depilation are acts of 'pampering' and self-indulgence that no self-respecting woman should deny herself ('because you're worth it'). According to this cultural sensibility, any remaining power differences between men and women are the result not of discrimination but of *choice*.' (ibid, p. 118; original emphasis)

Gill (2011) therefore calls for the resurgence of feminism to take into consideration this new form of sexism (*cf.* similar calls by other scholars, e.g. McRobbie, 2009; Lazar, 2007; Tasker and Negra, 2007; Mills and Mullany, 2011).

My research is particularly informed by the conceptualisation of postfeminism by Rosalind Gill, a cultural theorist researching extensively in the area of postfeminist media culture. She understands postfeminism as 'a sensibility' (Gill, 2007b, p. 148; see also Gill, 2007a, 2011, 2014; Gill and Arthurs, 2006; Gill and Scharff, 2011), and has identified the following key interconnected themes of gender representations in postfeminist media culture, which are all characterised by the coexistence of feminist and anti-feminist ideas (see Gill, 2007b, p. 149-159 for a thorough discussion):

(a) Femininity as a bodily property

In postfeminist media culture, femininity is conceived of as 'a bodily property' (Gill, 2007b, p. 149). Traditionally feminine traits, e.g. a motherly or nurturing character, are no longer considered key characteristics of femininity. Gill (2007b) notes: '[t]he body is presented simultaneously as women's source of power and as always unruly, requiring constant monitoring, surveillance, discipline and remodelling (and consumer spending) in order to conform to ever-narrower judgements of female attractiveness' (p. 149).

More recently, a new representational tactic is employed in the media, most notably in advertising, to regulate women's body by encouraging them to love their body, rather than subjecting them to hostile scrutiny (Gill and Elias, 2014). Gill and Elias (2014) criticise that advertisers employing the 'love your body' tactic are those who most often aggressively pathologise women's body. For example, on the one hand, the diet cereal brand Special K encourages women not to negatively comment on their body shape in its 2013 advertisement titled 'Let's shut down fat talk'; on the other, all women selected for its advertisements are slim, and its website is full of information about weight loss, e.g. a BMI counter. The Special K advertisement also seems to suggest that it is women who choose to problematise their own body without taking into consideration how the female body is culturally pathologised. Therefore, those 'love your body' messages are not 'a straightforward liberation from tyrannical beauty standards, and may in fact instantiate new, more pernicious forms of power that engender a shift from bodily to psychic regulation' (p. 180).

(b) The sexualisation of culture

Postfeminist media culture is also characterised by sexualisation, which is linked to its preoccupation with the female body. This can be seen by the proliferation of discourses concerning sex and sexuality and the erotic representation of the female body in the media, e.g. the mainstreaming of 'porno chic' in magazines and on television (Gill, 2007b).

(c) From a sex object to a desiring sexual subject

In contrast to the traditionally dominant representation of women as sex objects of the male gaze in films (see Mulvey, 2009), women are constructed as a desiring sexual subject in postfeminist media culture. Gill (2003) suggests that this shift can be seen as a response to the feminist critique of the objectification of women in the media and criticises that this kind of subjectification has an even more damaging effect on women: 'I would argue that what this shift entails is a move from *an external male judging gaze to a self-policing narcissistic gaze*. I would argue that it represents a higher or deeper form of exploitation than objectification – one in which the objectifying male gaze is internalised to form a new disciplinary regime' (p.104; original emphasis).

(d) Individualism, choice and empowerment

Postfeminist media culture is very much based on neoliberal individualism and lays stress on the notions of choice, 'being oneself', 'pleasing oneself' and empowerment (Gill, 2007b, p. 153). Postfeminist subjects take control of their own life, and whatever they choose to do, it is for their own sake, as distinct from pleasing others. Such representations imply gender equality. However, Gill (2007b) rightly challenges postfeminist media culture for 'present[ing] women as entirely free agents and [not

being able to] explain why – if women are just pleasing themselves and following their own autonomously generated desires – the resulting valued "look" is so similar – hairless body, slim waist, firm buttocks, etc.' (p. 154). It is obvious that under the influence of a sexualised culture, many women internalise the male gaze and become active agents to objectify themselves to please men.

(e) Self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline

Postfeminist media culture not only emphasises women's agency to choose and control their life, but also the need to survey, monitor and discipline the self (Gill, 2007b). Therefore, femininity needs to be attended to and worked on. Women are required to pay constant attention to and remodel their body, e.g. body shape and attire, as well as their interior life, e.g. emotional intelligence. Gill (2007a) attributes such emphasis on self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline to the proliferation of self-help discourses in contemporary culture, and criticises that it is a highly gendered phenomenon: '[i]n magazines, contemporary fiction and television talk shows, it is women, not men, who are addressed and required to work on and transform the self. Significantly, it appears that the ideal disciplinary subject of neoliberalism is feminine' (p. 156).

(f) The makeover paradigm

The makeover paradigm plays an essential role in postfeminist media culture. It works by 'requir[ing] people (predominantly women) to believe first that they or their life is lacking or flawed in some way, and second that it is amenable to reinvention or transformation by following the advice of relationship, design or lifestyle experts, and practising appropriately modified consumption habits' (Gill, 2008, p. 441). While elements of the makeover paradigm can be identified in a variety of media genres, e.g.

magazines and talk shows, it forms the basis of makeover television (see Section 3.2 for a detailed description of this genre).

(g) The reassertion of natural gender difference

Postfeminist popular media is saturated by ideas of natural gender difference, which resurged and replaced the short-lived focus on gender equality and similarities between women and men in the media in the 1970s and 1980s (Gill, 2007b). This might pertain to the great popularity of self-help books e.g. John Gray's *Men are from Mars, women are from Venus* (1992). As Gill (2007b) points out, such an essentialist view on gender 'can be used to freeze in place existing [gender] inequalities by representing them as inevitable and – if read correctly – as pleasurable' (p. 159).

(h) An emphasis on consumerism and the commodification of difference

Another feature of postfeminist media culture is its stress on consumerism and the commodification of difference (Gill, 2007b). This is particularly linked to the makeover paradigm, which concerns problematising different aspects of women and convincing them how much they/their life can differ by adopting various lifestyle and consumption habits. The intertwining between postfeminist media culture and consumerism has also been pointed to by Tasker and Negra (2007), who suggest that postfeminist media culture 'works to commodify feminism via the figure of the woman as an empowered consumer' (p. 2). Women are also made to monitor and work on their bodies so as to please themselves. As Lazar (2007) observes, postfeminism is 'a media-friendly. consumer-oriented discourse' (p. 154).

Before closing this section about feminism and postfeminism, I would like to draw attention to the preoccupation of postfeminist scholarship with White, middle-

class heterosexual young women (*cf.* the same preoccupation by second-wave feminists) (see e.g. Gill, 2011; Tasker and Negra, 2007; Gwynne and Muller, 2013). Butler (2013) even points out that while postfeminism centres upon White, middle-class, heterosexual young women (see Projansky, 2001), this does not mean that other groups of women are not impacted. She suggests: 'It is not enough to claim that postfeminism excludes various groups by privileging a white middle-class, heterosexual subject; we need to dig much, much deeper and unpack how postfeminism, racism, classism, heterosexism, nationalism, ageism, and ableism work together to reproduce social inequality and relations of power' (p. 53-54). Some exceptions include Whelehan (2013), who explored postfeminist discourses on ageing in contemporary Hollywood cinema, and Springer (2007), who examined representations of African American women in popular culture.

Following this overview of feminism and postfeminism, the next section will proceed to the other key theoretical approach fundamental to my research, i.e. CDS.

2.2. Critical discourse studies (CDS)

CDS, also known as critical discourse analysis, is a problem-oriented research paradigm which is not defined by research methods, but the researcher's critical perspective. Within the paradigm, there are different approaches drawing on different theories and methods. Major approaches include Fairclough's dialectical relational approach, Jäger and Maier's dispositive analysis, van Dijk's sociocognitive approach, van Leeuwen's social actors approach and Wodak and Reisigl's discourse-historical approach (see Wodak and Meyer, 2016). This section will start by introducing the constitutive notions of CDS, which are the common ground shared among different approaches.

2.2.1. Discourse and discourses

At the heart of CDS is the concept of *discourse*. In CDS, it is theorised as 'language use in speech and writing' (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 258) and 'a form of social practice' (Fairclough, 2010, p. 95), in which case, it is an uncountable noun and can take pre-modifier(s) to show the corresponding historical context and social realm, e.g. 'late capitalist advertising discourse' (Koller, 2012, p. 21). Discourse can also be used specifically as a count noun, i.e. *a discourse* or *discourses*, meaning 'ways of representing aspects of the world' (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124), in which case, it can be pre- or post-modified to show the attitude, topic, and the location, producer and channel of distribution, e.g. 'a nationalist discourse on immigration in British newspapers' (Koller, 2012, p. 21).

Discourse is *representational*, which means that discourses do not construe the world as it is, but represent it from a particular perspective. Van Leeuwen (2008) emphasises the distinction between 'doing it' and 'talking about it' (p. 6). Representation is not a reflection of a social event, but a recontextualisation of it (ibid, p. 4-6; Fairclough, 2003, p. 139-141). In other words, the event is talked about in another context, and it involves intention and a selection of e.g. what to include/exclude, how to represent, and what to add. In a text, there can be many different representations of the world, but not all of them are discourses. Only when a particular representation achieves a certain level of repetition and stability, and is shared by groups of people can it be seen as a discourse (Fairclough, 2003, p. 125).

What is particularly important to CDS is the constitutive power of discourse. CDS not only sees discourse as part of society, but also as dialectically related to other social elements, i.e. being 'socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned' (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 258). In other words, not only is a discursive event

shaped by other social elements, but it also shapes them. *Construction* is a concept corresponding to this socially constitutive capacity of discourse, referring to representations which shape the world in some way. It is such a dialectical relationship that enables discourse to have the potential to help maintain, (re)produce or challenge the status quo. This relationship is especially crucial when it comes to ideological discourses, which potentially (re)produce or resist inequality of power in society.

2.2.2. Taking a critical perspective

Another core notion of CDS is *critique*, more specially, the researcher's explicit critical standpoint in relation to social injustice or power abuse. This is a distinctive feature of CDS which distinguishes it from other forms of discourse analyses. CDS research always departs from a social or political problem, and aims at, through the critical examination of semiotic data, 'making transparent taken-for-granted assumptions, identifying how relations of power are established, reinforced and subverted by discourse participants, and contributing to the emancipatory efforts of marginalised groups' (Koller, 2014b, p. 149). This emancipatory agenda entails two implications. First, CDS is uninterested in language *per se*, but how it is used to reproduce, legitimise and challenge social injustice and inequality, especially by groups with access to public discourse, e.g. political parties and the media. Therefore, CDS researchers not only describe discourse structures, but also explain them in relation to the relevant sociopolitical contexts (see Wodak and Meyer, 2016; van Dijk, 2015). Second, CDS researchers always take the side of oppressed groups, and make their positions explicit (Fairclough *et al.*, 2011; van Dijk, 1993). This social and political commitment has led to criticism of partiality (see e.g. Widdowson, 1995, 2004). However, van Dijk (1993) points out that it is impossible for critical researchers to take a neutral standpoint when

it comes to social injustice; Fairclough *et al.* (2011) also argue that CDS scholars' commitment does not preclude social scientific objectivity, and that 'standards of careful, rigorous and systematic analysis apply with equal force to CD[S] as to other approaches.' (p. 358).

2.2.3. Power and ideology

Also fundamental to CDS are the inextricably linked notions of *power* and *ideology*. I will first briefly describe the notion of power.[8] Given its emancipatory agenda committed to social equality, CDS pays particular attention to *social power* (see e.g. van Dijk 1998a, 2000), i.e. power abuse at the level of groups or organisations. As Wodak and Meyer (2016) point out, '[p]ower is about relations of difference, and particularly about the effects of differences in social structures' (p. 12). Turning to the notion of ideology, it is defined differently in different CDS approaches. For example, Reisigl and Wodak (2016) see ideology as 'a worldview and a system composed of related mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes, values and evaluations, which is shared by members of a specific social group' (p. 25). On the other hand, Fairclough (2003) takes a Marxist perspective and defines ideology vis-à-vis its relationship with power and dominance:

> Ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation. This 'critical' view of ideology, seeing it as a modality of power, contrasts with various 'descriptive' views of ideology as positions, attitudes, beliefs, perspectives, etc. of social groups without reference to relations of power and domination between such groups. (p. 9)

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[8] See Section 2.3 for a more detailed discussion about the theorisation of power in van Dijk's sociocognitive approach.

Despite the variations in the conceptualisations of ideology, different CDS approaches share the belief of the important role of ideology in the reproduction of power asymmetry. According to Wodak and Meyer (2016), CDS is particularly interested in those more latent and covert type of everyday beliefs, which are often taken for granted as common sense and which are unchallenged, i.e. the Gramscian concept of 'hegemony'. It is via such everyday beliefs that inequalities and oppression are maintained and reproduced.

I will end this section by describing how the above key notions are interwoven and offering a glimpse of what CDS is about. As touched upon above, some discourses have ideological effects, and it is mainly, but not necessarily, through discourse that ideologies are learnt, expressed and reproduced (e.g. van Dijk, 2006, 2011). Since ideologies organise how we see the world, they may help legitimise inequality of power or express resistance to such dominance. CDS research takes a critical perspective and aims to unmask how different forms of social inequalities and domination are sustained and legitimised via the discursive reproduction of ideologies. Following this general introduction to CDS, in the next section, I will narrow down my scope and explicate the specific approach that my research draws on, i.e. van Dijk's sociocognitive approach to ideology (1998a).

2.3. A sociocognitive approach (SCA) to ideology

van Dijk's SCA to ideology (1998a) forms an important basis of my research. Before elaborating this framework, I will first give a brief overview of SCA.

For van Dijk, SCA is a multidisciplinary approach analysing discourse in terms of the discourse-cognition-society triangle (see e.g. van Dijk, 1993, 1998a, 2015). Van Dijk argues for a cognitive interface between discourse and society and makes a

distinction between the micro-level of personal cognition and the macro-level of social cognition. Personal cognition involves event models, which define the events concerned and control the semantic aspect of discourse, and context models, i.e. 'subjective definitions of the communicative situation' (van Dijk, 2011, p. 391), which control the pragmatic aspect of discourse, e.g. politeness; social cognition refers to cognition shared with other members of a group or culture, e.g. attitude, social/group knowledge and ideology. Significantly, how we interpret a communicative situation is often influenced by social cognition. Therefore, it is through the mental representation of social actors (as language users) that social situations, and structure and language use are linked.

After a general description of SCA, I will now proceed to van Dijk's ideology framework (1998a), which theorises ideology in terms of the dimensions of cognition, society and discourse:

<u>The cognitive dimension</u>

Ideology is a form of social cognition. Van Dijk defines ideology sociocognitively as 'clusters of beliefs in our minds' (van Dijk, 1998a, p. 26) and 'the basis of the shared mental representations of social groups which in turn will control the social practices of members' (van Dijk, 2011, p. 381). Also taking a sociocognitive perspective, Koller (2014a) provides a more encompassing definition: 'a network of beliefs that leads to expectations, norms and values, can entail emotional effects and is a crucial means of organising social life' (p. 247). As shown by these definitions, the sociocognitive approach sees ideology as characterised by the following properties: (1) systems of beliefs; (2) shared within a social group; (3) fairly general or fundamental, controlling different sorts of social attitudes; (4) quite stable. What is central to CDS is group ideologies. Van Dijk (1998a) points out that 'the contents of group ideologies pertain

to what, for each group, is the preferred social and moral order' (p. 72), so they often concern conflicts of interests, competition, oppression and resistance between groups. This means that ideologies are not arbitrary beliefs. They define who we are, our standpoint, our value and our relations with other groups. Relating to this, van Dijk (1998a, p. 65-69) has identified some possible formats of ideology:

(a) **Group self-schema:** Because of its fundamental role in organising group relationships, 'an ideology is a self-serving schema for the representation of Us and Them as social groups' (ibid, p. 69); ideology can therefore be structured in the format of a group schema consisting of the following categories:

Identity (Who are we? Who belong to us? Where do we come from?)

Activities (What do we usually do? What is our task?)

Goals (What do we want to obtain?)

Norms and values (What is good/bad, permitted/prohibited for us?)

Group relations (Who are our allies and opponents?)

Resources (What is the basis of our power, or our lack of power?)

(van Dijk, 2011, p. 386)

These categories cover different group properties and can be applied to different types of ideological groups, e.g. feminists, populists, religious groups and professional groups. Besides, some ideologies are particularly based on one of the categories. For example, feminism aims to fight for gender equality, and is a goal ideology; conservatism believes in traditional values and opposes social change, so it is mainly based on norms and values.

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(b) Group conflict and group polarisation: Apart from the group self-schema, van Dijk (1998a) has also proposed a group polarisation schema to account for the conflict between Us and Them, more specifically, positive ingroup presentation and negative outgroup presentation. Such polarised representations can be extended to values Our group stands for and those Others stand for. However, Koller (2014a) points out that in some cases, ideology is structured in the form of negative outgroup presentation *only*.

(c) Problem and solution: Another possible structural pattern of ideology is problem and solution. As van Dijk (1998a) points out, 'many beliefs, especially of dominated and dissident groups, organise around basic beliefs about what is wrong, and about what should be done about it' (p. 66). For instance, in terms of anti-racism, the problem is racism while the solution is equality and diversity (ibid, p. 67).

Ideologies perform the cognitive function to organise how a group is socially represented, but this can only be achieved indirectly through the following intermediate cognitive levels:

(a) Knowledge: Knowledge refers to 'beliefs that meet the (historically developing) epistemic criteria of each community, such as reliable perception, discourse or inference' (van Dijk, 2016, p. 68). The difference between knowledge and ideology lies in the fact that whereas knowledge is *factual beliefs* presupposed in everyday interactions and is treated as common ground by *a whole community*, an ideology is a set of beliefs (often *evaluative* ones) shared by members of *a particular social group*. However, van Dijk (e.g. 2011, 1998a, p. 110) points out that some epistemic

criteria are group-specific, and so some knowledge is ideologically based. For example, what were regarded as true beliefs about women and Black people in history no longer hold true today. This points to the relativity of knowledge. What is believed to be true by a community might be viewed by another as group knowledge or even an ideology, e.g. the existence of God. It is this kind of knowledge that is controlled by ideologies.

(b) **Attitude:** Attitude refers to 'specific, organised, *clusters* of socially shared beliefs, such as the (often complex) attitudes about nuclear energy, abortion or immigration' (van Dijk, 1998a, p. 43; original emphasis). Such beliefs are often evaluative beliefs based on social norms and values. Attitudes, as van Dijk (2011) suggests, 'play a crucial *intermediary* role in our minds, namely to link very general ideologies to more specific social domains, issues and practices, and ultimately to discourse' (p. 389; original emphasis). For example, a feminist ideology may control a negative attitude to polygamy; a Christian ideology may control an oppositional attitude to same-sex marriages.

(c) **Opinions:** Opinions are 'personal evaluative beliefs' (van Dijk, 2011, p. 390) which 'presuppose a judgement based on socially shared values and norms' (van Dijk, 1998a, p. 34). Hence, despite not being socially shared, opinions are under the influence of social beliefs including knowledge, ideology and attitude.

To briefly summarise, an ideology controls social representations of a group by organising social cognitions including knowledge, i.e. what is true or false for us, and

attitude, i.e. what we consider good or bad, which form the foundation of how we personally judge the group.

The social dimension

Van Dijk (1998a) emphasises that ideology is not only a cognitive construct, but also a social one. First, the social nature of ideology can be realised by it being a form of *social* cognition. As mentioned earlier, it is socially shared and controls our social attitudes. A more sociological account of ideology looks at its relations with society at both the micro- and marco-levels. The micro-level refers to the manifestation of ideologies in the social interactions between social actors. As van Dijk (2000) notes, 'as soon as people act as members of social groups, they may bring to bear their ideologies in their actions and interaction' (p. 31). Ideology also relates to the macrostructures of society, i.e. relationships of groups and organisations in terms of power and dominance. Fundamental to such social power includes 'material power resources, such as property or capital, and also on symbolic power resources, such as knowledge, status, fame and access to public discourse' (van Dijk, 2016, p. 71). In contemporary society, the media is an influential institution (re)producing various ideologies. Van Dijk (1998a) defines power in terms of control and suggests that power can be exerted at different levels of control (p. 162). The first level is *discursive control*, i.e. the control of the contexts and structures of discourse, e.g. genres, topics, and 'who is allowed to say/write/hear/read what to/from whom, where, when and how' (van Dijk, 1993, p. 257). As van Dijk (2016) points out, 'discourse [also] expresses social cognition and may thus "manage the minds" of other groups and their members' (p. 71). Therefore, via discursive control, powerful speakers and groups can indirectly perpetuate ideologies, knowledge, attitudes and opinions, and achieve the impact of *mind control*. As ideology organises how we see

the world, through mind control, powerful groups can legitimise their power abuse and sustain their control over dominated groups.

A common critique of CDS is the way power is dealt with in research. For example, Blommaert (2001) maintains: 'Power relations are often predefined and then confirmed by features of discourse (sometimes in very questionable ways…)' (p. 15; see also Blommaert, 2005). While this critique is a general comment about CDS without pinpointing any particular approach, I try to look into it in relation to SCA. I agree that SCA does predefine power relations, but not as questionably as Blommaert puts it. The rationale is that SCA only predefines power relations in the societal macrostructure, e.g. the institutional power of the media and men's power over women, and van Dijk (e.g. 1993, 2015) repeatedly points out that such power relations can be challenged discursively. He also makes it clear that '[g]roups may more or less control other groups, or only control them in specific situations or social domains' and that 'not all members of a powerful group are always more powerful than all members of dominated groups: power is only defined here for groups as a whole' (van Dijk, 2015, p. 469), which indicates his awareness that a social group's power is not absolute in all contexts and that its members have varying levels of power. However, I consider it inadequate just to acknowledge that such power relations do not hold in all situations and that there are individual differences. More emphasis should be placed on the fluidity of power. For example, China is still very much a patriarchal society, and single women with high educational and income levels are often stigmatised (see Fincher, 2016; To, 2015). In terms of the societal macrostructure, women's subordination to men seems to be beyond doubt. However, while single women with high educational and income levels suffer from the symbolic power of men in some contexts, it is problematic to describe them as 'powerless'. Considering their wealth, knowledge, and career achievement, they may

have power over many men in many social domains, e.g. in the workplace, and are perhaps more appropriately described as 'powerful'. This illustration shows how gender often intersects with other social categories, e.g. age and social class, and such intersections may affect power relations between women and men in some contexts. Therefore, power is fluid and very much context-dependent. I find it necessary to look into such complexities in CDS research.

The discourse dimension

Lastly, I will focus on the discourse dimension of ideology. As mentioned earlier, discourse is a crucial medium for the expression and reproduction of ideologies. That said, most ideologies are not articulated directly in discourse, except e.g. in some religious texts (see e.g. van Dijk, 2000, p. 18). In most cases, ideological beliefs can only be indirectly identified through the researcher's interpretation. As ideology organises group relations and often relates to group conflicts, meanings in relation to the group properties listed in the aforementioned group self-schema are typical of ideological discourse (van Dijk, 2011). Koller (2014a) suggests that in order to identify ideology in discourse, it is necessary to analyse a discourse in relation to its discourse goals, discourse strategies and linguistic features:

(a) **Discourse goals:** Discourse goals are what the speaker tries to achieve discursively. A common example is ingroup favouritism and outgroup derogation, as shown by the ideological square below:

Emphasise *Our* good things	Emphasise *Their* bad things
De-emphasise *Our* bad things	De-emphasise *Their* good things

<div align="right">(van Dijk, 2011, p. 396)</div>

However, as mentioned earlier, Koller (2014a) suggests that some ideologies *only* manifest themselves in the negative out-group presentation.

(b) Discourse strategies: Discourse strategies refer to 'the means, as effects of language use, by which discourse goals are realised' (ibid, p. 243). There are many ways to pursue various discourse goals. For example, corresponding to the basic group properties listed in the aforementioned group self-schema, Koller (2014a) has proposed, among others, modality, tense and aspect, evaluation, social actors and processes (p. 243).

(c) Linguistic features: Linguistic features are what realises the particular discourse strategy, e.g. modality can be realised through modal adverbs.

It is through this micro-level of ideological discourse analysis that underlying ideologies can be inferred and linked to the macro-level of social structures.

After explicating how ideology is theorised in van Dijk's (1998a) framework, the next section will look at how insights from feminism and CDS are combined in the literature.

2.4. Feminist studies and CDS

This section showcases the fruitfulness of combining insights from feminism and CDS. As shown by the above discussion, feminist studies are congruent with CDS in many ways, most noticeably in terms of their interest in social injustice and their emancipatory aims. This intricate link has also been noted by different CDS theorists. For instance, van Dijk (1991) openly acknowledges the insights CDS has gained from feminist scholarship in the 1980s; Wodak (1997) also points out: '[m]any proposals and basic assumptions of feminist linguistics relate to and overlap with principles of critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis' (p. 7). Owing to the compatibilities between feminist studies and CDS, many feminist linguistic studies are conducted in the CDS paradigm (Lazar, 2005, 2007), especially vis-à-vis gender representations in the media (see Mills and Mullany, 2011).

A strong advocate of bringing together feminist studies and CDS is Michelle M. Lazar, who has developed feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA),[9] a research paradigm dedicated to addressing the discursive reproduction of unequal gender orders (Lazar, 2005, 2007). As Lazar (2007) suggests, '[t]he central concern of feminist critical discourse analysts is with critiquing discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order – relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group, and disadvantage, exclude, and disempower women as a social group' (p. 145). FCDA is CDS with a critical feminist perspective. According to Lazar (2005), there are three reasons for the emphasis of a feminist perspective in CDS. First, many gender studies in the CDS paradigm have goals of social transformation. Second, the power imbalance between men and women is in play on a daily basis and is different from other forms of power asymmetries, e.g. race and social class, in that women are expected to love their

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[9] Despite my preference for the term *CDS*, I stick to the term *FCDA*, as used by Lazar (2005, 2007).

oppressor. This makes it not always possible to deal with sexism adequately in the same way as other forms of oppression, and thus necessary for CDS research on gender to take into account feminist insights. Last, an explicit feminist label helps unite feminist critical discourse researchers and increase the group visibility so that feminist views can enter the mainstream of CDS scholarship. On the other hand, CDS can also contribute to feminist scholarship in that it 'offers a considered theorisation of the relationship between social practices and discourse structures…and a wide range of tools and strategies for detailed analyses of contextualised uses of language in texts and talk' (ibid, p. 144). Issues of particular concern to FCDA include the intersectionality of gender with other social identities, subtle patriarchal orders and postfeminism. Through the FCDA lens, Lazar has researched extensively on postfeminist advertising discourse in Singapore, e.g. Lazar (2006, 2009, 2011, 2014).

As mentioned earlier, CDS has been widely employed by feminist linguists, with some following FCDA and explicitly taking a critical feminist perspective. For example, Makoni (2011) examined how the female body, especially in relation to miniskirts, was discursively constructed in multilingual taxi inscriptions in Johannesburg. She suggested that taxi inscriptions are 'a subgenre of street remarks' (p. 342), often about various social issues, and are often gendered. Focusing on the use of metaphors and lexical choices in the inscriptions, the analysis indicated a foregrounding of women's clothing, and a dichotomised representation of 'male clothing' and 'female clothing'. For example, trousers were portrayed as 'male clothing'. The miniskirt played a particularly prominent role in the representations of the female body. First, women wearing miniskirts were represented as transgressing African tradition and cultural norms of female dress codes, e.g. 'Wamen sebegqoka isgcebhe, aphelile amasiko ethu (Women now wear miniskirts, our cultures are finished/dead)' (ibid, p. 351). Second,

wearing miniskirts was not only constructed as too revealing, but also metaphorically equated with nakedness, e.g. 'Abaze abaqgoke isgcebhe abavunyelwe (Those who are naked those wearing miniskirts are not allowed)' (ibid, p. 352). Last, some taxi inscriptions even linked it to rape and conveyed the idea that if women wearing miniskirts are sexually assaulted, they themselves are to blame, e.g. 'Gqok' isgcebhe uzongiph' ikuku (Wear the miniskirt you will give me the cake/vagina)' (ibid, p. 354). Makoni criticised: '[f]or women, the threat of rape leads to self-regulation, which indicates an ideological construction of the female body as an object in a male-defined value system that expects women as a social group to conduct their lives in specific ways' (p. 354). The findings showed the discursive reproduction of a patriarchal ideology. Through the reinforcement of various cultural norms and values and problematisation of women wearing miniskirts as the cause of rape, the female body was constructed as a site of patriarchal control.

Another example of CDS research taking a feminist standpoint is Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich's (2014) study, which employed van Dijk's SCA to ideology (1995a, b, 1998b, 2006) to investigate the formation of gender ideologies and social identities in comments (in Spanish) on four advertisements of violence against women (VAW) on YouTube. Despite not referring to Lazar's FCDA, the authors expressed their feminist attitude and explicitly stated that they adopted a 'feminist critical discourse analysis approach' (ibid, p. 242). The data was analysed quantitatively as well as qualitatively. According to the quantitative analysis, only eight percent of the comments showed an explicit supportive stance towards VAW, whilst 48 percent were explicitly against it and 44 percent did not indicate an explicit position. The detailed analysis of the discursive strategies employed to express such ideological positioning however revealed another story. Altogether three discursive strategies were identified,

namely (1) 'blame the woman for the abuse' (50.0 percent), e.g. blaming women for attracting public attention; (2) 'minimise the severity and/or frequency of abuse' (41.0 percent), e.g. by representing women as tricking men into violence so as to achieve different ends such as winning the residency of their child in a divorce; and (3) 'deny its very existence' (9.2 percent), e.g. by claiming that the woman was not necessarily the victim in a VAW case, but was often assumed to be so right away (implying the influence of feminism) (ibid, p. 233). Such findings revealed how VAW was legitimised based on patriarchal norms and values. Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich criticised that the YouTube commentators constructed their social identities by positively representing the ingroup (men, and in some cases, women embracing traditional values), e.g. being innocent and unprotected by laws, and negatively representing the outgroup (women), e.g. being manipulative. They also argued that most commentators did not express their ideological stance explicitly, and hence drew attention to the increasing subtleness of sexism.

The above discussion shows that it is both necessary and theoretically and empirically sound to combine insights from feminist studies and CDS to investigate how unequal gender orders are discursively reproduced.

2.5. Genre and genres

After presenting the various theories that inform my theoretical framework, this section focuses on how genres are theorised in the literature and aims to lay the groundwork for Chapter 3, in which I describe the genre of my data, i.e. reality television. The reason for my foci on the theorisation of genres here and on the generic features of reality television in Chapter 3 is that genre is an important means for the exercise of power

(Fairclough, 2003, p. 75; Wodak, 2007), which will be elaborated below. It is therefore a salient part of CDS research to look at the genre of the data.

First, I address the issue of what genres are. An oft-cited definition is that of Swales (1990), which emphasises the social purposes of genres:

> A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. (p. 58)

Swales (1990) has a rather purpose-driven notion of genres, seeing the functions expected of a genre as determining its features. Fairclough (2003) has pointed to two problems in the definition. First, he rightly comments that the purpose factor should not be over-privileged on grounds that while 'strategic' genres are clearly purposive, 'communicative' ones, e.g. chats between friends, are not (p. 71). That said, since reality television is a strategic genre, Swales (1990) still provides an insightful account of genres for my research. Another problem identified by Fairclough (2003) is that communicative events do not form part of a genre; instead, features of different genres may be realised in a single communicative event, i.e. genre mixing (p. 69). I will return to this point later. Besides, the notion of genre is also conceptualised by Fairclough (2003), who subsumes genres within his conceptualisation of discourse. He sees discourse as a social practice which is a configuration of three aspects, namely *genres*, i.e. ways of acting, *discourses*, i.e. ways of representing, and *styles*, i.e. ways of being (ibid, p. 26). More specifically, genres are 'the specifically discoursal aspect of ways of acting and interacting in the course of social events' (ibid, p. 65).

I will now turn to some key characteristics of mostly strategic genres (see Tardy and Swales, 2014, p. 166-167; Tardy, 2011, p. 55-61),[10] with some already being covered by the definitions listed above:

(a) A genre is often formed for particular communicative purposes, and its features are often determined by those purposes.

(b) Created by social groups for specific social purposes, genres are socially situated. Such situatedness entails the dynamics and changeability of genres. Genres change in relation to shifts in social contexts, e.g. technological advancement and change in social values.

(c) As mentioned earlier, discourse is dialectically related to other social elements; in the same way, genres shape and are shaped by discourse communities and their practices (see also Berkenkotter and Huckin's (1993, 1995) discussion of the duality of structure in genres). On the one hand, a community creates and shapes a genre according to its particular motive. The genre conventions formulated often manifest the community's knowledge, ideologies, norms and values. On the other, genre conventions affect individual members' practices and beliefs. For example, the generic features of a curriculum vitae not only influence how job seekers present themselves to their potential employers, but also their beliefs about job seeking and hiring.

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[10] I disagree with a point that Tardy and Swales (2014) and Tardy (2011) make, and have deliberately excluded it from my discussion. Tardy and Swales (2014) suggest that '[g]enres are not isolated, but are instead intertextually linked to other genres and discourses' (p. 167). I see *genre* and *text* as two discrete concepts (see my discussion below), and intertextuality as a defining feature of texts, rather than genres.

(d) When a discoursal action is recurrently performed in similar ways and under similar circumstances, it will become conventionalised over time. Users will recognise the genre, e.g. in terms of its grammatical and structural features and topics, and know how to carry out the rhetorical action appropriately.

(e) Genres are multimodal. Even text-based genres, e.g. research article abstracts, involve the interplay between language and the visual mode, such as layout and font.

(f) As mentioned in (c), genres show the discourse community's knowledge, ideologies, norms and values, so genre conventions are by no means neutral, and different kinds of power relations are embedded therein. As Tardy (2011) points out, genres 'must be viewed as not just a reflection but also a reinforcement of the power structures that exist in the community within which they are used' (p. 60). This can be seen by the unequal conversational rights among different participants in dialogues in many institutional settings. For example, the genre conventions of job interviews preclude the interviewee from controlling topics or refusing to answer the interviewer's questions (see Fairclough, 2003, p. 79). The relationships between genres and power relations have also been pointed to by different CDS scholars, e.g. Fairclough (2003); Wodak and Busch (2004); Wodak (2007).

After describing some key features of genres, I find it necessary to discuss genre in relation to the notion of *text*, as the two are intricately linked. Text refers to 'the concrete material object produced in discourse' (Hodge and Kress, 1988, p. 6). Text cannot be equated with genre because while users of a genre are restricted by different genre conventions when producing a text, the text produced always deviates slightly from the prototypical form of the genre. As Bax (2010) puts it, genres 'are ideal,

whereas texts are actual' (p. 45).[11] The relationship between genre and text is made even more complex by the fact that many texts cannot be mapped onto a single genre, which brings us to the concept of genre hybridity. A text is often a mixture of different genres (Fairclough, 2003, p. 34).

Considering its relevance to my data, I will elaborate the concept of genre hybridity further. As Fairclough (2003) observes, '[c]hange in genres is change in how different genres are combined together. New genres develop through combination of existing genres' (p. 66). This can be well exemplified by reality television, which commonly hybridises documentary and drama (possibly some other combinations, depending on the subgenre) (see e.g. Hill, 2015; Deery, 2015; Cook, 2014). A concept linked to genre hybridity is that of *genre colonies*, i.e. 'groupings of closely related genres serving broadly similar communicative purposes, but not necessarily all the communicative purposes in cases where they serve more than one' (Bhatia, 2014, p. 67), e.g. promotional genres and reporting genres. I will illustrate this with the promotional genre, which as the name suggests, serves promotional purposes. Genres strongly associated with this genre colony include e.g. advertisements and promotional letters, which make up its primary membership. Apart from such primary members, the promotional genre has secondary members, which are often hybrid genres with promotion as one of their communicative purposes, e.g. advertorials, which aim to inform as well as to promote products/services. Bhatia (2014) also draws attention to the phenomenon of genre colonisation as a process involving 'invasion of the integrity of one genre by another genre or genre convention' (p. 66): some expert genre users might appropriate generic resources or exploit conventions of one genre for the sake of

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[11] de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) have also proposed seven criteria for a text: cohesion, coherence, intertextuality, intentionality, acceptability, informativity and situationality. The limited space precludes me from explicating them. See Wodak (2008) for a succinct description of the criteria.

creating another one in order to fulfil their private or institutional ends. He especially

points to the widespread colonisation of professional genres, e.g. academic and

journalistic genres, by promotional concerns. An illustration given is how generic

resources of reviews are deployed in some ostensible product reviews, which are

dominated by positive descriptions and evaluations and which obviously function to

advertise the product concerned.

2.6. Conclusion

In this final section, I will end the chapter by explaining how the above theories

form the theoretical basis of my research. My research has been driven by the

stigmatisation of single women in Hong Kong who are considered no longer young. I

investigate this issue from a critical feminist perspective, with the aim to unveil various

ideological gender beliefs through which women are stigmatised in terms of their

singleness and age, and the media's role in reproducing unequal gender orders. This

accords with the emancipatory goals of feminist studies and CDS. Apart from having

the same emancipatory goals, the two also influence my research in other ways. In terms

of feminist studies, I have to draw special attention to the fact that my data is a makeover

television show, which is a postfeminist product (see Subsection 3.2.1). Therefore, the

theorisation of postfeminism and postfeminist media culture crucially informs my

research. As regards CDS, my research is very much based on its theorisation of

discourse, especially the socially constitutive capacity of discourse and its potential to

reproduce or challenge power imbalances. I think that van Dijk's SCA to ideology

(1998a) best suits my research purpose. The rationale is that my data, the makeover

television programme *Bride Wannabes*, is all about how the 'experts' represent what is

good and what is bad in the participants, and what they should and should not do based

on social norms and values. The programme is thus very much to do with social beliefs and attitudes, i.e. social cognitions, and gender ideologies play a central role. Van Dijk's SCA to ideology (1998a) takes into account the cognitive, social and discoursal dimensions of ideology and offers an in-depth and comprehensive theorisation of the concept.

Chapter 3: Literature review

This chapter surveys the literature on two broad areas relating to my research. First, I thematically review research concerning postfeminist media representations of women. I then look at literature pertaining to the genre of my data, i.e. reality television.

3.1. Postfeminist media representations of women

This section is a topical literature review on postfeminist media representations of women, centring upon two themes, namely singleness and romance, as well as ageing:

3.1.1. Women, singleness and romance

In this subsection, I review research findings of postfeminist media representations of women vis-à-vis their singleness and romance in different genres, including 'chick lit' genres, self-help books, advertising and women's magazines.

I first approach the topic by looking at various research on chick lit, which is a key site for the study of women's singleness and romance. As Whelehan (2005) points out, chick lit is a kind of 'post-feminist narrative of heterosex and romance' (p. 186) and its heroines are often single middle-class women in their 20s-30s (Smith, 2008, p. 2; Ferriss and Young, 2007). Gill's (2007a) and Gill and Herdieckerhoff's (2006) studies offer a concise overview of postfeminist representations of women's singleness and romance in chick lit novels. They examined 20 chick lit novels published in 1997-2004 and identified various characteristics of the single heroine in relation to her sexual experience, intelligence and independence, beauty, work and singleness.

(a) Sexual experience

Unlike their counterparts in traditional romantic novels, most heroines in chick lit novels are portrayed as sexually active and experienced; however, they become sexually innocent and are emotionally 're-virginised' in their first sexual encounter with their hero, i.e. only when they meet their hero can they enjoy sex and truly become a woman. As Gill and Herdieckerhoff (2006) observed, 'feminist goals in relation to sexuality are presented as inauthentic, in the sense of not speaking to women's deepest desires' (p. 494).

(b) Intelligence and independence

Women's intelligence is often played down in chick lit novels. The heroine is often featured by her naivety. As Gill and Herdieckerhoff (2006) pointed out, the heroine's intelligence can never enable her to win the hero's heart; rather it is always her conformity to traditional femininity that counts. The heroine is also far from independent, constantly needing the hero's rescues. A common scenario is the hero rescuing the heroine from single motherhood.

(c) Beauty

While the heroine in traditional romantic novels is often depicted as a natural beauty, in chick lit novels, beauty requires constant self-surveillance and work. Two approaches to beauty have been identified. First, the heroine only becomes beautiful after undergoing various self-transformations, e.g. through weight loss. Second, the heroine chooses to beautify herself only when she feels like it, i.e. to please herself; however, once she meets the hero, she will become obsessed with her appearance.

(d) Work

In chick lit novels, most heroines have their career and are no longer confined to the domestic sphere, but their independence and career success do not exist concomitantly. The heroine is often portrayed as trapped in her dead-end job with no breakthrough until she finds her hero and is in a fulfilling relationship. While accomplished professional women can be found in chick lit novels, they are often characterised as villains, who are in the end converted by the hero's love.

(e) Singleness

Women's singleness is negatively constructed as horrible and miserable in chick lit novels. Most heroines are portrayed as unhappily single.

Gill and Herdieckerhoff (2006) argued that the construction of romance in chick lit novels relates to a postfeminist sensibility, as shown e.g. by the heroine's sexual assertiveness and her choice to be obsessed with her body and to adhere to normative femininity. They concluded: 'chick lit is indeed rewriting the romance, but not in ways that allow for complex analyses of power, subjectivity, and desire, but rather in ways that suggest women's salvation is to be found in the pleasures of a worked-on, worked-out body, and the arms of a good man' (p. 500).

Many studies have been conducted on probably the two most well-known chick lit texts, namely *Bridget Jones's Diary* (also its sequels and film adaptations) (e.g. Taylor, 2012, McRobbie, 2007; Umminger, 2006) and *Sex and the City* (both the television series and its spin-off films) (e.g. Mabry, 2006; Kiernan, 2006; Whelehan, 2005; Arthurs, 2003). *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) is a chick lit novel by the English writer Helen Fielding, which proved a great success and which was followed by two

sequels and three film adaptations. The protagonist, Bridget, first appears in the novel as a 32-year-old single woman. Many scholars saw her as a postfeminist subject *par excellence* (e.g. Kiernan, 2006) or as what Genz (2010) refers to as a 'postfeminist Singleton': 'the young, unattached, and mostly city-dwelling woman who is caught between the enjoyment of her independent urban life and her desperate yearning to find "Mr. Right" with whom to settle down' (p. 99). Bridget enjoys and takes for granted various rights and freedoms. For example, she is financially independent and can indulge herself in pubs and bars (see Gill, 2007a, p. 228; McRobbie, 2007, p. 35). However, on the other hand, she is obsessed with her bodies and thirsts for a partner and the traditional kind of wedding. She embraces the postfeminist idea of 'having it all', i.e. having both career and romance, which according to Taylor (2012), means 'definitely not remaining single' (p. 90). Throughout the novels and films, she is struggling with the conflicting demands between her career and romance and between feminism and femininity (see Genz, 2009, p. 116). Her feminist attitude can be realised, e.g. by her rejection of the derogatory term 'spinster' and her self-identification as a 'Singleton', which is 'a new, rebel identity with its own language and attitude' (Genz, 2010, p. 100). She refuses to see herself as the abject Other and repeatedly claims that she does not need a man to make herself complete. For instance, in one of her diary entries, she stresses her autonomy and independence: 'The only thing a woman in this day and age needs is herself' (see Taylor, 2012, p. 87-88). This is despite the fact that right after her assertion, she shows her obsession with her romantic interest: 'Huurrah! 2a.m. Why hasn't Mark Darcy rung me? Why Why? Am going to be eaten by Alsatian despite all efforts to the contrary. Why me, Lord' (ibid, p. 88). In this way, she constantly oscillates between her satisfied Singleton position and her desperation for a man (ibid, p. 82). As Taylor (2012) commented:

She never truly contemplates singleness as a permanent way of being in the world – partially as she recognises its broader cultural devaluation and the forms of capital that accrue to the coupled (especially married) self. Though she has tried on, and tried to celebrate, the Singleton identity, ultimately it is disavowed. The Singleton was, as we perhaps could have expected, only a transitional, strategic subject position, temporarily invoked to make sense of and help affectively manage life sans partner. (p. 93)

As shown above, in line with postfeminist media culture, the Bridget Jones texts draw on and take into consideration various feminist ideas, e.g. the autonomy of women, but in the end reject them through the rhetoric of choice (Gill, 2007a, p. 231).

Women's singleness and romance also form the foundation of the American television series *Sex and the City* (1998-2004) (and its two spin-off films), which surrounds the lives of four single middle-class women in their 30s-40s in New York. The series celebrates women's singleness and interrogates the social stigma attached to single women. For example, Miranda, one of the protagonists, explicitly points to the double standard on singleness: 'Why do we get stuck with old maid and spinster, and men get to be bachelors and playboys?' (Taylor, 2012, p. 67; *cf.* Baker's (2008) study on the terms 'spinster' and 'bachelor'). Besides, unlike their counterparts in many chick lit texts, the four protagonists are portrayed as happily single. In contrast to the postfeminist tradition that privileges heterosexual coupledom and familial bonds, *Sex and the City* celebrates the non-biological sisterhood between the protagonists and suggests that women can live well without a man (Taylor, 2012, p. 63-64). Despite the seemingly progressive representation of women's singleness, it is problematic in that it only celebrates White, middle-class, heterosexual women's singleness (ibid, p. 1). In

consonance with postfeminism, the show emphasises consumption, and the four protagonists are shown as enjoying their luxurious lifestyle. Lehman (2007) maintained that the show constructs the act of luxury consumption as a symbol of single women's independence (p. 232, cited in Taylor, 2012, p. 64). Another important point is the faux celebration of women's singleness of the series. The finale of the series ends with all the four protagonists finding their true love and being in committed relationships (Mabry, 2006; Kiernan, 2006; Taylor, 2012, p. 69-70). As Mabry (2006) commented:

> For six seasons this show has supposedly been about the lives and the relationships of these four strong, independent women, but the finale tells us that the *real* point of the show has been to place these sexually powerful, economically independent women in traditional heterosexual relationships. (p. 204; original emphasis)

Not only is this conventional romantic ending inconsistent with the show's earlier feminist messages, it may also serve to overturn them (ibid).

Apart from chick lit studies, Taylor's (2012) examination of self-help books for single women published in the 1990s-2000s has also cast light on postfeminist representations of women's singleness and romance. She identified a diverse range of representations of single women, from those representing single women as lacking and deficient to those glamorising women's singleness. For example, some self-help books universalise women's desire for a heterosexual partnership and presume that those remaining single simply do not perform femininity appropriately. In this way, single women are represented as lacking and in need of modifications. These books often hold a binary view on femininity and masculinity and advise their readers to embrace 'feminine' traits/behaviours, e.g. be quiet and passive (ibid, p. 146-158). All these traditional ideas are repackaged with a postfeminist neoliberal ethos of choice and

agency. As Taylor (2012) put it, 'deliberately choosing a position of subordination bizarrely becomes empowerment, a logic which relies upon the mobilisation of feminist notions of agency and neoliberal rhetorics of the control of the self for politically questionable ends' (p. 157). Another set of self-help books represent singleness as a desirable choice for women (ibid, p. 171-177). Assuming single women's disposable income and freedom, the books foreground the reader's consumption power and carefree life, and advise her how to live, travel and socialise alone and indulge herself. The books also stress the importance of satisfying one's sexual desires and describe it as 'seeking "fun" and "entertainment" from men' (ibid, p. 174). While such books progressively construct singleness as a desirable option for women, for one thing, they problematically only celebrate middle-class women's singleness again; for another, they represent single women as empowered only in the postfeminist sense, i.e. through consumption and sexual agency (ibid, p. 176-177). Taylor (2012) pointed out that despite the wide range of self-help books available, it is the more traditional type, i.e. those problematising women's singleness, which dominate the market (p. 178).

Other than in some relatively 'progressive' self-help books, women's singleness is also celebrated in some advertising targeting single women. This can be illustrated by how single women are individualised and constructed in terms of their freedom, power and confidence in the Taiwanese car and motorbike advertisements in Shaw and Lin's (2012) study. For example, in a motor scooter advertisement, a beautiful, elegantly dressed woman fashion model appears and is immediately surrounded by admiring photographers. Not only is she portrayed as 'the epitome of beauty, confidence and dominance' (ibid, p. 134), her power is made even more obvious in the final scene when she is leading a convoy of male and female riders. In another advertisement, the female protagonist's singleness is foregrounded. While doing her shopping, she asks

various shopkeepers, 'Can I just buy one?', which is met with an unkind response each time. She then returns to her car and drives freely to a riverbank to enjoy the sunset alone. As Shaw and Lin (2012) put it, the car can be seen as 'an instrument through which single women can escape temporarily from the established heterosexual hegemony of marriage', the mobile experience as 'a marker of single female individuality', and technology as 'a medium of power that users can display externally' (p. 135). Thus, the advertisement creates an image of contemporary single women's power and freedom. This kind of de-politicised power femininity constructed in the advertisements matches what Lazar (2014) criticised in relation to the case of jewellery advertisements in Singapore in her study: 'the de-politicisation in consumer feminism transforms a collective social movement for social change merely into a marketing strategy and an individual lifestyle choice based upon endless consumption' (p. 222).

Turning to women's magazines, many studies have been done on global magazines targeting young women, e.g. *Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan*, especially in relation to sex and sexuality (e.g. Kauppinen, 2013; Machin and Thornborrow, 2003, 2006). For instance, Moran and Lee (2011) explored articles about sex in the Australian version of *Cosmopolitan* and *Cleo*, two global women's magazines, in 2009. Despite its focus on sex and sexuality, the study illuminates the issue of women's singleness and romance in postfeminist media culture. It found that women are either represented as being in a heterosexual relationship or trying to secure one, as realised by references, e.g. 'your partner, your boyfriend or your man' or headlines, e.g. 'How guys decide if you're the one' (ibid, p. 165). Despite the emphasis on women's independence and sexual agency, they are represented as ignorant about men and are given advice on how to take care of men's feelings and satisfy men's sexual needs in order to please men. This accords with Machin and Thornborrow's (2003, 2006) research finding that in

women's magazines, although women are constructed as the 'fun, fearless female', their main goal of sex is still to please men, and their self-image still relies on men's reaction. The representations of women in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cleo* are highly problematic in that they reinforce the idea that all women desire a heterosexual relationship and as Moran and Lee (2011) criticised, '[w]omen [are] depicted as using sex to make men happy, to maintain or achieve heterosexual relationships, with no representations of positive female sexuality or desire' (p. 177).

Another study I would like to discuss is Gill's (2009) discourse analytical research on sex and relationship advice in *Glamour* (UK version) during the period 2005-2008, which albeit not relating to women's singleness, gives insights into women's roles in romantic relationships in postfeminist media culture. She identified three postfeminist interpretative repertoires in the data. The first repertoire is *intimate entrepreneurship*, which is 'based on language of goals, plans and strategies, applied to intimate emotional life' (ibid, p. 351). More specifically, relationships are viewed as 'a professional, rational, quasi-scientific affair' (ibid, p. 353). According to this repertoire, women should make checklists of their partner selection criteria and treat relationships as something quantifiable; they should work hard and spare no time in expressing any negative emotion in the process of finding a partner. The second repertoire is *men-ology*, i.e. women being represented as responsible for 'constructing a lovable persona, learning to read men, and paying attention to their sexual and emotional needs' (ibid, p. 356) (*cf.* the same finding by Moran and Lee (2011) in relation to articles about sex in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cleo* in the Australian context, as discussed above). Women are repeatedly told not to expect men to do the same work for them because this is 'the way men are' (ibid, p. 356), i.e. we find the rhetoric of gender difference. The last repertoire is *transforming the self*, mainly the interior self. Women should learn to love their body

and stop complaining about it, which men dislike, and turn themselves into 'confident, secure, optimistic and happy subjects' (ibid, p. 359). Besides, women should also transform their attitude to sex and be 'a sexual adventurer' (ibid, p. 306). The representations of romantic relationships in *Glamour* are highly problematic. As Gill (2009) concluded, 'women are enjoined to self-monitor and monitor others, to work on and transform the intimate self, to regulate every aspect of their conduct, and to present every action – however constrained or normatively demanded – as the outcome of individual choice and a deliberative personal biography' (p. 366).

The above discussion shows that postfeminist media culture constructs heterosexual coupledom as innately desired by all women and as pointed out by Taylor (2012), despite its emphasis on choice, remaining single is not an option for women (p. 26). While women's singleness is sometimes celebrated, it is only in the sense of consumption power and sexual agency. As regards postfeminist representations of romantic relationships, women are represented as responsible for learning about men's needs and for transforming themselves into a lovable persona, all for the sake of pleasing men; while women are constructed as 'fun, fearless sexual subjects', the whole point of sex is to please men and secure/maintain a relationship.

After discussing how postfeminist media culture represents women's singleness and romance, the next subsection will turn to the topic of women and ageing.

3.1.2. Women and ageing

Many studies have been done regarding women's ageing in postfeminist media culture. Various cultural studies researchers (e.g. Gullette, 1995, 1997, 2004; Hepworth, 1999, 2003) point out that ageing is often culturally constructed as a bodily decline; in line with this broader context, postfeminist media culture pathologises women's ageing

body, insofar as it 'thrives on anxiety about ageing' (Negra, 2009, p. 12). In the postfeminist era, 'women of a certain age' are under increasing pressure to monitor their bodies and maintain their youthful appearance (ibid, p. 12; Caldas-Coulthard, 2010). This phenomenon is particularly evident in bodycare advertising. For example, Coupland (2003)[12] looked at a corpus of skincare product advertisements and features published in UK women's magazines between 1999 and 2001 and investigated how ageing is discursively constructed. She found that ageing signs, e.g. wrinkles, are represented as undesirable and pathological. For instance, a war metaphor is used to describe the erasure of ageing signs, e.g. 'intervention in the fight against skin ageing' (ibid, p. 134); and ageing signs are equated to 'physical aberrations or errors', e.g. 'to correct the signs of ageing' (ibid, p. 134). After pathologising various ageing signs, the advertising texts often urge their women readers to take responsibility to control their ageing signs by using the product advertised. A frequently used rhetorical strategy identified is to foreground the scientific and clinical respects of the product, e.g. 'Nivea Visage has introduced a powerful active ingredient called Co-enzyme Q10, which has previously been used only in medicine and as a nutritional supplement' (ibid, p. 132).

The problematisation of women's ageing appearance is not confined to advertising, but also shows in other media genres, e.g. films. It was found that older/midlife women are often represented in relation to the process of ageing, e.g. gaining weight, in Hollywood films (Whelehan, 2013). An example is *Sex and the City 2*, which pathologises the 52-year-old protagonist Samantha, who was originally a sexual subject, in relation to her menopause. She is portrayed as having various

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[12] Coupland (2007) conducted a similar study, but she looked at skincare product advertising texts in both women's and men's magazines. In line with her study in 2003, she found that advertising texts aimed at women often construct the undesirability of ageing and hold women responsible for maintaining a youthful appearance by using the marketed product. As the focus of her study was to compare the different marketing strategies employed to encourage women and men to invest in their body, I do not include her findings in my review.

symptoms of menopause, e.g. 'hot flushes, mood swings, loss of sex drive' (ibid, p. 86) and as relying on hormone-replacement drugs to regain her libido. As Whelehan (2013) commented, 'Samantha's menopause is played for laughs throughout the film and undermines her role as a sexual radical in the TV series once and for all' (p. 86). Women's ageing appearance is even negatively represented as a symbol of defeat in *Mirror Mirror*, a film adaptation of the fairy tale *Snow White*, which has been explored by different scholars vis-à-vis the issue of women's ageing (e.g. Whelehan, 2013; Wohlmann, 2015). The film subverts the storyline of the fairy tale and starts by saying 'it is the stepmother's story' (Whelehan, 2013, p. 88). The queen is constructed as a postfeminist subject being obsessed with her appearance and expresses her sorrow over the loss of her youthful beauty. The film depicts how she competes for the prince with young and pretty Snow White. In line with the postfeminist logic, it problematises the queen's ageing appearance, and realises the makeover paradigm. In order to lure the prince, the queen tries to transform her bodies, e.g. using bird dung as facial mask and exfoliating her skin with maggots. This scene, according to Wohlmann (2015), serves as a satire on the beauty industry; however, Dam (2014) thought that it points to how women willingly endure the pain involved in various beauty treatments in order to maintain their youthful appearance. The queen also uses magic to make the prince fall in love with her and attempts to kill Snow White. However, Snow White successfully breaks the spell. The queen is immediately turned into a visibly very old woman, which according to the magic mirror, is a punishment for her use of dark magic. In the end, the disguised queen offers to Snow White a poisoned apple. Instead of eating it, Snow White cuts it in half, offers half to the queen and condescendingly says 'age before beauty'. The queen's ageing face, most noticeably her deep wrinkles, is foregrounded in this scene (see Whelehan, 2013; Short, 2015, p. 146), which functions as a visual

effect of the queen's defeat (Wohlmann, 2015). Wohlmann (2015) also compared the representation of age and ageing in *Mirror Mirror* and *Snow White and the Huntsman*, another adaptation of the fairy tale, and found that both films equate ageing with a loss of youth and power. She noted: 'Both queens are [thus] defeated in the end by a triumphant Snow White, whose youthfulness is set against the rapid aging and death of the two queens. Apparently, there is no beauty in aging nor a possibility for intergenerational solidarity' (p. 227).

Despite the negative representations of women's ageing discussed above, a group of 'successful agers' (Dolan and Tincknell, 2012, p. viii) are celebrated in postfeminist media culture, i.e. those being 'able to control and halt the ageing process through shrewd consumer choices' (Hibberd, 2014, p. 124). A realisation of this is how many mature actresses 'cheat age, inhabiting as they do the aspirational culture of "middle youth", which defers middle age later into life, bolstered by the miraculous healing properties promised by exercise, weight control and judicious dietary regimes' (Whelehan, 2013, p. 92). This phenomenon corresponds to the notion of 'rejuvenation' (Wearing, 2007) or the 'girling' of women (see e.g. Whelehan, 2013; Tasker and Negra, 2005), i.e. 'the competent professional adult woman who is made safe by being represented as fundamentally still a girl' (Tasker and Negra, 2005, p. 109). An example of a successful ager in the celebrity culture is the British actress Elisabeth Sladen, who played a leading role in the British television series *Doctor Who* in 1973-1976. Her acting career diminished following her departure from the series, but revived in the 2000s when she reprised the role in various spin-offs of *Doctor Who* in her 60s. Hamad (2015) investigated media representations of Sladen following her re-appearance on the screen after three decades and found that she is represented as a postfeminist subject of rejuvenation who disciplines and works on her bodies and who successfully manages

her ageing. Newspaper reports of her often focus on her youthful appearance, which bears a strong resemblance to herself three decades ago. For example, in his article in *The Daily Record*, Keal (2009) described her as having 'rolled back the years' and commented that '[a]s *Dr Who*'s longest serving sidekick, Sarah Jane Smith,[13] Elisabeth Sladen still looks slim, sexy and sensationally youthful' (p. 26; cited in Hamad, 2015, p. 170-171). This kind of postfeminist representation of older/middle-aged women is problematic because whilst it seems to deconstruct the link between 'youth' and chronological age, as Wearing (2007) puts it, 'if chronological boundaries are indeed blurring, this only happens in one direction' (p. 294). Another problem is that the kind of 'successful ageing' promoted in postfeminist media culture is highly classed, marginalising women who could not afford such lifestyle (ibid).

As shown above, postfeminist media representations of middle-aged/older women often foreground their bodies. On the one hand, ageing signs are pathologised; on the other, those who successfully retain their youthful appearance are celebrated. As Caldas-Coulthard (2010) comments, postfeminist media culture only pays attention to women's bodies, but not their intelligence or inner qualities.

In Subsection 3.1.1. and this present subsection, I discussed the themes of women, singleness and romance, as well as women and ageing separately. In the next subsection, I will address the intersection between singleness and age in postfeminist representations of women.

3.1.3. Temporal propriety

The denigration of single women who are considered no longer young in postfeminist media culture relates to the notion of temporal propriety. According to Tasker and

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[13] The name of the role Sladen plays in *Doctor Who*.

Negra (2007), 'postfeminism evidences a distinct preoccupation with the temporal – women's lives are regularly conceived of as timestarved, women themselves are overworked, rushed, harassed, subject to their "biological clocks," etc. to such a degree that female adulthood is defined as a state of chronic temporal crisis' (p. 10). Women's lives are therefore policed by the notion of temporal propriety. They are expected to achieve particular normative life stages, most importantly marriage and motherhood, within specific temporal limits. The lives of single women who are considered no longer young clearly do not map on to the life stage paradigm and their singleness is regarded as a temporal failure (Negra, 2009, p. 61).

Single women who are considered no longer young are often negatively represented according to the notion of temporal propriety in postfeminist media culture. A real-life example is the well-known actress Jennifer Aniston, as shown by Berridge's (2015) research on representations of her in UK and US magazines right after her divorce from Brad Pitt in 2005 in her 30s. Before her divorce, Aniston was represented as the epitome of a woman having it all – career success, youthful appearance, a dream husband and the prospect of having children; however, right after that, she immediately became 'the doomed and ageing singleton' (ibid, p. 113). While Aniston is often praised for her youthful beauty, she is 'frequently positioned in the popular press as a high-profile exemplar of the dangers of not achieving particular gendered life goals by a certain age' (ibid, p. 117) and her self-surveillance and work on her body are represented as a necessary means to 'keep her man' (ibid, p. 116). Worse, some articles attribute her divorce to her career ambition and hold her accountable for it. Aniston is not only problematised relating to her 'unsuccessful' marriage, but also her childlessness. Her possible infertility is often pointed to. Berridge suggested that only women celebrities are subject to this kind of policing based on temporal propriety and

illustrated her point with the case of George Clooney, an American actor in his 50s. Before his marriage in 2014, articles on him only foregrounded his freedom, but not his singleness or childlessness.

Single women are also pathologised based on temporal propriety in different television series. For example, Lahad and Shoshana (2015) investigated the 2005 Israeli television series *In Treatment*, which surrounds Reuven's, a psychologist's, weekly sessions with his patients. They focused particularly on the case of Talia, a 40-year-old single woman attorney. In Israel, the centrality of motherhood in women's lives is emphasised to the extent that childless women see their childlessness as 'a hidden disability that undermines their other achievements' (ibid, p. 341). Such cultural pathologisation of childless women can be seen in *In Treatment*, when Talia seeks therapy because of her singleness and childlessness. In the programme, '[r]escuing the single woman from the single self and moving on towards the fulfillment of her true self as a wife and mother is portrayed as the required emotional makeover and the only redemption available to the protagonist' (ibid, p. 341). Despite her awareness of the social stigmatisation of women's singleness and childlessness, Talia repeatedly expresses her preference for being single and once even her lack of maternal instincts. She attempts to negotiate with Reuven whether remaining single is a better lifestyle option for her, but Reuven repeatedly ignores it and recommends some more normative options instead. This series clearly delegitimises being single as a choice for women. At the end of the episode, Talia raises the possibility of remaining single again, and Reuven proposes, 'Make a baby, Talia…Even if it doesn't happen to you naturally, do it. You can do it. You'll be a wonderful mother' (ibid, p. 344). Lahad and Shoshana suggested that the series constructs a hierarchy of feminine identities. At the top of the

hierarchy is for the married mother. If this cannot be accomplished, being a single mother is a better choice compared with being single and childless.

The problematisation of single women based on temporal propriety can also be identified in the American television series *Ally McBeal*. While the series features the eponymous protagonist as a lawyer, what is foregrounded is not her professional life, but her temporal anxiety, i.e. her desires to marry and become a mother. This is represented as a pressing issue for her. She undergoes recurring hallucinations of a dancing baby animation, which metaphorically points to her ticking biological clock; she even seeks therapy because of this (Taylor, 2012, p. 59). She expresses her regret for prioritising her professional development over her personal life and rejecting her true love, as shown by her self-reflection, 'so here I am, the victim of my own choices' (Genz, 2010, p. 109-110). As Genz (2010) commented, Ally is a postfeminist singleton struggling to 'have it all'. The series also highlights the tension between Ally's career and independence, which is made possible by feminism, and her longing for romance (see Taylor, 2012, p. 61). She reflects, 'I'm a lawyer, I'm independent, I've got the world at my fingertips and I am a woman – and if he doesn't love me, I don't know what I'm going to do' (ibid, p. 61). Nevertheless, at the end of the series, Ally no longer perseveres her 'have-it-all' position upon discovering that she has a daughter conceived from an egg she donated for a research clinic a decade ago. She chooses to give up her job and relocate from Boston to New York for her daughter and no longer finds her singleness a problem. As Taylor (2012) comments: 'Ally's singleness is recuperable only via her adoption of a socially laudable subject position: Mother' (p. 62).

As indicated above, postfeminism sees marriage and motherhood as defining markers of full femininity, and based on the notion of temporal propriety, women are expected to achieve the conventional heterosexual life stages of marriage and

motherhood within specific temporal limits. This is different from traditional discourses on femininity in that postfeminist media culture sees marriage and motherhood as an empowered choice and a project to be perfected. Therefore, single women are considered 'a failure to perform heterosexuality adequately or appropriately' (ibid, p. 22), and 'unwed, childless women's lives are somewhat lacking and/or not yet underway' (Berridge, 2015, p. 119; see also Negra, 2009, p. 61).

The above literature review lays bare how patriarchal norms are reinforced in postfeminist media culture. While postfeminism emphasises choice, remaining single is not a choice for women. What are represented as the best choices for women include e.g. monitoring their bodies so as to maintain their youthful beauty and prioritising romance over their career so as to secure a heterosexual partner and have a child. Such practices are justified through the postfeminist ethos of choice and empowerment. It is obvious that women are still patriarchally defined by their appearance and judged against their ability to achieve the gendered life stages of marriage and motherhood within certain temporal limits. Following this review of postfeminist representations of women, the next section will proceed to the other focus of this chapter: reality television.

3.2. Reality television

This section focuses on the genre of reality television, with special reference to makeover television, and is formed of two parts. The first part deals with the generic features of reality television while the second part reviews empirical studies on representations of single women in reality television.

3.2.1. Generic features

This sub-section gives an overview of reality television as a genre, with special reference to the makeover television subgenre. I will start by looking at what reality television is. Reality television has been a popular television genre ever since it first came into being in the UK and US in the 1980s and became a global success in the 1990s (Hill, 2015; Palmer, 2011). Despite its popularity and ubiquity on television, no consensus has been reached in the literature on what exactly reality television is (see e.g. Holmes and Jermyn, 2004; Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Lorenzo-Dus, 2013). According to Holmes and Jermyn (2004) and Hill (2015), some early researchers foreground the supposedly reality-based nature of reality television, i.e. real life and ordinary people, and define it as 'infotainment' (see Hill, 2015, p. 11). While this definition might apply to earlier forms of reality television, e.g. fly-on-the-wall programmes, it does not hold following the proliferation and rapid development of the genre into a wide range of subgenres, e.g. docusoaps, game shows and makeover shows. Many scholars observe that contemporary reality television is far from real. For example, some challenge the ordinariness of reality television participants on grounds that they are often selected because they can perform particular functions for the programme (e.g. Bonner, 2003; Turner, 2010). Thornborrow (2015) further illustrates the importance of participant selection to a reality show with the UK programme *Wife Swap*: 'the success of the series owes much to the selection of participants whose differences and specific identities are made salient through their middle-space performance,[14] rather than to their ordinariness' (p. 188). Besides, Dover and Hill (2007) focus particularly on the makeover television subgenre and pinpoint 'its reliance on presenters and formats, and

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[14] 'Middle-space performance' means 'the talk that is produced on specific occasions where participants are primarily engaged in "the work of being watched", and that work is not about being ordinary, but about displaying particular kinds of relevant social identities' (Thornborrow, 2015, p. 44).

the spectacle of the reveal' (p. 37) as something rendering it unreal. Owing to the complexities of reality television genres, some researchers consider 'reality television' a catch-all term covering a wide variety of unscripted television formats (e.g. Holmes and Jermyn, 2004; Godlewski and Perse, 2010). Holmes and Jermyn (2004) even suggest that what the instantiations of reality television have in common is their 'discursive, visual and technological *claim* to "the real"' (p. 5; original emphasis; *cf.* a similar claim by Murray and Ouellette (2009)). This can be explained by 'reality' being a selling point of reality television, as Deery (2004a, b, 2014) suggests. Similarly, Biressi and Nunn (2005) ascribe the popularity of reality television to its unscripted format and its focus on ordinary people, which entertains its viewers in a way resembling their daily life.

As touched upon in Chapter 2, reality television is a hybrid genre (see e.g. Morris, 2007; Hill, 2015; Deery, 2015; Cook, 2014). Gailey (2007) draws an analogy between reality television and virus: '[l]ike a virus that has colonised nearly every space in the televisual landscape, reality television is a self-replicating system that works by appropriating pre-existing structures and "authenticating" them through the conventions of the documentary form' (p. 108). Other than its proliferation, this analogy shows that reality television often amalgamates the genre conventions of the documentary with other genres, e.g. the soap opera and the comedy, i.e. docusoaps and sitcoms, respectively. To narrow down my discussion, I will now focus specifically on makeover television.

It is hard to pinpoint precisely what generic resources or conventions makeover television draws on owing to its wide spectrum of formats, from the makeovers of home and fashion to the more recent form of plastic surgery makeovers (Lewis, 2011). However, its different forms may develop by mixing in different combinations the

following non-exhaustive list of features of different genres (with some being hybrid in their own right): the observational style of documentaries; the offer of 'experts'' guidance and lifestyle advice in lifestyle advice programming, e.g. magazine shows (see Lewis, 2013a, b); the self-help themes in self-help books; elements of melodrama, e.g. emotions, conflicts and moral polarisation (Sender, 2012); the 'formula of identification of the problem, offer of a solution, and empirical proof of the desired transformation' (Deery, 2014, p. 14) of infomercials; and the plot of the fairy tale, i.e. the participant (in place of the protagonist) being transformed under the guidance and help of various 'experts' (in place of the fairy godmother), and in the end being rewarded with marriage, money, survival or wisdom (Bratich, 2007). I would like to particularly highlight the close link between makeover television and lifestyle television. According to Lewis (2008), lifestyle television concerns 'experts' giving lifestyle advice, but not necessarily via makeovers. Some researchers see makeover television as a subtype of lifestyle television (e.g. Lewis 2007; Redden, 2007; Franco, 2008). For example, Bonner (2008) describes makeover television as 'quintessentially lifestyle television' (p. 28). There are variations in the literature, however, on how to refer to the subgenre in question. While it is commonly referred to as 'makeover television', some scholars use the term 'lifestyle makeover television/programming/format' (e.g. Lewis, 2013a, b; Biressi and Nunn, 2008), and some prefer the broad term 'lifestyle television' (e.g. Palmer, 2011).

Another important point I would like to make is that reality television serves entertaining as well as advertising purposes, and is not only a hybrid genre, but also a case of breaking down the territorial integrity of genres: reality television does not simply function to attract viewers for advertisers; it is itself a subtle form of advertising masked by various forms of entertainment, i.e. advertainment (Deery, 2004a) or commercialtainment (Anderson, 1995). This is mainly done through the integration of

product placements into the programme content (Deery, 2004a, 2012, 2014, 2015). Deery (2014) points to the interlocking relationship between reality television and product placements, and supports it with Nielsen (2011) statistics that in 2011, nine out of the top ten programmes in America with the highest occurrence of product placements were reality television shows. She especially accentuates the makeover television subgenre as 'a particularly fertile ground for placements' because its 'constructive contexts offer advertisers an integral and positive role and the programs' dramatic arc imitates the "Before-and-After" binary of much advertising' (Deery, 2014, p. 13). This subtle form of advertising can be deceptive at times, as producers might shape the broadcast content according to advertisers' needs, and it is not always easy for viewers to tell whether a lifestyle 'expert's' recommendation of a product is a paid one (ibid). It is clear that the supposedly reality-based feature of reality television is often exploited for advertising ends. Therefore, I consider the genre an instantiation of breaking down the territorial integrity of genres.

I will now turn to some generic features/conventions of reality television:

(a) Use of non-professional actors and unscripted (but edited) nature

As mentioned earlier, reality television is not entirely reality-based, as indicated e.g. by the purposefully selected participants and the role of the presenter; rather, it is 'pre-planned but mostly unscripted programming with non-professional actors in non-fictional scenarios' (Deery, 2015, p. 16). Despite the unscripted nature of reality television, what is broadcast on television is often the final product of heavy editing (see e.g. Mendible, 2004; Marwick, 2010). Springer (2007) even discussed how several American reality series manipulate some Black women participants and reinforce the 'angry Black woman' stereotype through editing (p. 262-268).

(b) People involved

Reality television is co-created by producers, participants and audience (Hill, 2015). As far as participants are concerned, as mentioned, they are often ordinary people purposefully selected. A selection criterion is to include participants from diverse backgrounds 'in order to attract a broad audience with matching demographics and to create just enough conflict to generate drama but not enough to really question the status quo' (Deery, 2004a, p. 13). Another significant point about reality television participants is that they often do not have the same interactional power as the representatives of the producer, be they presenters, judges or 'experts' (see e.g. Lorenzo-Dus' (2009) discussion about the power asymmetry between the contestant, and the presenter and the judge in the UK programme *Dragons' Den*).

Reality television also often involves interactions with viewers. For instance, viewers may be encouraged to vote on-site or online for the worst campaign or their favourite participant in the show (see Penzhorn and Pitout, 2007; Deery, 2014). Deery (2014) points to the commercialisation of this kind of interactions. For one thing, they can make viewers more engaged with the programme and help boost the ratings; for another, the online site serves as good advertising space.

(c) Impoliteness/language of aggression

Impoliteness has been found to characterise many reality shows, e.g. *The Weakest Link*, and *Idol* (see Culpeper, 2005; Garcés-Conejos Blitvich *et al*., 2013). The salient role of impoliteness in reality television can also be demonstrated by the fact that in Lorenzo-Dus and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich's edited book *Real talk: Reality television and discourse analysis in action* (2013a), which specially investigates

reality television discourse, five out of the twelve chapters are dedicated to reality television and aggression. Culpeper and Holmes (2013) even refer to shows featured by impoliteness as exploitative shows (see also Culpeper, 2005). This can be explained by the entertaining value of impoliteness (see Culpeper, 2005, 2011), or what Lorenzo-Dus and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2013b) call 'confrontainment' (p. 35). It also relates to the power asymmetry between the participant and the representatives of the producer embedded in the genre (see Subsection 7.1.1 for a discussion of institutional impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011)).

Turning to the generic features/conventions more specific to makeover television, first, makeover television often contains a sequence of the following key elements (see Lewis, 2013a; Bratich, 2007; Gill, 2007a; Doyle and Karl, 2008):

(a) Identification of the participant's inadequacies/flaws

Makeover television often starts with lifestyle 'experts' identifying various inadequacies/deficiencies of the participant (often women), e.g. in terms of fashion taste or dating, i.e. creating demands for change. This process often involves humiliation, e.g. the pathologisation of the participant's bodies in many surgical makeover programmes, and is followed by the participant's 'confession' (Gailey, 2007).

(b) Offer of lifestyle advice and makeover

After identifying the areas in need of change, the 'experts' typically offer solutions, often in the form of appropriate consumption (Redden, 2007), e.g. to make oneself look younger via cosmetic surgery, followed by the makeover of the participant

under some 'experts'' guidance. The makeover might be a transformation of the body, behaviours, or even taste. As mentioned above, it is a common practice to integrate product placements into the programme content in makeover television. Product placements are in particular commonly embedded in the process of the 'experts' offering advice to and transforming the participant (Deery, 2014, 2015).

(c) Final reveal or the go-it-alone process

What follows the makeover process is a showcase of the 'improvement' in the participant. This may take the form of the reveal or a go-it-alone task, depending on the subtype of makeover television. Makeover programmes in the form of body transformations normally end with the reveal, i.e. the participant (often accompanied by her family and friends) being shown her new self. Lewis (2013a) considers this an emotional moment for the participant and the people surrounding her, because of all her endurances and hard work before and during the transformational process. Jones (2013) even describes it using a rebirthing metaphor: 'the endometrial richness of the curtains, their slow vulval parting, the long labour of sweat and blood and tears leading up to this revelation. Here the woman is both mother and child: giving birth to herself she is powerfully and substantially reborn' (p. 77). In some subtypes of makeover television, after the 'experts' advise the participant how to handle the first date or how to choose clothes that fit her figure, she will be made to go it alone and put what she has learnt into practice, which is monitored with a hidden camera and evaluated by the 'experts'.

As shown above, makeover television is essentially about change (see e.g. Palmer, 2011; Lewis, 2013a). Makeover programmes often seek to show a stark contrast between the

'before' and 'after' so as to construct the power of change and to disseminate the message that one can create a more desirable self through consuming different goods/services.

Other than the components of makeover television, I find it necessary to discuss its gendered and classed nature, which has been noted by many scholars (e.g. Gill, 2007a; McRobbie, 2004). One realisation is the predominance of women makeover subjects, often from the lower middle- or working-class (Palmer, 2011). This is despite the fact that some male participants have been brought onto the scene in some recent makeover shows, e.g. the US programmes *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *The Biggest Loser* (Sender, 2012). In what follows, I will explicate in what way makeover television is both gendered and classed.

First, makeover television is the quintessence of postfeminist media culture. As mentioned, the makeover paradigm is fundamental to makeover television. Other key themes of postfeminist media culture described in Section 2.1, e.g. 'femininity as a bodily property' and 'self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline', also abound in various makeover shows. Postfeminist media culture is probably best embodied by the body makeover format. Its preoccupation with women's bodies has been observed by many scholars, e.g. Jones (2013), Tincknell (2011) and Deery (2004b). Women's bodies are often pathologised, commodified and made over into the version of femininity (here understood as a bodily property) shaped by the media. Although some makeover series follow a different track by encouraging their women participants to appreciate their body, which I think corresponds to the 'love your body' tactic discussed by Gill and Elias (2014) (see Section 2.1), they similarly commodify the female body and uphold traditional femininity. For example, the UK makeover series *How to Look Good Naked* does not aim to transform women's bodies *per se*, but enhance their body image, which

is achieved through body-control underwear, body treatments, make-up and choosing the right clothes that suit their body shape; its ultimate goal is for the participants to be confident enough to participate in a nude catwalk (Tsaousi, 2017). Despite the absence of humiliation and pathologisation of the female body, the show still makes its participants govern and invest in their bodies. Moreover, as Tsaousi (2017) commented, the show 'reaffirms gender boundaries and constructs gendered identities and practices, by complying with the standards of slenderness, youthfulness and the idea that appearance is interlinked with social worth' (p. 156). Another significant feature of body makeover television is that the 'experts' often link the women participants' perceived imperfect bodies to their psychological shortcomings, and offer body transformations as a solution, e.g. the US makeover shows *I Want a Famous Face* and *The Swan* (Tincknell, 2011; Marwick, 2010). As Marwick (2010) points out, '[w]hile makeover subjects are positioned as empowered agents with many choices, they are still confined to the limited cultural space allowed for women in the media: as objects to be worked upon' (p. 263).

The gendered nature of makeover television often intersects with class. Bourgeois norms are at the heart of many makeover television programmes. The classed nature of the genre is particularly explored in the book *Exposing lifestyle television: The big reveal* edited by Palmer (2008a). In the introductory chapter, Palmer (2008b) points out that middle-class norms are often reproduced in the genre, since working-class participants are constructed as in need of improvement based on middle-class values. The subsequent chapters empirically investigate how middle-class norms are privileged in various forms of makeover television, e.g. parenting (Biressi and Nunn, 2008), fashioning (Sherman, 2008a) and the body (Doyle and Karl, 2008). Other than the book, many other studies also suggest that middle-class standards are upheld in various

makeover television series, e.g. in terms of fashion taste (Lewis, 2014), marital relationships and home renovation (Press, 2014).

Another aspect concerning the classed nature of makeover television is the destabilisation of class distinctions. Many makeover television shows do not represent class in terms of one's socio-economic status, but how one appears to be (Palmer, 2004). The whole point of transforming working-class participants according to middle-class norms is based on the premise of the attainability of upward class mobility via the appropriate consumption of goods or services, i.e. everyone can be turned into a middle-class subject. As Palmer (2008b) maintains, '[i]n the guise of re-education the working class can be made to see their problems from the perspective of objective expert/consultants who will stress performance and character rather than anything else. The aim thus becomes the trying if elementary one of erasing the unacceptable signs of lower class origins and making them respectable merely by looking respectable' (p. 4). This means that one can become a middle-class subject by behaving like one, e.g. by eating high-quality healthy food (Biressi and Nunn, 2008) or dressing well (Sherman, 2008a, b). This logic is problematically underpinned by rigorous class assumptions. As Doyle and Karl (2008) commented in relation to the US body makeover show *10 Years Younger*: '[t]he transformations offered by the programme reproduce class stereotypes, presenting middle class versions of the (transformed) self as attainable by all women. In doing so, the programme appears to erase class differences whilst simultaneously creating and reinforcing them' (p. 97). Therefore, makeover television is very much classed.

After depicting the generic features of reality television and makeover television, I will delineate how the features are shaped by the changes in social, industrial and technological contexts. Many scholars have pointed to the increasing commercialisation

of television as a consequence of the deregulation of commercial television in the UK and US since the 1980s (e.g. Deery, 2015; Ouellette and Hay, 2008) as well as the fragmentation of audiences[15] and the concomitant decline in advertising income of private television companies (Sender, 2012). This means that television companies face fiercer competitions and often place profits as their first consideration. Reality television has proliferated as a response to the industrial need for 'cheap, revenue-generating, popular programming that could be easily franchised across the globe' (ibid, p. 32). The genre is well-known for its low production costs and is even described as 'cheap telly' (Moorti and Ross, 2004, p. 203). As mentioned, reality television is characterised by its use of ordinary people and its unscripted nature. This means that television companies hardly need to spend money on professional scriptwriters or actors and can reduce expenditure on supporting staff; furthermore, participants are mostly unpaid (see Deery 2004a, 2015). Reality television shows are also fairly cheap to produce with short production times because of the little research involved, which is in sharp contrast with documentaries (Deery, 2004a). This is a possible reason why documentaries play a diminishing role in television broadcasting. Apart from their low production costs, reality television formats are easily adaptable across cultures and can be franchised on a global scale (Sender, 2012; Deery, 2015). Reality television has thus become a global phenomenon.

The shape of reality television is also under the influence of recent technological advancement. As Deery (2004a, 2014) and Sender (2012) point out, many viewers bypass commercial breaks using digital video recorders or by switching channels. Under such circumstances, advertisers can no longer only rely on traditional forms of advertising in commercial breaks. Reality television has emerged as an alternative form

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[15] The fragmentation of audiences can be attributed to the emergence of cable and satellite television (Elkins, 1997) and the later widespread use of the Internet (Tewksbury, 2005).

of advertising for advertisers, providing ample opportunity for integrative forms of advertising, e.g. product placements and sponsorship (Deery, 2004a, 2014; Sender, 2012). For example, in makeover television, product placements can be integrated into the 'experts'' advice, the makeover process, and the endorsement of the desirable change on the participant in the final reveal. This also explains the gendered and classed nature as discussed above. In relation to such a commercial nature of reality television, Deery (2004a) describes it as the 'advertiser-friendly and mongrel offspring' of documentaries (p. 4).

Given the apparent dominance of Anglo-American literature in my review above, before closing this subsection, I would like to briefly discuss existing literature on Asian contexts. Few studies can be found regarding Asian makeover television. The most relevant ones are probably Lewis *et al.*'s (2012) study on lifestyle programming in Singapore, mainland China and Taiwan, and Martin and Lewis' (2012) on women-orientated lifestyle television in Singapore and Taiwan, despite their focus on lifestyle television, rather than makeover television. Lewis *et al.* (2012) point out that lifestyle television, including its makeover subgenre, is not a widely recognisable genre in mainland China or Taiwan. Presumably, this also applies to some other Asian societies.[16] In Singapore, however, lifestyle programmes are a familiar genre. Unlike their Anglo-American counterparts, Singaporean television broadcasters are regulated by the state, and lifestyle programmes overtly address various government concerns, e.g. health, and serve to educate the public (other than their commercial ends). In terms of the makeover subgenre, according to Lewis *et al.* (2012), while Singaporean

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[16] In the case of Hong Kong, lifestyle television is undoubtedly recognised as a genre, as realised, for example, by the that fact that TVB, the largest television broadcaster in Hong Kong, dedicates one of its pay television channels to lifestyle programmes (Television Broadcasts Limited, 2016). However, makeover television seems far less recognisable. During the five-year period ended 5th June, 2017, 'makeover TV/television/series/show(s)/programme(s)/program(s)' only appeared four times in *South China Morning Post*, the most popular English paid newspaper in Hong Kong.

makeover series borrow considerably from the Anglo-American format, they are under notable local influence. For example, the home makeovers in the series *Home Décor Survivor* exhibit a mixture of Western and Asian tastes. Another example is the women-orientated makeover series *Style Doctors*. Both Lewis *et al.* (2012) and Martin and Lewis (2012) illustrated how the show ostensibly celebrates women's empowerment as consumers, but in actual fact retraditionalises and refeminises them with the makeover of Selinna, a 36-year-old mother-to-be seeking to construct her power as a manager in a male-dominant office by wearing dark masculine-coded outfits. The show's consultants make humiliating comments, e.g. 'this must be your husband's!' (Martin and Lewis, 2012, p. 58) and propose she replace all her dark masculine-coded clothes with colourful ones to celebrate her upcoming motherhood. As Martin and Lewis (2012) commented, '[r]ather than negotiating pregnancy, power and the workplace, the focus of the show is on Selinna rediscovering her feminine side and shifting her lifestyle to focus on motherhood rather than work, reflecting the broader Singaporean trend…of abandoning the workplace after marriage and childbirth' (p. 60). They considered this a manifestation of the competing global and local forces in the show. In my opinion, this perhaps also links to global postfeminism. More specifically, it accords with what Negra (2009) calls 'postfeminist retreatism' (p. 16), i.e. urban independent professional women choosing to retreat to their hometown or to prioritise their familial roles for the sake of their husband or family (ibid, p. 15; Tasker and Negra, 2005).

Another relevant study is Sun's (2014) research on 'Chinese women's makeover shows' (CWMS). She argues that the theorisation of makeover television in the literature is inapplicable to the mainland Chinese context. More specifically, while she sees the makeover theme as fundamental to makeover television, she does not consider makeover television a reality television subgenre in the mainland Chinese context, on

the grounds that reality television and makeover television were introduced in the mainland Chinese televisual landscape at more or less the same period in the 2000s, and unlike in the West, the latter did not derive from the former (see ibid, p. 19, 50). She suggests: 'CWMS is neither documenting actual events nor are its main figures on the show ordinary people...CWMS are more similar to western reality shows that only cast celebrities instead of ordinary people, e.g. *The Celebrity Apprentice* (NBC, 2007-Present), *Celebrity Come Dine With Me* (Channel 4, 2005-Present)' (ibid, p. 49). Whilst not being in a position to judge the situation in mainland China, I do not see the makeover theme as the only defining feature of makeover television because the makeover paradigm can be identified across different genres, e.g. films (see e.g. Gwynne, 2013) and television series (see e.g. Tato-Pazo, 2015). I think the unscripted nature and use of ordinary people, or at least non-professional actors, are equally fundamental features. I will illustrate my point with one of the CWMS under consideration in Sun's study, namely the mainland Chinese franchise of the Taiwanese series *Queen*. The Taiwanese series is referred to as a 'variety-style show' by Martin and Lewis (2012, p. 65), and as a 'variety/talk/beauty advice TV show' by Martin (2016, p. 370). It involves some 'young female media starlets' being positioned 'as stand-ins for the younger, less sophisticated members of the program's audience' (Martin, 2016, p. 378). They are put in different scenarios to make various lifestyle choices and to be transformed by the show's 'experts'. As Martin (2016) pointed out, their function is 'to pose questions about the correct implementation of style, beauty, and fashion to the "experts" on behalf of the young viewers at home' (p. 378). The scenarios are hence imagined and the starlets are not real makeover subjects. More importantly, while the makeover paradigm can be identified, it does not form the foundation of the show, which is more about giving advice to the viewers. In my view, this is an example of a

makeover narrative, rather than a makeover show, which is similar to the way makeover themes are used in films or television dramas; the two should be differentiated more clearly.

Aside from the above-mentioned three studies, I could not find any research addressing makeover television in Asian contexts.[17] Lewis *et al.* (2012) and Martin and Lewis (2012) certainly provide a good starting point in this regard, but much more needs to be done. In my view, despite its Anglo-American origin, it is salient to explore how the genre is glocalised in non-Anglo-American societies.

Following a review of how reality television is theorised in the literature, in the next subsection, I will shift my focus to some empirical studies on how single women are represented in reality television.

3.2.2. Representations of single women in reality television

Female-orientated reality television is a well-research area, especially vis-à-vis several Anglo-American body makeover series, namely *10 Years Younger* (e.g. Sherman, 2008b; Tincknell, 2011), *What Not to Wear* (e.g. Roberts, 2007; Sherman, 2008a, b), *The Swan* (e.g. Jones, 2013; Marwick, 2010) and *Extreme Makeovers* (e.g. Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer, 2006; Tait, 2007). The limited space precludes me from providing a comprehensive review of this large body of research. Instead, I will narrow down my scope to studies on single-women-targeted reality series, which have received much less critical attention.

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[17] Two Hong Kong makeover series, namely *Bride Wannabes* and *Bachelors at War*, were adopted as data in Kwan's dissertation titled 'The representations of Kong girls and Kong boys through gendered discourses in reality television shows in Hong Kong' (2015). However, Kwan only examined how women as a whole and men as a whole (including participants, 'experts' etc.) are represented differently in the two series, without looking at who says what to whom and how. I do not think she discussed anything generalisable about reality television and do not consider it a relevant study here.

The American dating show *The Bachelor* is probably the single-women-orientated reality series that has been most extensively investigated (e.g. Dubrofsky, 2006, 2014; Yep and Ochoa Camacho, 2004; Cloud, 2010). The series features 25 single women competing for the season's Bachelor. Over eight weeks, the women go on numerous group and one-on-one dates with the Bachelor. There is an elimination process in each episode, with the Bachelor giving a rose to those women he would like to stay, who can then choose whether to accept it. The series often ends with the Bachelor proposing to the finalist. The gender representations of the show were deemed to be problematic by different scholars. For instance, Taylor (2012) suggested that by making 25 women compete for one man, the show 'is predicated on the notion that men are at a premium and drastic measures must be taken to secure one' (p. 129); Yep and Ochoa Camacho (2004) pointed to the limited agency granted to the women, who can only choose whether to accept the rose or to quit. Another problem lies in the selection of contestants. The women selected are all conventionally beautiful (see Dubrofsky, 2005, 2014; Yep and Ochoa Camacho, 2004). Various postfeminist ideas can be identified in the show. For instance, despite the absence of 'experts', the single women are still under hostile scrutiny, which is done through peer policing. An example is how a contestant's overt sexual performance is sanctioned by her fellow contestants, who describe her as a 'bitch' and a 'whore' (Taylor, 2012, p. 135). This also shows that the contestants are not allowed to fully exert their sexual agency (Cloud, 2010), despite the postfeminist stress on women's sexual subjectivities. As Dubrofsky (2009) put it, '*The Bachelor* recruits women into the job of governing the bad behaviour of other women' (p. 366). In addition, in line with postfeminist media culture, the show features some women struggling to 'have it all'. While most women in the show express their willingness to sacrifice their career and relocate to where the Bachelor lives (Taylor,

2012, p. 138), several refuse to give up their career. The programme particularly problematises women's career ambition through Ali, who chooses to withdraw from the competition in order to return to her work, despite her love for the Bachelor. However, after several weeks, she regrets her decision and begs the Bachelor to take her back, but he refuses. The programme problematises her prioritisation of her work as a wrong choice and implies that she should 'put career on the back burner so she can prioritize letting a man into her life' (Dubrofsky, 2014, p. 204). When Ali later appears as a bachelorette of *The Bachelorette*, a spin-off of *The Bachelor*, she confesses her previous 'mistake' and expresses her willingness to sacrifice all for love. As Dubrofsky (2014) suggested, *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* accentuate the idea that 'the only way [for women] to be happy is to make love (marriage and children to follow) a priority' (p. 206). Through the transformation of Ali, the shows shape views on what is important for women and direct the viewers to seeing prioritising romance over career as an empowered choice.

Unlike *The Bachelor*, the American relationship makeover series *Tough Love* has attracted little scholarly attention (see Taylor, 2012, p. 216). The series features eight single women in their 20s and 30s being sent to a 'boot camp' hosted by Steve, a matchmaker, with the aim to prepare them for romance. The show is based on the premise that the women are deficient and need to work on themselves so that they are ready and deserve the reward of a partner (ibid, p. 117). It often starts with Steve identifying flaws which make the women remain single and offering solutions. Humiliation and shame play an important part in the transformation. For example, the participants are made to have dates with different men, which are filmed and later watched together by Steve and all the participants in a weekly group therapy session. The session involves Steve harshly criticising their behaviours and setting rules on how

to behave, e.g. 'When you're around a guy you're attached to, you never want to whine and complain' (ibid, p. 120). Worse still, the participants are even subject to physical punishment, e.g. electric shock and being dunked into cold water. The whole point of the session is to modify the participants' behaviours by publicly shaming them and 'pushing [them] to breaking point' (ibid, p. 120). Apart from the group session, the participants are also publicly shamed via the use of a mock court, where they are charged with 'a dating felony, crime of love or just inappropriate behaviour' (ibid, p. 125). Playing the role of defendants, they need to justify their past behaviours and are pronounced as either 'dateable' or 'undateable' by the male jury and Steve's mother, who acts as the judge. The court scene suggests that women's singleness is not only pathological, but also a crime. Taylor (2012) pointed to the power imbalance between Steve and the participants, and suggested that 'Steve's tone is aggressive and frequently patronising' (ibid, p. 120). Despite the significant role of humiliation in the makeover process, the participants are sometimes praised, often after being shamed and making a confession. This relates to what Weber (2009) calls 'affective domination', i.e. 'the way that experts point out flaws in a combined gesture of humiliation and care' (p. 30), or to put it simply, emotional abuse. The show is also characterised by its emphasis on the male gaze. A 'problem' Steve often identifies in the participants is their lack of understanding of what men want and think. They are often made to internalise the male gaze (ibid, p. 122). For example, men in the aforesaid filmed dates are asked to evaluate the participants; the participants are even made to participate in a lingerie photo shoot, which is judged by a group of men in terms of their sexiness and attractiveness. They are obviously made to submit to the patriarchal authority.

My original plan was to review research on some locally produced relationship reality series directed at single women in non-Anglo-American contexts, but

unfortunately, I could not find any in the literature.[18] Even in terms of Anglo-American single-women-targeted series franchised in Asia, I could only find one which has received some scholarly attention, namely the mainland Chinese version of the UK dating show *Take Me Out* (e.g. Morrow, 2014; Li, 2015; Ren and Woodfield, 2016). As this show is highly relevant to my research, I will discuss studies on it in more detail. Without an official English name, it is referred to differently in the literature, e.g. *Take Me Out* (Wu, 2012), *Fei Cheng Wu Rao* (Shei, 2013) and *If You Are the One* (Li, 2015). I will hereafter refer to it as *If You Are the One*. The show involves 24 women participants, one man participant, a host and some guest commentators. It starts with the bachelor undergoing three rounds of brutal interrogations, e.g. concerning his career and wealth, by the host and 24 single women on stage. Each woman can vote him off anytime by switching off the light above her. If he has two or more lights on in the end, it will become his turn to choose from the women remaining on stage (see Li, 2015). According to Shei (2013), the show follows tightly the content and structure of the original *Take Me Out*, yet the two differ in that whilst the contestants in *If You Are the One* 'are seriously looking for life-long partners', their counterparts in *Take Me Out* are just looking for a date light-heartedly (p. 47). This difference can be attributed to the Chinese state's intervention. The show's producer has been made to limit the contestants to those seriously looking for a partner (Wu, 2012). I will further elaborate the policing of the show by the Chinese government below.

The gender representation in *If You Are the One* is far from progressive. Many researchers pointed to the highly unconventional image of its women participants, e.g.

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[18] As mentioned in Note 17, Kwan (2015) adopted as data the Hong Kong makeover series *Bride Wannabes* and *Bachelors at War*, which are both locally produced relationship makeover shows directed at single women and single men, respectively. However, she treated the two series as a corpus and did not say anything specific about *Bride Wannabes* or *Bachelors at War*, nor did she consider the intersectionality between gender and singleness in the shows. The study therefore does not illuminate how single women are represented in relationship reality television.

their outspokenness and aggressiveness when questioning the bachelor and their overt expression of their sexual and materialistic desires (e.g. Li, 2015; Wu, 2012). While the show brings in women deviating from traditional femininity, its oppositional stance to their transgressive behaviours is obvious. According to Wu (2012), despite the 'strong women' image of the participants, it is the host and commentators who control the show and who enjoy more interactional power, e.g. cutting short someone's speech, commenting against and shaping views on the participants' irrationality and editing conversations to their advantage. She argued, '[t]he programme as a whole frames the carnivalesque performance of many female participants as pathological, as a symptom of the social disease that is shameless materialism and a loss of belief' (p. 232). On the other hand, the host and commentators try to educate the participants by upholding 'feminine' virtues. For example, a participant who is 'cute', quiet and weak-willed are praised and are often used to illustrate what true love means (ibid). Traditional gender expectations are not only reinforced by the host and commentators, but also the contestants. Although most women contestants are independent career women, they show strong interests in the bachelor's economic condition and expect material support from men, which relates to the traditional expectation of men as the family provider; on the contrary, the men contestants are uninterested in the women's income, but their appearance and personality, e.g. 'gentle, considerate and filial' (Li, 2015, p. 531), which relates to women's traditional role as the carer. Another point is that the women participants' self-representations reveal their internalisation of various patriarchal beliefs about women, particularly those concerning the problematisation of single womanhood (Luo and Sun, 2015). For example, in the show, each woman is asked to write a self-description on a name tag; many of the self-descriptions show very traditional views on women's roles, e.g. '[I am] a "little" woman of domesticity' or

'Marriage is a woman's primal career' (ibid, p. 249-250). Many women express their anxiety about becoming 'leftover women' and their desperation for a heterosexual partner (ibid). Some studies on the show suggested that the seeming empowerment of the women participants on the one hand, and the reinforcement of traditional femininity on the other, echo the postfeminist sensibility circulated in Western popular media[19] (Wu, 2012; Li, 2015). As Li (2015) criticised, '[t]he worst thing about women's ostensible aggressiveness and domination as constructed in the show is that it hypes up postfeminist sentiments in a society that argues that feminism has arrived or even that feminism is no longer needed in China' (p. 532).

Different scholars linked the gender representation in *If You Are the One* to the Chinese state's heavy hand in the media (e.g. Li, 2015; Wu, 2012). In post-socialist China, although media outlets are held accountable for their own financial management, they are subject to heavy state monitoring and censorship. In terms of *If You Are the One*, the state's overt intervention is evident. The subversive behaviours of some women participants, especially their perceived materialism, were found problematic by the state. Consequently, two documents were issued by the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television to forbid the dissemination of 'unhealthy and incorrect opinions on marriage and relationships such as materialism' (Li, 2015, p. 533). As mentioned above, the show's producer has also been made to limit the participants to those seriously looking for a partner. In response to the state's censorship, the show's

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[19] Wu (2012) argues that despite the absence of a feminist movement in Chinese history, Chinese socialism (1949-1970s), which promoted gender equality and collectivism, is comparable to feminism in the West. She even extends this line of argument and draws parallels between postfeminism and post-socialism: 'the post-socialist structure of feeling does have structural and thematic resemblance to post-feminist and neo-liberal theories of individual freedom and responsibility against the idea that it is social, cultural and gender power structures that shape and influence an individual's chances for development' (p. 225).

producer has taken various remedial measures, e.g. inviting a Communist Party member as one of the commentators and editing out parts potentially regarded as sensitive or inappropriate (Luo and Sun, 2015; Li, 2015; Wu, 2012). *If You Are the One* functions as a useful case of how the Anglo-American genre of reality television is glocalised in an Asian context.

As indicated by my review above, all the three single-women-orientated relationship reality shows are based on the premise that women's singleness is a problem. As Taylor (2012) rightly suggests, in such shows, 'the single woman-as-lack becomes most evident and men become figured as "prizes" for which women must quite literally compete' (p. 5). Besides, a postfeminist sensibility can be identified in the shows. They all uphold heterosexual partnerships and various patriarchal beliefs, and legitimise them by representing them as empowered choices for women. That said, ideas contradictory to the postfeminist logic can be found in *If You Are the One*, e.g. many women's expectation of material support from their partner.

To summarise, this chapter reviewed key literature concerning the topics, i.e. postfeminist media representations of women in relation to singleness and romance as well as ageing, and the genre, i.e. reality television, of my research. An important finding is the problematisation of women's singleness and the upholding of heterosexual partnerships and various patriarchal beliefs, which is often legitimised through a postfeminist ethos of choice. It is also obvious that most studies in this review are based on Anglo-American contexts, mainly focusing on White, middle-class women. There is in particular a research gap in the area of makeover television and relationship reality television in Asian contexts. My empirical research on the Hong Kong relationship makeover series *Bride Wannabes* aims to contribute to this under-researched field. This is especially the case when relevant existing literature is either

based on the Singaporean or mainland Chinese context (e.g. Martin and Lewis, 2012; Li, 2015). Unlike the cases of Singapore and mainland China, in Hong Kong, television broadcasting is mainly commercially-driven and is generally free from the state's intervention (Saidi, 2015).

After providing the theoretical background in Chapter 2 and the literature background in this present chapter, the next chapter will procced to the empirical part of my research, where I will introduce my dataset and describe issues of data collection, transcription and translation.

Chapter 4: Data

This chapter provides details of my dataset, starting with an introduction to my data, followed by the justification for my selection and ending with a description of the data collection procedures and issues relating to data transcription and translation.

4.1. Description of data

My dataset comprises the primary data of *Bride Wannabes* (the whole series), a television programme produced by Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB), and the auxiliary data of online posts about the programme on the TVB forum. To begin with, I briefly introduce the background of TVB, followed by a description of the two data components.

4.1.1. Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB)

Before describing the background of TVB, I find it necessary to stress that this subsection aims to introduce the television broadcaster and its position in the Hong Kong television industry as at 2012, when *Bride Wannabes* was aired, rather than presenting an up-to-date account. This is especially the case, considering the drastic changes in the industry since the programme was broadcast, e.g. the revocation of Asia Television Limited's (ATV's) free-to-air television licence and the appearance of two new free-to-air television outlets in 2016. Wherever there are differences between the present situation and that in 2012, I will base my discussion on the latter.

TVB, established in 1967, was the first wireless commercial television broadcaster and was one of the two free-to-air television stations (the other being ATV) in Hong Kong as of 2016. TVB originally only operated a Cantonese channel, *Jade*, and an English channel, *Pearl*, but in 2007, it expanded its services to digital terrestrial

broadcasting. In 2012, other than the above-mentioned channels, TVB also operated three free terrestrial television channels: *J2*, *iNews* and *HD Jade*. Most of the programmes telecast on the five free-to-air channels could be viewed on *MyTV*, the online television service of TVB's official website, and its corresponding mobile application; it also had a pay-television division, TVB Pay Vision, providing twelve subscription channels. TVB's business operations are not limited to Hong Kong: having some overseas subsidiaries and working with various global partners, TVB operates its business in broadcasting and programme licensing worldwide.

TVB dominates the television market in Hong Kong. As Ma (1999) commented, TVB barely faced any competition, as its only rival (as at 2016), ATV, did not pose any serious threat to it. TVB maintains its predominance even today, despite the closure of ATV and the appearance of two new competitors, as aforesaid, which can be seen by its dominant reach in the Hong Kong television market (see Television Broadcast Limited, 2016). This is despite TVB's drop of popularity since the 1980s, due to the rise of various forms of entertainment, its lack of creativity and the emergence of subscription-based television broadcasters (Ma, 1999). The Hong Kong Communications Authority (2013), an independent statutory body regulating the broadcasting and telecommunications industries in Hong Kong, also suggested that 'TVB enjoys a certain level of brand loyalty' (p. 48). According to TVB Annual Report 2012 (Television Broadcasts Limited, 2013), the audience share of its flagship free-on-air channel, Jade, during weekday primetime accounted for 94 percent in 2012. The dominance of TVB's terrestrial channels is not only confined to the free television broadcasting market, but extends to the whole television broadcasting market. Figure 4.1 shows the market shares of different television stations (both free-to-air and subscription-based ones) from 2006 to 2010:

Figure 4.1: Television stations' market shares measured by viewership from 2006 to 2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
TVB	64%	63%	63%	63%	66%
ATV	18%	18%	17%	17%	15%
Cable	10%	9%	8%	8%	8%
Now TV	3%	5%	6%	7%	6%
Other	5%	6%	6%	5%	5%
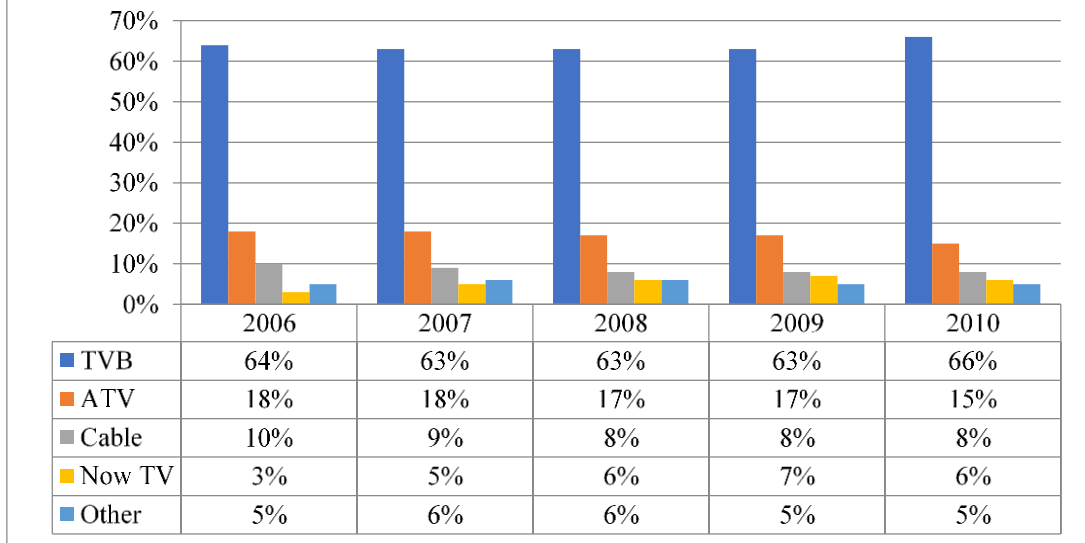
Source: CSM Media Research (cited in Hong Kong Communications Authority, 2013, p. 49)

TVB maintained a stable viewership rate of 63-66 percent from 2006 to 2010, which was far higher than that of any of its competitors. Owing to its leading role in the television market, news related to its productions and its pop stars is widely reported in the print media while news related to other television broadcasters is rarely seen. On top of television broadcasting, TVB's online platforms also play an influential role. In 2012, TVB's website, where *MyTV* was located, was the fifth top website in Hong Kong in terms of the total time spent, after only Facebook, Yahoo, Google and Microsoft (Television Broadcasts Limited, 2016).

Following this brief introduction to the background of TVB, I will now proceed to the central part of this section: a depiction of my primary data, *Bride Wannabes*.

4.1.2. Bride Wannabes

In this subsection, I will describe *Bride Wannabes* in terms of three aspects: background information, the programme itself, i.e. who, what, where and how, and its reception.

I start by giving some background information about the programme. It is a pre-recorded reality television series (ten episodes and five hours in total) simulcast on TVB Jade and TVB HD Jade from 14th to 20th April, 2012. It depicts five unmarried Hong Kong women aged from 28 to 39 undergoing makeovers under some 'experts'' guidance and participating in different matchmaking events to find their 'Mr Right'. The Chinese programme title is 盛女愛作戰 (literally 'blossomed women love to fight (for their "Mr Right")'. As mentioned in Chapter 1, 盛女 *(blossomed women)* is a euphemistic derivative of its homophonous expression 剩女 *(leftover women)*, referring to women who have reached the suitable age for marriage but who remain single. The Chinese programme title is obviously not completely identical to its English counterpart, and has been criticised as 'more uncharitable' (Ip-Lau, 2012, para. 2). An interesting point about *Bride Wannabes* is that despite its entertainment agenda, it was produced by TVB's News and Information Division, i.e. the production team of the weekly newscast *Tuesday Report*. This secondment was probably linked to the 2nd March, 2010 episode of *Tuesday Report*, whose topic was '中女告白 (literally, Middle Woman Declaration)'. According to Pang (2009), 中女 is an informal reference to women who are no longer young. The episode explores as a social issue the increasing number of single women and women's difficulty in finding partners in Hong Kong by interviewing eight single 'middle women' about their romantic experience and attitude to love. It was successful in bringing about widespread discussions in society.[20] The *Tuesday Report* episode and *Bride Wannabes* are apparently connected. Not only were they produced by the same team, they also both focus on unmarried women who are considered no

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[20] This can be seen, for example, by the 147 posts about the episode on the TVB forum (as at 24th May, 2013) and it being uploaded to YouTube and other video sharing sites. Erica Yuen, an ex-Miss Hong Kong pageant candidate and a politician, has also responded to the episode in a video on her own YouTube page: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpOSufBv46s

longer young; what is more, two informants in the *Tuesday Report* episode appear in *Bride Wannabes* to give advice to the participants.

After introducing the background of *Bride Wannabes*, I now turn to the programme itself. TVB explicitly describes it as a reality show (see e.g. Television Broadcasts Limited, 2013). I think that it more specifically falls into the makeover television subgenre. In what follows, I will depict the who, what, where and how of *Bride Wannabes* and relate its features to the genre conventions of reality television and makeover television. In terms of the people involved, *Bride Wannabes* revolves around the stories of the following five unmarried female participants:

Florence: a 39-year-old assistant finance manager and master's degree holder

Bonnie: a 29-year-old marketing officer described by the host as a 'tomboy'

Gobby: a 30-year-old divorced mother who works at a fast food restaurant

Suki: a 28-year-old bank teller described by the host as an 'office lady'

Mandy: a senior customer service manager and the only participant refusing to disclose her age

They are under the guidance and surveillance of some 'experts', who are involved in various commercial activities in their real life. I list below the crucial members of the 'expert' team, including a description of how they are introduced in the programme and in brackets their other commercial backgrounds (if any):

Winnie: a life coach, columnist (and a beauty blogger)

Eva: a communication skills tutor (and the founder of a voice and movement training company)

Mei-Ling:	a dating agent (the founder of an upscale matchmaking company and a columnist)
Jessica:	a notable make-up artist
Angel:	an image consultant (and the founder of an image consulting company)
Y.C. Tsao:	a consulting psychologist (the founder of a coaching and consulting company, the director of a matchmaking and dating company, and a columnist)
Santino:	a 'love expert' (a 'lecturer' in gender relationship management, and the host of an internet radio programme)
Pierce and Donald:	Santino's assistants

Besdies the participants and the 'experts', the host, Louisa So, also plays a key role in the programme, although she is there just to provide voice-overs and has no interaction with anybody. Probably because there are only five broadcast hours to capture what happened over six months, the development of the participants' stories is not shown to the audience in detail. Instead, the programme relies heavily on Louisa's narrations, the details of which will be discussed below. There are also some minor characters in the series including suitors, people who appear in different matchmaking events, e.g. those participating in speed-dating events along with the participants, and people who provide advice/services for the participants, e.g. a doctor and a psychologist. As shown above, as in the case of many reality television series, the participants in *Bride Wannabes* are all non-professional actors, and they represent different social backgrounds; there are also some lifestyle 'experts' giving advice to the participants.

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I will now address the what of *Bride Wannabes*. As depicted in Subsection 3.2.1, many makeover television shows include a sequence of the following elements: (1) the 'experts' identifying various inadequacies or flaws of the participants; (2) the 'experts' offering lifestyle advice to and transforming the participants; and (3) the final reveal of the post-makeover participants or the participants going it alone. The development of *Bride Wannabes* is broadly congruent with this formula. Chu (2012) has rightly summarised how the 'experts' in *Bride Wannabes* problematise the participants and offer help: first, to fix their appearance and body shape; second, to change the way they get along with men; third, to heal mental wounds caused by previous relationships. Although most of the participants are made to undergo different forms of body transformations, e.g. losing weight and having beauty treatments, and the 'before' and 'after' are also foregrounded, in all cases but one, the final reveal does not come as an emotional or dramatic moment as Lewis (2013a) and Jones (2013) suggest (see Subsection 3.2.1). This is because the transformations do not involve complicated procedures and the participants can see the results either gradually or immediately. The only exception is the case of Gobby. She undergoes a zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment and is kept in suspense for a month before being able to see her post-treatment self. Apart from the final reveal, many go-it-alone tasks can be identified. For example, after being told how to communicate with men, different participants are made to attend a dating event and apply what they have just learnt. As indicated above, *Bride Wannabes* broadly follows the aforesaid makeover television formula, but I would like to stress that that applies better to the storylines of Bonnie, Gobby and Florence than those of Suki and Mandy. Suki is only minimally problematised in term of her skin and is made to have a beauty treatment, whereas Mandy is not involved in any form of transformation. Lastly, I conclude what happens to the participants in the

end. Suki is the only participant who successfully finds a boyfriend during the show. She hence quits the show in Episode 6. Her boyfriend, Zion, is Mandy's friend, but the pair did not get to know each other and fall in love through any of the matchmaking activities arranged by the 'experts'. Besides Suki, Mandy also withdraws in Episode 6, claiming that love is not her everything. Although the other three participants persevere until the end, they do not find their 'Mr Right'.

As regards where *Bride Wannabes* was shot, it was not confined to the television studio, but took place in many different locations. The participants are brought to different places for body makeovers, e.g. beauty salons and a slimming company. They are also made to talk about their previous experience and share their thoughts in places e.g. their own accommodation and meeting rooms. Matchmaking activities take place in an even broader range of places, e.g. a restaurant, a drama studio, a banquet hall and a pub. Some participants even join a speed-dating activity in mainland China.

I will now proceed to how *Bride Wannabes* is structured, which is quite different from the structures of the relationship reality series reviewed in Subsection 3.2.2. The programme follows the storylines of the five participants in parallel. As in the case of films or novels, not all storylines carry the same weight, with those of Florence and Bonnie apparently being the main foci. While the participants sometimes appear as a group, e.g. when attending a gender relationship management class, or in pairs, e.g. when joining matchmaking activities, their stories are treated individually. They do not interact with each other, nor are they in competitive terms. Apart from how the participants' stories are dealt with, I find it necessary to discuss the presentation elements that the programme is structured with. These include:

(a) Narrations

The programme relies heavily on Louisa's narrations, which include:

- providing background information about the show at the beginning of Episode 1, e.g. its purpose and how the participants were recruited;

- introducing the participants and the 'experts' to the audience;

- depicting what is happening;

- (except Episode 1) briefly recapitulating some background information about the show at the beginning of each episode, and different participants' background and what happened to them in previous episodes when they first appear in a particular episode;

- (except Episode 10) announcing what will take place in the next episode or after the commercial break.

Her narrations spread across the programme, with some even appearing as cut-ins within conversations. Since she only provides voice-overs, there is always something happening on the screen during her narrations.

(b) Conversations

Conversations in *Bride Wannabes* are characterised by their shortness and the often power imbalance between interactants. The shortness of conversations can be attributed to heavy editing. Many conversations are obviously not broadcast in full, with many parts being cut out for Louisa's voice to come in. Louisa either concisely narrates what is happening in the deleted parts or creates some pseudo-conversations, which will be further discussed under (c).

The other feature of conversations in *Bride Wannabes* is the often asymmetrical power between interactants; more specifically, the participants often do not have the same interactional power as the 'experts', which is a generic feature of reality television (see Subsection 3.2.1). As mentioned earlier, *Bride Wannabes*, like many makeover television series, involves the 'experts' identifying the participants' flaws and giving lifestyle advice. Therefore, conversations between the 'experts' and the participants are often in the form of counselling or consultations, and the participants often play the role of seeking help. They are also under the pressure to follow the 'experts'' advice. Even when talking with their suitors, the participants are subject to various interactional restrictions. They are often accompanied by at least one 'expert', except on very few occasions when meeting a particular suitor more than once, so they are mostly monitored by a 'chaperone' and cannot talk freely. Importantly, they do not have any chance to talk with their fellow participants, which undermines their solidarity.

(c) Pseudo-conversations

Although Louisa only provides voice-overs and is not involved in any activity in the show, from time to time, she narrates as if she were talking on the scene. She sometimes seems to provide cues for another social actor to take up, e.g.[21]

(1)

1	**Louisa**:	我哋	決定	通過	呢	個	節目		幫
		We	decide	through	this	CL	programme		help

We decide through this programme to help

---

[21] See Section 4.3 for a description of my data transcription and translation.

2		香港	女士	搵	對象(.)
		Hong Kong	woman	find	partner(.)
		Hong Kong women with finding a partner.			

3		於是	請咗		專欄作家	Winnie(.)
		Thus	invite-PFV		columnist	Winnie(.)
		Thus, we have invited the columnist, Winnie,				

4		喺	網上	招募	真實	個案(.)
		on	internet	recruit	real	case(.)
		to recruit real cases online.				

5	**Winnie:**	個	blog	嗰	個	title	呢	叫	做
		CL	blog	that	CL	title	VTIP	call	do
		The title of the blog is							

6		送	妳	一	場	戀愛(.)
		give	you	one	CL	romance(.)
		'Give you a romantic relationship'.				

…

In the above example, Louisa says that the programme has invited Winnie to seek real cases online; then Winnie seems to take the cue and introduces the blog title. In some cases, what a participant says echoes Louisa's narration, e.g.

(2)

7   **Louisa**:   男仔頭   嘅   Bonnie(.)   經常   俾   人   話

           Tomboy   LP   Bonnie(.)   often   by   person   say

           Bonnie, a tomboy, is often said by others

8   粗魯(.)   唔   識   打扮

           coarse and crude(.)   not   know   dress up

           to be crude and coarse. Not knowing how to dress up

9   又   唔   識   嗲   人

           and   not   know   coquet   person

           and not knowing how to be coquettish to others.

10   身邊   嘅   男仔   只係   當   佢   兄弟(.)

           Body-side   LP   boy   only   see   her   brother(.)

           Boys around her only see her as a brother

11   因為   佢   係

           because   she   be

           because she is

12   一   個   有義氣   嘅   女仔(.)

           one   CL   has-fraternal-righteousness   LP   girl(.)

           a girl with fraternal righteousness.

13   **Bonnie:**   無論   你   係   真係(.)   講真   喺   街

           No matter   you   be   really(.)   frankly   in   street

           Frankly, no matter you're really…in the street

14	無	錢	搭	車	返	屋企 (.)
	not-have	money	take	car	go back	home(.)

having no money to take a (mini)bus back home,

15	到	ar	即係(.)	有	啲	乜嘢	ar
	till	VTIP	that's(.)	have	CL	what	VTIP

or, um, that's, require me to do anything, um

16	赴	湯	蹈	火[22]	嘅	事(.)
	go to	boiling water	step	fire	LP	thing(.)

that I've to defy all difficulties and dangers by going into boiling water or stepping onto fire,

17	嘩	我	真係	會	仆	出嚟	救	你	嘅
	oh	I	really	would	rush	come-out	save	you	SFP(.)

oh, I would really rush out to save you.

As shown above, Louisa describes Bonnie as 有義氣 *(having fraternal righteousness)* (see a thorough discussion of this concept in Subsection 5.2.2), and Bonnie immediately echoes this by giving instantiations of her fraternal righteousness.

(d) Cut-ins

There are two types of cut-ins in the programme: those from previous episodes and those from subsequent episodes, with the majority being the former. As mentioned,

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[22] 赴湯蹈火 is a Chinese idiom describing someone so determined to do something that he/she is unafraid of any difficulty, not even going into boiling water or stepping onto fire.

Louisa often recapitulates what happened in previous episodes and announces what will happen in the next episode. This is often concomitant with the cut-in of the corresponding scene from the particular episode. Traces of editing can sometimes be found in cut-ins.

(e) Individual voices

There is often solo-time for the 'experts', participants, suitors and even people who briefly appear in various matchmaking activities to share their opinions and/or stories. The five participants' and the 'experts'' voices are heard most frequently. The participants are often given chances to express their views on their suitors or aspects related to the matchmaking activities. They sometimes also tell their stories, mostly regarding their previous relationships, and occasionally, express their opinions on what they were instructed to do. Almost after each 'expert consultation' and matchmaking activity, the 'experts' comment on the participants or their performance. Similarly, suitors also have opportunities to comment on the participants, and people the participants briefly come across in various matchmaking events are also asked to share their experience of finding partners.

(f) Others

Apart from the above key elements, *Bride Wannabes* is also structured by two minor elements, namely on-screen textual descriptions, i.e. words which appear on the screen, but which are not uttered by anyone, and songs. There is a pattern in the programme that whenever a person appears, a brief introduction to her/him will appear on the screen, which includes her/his name, occupation and in the case of the participants, age as well, e.g.

Figure 4.2: An example of on-screen textual descriptions –

introducing participants

SUKI
28 years old, bank teller

(Broadcast in Episode 1 – 9th April, 2012)

Besides, at the beginning of Episode 1, the question 'HOW To Find A HUSBAND?' can be seen:

Figure 4.3: An example of on-screen textual descriptions –

'How to find a husband?'

(Broadcast in Episode 1 – 9th April, 2012)

Love songs are played from time to time in *Bride Wannabes*. Dionne Warwick's song *I Say a Little Prayer* (1967) is used as the theme song and is played not only before the show begins, but also within it. Other love songs are also played when they match the particular scene. For example, in Episode 4, Bonnie is made to dress up and wear make-up and then go to a ball with Mei-Ling. Bonnie compares herself to the princess in *Cinderella*, being transformed from a woman living in a public housing estate to a princess, and Mei-Ling to the fairy godmother. To enhance such fairy tale atmosphere, Sammi Cheng's song, *玻璃鞋 (Glass Slipper)* (2002), is played.

I will now proceed to the last focus of this subsection, namely how *Bride Wannabes* was received by Hong Kong society. It was a highly popular programme, as manifested by its high ratings. According to Television Broadcasts Limited (2013), on average, each episode was viewed by 1.7 million people on TVB Jade, i.e. about 25 percent of the Hong Kong population and a record high for the particular timeslot in recent years; furthermore, it was simultaneously watched online by 3.1 percent of the Hong Kong population. It also attracted considerable media attention and led to widespread discussions by viewers (see Television Broadcast Limited, 2013). In response to its popularity, TVB produced the chat show *Here Come the Bride Wannabes* (simulcast on TVB Jade and TVB HD Jade on 14th, 22nd and 29th April, 2012) to show what had happened behind the scene of *Bride Wannabes*. Some of the participants were invited to share their recent experience and some of the 'experts' were there to talk about their opinions on romantic relationships and give advice to the participants. Unfortunately, I cannot provide any demographic information about the audience of

Bride Wannabes, despite its significance and relevance. I contacted TVB for such information, but was told that it was unavailable.

Despite its high ratings, *Bride Wannabes* attracted widespread criticisms. The Hong Kong Communications Authority received a total of 141 complaints about the programme (see Hong Kong Communications Authority, 2012). For example, it was criticised for stigmatising single women based on their age, gender and marital status, disseminating distorted values on romance, marriage and relationships, promoting plastic surgery, and being highly commercialised with references to many commercial operators, e.g. a slimming company and a dating agent (ibid). These criticisms accord with the sexist and commercial nature of the reality television genre (see Subsection 3.2.1). Chu (2012) also made similar criticisms, but what she regarded as the biggest failure of the programme was that the 'experts'' advice, despite being treated as a golden rule, could not help any participant find her 'Mr Right'; she thus pointed to the complete irrelevance of the makeovers of the participants. A Facebook group, *向盛女愛作戰說不* (literally *Say No to Bride Wannabes*), was also formed by a group of professionals and scholars to request that the programme be terminated. Despite the backlash against the series, TVB refused to terminate it and responded that they would produce a similar reality show for men instead. They did and the reality show for men *Bachelors at War* was broadcast in 2013. However, it was not as popular as *Bride Wannabes*, with an average of 1.28 million viewers for each episode. On the other hand, following almost three months of investigation, the Hong Kong Communications Authority (2012) concluded that all the complaints about *Bride Wannabes* were unsubstantiated and did not take any further action.

Following a description of *Bride Wannabes*, the next subsection will focus on online forum posts about the programme.

4.1.3. Online forum discussions

My investigation of representations of unmarried women in *Bride Wannabes* is complemented with an auxiliary dataset of forum posts about the programme. The posts do not form part of my data analysis; instead, they serve as textual support for my interpretation. Owing to their auxiliary role, I will only give a brief overview.

The forum posts in question are located on the TVB forum on TVB's official website. Within the forum, there is a sub-forum for each TVB programme,[23] which functions as a platform for viewers to share their opinions on the programme. My dataset comprises all posts and threads on the sub-forum 盛女愛作戰 *(Bride Wannabes)* as at 24th May, 2013. Altogether 861 users (excluding the administrator) commented on the sub-forum, contributing to a total of 220 threads and 2,034 posts. The last comment was posted on 20th February, 2013.

After describing the data of this research, in the next section, I will explain the rationale for my choice of data.

4.2. Rationale for the data selection

In this section, I justify why I have selected *Bride Wannabes* as my data. First, my choice is based on the media consumption patterns in Hong Kong. Nielsen (2009, May 26) conducted a survey with 5,800 interviewees aged between 12 and 64 in 2008 on media consumption patterns of Hong Kong citizens. Figure 4.4 indicates the average time Hong Kongers spent on different media in 2008:

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[23] See http://forum.tvb.com/index.php

**Figure 4.4: Average time spent
on various media per day in 2008**
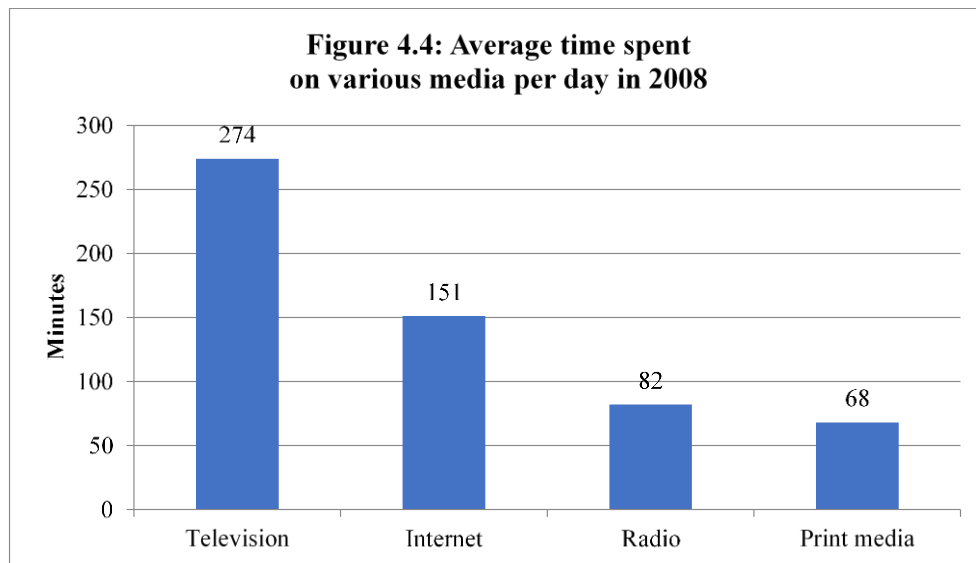
It was found that Hong Kong people spent far more time on television (274 minutes per day) than on any other medium in 2008, which applied to all age groups. While the average time spent on the internet was only 151 minutes per day in 2008, according to Nielsen (2009, 26 May), there was an upward trend of internet consumption among Hong Kong people, with a record of ten percent growth from 2007 to 2008. Although I cannot provide more up-to-date figures, it can be presumed that the figures for 2012, the year when *Bride Wannabes* was aired, would be even higher. As mentioned earlier, not only is TVB the leading television broadcaster in Hong Kong, its online platforms also play a prominent role on the internet. Therefore, it predominates the two most important media in Hong Kong. In the light of this circumstance, TVB primetime series are a powerful site for the (re)production of ideologies and thus an obvious choice for the study of media representations.

After explaining my choice of a TVB television series, I will now more specifically justify why I have selected *Bride Wannabes* as my data. The rationale is threefold. First, as mentioned, it achieved high ratings and attracted widespread media

coverage. Second, makeover television is notorious for sexism (see Subsection 3.2.1). This is especially the case for *Bride Wannabes*, which as alluded to earlier, was accused of stigmatising single women based on their age, gender and marital status and disseminating distorted values on romance, marriage and relationships. I therefore consider *Bride Wannabes* an ideal platform for the study of gender ideologies through which women are stigmatised in terms of their singleness and age. Third, despite the omnipresence and wide variety of makeover television series in the UK and US, relationship makeover shows were still a rather new television format in Hong Kong when *Bride Wannabes* was aired. While *Bride Wannabes* was not the first makeover show of its kind in Hong Kong,[24] it was the first one aired on the TVB's flagship channel *Jade* and proved a great success. The success of *Bride Wannabes* has resulted in the emergence of various similar makeover series. As touched upon earlier, following the accusation of sexism in *Bride Wannabes*, TVB produced *Bachelors at War* (2013), the counterpart of *Bride Wannabes* for men. Another example is *Nowhere Girls* (2014), a makeover series aiming to transform a group of 沒女 *(nowhere girls)*, which, according to the programme description on its official website, is a mainland Chinese informal reference to women without attractive appearance, good figure, youth, wealth or achievement,[25] so as to help them boost their confidence. Significantly, these two programmes were produced by the production team of *Bride Wannabes*, i.e. TVB's News and Information Division. Moreover, the makeover paradigm of *Bride Wannabes* has also been drawn on in other television formats. This is best exemplified by the drama series *Bounty Lady* (2014), which is like a duplication of *Bride Wannabes* in another genre. It features a man, described as 'a saviour to single women', transforming

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[24] Some researchers regard *Bride Wannabes* as the first reality show of its kind in Hong Kong (e.g. Yang, 2014; Kwan, 2015). However, I think that the first one was *The Perfect Match*, an online dating show aired on TVB J2 in 2010 (see Television Broadcasts Limited, 2011).
[25] See http://programme.tvb.com/variety/nowheregirls/

different single women relating to their respective 'problems', e.g. being 'non-feminine' and unconfident, and helping them find a husband, which overlaps considerably with *Bride Wannabes*. In view of the above, I consider *Bride Wannabes* an influential programme worthy of serious academic investigation.

4.3. Data collection, transcription and translation

In this last section, I will delineate my data collection procedures and issues concerning my data transcription and translation. I will first focus on my primary data, i.e. the whole *Bride Wannabes* series. I collected the television series through Google video searches, and in the end successfully retrieved all episodes on various video sharing websites including PPstream, 56.com and Youku. In Hong Kong, Chinese subtitles are available in all pre-recorded programmes on Cantonese television channels. However, I did not adopt the subtitles in *Bride Wannabes* as my transcript, as they do not fully capture the original utterance, e.g. the translation of all English utterances/expressions into Chinese and the omission of many particles. Instead, I transcribed the data verbatim. I would like to particularly emphasise that while *Bride Wannabes* is primarily in Cantonese, it also involves English and Mandarin. For one thing, there are some non-Cantonese-speaking suitors; for another, code-mixing/code-switching is a common practice in Hong Kong. I transcribed the data as per the language(s) actually used. As the written forms of Cantonese and Mandarin are not always easily distinguishable, I italicised all parts in Mandarin. Besides, I also included in my transcript pauses, emphases, non-verbal features, e.g. nodding, prosodic features, e.g. volume, and, where relevant, descriptions of what is happening on the scene. Below is a list of symbols used in my transcript:

(.)   A dot inside brackets indicates a pause.

___   Underlining denotes the speaker's emphasis.

[ ]   Non-verbal and prosodic features, and what is happening on the scene are included in square brackets.

Italics   Utterances/terms uttered in Mandarin are italicised.

As regards my auxiliary data of forum posts, I collected them on the TVB forum. In my transcript, I showed them as they are without any modification, including language mistakes.

The last focus of this section is how I translated my data into English. Before doing that, I would like to stress that my data analysis is based on the original utterance, whatever the language is; the English translation is for reference only. Throughout this thesis, I will present my data transcription and translation in the following format:

Suki: 個　感覺　係　好(.)　好　empty　呀(.)　→ Original version

CL　feeling　be　very(.)　very　empty　SFP(.)　— Word-by-word translation

Feeling very…very empty. — Idiomatic translation

As shown above, I translated my data at two levels: word-by-word translation and idiomatic translation. The idiomatic translation aims to make the data more understandable for the reader. As for the word-by-word translation, I tried to capture the essence of the original version. This is especially useful when it comes to Chinese idioms, in which case an idiomatic translation may not reflect the richness of the language use. Owing to the vast difference between Cantonese and Mandarin on the one hand, and English on the other, it is not always possible to do a word-by-word translation. For example, an important means of expressing temporal and aspectual

meanings in Cantonese is through aspect markers, which are often expressed grammatically in English (Matthews and Yip, 2011); some adverbial markers and noun classifiers cannot be translated into English word by word either. Instead of ignoring such language differences, I indicated in my word-by-word translation all such markers whenever a word/phrase does not have an English equivalent (see a full list of such markers and their abbreviations on p. 12).

I find it necessary to particularly highlight an important feature of Cantonese, namely the large number of particles, with many not having direct English counterparts. Cantonese particles can be classified syntactically into the following types:

(a) Linking particles

Linking particles function to link (1) the possessor and the item possessed; (2) the attributive adjective and the noun; and (3) the relative clause[26] and the noun in a nominal phrase (ibid). In Cantonese, the most common linking particle is *嘅*, e.g.

(3)

18	**Louisa**:	嬌	小	玲瓏	**嘅**	Suki
		Delicate	tiny	exquisite	**LP**	Suki
		Delicate, tiny and exquisite Suki				

In (3), the linking particle *嘅* is used to link the adjective *嬌小玲瓏 (delicate, tiny and exquisite)* and the noun *Suki*.

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[26] In Cantonese, all relative clauses are premodifiers.

(b) Verbal particles

Verbal particles are similar to particles in English phrasal verbs in terms of both form and function, e.g. 'up' in 'pick up' (ibid, p. 243). They function to (1) show directions; (2) indicate an effect upon the object; (3) quantify a noun; and (4) express adversative and habitual meaning (ibid, p. 243-262). For example, an important Cantonese verbal particle is *倒*, which shows attainment (ibid, p. 251), e.g.

(4)

19	**Winnie:**	我	覺得	我	一定	可以	幫**倒**手
		I	think	I	must	can	help-**VTIP**
		I think that I must be able to help					

20		去	減輕	呢	個	災情	嘅
		go	relieve	this	CL	disaster situation	SFP
		relieve the situation of this disaster.					

(c) Topic particles

Cantonese is a topic-prominent (or topic-comment) language (*cf.* English is a subject-prominent (or subject-predicate) language)[27]; topic particles, which are often preceded by the sentence topic, are an important means to separate the topic and the comment in a sentence. For instance, in (5), the topic particle *啦* functions to mark *20 歲女仔 (20-year-old girls)* as the sentence topic:

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[27] For details about the feature of topic-prominence in Cantonese, see Matthews and Yip (2011, p. 83-91).

(5)

21	**Bonnie:**	20	歲	女仔	**啦**(.)	咁	出嚟	就
		20	years old	girl	**VTIP**(.)	in this way	out-come	then

When 20-year-old girls came out

22		同	我(.)	一齊	去	做	speed-dating	嘅	時候...
		with	me(.)	together	go	do	speed-dating	LP	when...

to do speed-dating with me...

(d) Interjections

Interjections often precede a sentence/clause and serve as place-fillers on the one hand, and to utter exclamations on the other. For example, in (6), the interjection *嗱* functions to seek attention:

(6)

23	**Mei-Ling:**	Bonnie	個	人	好	活潑(.)
		Bonnie	CL	person	very	lively(.)

Bonnie is very lively.

24		**嗱** (.)	中國	男仔	呢(.)	就	會	覺得
		VTIP (.)	Chinese	boys	VTIP(.)	just	would	think

There it is! Chinese boys would think

(e) Sentence-final particles[28]

Sentence-final particles, as the label suggests, occur in the final position of a sentence/clause. They do not have direct counterparts in English, but many linguists

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[28] See a more thorough discussion about Cantonese sentence-final particles in Chapter 6.

have pointed to the parallels between the functions of Cantonese sentence-final particles and those of English intonation (e.g. ibid; Leung and Gibbons, 2009). More specifically, they serve the pragmatic functions of showing speech-act types, marking evidentiality as well as emotional and affective colouring (see Matthews and Yip, 2011, p. 397-408). For example, in (7), 囉 serves as an evidential marker which marks the obviousness of Gobby's increased confidence after being transformed by the 'experts':

(7)

25	**Gobby:**	即係(.)	經過	改造咗		之後(.)	
		That is(.)	after	transform-PFV		after(.)	
		That is, after being transformed,					

26		我	對	自己	自信心	大咗	囉(.)
		I	in	self	self-confidence	big-PFV	**SFP**(.)
		I have more self-confidence.					

In my data transcription, I referred to linking particles and sentence-final particles as 'LP' and 'SFP' respectively, and the other types of particles, which are less relevant to my analysis, i.e. verbal particles, topic particles and interjections, as 'VTIP'.

To summarise, in this chapter, I introduced my data, justified my choice and depicted how I collected, transcribed and translated my data. This lays the groundwork for the following three data analysis chapters, in which I explain my methods of analysis, present my data analysis findings and address my first three research questions.

Chapter 5: How unmarried women are talked about

Following a description of my data, I now proceed to present my textual analysis findings in the coming three chapters. The present chapter addresses the parameter of how unmarried women are talked about in *Bride Wannabes*, focusing on two aspects: social actor representations and transitivity.[29] How the participants are referred to plays a crucial part in how they are talked about in the programme. It is interesting to explore e.g. whether they are referred to with their names or categorised in terms of their identities or roles; or whether they are represented via impersonalisation. As regards transitivity analysis, as van Leeuwen (2009) suggests, social actions are 'the core of a social practice' (p. 148). It is potentially useful to investigate what types of actions the participants are involved in and their roles therein. In the remainder of this chapter, I first introduce my analytical frameworks and methods of analysis, followed by a presentation and discussion of my data analysis findings.

5.1. Analytical frameworks

I examine how unmarried women are referred to and the types of actions involving them using van Leeuwen's social actor framework (2008) and the transitivity system in systemic-functional grammar (SFG, see Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014), respectively. This section first provides an overview of these two frameworks, along with, where relevant, the adaptations I make. What follows is a brief review of research drawing on the two frameworks. The last part is a discussion of my methods of analysis.

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[29] Other linguistic parameters are also relevant to how unmarried women are talked about. An obvious example is evaluation. Owing to the lack of space, however, I do not study it as a specific linguistic parameter. I do refer to it though when it overlaps with social actor representations and transitivity, e.g. when a social actor is appraised or when the attribute in a relational clause is value-laden (see Subsections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2).

5.1.1. Social actor framework

5.1.1.1. Overview of the social actor framework

Van Leeuwen's social actor framework (2008) is set within his social actors approach to CDS. He sees *discourses* as recontextualisations of actual social practices and has proposed various significant elements of social practice, among which participants and their eligibility conditions are central.[30] In addressing the element of participants, the social actor framework more specifically looks at how participants in social practices can be represented in English. Drawing on SFG, the framework does not view grammar as an abstract system of rules, but adopts a *functional* approach to grammar. Key to SFG are the three metafunctions of language: *experiential* (how an aspect of experience is represented), *interpersonal* (how people interact, including negotiations of social relationships) and *textual* (how information is presented). Van Leeuwen largely draws on the transitivity system (i.e. processes and participants) in the experiential dimension, but unlike SFG, he describes different kinds of social actor representations *sociosemantically*, i.e. classifying representations into sociological rather than grammatical categories, before looking at their linguistic realisations. For instance, instead of looking at whether a social actor plays the grammatical role of *actor* or *goal* in a clause, he is interested in whether a social actor is represented as having agency in an activity or undergoing an activity, i.e. *activation* versus *passivation*. He has systemised his framework into a system network,[31] as presented in Figure 5.1.

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[30] The other significant elements are actions, performance modes, presentation styles, times, locations, eligibility conditions (locations), resources: tools and materials and eligibility conditions (resources) (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 7-12).

[31] For details about different categories in the social actor framework, see van Leeuwen (2008, p. 23-56).

Figure 5.1: Social actor network
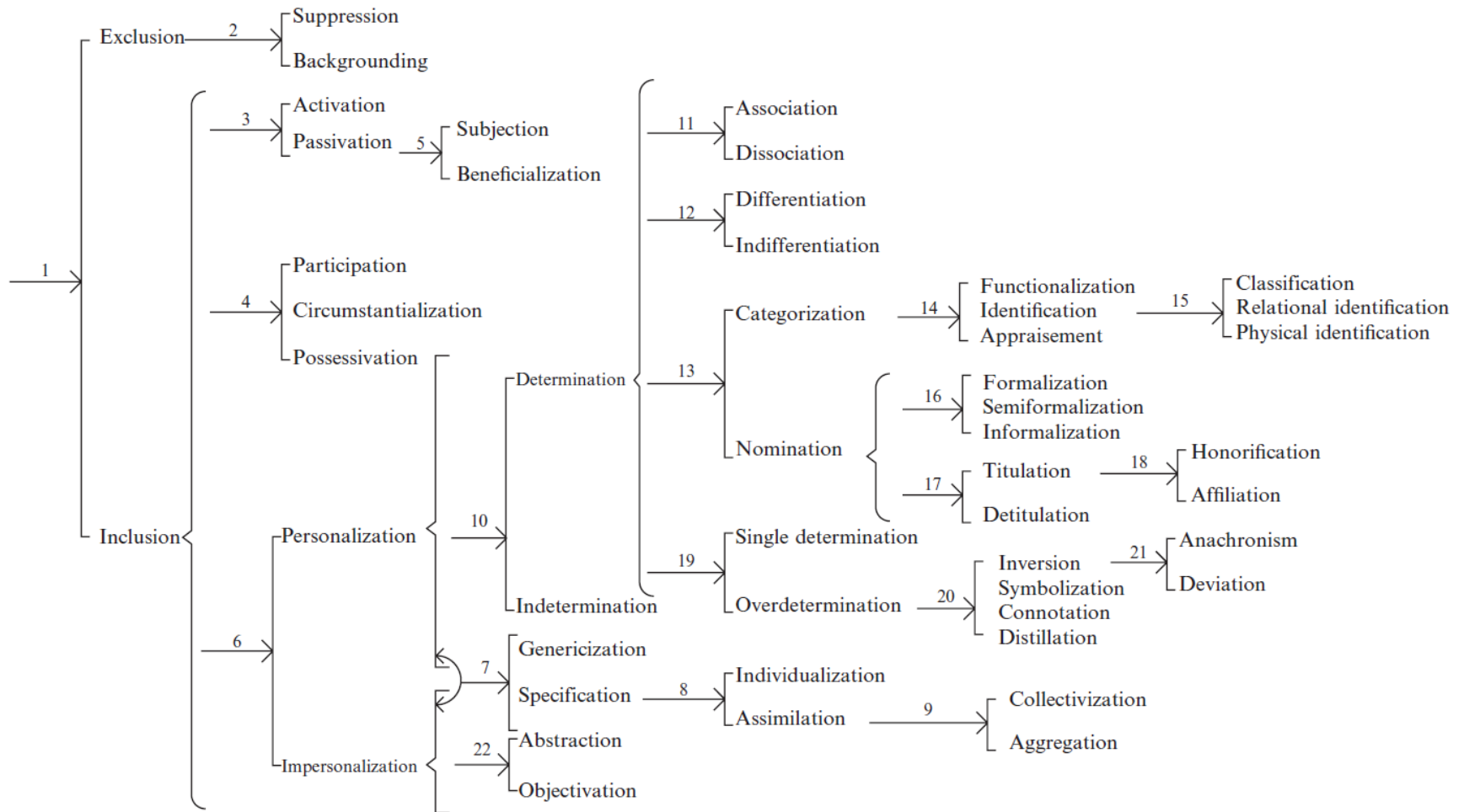
(Adopted from van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 52)

Notes: Square brackets = either-or choices; curly brackets = simultaneous choice

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Before my data analysis, I did a pilot study on a small selection of data and found that some of the categories in Figure 5.1 are particularly relevant to my research (see Figure 5.2). They are therefore focused on in my research.

Figure 5.2: The part of the social actor framework being drawn on
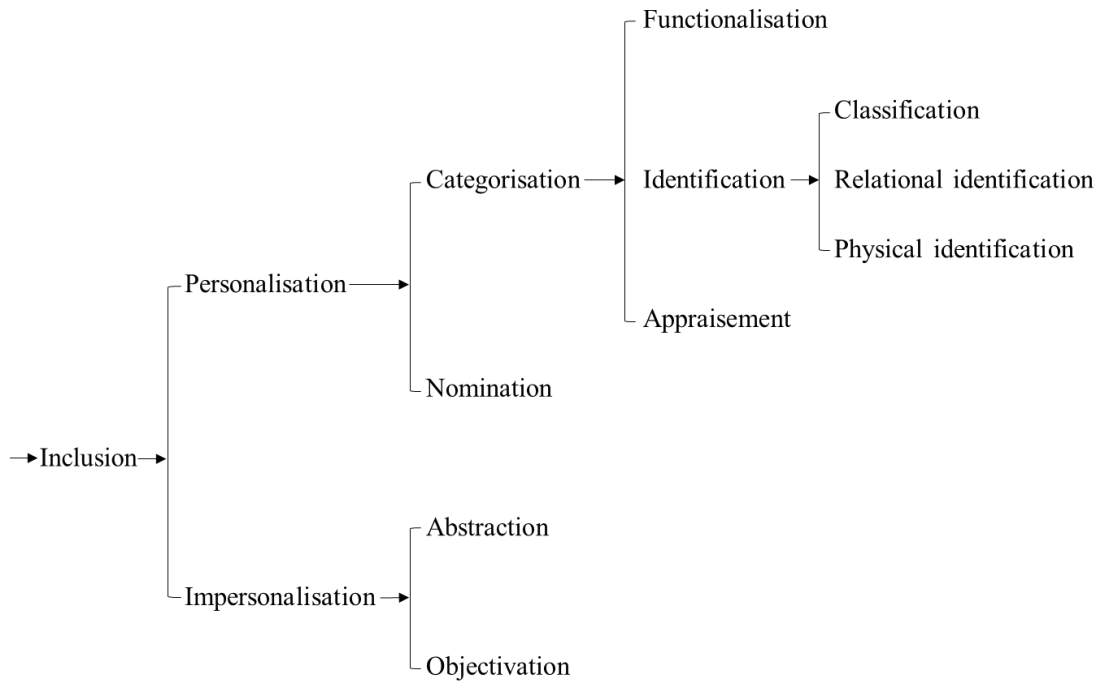
As indicated in Figure 5.2, when a social actor is *included* in a representation, he/she can be *personalised* or *impersonalised*. Impersonalisation can be sub-categorised into *abstraction* and *objectivation*. Abstraction occurs when social actors are represented through a quality ascribed to them. For example, in van Leeuwen's (2008) data, 'poor, black, unskilled, Muslim, or illegal' immigrants are impersonalised through abstraction as 'a lot of unwanted problems': 'Australia is in danger of saddling itself up with a lot of unwanted problems' (p. 46). When social actors are objectivated, they are represented via a place or an instrument associated with them, their utterances or their body parts, e.g. 'She put her hand on *Mary Kate's shoulder*' (ibid, p. 47, my emphasis).

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Most representations personalise social actors, who can be referred to with their names (*nomination*) or their roles or identities (*categorisation*). Van Leeuwen (2008) further categorises nomination in terms of levels of formality (*formalisation*, *semiformalisation* and *informalisation*) and the presence and absence of standard titles/ranks or personal/kinship terms (*titulation* and *detitulation*), but these nomination sub-categories appear to be of little relevance to my research. In Hong Kong, it is very common to address others by their English names (Bacon-Shone and Bolton, 1998; Bolton, 2000; Chan, 2002). Li (1997) even suggested that English names are often the preferred address form in educational and workplace settings. In *Bride Wannabes*, all participants are introduced with their English names. There is no mention of their surnames in the programme, let alone their full names. It thus seems unnecessary to look at those nomination sub-categories.

Van Leeuwen (2008) divides categorisation into three types: *functionalisation*, *identification* and *appraisement*. Functionalisation means representing social actors in terms of what they do, e.g. their occupations. When identified, social actors are represented in terms of who they are. Identification can be sub-divided into *classification* (representations that categorise social actors into different social groupings, e.g. based on gender, age and social class), *relational identification* (representations based on social actors' personal, kinship and work relationships with others, e.g. 'mother' and 'colleague') and *physical identification* (representations in terms of social actors' physical attributes, e.g. 'blonde'). The last sub-type of categorisation, appraisement, refers to representations carrying evaluative meanings.

I have selected the social actor framework as an analytical tool because it provides me with a useful and detailed linguistic operationalisation to investigate the representations of unmarried women in *Bride Wannabes*. The concepts of

impersonalisation and categorisation are of particular relevance. I do not expect many instances of impersonalisation in the programme, as it is unusual to represent the participants as a quality or an object. Impersonalised references are hence often telling. Van Leeuwen (2008) has discussed various effects of impersonalisation. For example, when a social actor is represented in terms of a quality abstracted from him/her, the abstracted reference often carries connotations and invites the audience to evaluate the social actor in a particular way. As regards categorisation, since *Bride Wannabes* is all about 'helping' the participants find a partner and they are often talked about in relation to their marriageability, the way they are categorised is often ideological. The viewers are often directed to seeing particular traits of the participants as (not) good when it comes to marriageability.

5.1.1.2. Adaptation to the social actor framework

After an overview of the social actor framework, this sub-section describes how I adapt it for my data. As mentioned, I did a pilot study on a small selection of data to test how well the framework fits my data. It provides the basis for me to make the adaptation to be discussed.

A problem I came across in my pilot analysis is the many cases of hybrid references of appraisement and identification/functionalisation. I find it problematic to see functionalisation, identification and appraisement as three either-or choices because appraisement seems likely to appear in combination with the other two categories, e.g.

(8)

27	**Louisa**:	一直	等待	真	愛	嘅	女	主角
		All along	wait	true	love	LP	female	protagonist

The female protagonist, Florence, who is all along waiting for her true love,

28		Florence(.)	係	**大都會**	**三高**	**女性**[32](.)
		Florence(.)	be	**cosmopolitan**	**three-high**	**woman**(.)

is **a cosmopolitan three-high woman**

29		高	學歷(.)	高	收入(.)	高	要求[33]
		high	education level(.)	high	income(.)	high	requirements

− high education level, high income and high requirements (for choosing a partner).

In (8), Florence is referred to as *大都會三高女性 (a cosmopolitan three-high woman)*. It is clearly a hybrid of identification and appraisement – on the one hand, identifying Florence in terms of her gender, educational level and social class; on the other, positively appraising her high education and income levels, and negatively appraising her high requirements for partner selection. I do not find this a language-specific feature. In English, it is also common to refer to someone as *a devoted Christian* or *an independent woman*. Van Leeuwen (2008) is well aware of hybridity in his categories and emphasises that the either-or choices in the social actor network should not be followed strictly in actual data analyses as '[b]oundaries can be blurred deliberately, for

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[32] *三高女 (three-high woman)* is a common informal expression in Hong Kong. Its evaluative meaning is more or less understood even without Louisa's subsequent definition.

[33] While it is generally accepted that *three highs* include high education level and high income, there are different opinions on the last *high*. Some people, like Louisa, suggest that it stands for high requirements, e.g. To (2015); some, however, see it as high job ranking, e.g. Wong (2011).

the purpose of achieving specific representational effects' (p. 53). While this is a valid explanation for the combinations of appraisement with other categories in his sample newspaper text, it seems less applicable to my data. Since news reports are supposed to be 'objective' and 'neutral' (Huckin, 1997), at least on the surface, appraisement in news reports should be expected to be infrequent with hybrid categories of appraisement and identification/functionalisation being rare and appearing mainly to serve specific representational purposes. Nevertheless, in my data, the participants are explicitly talked about in terms of their marriageability, which involves many evaluations. Appraisement in my data seems more likely to appear in combination with other categories, most frequently identification, than on its own.

To deal with the above-mentioned problem, I propose to replace the square bracket linking functionalisation, identification and appraisement with a curly one (as shown in red in Figure 5.3) to reflect that the three categorisation subcategories are simultaneous choices.

Figure 5.3: Adaptation to the social actor framework
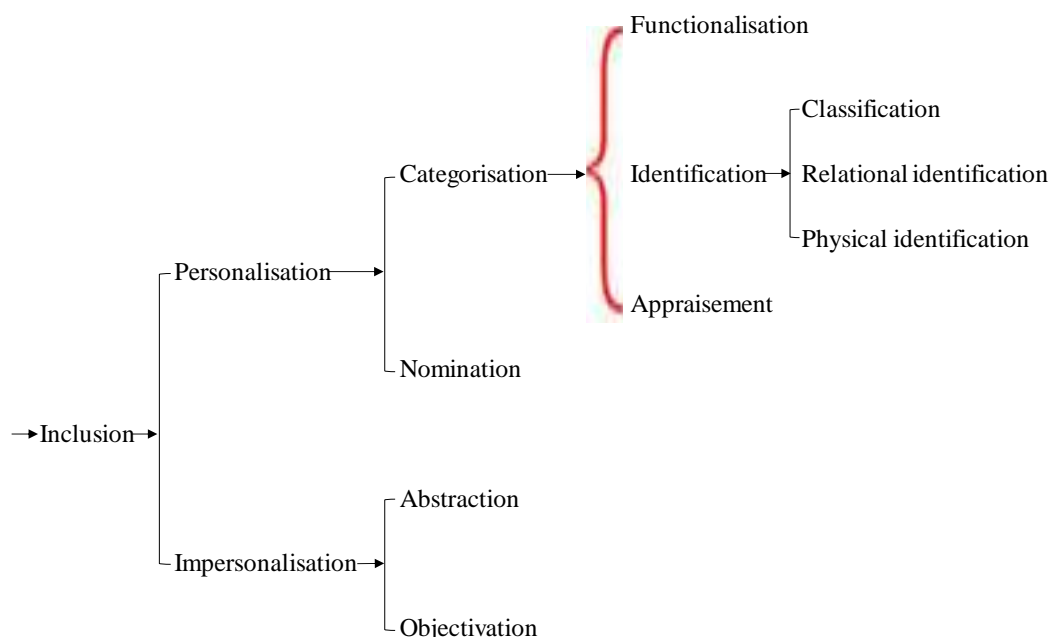
I analyse my whole dataset using this adapted framework.

5.1.1.3. Empirical research employing the social actor framework

In this last sub-section on the social actor framework, I review some empirical research employing it. Despite being English-based, the framework has been applied to data in various languages. For example, Storm (2015) drew on three categories in the framework, namely *individualisation*, i.e. referring to a social actor individually, *genericisation*, i.e. representing a social actor via generic references, and *differentiation*, i.e. representing a social actor as distinct from another (group of) social actor(s), along with some other grammatical categories, to investigate the representations of Latinos in minority Spanish-language print media in America and compare them against those by mainstream English-language media. She found that the representations were dynamic. Latinos were sometimes represented as a subordinate group, which reinforced the representations by the mainstream media. For example, Latinos were sometimes genericised in terms of their migrant status and their ethnicity, e.g. *comunidad inmigrante (immigrant community)* and *chicanos y mexicanos (Chicanos and Mexicans)*. However, they also sometimes played dominant roles in relation to Anglo Americans in the representations, which reversed the traditional Us/Them hierarchy in America. For example, in reporting the incident of several local supermarkets sacking their Latino janitors without prior notice, some newspapers referred to Latinos and their allies with the first person plural pronoun *nosotros*, i.e. Us, thus differentiating themselves from the local supermarkets (Them). Storm argued for the potential for Spanish-language media to challenge the status quo.

While I could not find any study adopting the social actor framework to analyse Chinese data, there has been one applying it to Japanese. Tominari (2011) drew on the framework to examine the construction of masculinity in the representation of Saitō, a high-school baseball player, in Japanese newspapers. She found that the newspapers

constructed him as a hero. For example, Saitō was singled out via individualisation and differentiation, whereas the other players were either referred to as a group, i.e. *assimilation*, or excluded despite some traces of their actions, i.e. *suppression*; Saitō was also impersonalised as 'iron arm' and 'right arm' to highlight the strength of his pitching. Apart from her empirical findings, Tominari has also contributed by adapting the English-based framework to make it applicable to Japanese. Relating to the category of *backgrounding*, i.e. a social actor being excluded in relation to the given action, but being retrievable from other references to her/him in the text, she added a subcategory *backgrounding by null anaphora* to cope with the 'innocent' backgrounding caused by the pro-drop feature in Japanese. Japanese is also characterised by the widespread use of honorifics, which mark gender, formality and the addresser-addressee relationship, and can appear as suffixes to names or stand alone. Tominari therefore also took into account the use of honorifics in nomination and functionalisation.

As shown by this review, the social actor framework can be a useful tool not only for English research. It has been applied successfully to Spanish and Japanese and potentially other languages, even though adaptations might be necessary in some cases.

5.1.2. Transitivity system in systemic-functional grammar (SFG)

5.1.2.1. Overview of the transitivity system

As well as investigating how the participants are referred to, I also examine what kinds of actions are associated with them and their roles therein, using the transitivity system in SFG (see Halliday, 1985, 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). Instead of studying language as an abstract model of theoretical categories, SFG views grammar as a system network of choices and 'a resource for making meaning' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 23). As mentioned, Halliday sees language as having experiential,

interpersonal and textual metafunctions, with transitivity being set within the experiential dimension.

Before giving an overview of the transitivity system, it seems necessary to justify why I have selected it, rather than van Leeuwen's social action framework (2008) in parallel with his social actor framework. The main rationale is that SFG of Chinese has been well-researched in the literature, both theoretically and empirically. Halliday and McDonald (2004) provide a description of Chinese SFG, and Li (2007) has even published a monograph on it. SFG has also been widely employed to study Chinese data, e.g. Tian (2008) and Liu (2005). Admittedly, both Halliday and McDonald (2004) and Li (2007) only discuss SFG in Mandarin and most empirical studies look at Mandarin data. Nonetheless, despite the mutual unintelligibility of spoken Cantonese and Mandarin (Tang and van Heuven, 2009), their grammars share many similarities (Matthews and Yip, 2011; Cai, *et al.*, 2011). Halliday and McDonald (2004) and Li (2007) therefore provide me with a reference point to deal with language-specific issues in my analysis.

I now briefly describe the transitivity system in relation to Cantonese and illustrate it with examples from my data. Transitivity concerns the content of a message and deals with the lexicogrammatical resources for expressing various domains of experience including types of *processes*, i.e. 'goings-on' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 213), *participants*, i.e. who/what, and *circumstances*, i.e. when/where/how. In the system, the basic analysis unit is the clause. Processes, which are prototypically realised by verbal phrases,[34] are the most important part of the clause and process types are the core of transitivity. As my interest is on what types of processes the unmarried women participants in *Bride Wannabes* are involved in and their roles therein, rather

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[34] Processes can be realised by other word classes through grammatical metaphors. However, considering the scope of this research, I only deal with verbal phrase realisations.

than when, where or how they perform the actions, process types and participant roles are obviously more relevant to my research and my discussion below will only focus on these two aspects.[35]

There are six process types in the transitivity system: *material*, *mental*, *relational*, *verbal*, *behavioural* and *existential* processes.[36] Below I discuss each process type, but keep the discussion brief for existential processes because of their low frequency and lack of relevance to my analysis.

1. Material processes

Material processes are processes of doing and happening. The most important participant in a material clause is the *actor*, who performs the action. If the process is realised by a transitive verb, it also involves a *goal*, i.e. the participant affected by the action, or a *scope*, the participant involved in but not affected by the action. For example, in (9), *they* is the actor of the process 唔俾 *(didn't allow)*, and 佢 *(her)* is the goal:

(9)

30	**Louisa:**	唔	俾	佢	同	男仔	交往
		Not	**allow**	her	with	boys	go out

They[37] **didn't allow** her to go out with boys.

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[35] For details of the circumstantial aspect of transitivity in SFG, see Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 310-332) in relation to the English language and Halliday and McDonald (2004, p. 377-378) in relation to the Chinese language.

[36] Both Halliday and McDonald (2004) and Li (2007) have a slightly different classification. The first difference is Halliday and McDonald's exclusion of the behavioural process and Li's classification of it as a sub-category of the material process. Besides, both classify the existential process as a sub-category of the relational process. My research sticks to Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) classification, as the two process types only form a very minimal part of the representations of the participants and they do not affect the overall representations in any way.

[37] In the Cantonese version, the subject has been omitted but is recoverable by the context.

In (10), *佢 (she)* is the actor of the process *模仿 (imitates)* and *類似 Suki 嗰類嘅女士 (women of Suki's type)* is the scope:

(10)

31	**Pierce:**	佢	**模仿**	類似	Suki	嗰	類	嘅	女士
		She	**imitate**	resemble	Suki	that	type	LP	women

She **imitates** women of Suki's type.

Transitive processes may also involve a *beneficiary*, i.e. the indirect object of a transitive verb, e.g.

(11)

32	**Pierce:**	之前	我哋	**教**	佢	好多	技巧(.)
		Previously	we	**taught**	her	many	skills(.)

Previously we **taught** her many skills.

佢 (her) is the beneficiary of the process *教 (teach)*. The beneficiary role can also be realised by a word class that does not exist in English: coverbs,[38] i.e. verbs that 'typically occur together with another verb, the coverb and its object serving to modify the following verb' (Matthews and Yip, 2011, p. 69). Another characteristic of coverbs is that while they have many properties of verbs, e.g. being able to take aspect markers, they function to convey circumstantial meanings like prepositions in English. Coverbs which commonly realise the beneficiary role include *幫 (help)* and *俾 (give)*. For

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[38] See Matthews and Yip (2011, p. 69-71; 130-142) for a discussion of Cantonese coverbs and Li (2007, p. 32-36) for that of Mandarin coverbs.

instance, in (12), Florence is the beneficiary of the process 設計咗 *(has designed)*, as realised by the coverb 幫 *(help)*.

(12)

33	**Louisa:**	Shirley	**幫**	Florence	設計咗
		Shirley	**help**	Florence	design-PFV
		Shirley has designed			

34		一	個(.)	修身	療程
		one	CL(.)	slimming	treatment
		a slimming treatment **for** Florence.[39]			

Here, the coverb 幫 *(help)* is equivalent to the English preposition 'for' as used to indicate a beneficiary of someone's action. As Matthews and Yip (2011) point out, there is no Cantonese preposition corresponding to *for* (in the sense of 'to the advantage of'), so the coverb 幫 *(help)* is always used to express such meaning.

2. Mental processes

Mental processes concern our state of mind and can be categorised into *perceptive* (e.g. seeing and smelling), *emotive* (e.g. loving and hating), *cognitive* (e.g. thinking and knowing) and *desiderative* (e.g. wanting and hoping) processes. Mental processes involve two participants: the *senser*, i.e. the entity who perceives, feels, thinks and desires, and *phenomenon*, i.e. what is being sensed. While the senser is in most cases a

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[39] In (12), Shirley is the actor of both helping and designing, and Florence is there just to receive Shirley's service. Therefore, it cannot be translated as 'Shirley has helped Florence design a slimming treatment'.

human, the phenomenon can be a human, an object or even a projected clause. Below is an example of a mental process:

(13)

35	**Gobby:**	我	成日	**覺得**	自己(.)	唔	夠	人	靚	呀
		I	always	**think**	self(.)	not	enough	people	beautiful	SFP

I always **think** I'm not as beautiful as others.

Here, 我 *(I)* is the senser of the cognitive mental process 覺得 *(think)*. The phenomenon is filled by a projected clause: 自己唔夠人靚呀 *(I'm not as beautiful as others)*.

3. Relational processes

Relational processes are processes of being and having. They can be sub-divided into two main types: identifying and attributive relational processes. Identifying relational processes define a participant in terms of another entity, with the specific category being the *token* and the more general one being the *value*. e.g.

(14)

36	**Louisa:**	盛女愛作戰	嘅	五	個	女	主角	當中(.)
		Bride Wannabes	LP	five	CL	female	protagonists	among(.)

Among the five female protagonists of *Bride Wannabes*,

37		第一	個	跑	出	嘅(.)	**係**	28	歲	嘅	Suki
		first	CL	run	out	LP(.)	**be**	28	years old	LP	Suki

the first one who has run out **is** 28-year-old Suki.

In this relational clause, *Suki* is the token and 第一個跑出嘅 *(the first one who has run out)* is the value.

The more common type of relational processes is attributive relational processes, which involve ascribing an attribute (the *attribute*) to a participant (the *carrier*). The carrier is often linked to a quality realised by an adjectival phrase, e.g. *She's smart*. In English, this kind of relational process is always realised by a linking verb, mostly *be*. The case differs in Cantonese and Mandarin. In those two languages, the verb and adjective boundary is fuzzy; since adjectives behave very much like verbs, e.g. being able to take perfective markers and objects, they are also referred to as *stative verbs* (Matthews and Yip, 2011). Therefore, both Halliday and McDonald (2004) and Li (2007) see the '[subject]+[adjectival phrase]' construction as a realisation of attributive relational processes, e.g.

(15)

38	**Winnie:**	因為		佢	**genuine**	吖嘛(.)
		Because	she	**genuine**	SFP(.)	

Because she**'s genuine**.

Attributive relational processes may also be realised by a nominal phrase, e.g. relating a participant to a role or class membership, e.g.

(16)

39	**Louisa**:	Mandy	**係**	典型	事業	型	女性(.)
		Mandy	**be**	typical	career	type	woman(.)

Mandy **is** a typical career woman.

Here, the carrier, *Mandy*, is related to the attribute, *典型事業型女性 (a typical career woman)*. In this type of attributive relational process, the attribute is often a categorised reference in the social actor framework. Attributive relational processes may also show circumstantial (e.g. *She's in London*) or possessive (e.g. *He has a car*) relationships.

4. Verbal processes

Verbal processes, i.e. processes of saying, involve four main participants: the *sayer*, i.e. the person talking and the only mandatory participant; the *receiver*, i.e. the addressee; the *target*, i.e. the person/object talked about; and the *verbiage*, i.e. the message of the talk. For example, (17) and (18) are verbal clauses:

(17)

40	**Louisa:**	Jamie(.)	由	男仔	角度(.)	**品評**
		Jamie(.)	from	boy	angle(.)	**comment**

Jamie **comments** on

41		兩位	女	主角
		two	female	protagonists

the two female protagonists from a boy's angle.

In (17), Jamie is the sayer of the process of *品評(comments)*, and *兩位女主角(the two female protagonists)* is the target.

(18)

42	**Mei-Ling:**	我	頭先	**問**	Florence(.)	點解	妳	唔
		I	just now	**ask**	Florence(.)	why	you	not

Just now, I **asked** Florence, 'Why don't you

43		同	個	個(.)	啲	男仔	傾偈	呀(.)
		with	that	CL(.)	CL	boys	talk	SFP(.)

talk with that…those boys?

44		介紹	三	個	男仔(.)	佢	**話**	我(.)	未	warm up
		introduce	three	CL	boys(.)	she	**say**	I(.)	not	warm up

I've introduced three boys to you.' She **said**, 'I haven't warmed up.'

(18) involves two verbal processes, excluding the quotes. In the first clause, 我 *(I)*, i.e. Mei-Ling, is the sayer of the process 問 *(asked)*, and Florence is the receiver; in the second, 佢 *(she)*, i.e. Florence, is the sayer of the process 話 *(said).* (18) also indicates another feature of verbal processes, namely that they can project another process, either via direct or indirect speech, i.e. parataxis or hypotaxis in Hallidayan terms (see Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 451-453).

5. Behavioural processes

Behavioural processes concern actions which manifest our state of mind and physiological states. This process type shares similarities between mental and material processes and is intermediate between the two. As noted by Thompson (2014), the difference between mental and behavioural processes lies in 'purely mental processes and the outward physical signs of those processes' (p 109), e.g. *see* versus *watch*.

Behavioural and material processes differ in that the former refers to physiological processes whereas the latter concerns physical actions. The only participant involved in behavioural processes is the *behaver*, i.e. the person who is 'behaving'. For example, in (19), 佢 *(she)* is the behaver of the physiological action of 笑騎騎 *(laugh)*:

(19)

45	**Zion:**	佢	成日	都	**笑騎騎**	咁	嘅
		She	always	all	**laugh**	SFP	SFP

She always **laughs**.

6. Existential processes

The last process type, the existential process, relates to the existence of an entity, which is often realised by *there is/are* in English. In Cantonese, however, the meaning of 'existing' is essentially expressed using the character 有 (literally 'have'). In existential clauses, 有 is often not equivalent to any English expression. (20) is an example:

(20)

46	**Mei-Ling:**	佢	話⟨.⟩	香港	**有**	好多	嘅	女仔	呢⟨.⟩
		He	say⟨.⟩	Hong Kong	**have**	many	LP	girls	VTIP⟨.⟩

He said in Hong Kong, **there are** many girls

47		好	鍾意	賣弄風情
		very	like	flirt

who like to flirt.

After an overview of the transitivity system, the next sub-section is a literature review of previous studies applying SFG to Chinese data.

5.1.2.2. Empirical research employing SFG

SFG has been widely employed to study Chinese data in different linguistic fields. For example, Tian (2008) examined all the three dimensions of SFG in his genre analysis of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome case report produced by the Chinese government in 2003. He found that the report was dominated by relational processes, providing factual details, e.g. numbers of cases and locations. It was also characterised by the use of inanimate subjects and marked themes[40] realised by time adjuncts. He argued that such features manifested the government's attempt to maintain the objectivity of the report, which enabled them to manage the crisis satisfactorily.

SFG was also used to conduct a comparative study of Chinese and English sales letters by Cheung (2011). She did a thematic analysis of the letters focusing on experiential themes, more specifically, the transitivity roles of the themes, e.g. the process or the actor. She found that in both cases, the theme positions were most often filled by the actor role in material processes and the carrier role in relational processes, which she thought was the writer's attempt to show the reader what he/she could offer and highlight the attributes of the offers. She also identified two major differences between the Chinese and English letters. First, there were many more ellipted themes, i.e. the subject being omitted, in the Chinese data. She attributed this to the pro-drop feature of Chinese. Second, material processes as marked themes (in the form of imperatives) appeared much more frequently in the English data. She considered this a strategy to trigger prompt actions and explained the difference in terms of culture: it

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[40] *Theme* is a concept in the textual dimension of SFG meaning the starting point of a clause. When the theme is not realised by a nominal phrase, it is called a marked theme.

would be face-threatening in the Chinese context to pressurise the reader into making a purchase immediately.

SFG is evidently a well-established framework for studying Chinese data. As shown by the two studies discussed, the researchers have successfully applied the framework to different kinds of Chinese data, and none mentioned any language-specific problem. After this overview of the social actor framework and the transitivity system in SFG, the next subsection will discuss the methods of analysing my data using the frameworks.

5.1.3. Methods of analysis

This sub-section presents the methods of analysing how unmarried women are talked about using the social actor framework and the transitivity system in SFG. First, I describe the data under investigation in this chapter and some of its features. I analyse all talk relating to the participants by (1) Louisa, the compere; (2) the 'experts'; and (3) the suitors.[41] A significant feature of the dataset is the large amount of talk by Louisa, which can be attributed to her role as a narrator. The programme, as mentioned, aims to 'help' the participants find a partner, and the talk about them often relates to their marriageability. Louisa's role is therefore not only to narrate what is happening, but also to create excitement and provide a frame for evaluating the participants in terms of their marriageability. My analysis focuses on the following social actors: (1) Florence; (2) Bonnie; (3) Gobby; (4) Suki; (5) Mandy; and (6) the participants as a group. A point to bear in mind is that the dataset is dominated by Louisa's talk about individual participants, which is thus my main focus.

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[41] While I only analyse how the participants are talked about by Louisa, the 'experts' and the suitors, where relevant, I also refer to how they are talked to by the 'experts' as corroborative evidence.

To do my social actor analysis, I first identify all references to the participants and categorise them according to the adapted social actor framework in Figure 5.3. Many hybrid categories appear in this process. For example, the participants are repeatedly referred to as female protagonists, i.e. in terms of their gender and role in the programme. In (21), Suki is referred to as 第一位女主角 *(the first female protagonist)*:

(21)

48	**Louisa:**	第一	位	女	主角(.)	係	Suki(.)
		First	**CL**	**female**	**protagonist**(.)	**be**	**Suki**(.)

The first female protagonist is Suki.

Considering this phenomenon, I mainly analyse the references qualitatively, although I sometimes do simple quantification. In other words, my focus is not on whether a social actor is nominated or categorised more, but on how different social actors are defined by the way they are referred to. Therefore, my main interest is categorised and impersonalised references, rather than English names or pronouns.

Apart from categorised and impersonalised references, I also look at a recurring pattern in Louisa's references to the participants: the '[prenominal modifier(s)]+[name]' construction ([PM]+[N] construction). In van Leeuwen's terms (2008), the construction is a categorisation and nomination hybrid. In his discussion of nomination, he mentions a similar construction commonly used in journalism: the '[pseudo title]+[proper name]' construction, e.g. 'controversial cancer therapist Milan Brych' (p. 41). The [PM]+[N] construction I am discussing includes, but is not limited to, this '[pseudo title]+[proper name]' construction. In many references in my data, the prenominal modifier (PM) is an adjective or relative clause. For example, Suki is referred to as 嬌滴滴嘅 *Suki*

(delicately pretty Suki) (i.e. the '[adjective]+[name]' construction), which is a hybrid of physical identification, appraisement and nomination:

(22)

49	**Louisa**:	嬌滴滴		嘅	**Suki**(.)	大	受歡迎
		Delicately pretty		**LP**	**Suki**(.)	greatly	popular

Delicately pretty Suki is greatly popular.

This construction is not Cantonese-specific. In English, it also makes sense to refer to someone as, e.g. *hardworking Daniel*, despite its markedness.

I have to particularly highlight the '[relative clause]+[name]' construction though, which is language-specific and inapplicable to English. This construction is repeatedly used by Louisa, e.g.

(23)

50	**Louisa:**	一直	等待(.)	白	馬	王子	嘅	Florence(.)
		All along	wait(.)	white	horse	prince	LP	Florence(.)

Florence, who is waiting for her prince on a white horse all along.

This example is not as straightforward as (22). As far as the idiomatic English translation is concerned, Florence is clearly nominated as *Florence*. However, considering the nature of relative clauses in Cantonese, I have a different interpretation. Unlike English, in Cantonese, all relative clauses are pre-modifiers of nouns, and there is no relative pronoun. In many cases, relative clauses are formed by adding the particle 嘅 at the end. 嘅 is a linking particle linking the PM (not necessarily a relative clause) and the noun in a nominal phrase. As indicated in (22), the particle 嘅 links the

prenominal adjective 嬌滴滴嘅 *(delicately pretty)* and the noun *Suki*. Relative clauses are thus not so easily identified in Cantonese. Matthews and Yip (2011) point out that in Cantonese, 'there is a continuum from adjectival modification to relative clauses, with some structures being of indeterminate or intermediate status as between adjectival modifiers and relative clause' (p. 482). Another significant difference between relative clauses in the two languages is that almost all relative clauses in Cantonese are restrictive ones. The only non-restrictive construction is the one listed in (23), i.e. 一直等待白馬王子嘅 *Florence (Florence, who is waiting for her prince on a white horse all along)*. According to Matthews and Yip (2011), this type of non-restrictive relative clauses is only used in formal registers, e.g. news reporting, but seems also commonly used as a form of introduction in game shows and sports events. They also point to the markedness of the usage of non-restrictive relative clauses in Cantonese: 'Such language is doubly unrepresentative of spoken Cantonese, since it shows the influence of English as well as written Chinese syntax' (p. 327). I would like to emphasise that although the relative clause in (23) is non-restrictive in function, it is still a PM similar to a prenominal noun/adjective in a nominal phrase. While in the English translation, *Florence* and *who is waiting for her prince on a white horse all along* are only loosely attached to each other, in the Cantonese version, 一直等待白馬王子 and *Florence* are closely linked, like the close link between *delicately pretty* and *Suki* in (22). Therefore, where relevant, I regard PMs as part of the social actor reference in the [PM]+[N] construction.

Louisa's use of the [PM]+[N] construction plays a salient role in social actor representations in *Bride Wannabes*, not only because of its recurrence, but also because it functions to, for one thing, identify the participants, and, for another, to define them and steer responses. The participants have different names, so it is unnecessary for

Louisa to put any pre-modifier before their names. The pre-modifier(s) thus serve(s) representational purposes to define the participants and claim relevance to their marriageability.

As regards the transitivity analysis, I first identify all processes the participants are involved in and classify them into different process types. Because of the limited space, I only take into account processes realised by verbal phrases and ignore those represented via grammatical metaphors. After gaining a picture of the overall process type distribution among the participants, I look at some general patterns in the representations of them. I then do a more thorough analysis on individual participants. More specifically, I do simple quantification to compare the relative importance of different process types in the representations of different participants and investigate the participants' roles in different processes, e.g. in terms of the mental process, whether they are a senser or a phenomenon, and identify some special features in each case.

After describing my methods of analysis, the next section reports my data analysis findings and discusses relevant implications.

5.2. Data analysis

This section concerns my social actor and transitivity analyses and addresses the following research question:

RQ1. How are unmarried women talked about in *Bride Wannabes*?

- How are they represented as social actors?

- What types of actions are they associated with?

I first report my analysis findings, including a brief description of the macro-representations of the participants in the programme and a more in-depth report of the

159

representations of individual participants. I then proceed to a discussion of the findings in relation to RQ1.

5.2.1. Macro-representations of the participants

This subsection provides a brief macro-picture of how the participants are represented in *Bride Wannabes*. I first depict the overall framing of the participants in the programme. I then report how they are collectively represented as social actors. Lastly, I describe the overall distribution of the five process types in the representations of them and some similarities and differences among them.

5.2.1.1. Overall framing

Bride Wannabes overtly problematises the participants' singleness and frames the process of them looking for partners as a war/race. Such framing is evidenced by the Chinese programme title: *盛女愛作戰* (literally, blossomed women love to fight (for their Mr Right)), which represents the participants and the show via a war metaphor. Besides, the participants are referred to as *盛女 (blossomed women)*, which as mentioned in Section 1.1, is an informal reference to single women who are considered no longer young. Their singleness is thus foregrounded. Moreover, the programme starts as follows:

(24)

51	**Louisa**:	情	場	如	**戰場**(.)
		Love	field	like	**battlefield**(.)

Love is like a **battlefield**.

52		喺	香港		呢	一	個	**戰區**(.)
		On	Hong Kong		this	one	CL	**battlefield**(.)

On the **battlefield** in Hong Kong,

53		女人	**戰**	**情**		告急(.)
		women	**battle**	**situation**		critical(.)

women's **battle situation** is critical.

Louisa, the compere, explicitly compares love to a battlefield, and represents Hong Kong women as facing a critical battle situation. The programme therefore frames looking for partners as a violent action.

Such framing is further reinforced throughout the programme by drawing on various material processes surrounding wars. The most frequently occurring one is the process of 出擊 *(sallying forth)* (seven times). Louisa from time to time refers to the action of finding a partner or going on a date as 出擊*(sallying forth)*. For instance, she twice represents the participants collectively as the actors of *sallying forth*, e.g.

(25)

54	**Louisa:**	五	位	單身	女郎(.)
		Five	CL	single	girls(.)

In the coming half a year, the five single women

55		嚟緊		會	有	半	年	時間(.)	接受
		come-PROG		would	have	half	year	time(.)	receive

will undergo

56		大	改造(.)
		considerable	transformations(.)

considerable transformations,

57		然後(.)	主動	出擊(.)	尋找	真命天子
		then(.)	actively	**sally forth**(.)	find	Mr Right

and then actively **sally forth** to find their Mr Right.

Louisa also uses this war metaphor to represent individual participants or several of them, e.g.

(26)

58	**Louisa:**	下	一	節(.)	Gobby	第一	次	出擊(.)
		Next	one	session(.)	Gobby	first	time	**sally forth**(.)

In the next session, Gobby is going to **sally forth** for the first time,

59		同	男仔	約會
		with	boy	date

having a date with a boy.

Apart from 出擊 *(sallying forth)*, Louisa also uses the term 作戰 *(fighting)*:

(27)

60	**Louisa:**	而家	剩	返(.)	三	個	繼續	作戰
		Now	remain	back(.)	three	CL	continue	**fight**

Now there remain three who continue **fighting**.

Similarly, Louisa draws on a couple of racing metaphors to represent the participants looking for boyfriends. In one example, she uses the material process of 衝刺 *(sprinting)*:

(28)

61	**Louisa:**	而家	剩	返(.)	Florence(.)	Gobby(.)	同埋	Bonnie(.)
		Now	remain	back(.)	Florence(.)	Gobby(.)	and	Bonnie(.)

Now, there remain only Florence, Gobby and Bonnie

62		最後	衝刺
		final	**sprint**

who **are having their final sprint**.

Louisa compares Florence, Gobby and Bonnie making their final effort to find a partner to them having their final sprint in a race. War and racing metaphors are also used to portray Suki as a success story. As this finding is highly relevant to how she is represented, I do not talk about it here, but in the discussion about her in Subsection 5.2.2.

Such war and racing metaphors are probably used to create excitement in the show, but they are problematic. Both metaphors fall into the wider metaphor complex *aggression and competition* and are conventional source domains for competition (Koller, 2004). The programme frames marriage as every woman's goal, and the participants need to pit against their fellow single women to achieve this goal, which as Taylor (2012) suggested vis-à-vis the American dating show *The Bachelor*, 'is predicated on the notion that men are at a premium and drastic measures must be taken to secure one' (p. 129). This also undermines female solidarity. Furthermore, such

163

representations ideologically define women by their relationship/marital status. Suki, who could find a boyfriend, is represented as the winner, whereas the others are losers.

After discussing the overall framing of the programme, the next subsection turns to the social actor representations of the participants as a collective group.

5.2.1.2. Representations of the participants as a collective group

The participants are mostly referred to collectively by Louisa, the compere, with the reference 五位女主角 *(the five female protagonists)*, but their singleness is sometimes foregrounded. Here, I particularly focus on two references which foreground the participants' singleness in a derogatory manner. First, the participants are classified in terms of their gender and marital status as 剩女 *(leftover women)*, a slang expression for single women aged 30 or above:

(29)

63	**Louisa:**	為咗	告別	**剩女**	行列…
		In order	say goodbye	**leftover-woman**	rank…

In order to withdraw from the **leftover woman** group…

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the referents of leftover women are often thought to be unwanted by men and 'picky' about their partners, so it is apparently a negative appraisement problematising the participants' singleness.

Another derogatory reference is the impersonalised reference 姑婆屋 (literally *the house for spinsters*; same as the English expression 'on the shelf'):

(30)

64	**Louisa**:	呢	五	個	不同	性格	嘅	單身	女子(.)
		These	five	CL	different	personalities	LP	single	women(.)

These five single women, who are of different personalities,

65		決定	改變	命運(.)	衝	出	**姑婆**	**屋**
		decide	change	fate(.)	dash	out	**spinster**	**house**

decide to change their fate and get off **the shelf**.

The term 姑婆屋 *(the house for spinsters)* originated in China in the Qing dynasty, when some women were able to earn their own living and unwilling to be married off to someone they did not know. They decided not to marry and bought a house and lived together with several other like-minded women. Their house was referred to as 姑婆屋 *(the house for spinsters)*, which was already a derogatory term then since the practice was against the rituals of the time. In (30), Louisa figuratively refers to the participants via the objectivated reference 姑婆屋 *(the house for spinsters)* to signal their singleness. While the reference originally referred to the place for women remaining single of their own accord, it now has the same meaning as 'on the shelf'.

Lastly, I discuss a telling reference of abstraction in Episode 1 by Winnie, a life coach, who represents the participants as (part of) a disaster:

(31)

66	**Winnie:**	我	覺得	我	一定	可以	幫倒手
		I	think	I	must	can	help-VTIP

I think that I must be able to help

67	去	減輕	呢	個	**災情**	嘅
	go	relieve	this	CL	**disaster situation**	SFP

relieve **the situation of this disaster**.

At the beginning of Episode 1, Winnie recruits online participants for *Bride Wannabes*. By saying that she thinks she must be able to help relieve the situation of the disaster, she implicitly refers to Hong Kong single women aged 30 or above as a disaster and to the five participants as part of it. By employing this negatively connoted reference, she represents this group of women's singleness as a serious problem in Hong Kong and defines women very much based on their marital status.

  All these three references carry negative meaning, representing the participants as a problem. By problematising them, the programme then has a point to 'help' and 'transform' them. After discussing the social actor representations of the participants as a group, the next subsection will proceed to the overall transitivity analysis results.

5.2.1.3. Overall patterns in the transitivity analysis

This subsection concerns the overall distribution of the six process types in the representations of individual participants and some similarities and differences among them. Figure 5.4 shows the overall process type distribution among the participants:

Figure 5.4: Distribution of process types among the participants

	Florence	Bonnie	Gobby	Suki	Mandy
Material	95 (31%)	138 (46%)	87 (56%)	35 (36%)	25 (49%)
Mental	80 (26%)	77 (25%)	22 (14%)	22 (23%)	10 (20%)
Relational	77 (25%)	55 (18%)	33 (21%)	24 (25%)	12 (24%)
Verbal	42 (14%)	30 (10%)	12 (8%)	11 (11%)	3 (6%)
Behavioural	10 (3%)	3 (1%)	1 (1%)	3 (3%)	0 (0%)
Existential	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	1 (2%)
Total	**304**	**303**	**155**	**96**	**51**
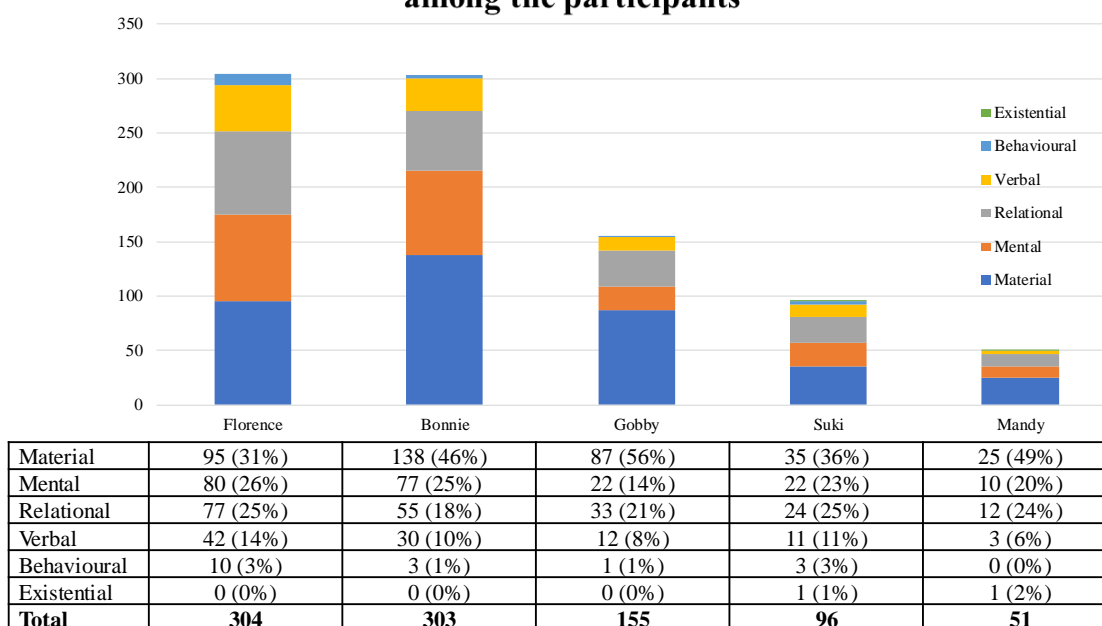
Different process types are distributed fairly similarly among the participants. Material processes are the most frequent process type in the talk about the participants, while existential, behavioural and verbal processes are the least frequent. There are however some variations in the relative proportions of relational and mental processes.

There are some common features in the talk about the different participants. First, Louisa, the compere, recurrently draws on the same types of material processes to describe what the participants experience in the programme, such as 參加 *(join)*, 去 *(go)* and 認識 *(get to know)*, e.g.

(32)

68	**Louisa**:	Bonnie(.)	去	ball	認識	俊	男
		Bonnie(.)	**go**	ball	**get to know**	handsome	man

Bonnie **goes** to a ball to **get to know** a handsome man.

There is also a noticeable similarity in the use of verbal processes to represent different participants. They are more often represented as the receiver than the sayer of the processes, which can be attributed to Louisa's recurrent use of the constructions in (33)-(34):

(33)

69	**Louisa:**	隔咗		一	陣(.)		
		Away from	one		while(.)		
		After a while,					

70		有	個	男仔	同	Bonnie	**傾偈**
		have	CL	boy	to	Bonnie	**talk**
		a boy **talks** to Bonnie.					

(34)

71	**Louisa:**	Mei-Ling(.)	**介紹咗**		一	位	男士(.)
		Mei-Ling(.)	**introduce-PFV**	one	CL	man(.)	
		Mei-Ling **has introduced** a man					

72		俾	Bonnie	認識
		to	Bonnie	know
		to Bonnie.		

Louisa often reports whenever a suitor approaches and talks to a participant and whenever Mei-Ling, a dating agent, introduces a suitor to a participant.

The most crucial difference found in the transitivity analysis is the uneven distribution of attention each participant receives. Florence and Bonnie are clearly put

under the spotlight. As Figure 5.4 indicates, in the total of 909 processes, there are just 302 processes (33%) involving Gobby, Suki and Mandy. It does not seem to make much sense to further compare the relative proportion of each process type in each case. Instead, I just focus my attention on Florence and Bonnie, who are more compatible in terms of the attention received.

The most noticeable differences between the representations of Florence and those of Bonnie are the relatively higher proportion of relational and verbal processes in Florence's case and the much higher proportion of material processes in Bonnie's case. This is probably because, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, Bonnie has many more conversations with the 'experts' than the other participants. Since in the conversations, many 'experts' criticise Bonnie ruthlessly, when it comes to talking about Bonnie, evaluations (a significant function of relational processes) play a less important role. Besides, because of those conversations, the 'experts' do not contribute much to the talk about Bonnie. Correspondingly, Louisa's narration dominates the talk, which explains the large proportion of material processes in Bonnie's case.

In contrast, in Florence's case, the 'experts' contribute much more to the talk about her because of the exclusion of many conversations between them. Despite attempts to impose on her by the 'experts', she always assumes a strong stance and refuses to act against her will. As the 'experts' cannot manipulate her using impoliteness, as they do with the other participants, many conversations between them have been edited out (see Chapter 7). The 'experts' therefore have to rely on their solo slots or discussions with their fellow 'experts' to comment on her. They need to refer to what Florence said and provide counter-arguments, and associate her with all sorts of negative attributes, which explains the lower proportion of material processes and higher proportion of verbal and relational processes in her case.

In this subsection, I provided a general picture of the overall framing of the participants, the distribution of different process types among them, and some formulaic representational patterns. The next subsection will proceed to a detailed analysis of the representations of individual participants.

5.2.2. Representations of individual participants

In this subsection, I demonstrate how the programme represents each participant. After reporting the findings, I will briefly comment on whether the representations of the participants could successfully steer the desired response in the audience and show some TVB forum posts to support my claim.

In the programme, the five participants are represented very differently, so I conduct a comparative study of how each participant is represented. My focus is on distinctive features of the representations of each participant, rather than recurrent patterns such as social actor references e.g. the participants' English names or 佢 *(she)*, or the formulae that Louisa, the compere, recurrently uses to portray their activities. It is also noteworthy that, as said earlier, the attention paid to each participant is uneven, with Mandy, Suki and, to a lesser extent, Gobby, not often talked about. In their cases, there may not even be special features, especially in the transitivity analysis, as the representations of them are dominated by those formulaic representations. Therefore, my discussion below primarily centres on the representations of Florence and Bonnie.

(a) Florence

The programme characterises Florence as a 'leftover woman'. Apart from aspects of her associated with this label, her idealistic attitude to love, strong personality

and undesirability for men are also highlighted. Below I will discuss the representations of Florence in relation to these four aspects.

Features associated with 'leftover women'

My data analysis shows that Florence is often represented in terms of various features of 'leftover women', including her age, high educational levels, career attainment and 'pickiness' when choosing a partner.[42] First, as briefly discussed in (8), she is categorised as 大都會三高女性 *(a cosmopolitan three-high woman)*, i.e. being high in education level, income and requirements for partners. According to Fei (2017), the term *three-high women* refers to the same group of women as 'leftover women' in mainland China (p. 27). In Hong Kong, even though 'leftover women' do not necessarily have the 'three-high' features, the two terms are associated with each other (see Section 1.5).

The representation of Florence as a 'leftover woman' can also be seen by the foregrounding of her age, which is supported by both the social actor and transitivity analysis results. In terms of social actor representations, Louisa refers to Florence using the [PM]+[N] construction 15 times and a third of them include a classification based on her age. For example, her age is explicitly mentioned in four references, e.g.

(35)

73	**Louisa**:	**39**	歲	嘅	**Florence**(.)	仍然	追求
		39	**years old**	**LP**	**Florence**(.)	still	desire
		39-year-old Florence still desires					

---

[42] See Section 1.5 for a discussion of the term 'leftover women'.

74		嗰	種	兩	小	無	猜[43]	嘅	愛情(.)
		that	kind	two	little	not-have	suspicions	LP	love(.)

the kind of love between two innocent youngsters.

I see such references as Louisa's attempt to link Florence's age to her inability to find a partner. As mentioned, the PM in the [PM]+[N] construction serves the representational purpose to define the participant and claim relevance to her marriageability. More importantly, Louisa places noticeably more emphasis on Florence's age than she does when referring to the other participants. Excluding Mandy, who refuses to disclose her age, all the other participants have only one classified reference with their age being explicitly mentioned. Another point is that whenever a participant (excluding Mandy) appears for a meeting with an 'expert' or for a matchmaking event, there is a brief introduction on the screen comprising her name, age and occupation. For example, below is the screen when Florence first appears in Episode 1:

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[43] *兩小無猜* is an idiom literally meaning two youngsters who never have suspicions about each other.

Figure 5.5: The screen when Florence first appears in the show

FLORENCE

39 years old, accountant

(Broadcast in Episode 1 – 9th April, 2012)

Hence, by classifying Florence in terms of her age, Louisa is not giving new information, but highlighting and problematising her age relating to her marriageability.

Not only Louisa, but also some 'experts' categorise Florence in terms of her age, e.g.

(36)

75	**Mei-Ling:**	我	未	見過	一	個	45	歲	嘅	男人(.)
		I	not yet	see-EXP	one	CL	45	years old	LP	man(.)

I've never seen a 45-year-old man

76	會	搵	一	個	**40**	歲		嘅	女人
	would	look for	**one**	**CL**	**40**	**years old**		**LP**	**woman**

who would look for **a 40-year-old woman**.

Here, Mei-Ling, a dating agent, is commenting on Florence's desire to look for a man who is five years older or younger. She classifies Florence in terms of her age and gender in order to problematise her desire as unrealistic. Throughout the show, Mei-Ling emphasises age as an important factor men consider when choosing partners. She even claims that all 39-year-old, 49-year-old and 59-year-old men are looking for 29-year-old women, and that no men would like a woman older than themselves.

Consistent with the social actor representations, the transitivity analysis results reveal that Florence's age is pointed to in 11 relational clauses. On two occasions, it is not Florence's actual age, but the age of her appearance that is referred to, e.g.

(37)

77	**Winnie:**	雖然	佢	本身(.)	其實	都	係(.)
		Though	she	originally(.)	actually	already	**be**(.)

Although she **is**

78	**39**	歲(.)	你	話(.)	又	唔	算	太	大(.)
	39	**years old**(.)	you	say(.)	but	**not**	**count**	**too**	**old**(.)

39 as such, you say… She **doesn't count as too old**,

79	但係(.)	個	樣(.)	睇起上嚟(.)	真係	似	四十幾
	but(.)	CL	appearance(.)	**look-VTIP**(.)	really	**like**	**fortyish**

but she really **looks like fortyish**.

This comment appears in a conversation between Winnie, a life coach, and Vanessa, a doctor, in a beauty centre. Winnie uses three relational clauses to refer to Florence, focusing on her real age, whether she is considered old, and the age she looks like. Winnie, in particular, stresses Florence's real age and the age she looks like, as realised by the verb 'to be' 係[44] (line 77) and the intensifier 真係 *(really)* (line 79). Such foregrounding of Florence's age is unsurprising, as age is a key focus of the show. The reason why Winnie compares Florence's actual age and apparent age is to problematise her appearance, so that Vanessa can provide a solution: micro-plastic surgery.

Besides Florence's age, her educational background is a focus in Louisa's representations and the attribute of six relational processes. (38), for example, involves two relational processes representing Florence as coming from an elite school and having a master's degree:

(38)

80	**Louisa**:	Florence	名	校	出	身(.)	有	碩士	學位
		Florence	**elite**	**school**	**from**	**origin(.)**	**has**	**master**	**degree**

Florence **comes from an elite school** and **has a master's degree**.

Florence's educational background seems irrelevant to her finding a partner. In fact, such information is not included in the representations of any other participant. I think that Louisa is trying to reinforce the representation of Florence as a 'three-high' woman.

The last aspect of 'leftover women' highlighted is Florence's 'pickiness'. This finding is especially supported by the transitivity analysis results, particularly in the use of mental and verbal processes. For instance, the 23 emotive mental processes involving

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[44] Matthews and Yip (2011) suggest that in Cantonese, forms of 'to be' are not required by predicative adjectives; when they appear, they serve as an intensifier.

Florence are dominated by processes of (dis)liking (20 cases), mostly with different suitors being in the position of phenomenon. Such representations are primarily made by Mei-Ling, the main person arranging matchmaking for Florence. For example, four processes of disliking can be found in Mei-Ling's comment on Florence in the following excerpt from an 'expert' team discussion:

(39)

81	**Mei-Ling:**	我	喺	第一	次	介紹	俾	佢	嘅(.)
		I	in	first	time	introduce	to	her	VTIP(.)

The first time, the suitor I introduced to her

82	係	一	個	大學	教授(.)
	be	one	CL	university	professor(.)

was a university professor.

83	佢	又	40幾	啦(.)	佢	又	**嫌**	人	老(.)
	He	also	fortyish	SFP(.)	she	both	**dislike**	person	old(.)

He's also fortyish. She **disliked** him being old

84	又	**嫌**	人	唔	夠	好玩(.)
	and	**dislike**	person	not	enough	fun(.)

and **disliked** him being not fun enough.

…

85	第二	次	介紹	俾	佢	嘅	嗰	個	呢(.)
	Second	time	introduce	to	her	VTIP	that	CL	VTIP(.)

The second time, the one I introduced to her

86		又	係	四十幾	歲(.)
		also	be	fortyish	years old(.)

was also fortyish.

87		高	大(.)	威猛(.)	靚仔(.)
		Tall	big(.)	mighty(.)	handsome(.)

He's tall and handsome,

88		搾住		架	直升機	嚟	接	佢(.)
		drive-CONT		CL	helicopter	come	take	her(.)

and took her on a helicopter ride.

89		佢	又	**嫌**-
		She	again	**dislike**-

She again **disliked**-

90	**Others:**	嘩(.)
		Wow(.)

Wow.

91	**Mei-Ling:**	不過(.)	佢	又	**唔鍾意**	鬼佬(.)
		But(.)	she	again	**dislike**	gweilo[45]

But she **dislikes** foreigners.

Such processes of (dis)liking serve the representational purpose of emphasising Florence's 'pickiness' and reinforcing the stereotype that 'leftover women' are 'picky'.

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[45] 鬼佬 *(gweilo)* is a common Cantonese expression for male foreigners.

Similarly, verbal processes are also used to draw attention to Florence's 'pickiness'. The most frequently occurring realisation of verbal processes is, unsurprisingly, 話 *(say)* (nine times). All such processes point to Florence's 'pickiness', and eight of them project what she says about different suitors or the kind of men she is looking for, e.g.

(40)

92	**Louisa:**	我哋	安排咗	兩	位	男士(.)	同	佢	相睇(.)
		We	arrange-PFV	two	CL	men(.)	with	her	matchmaking(.)

We've arranged for two men to have an opportunity for matchmaking with her,

93		但係(.)	佢	都	**話**(.)	無	興趣
		but(.)	all	both	**say**(.)	not-have	interest

but she **said** she wasn't interested in them.

Such verbal processes function similarly to the mental processes of Florence (dis)liking different suitors, as discussed above, i.e. to steer the audience into seeing her as 'picky'. By projecting Florence's comments, the verbal clauses further support the portrayal of her 'pickiness'.

As well as being in the sayer role, Florence is represented as the receiver 22 times. Such verbal processes are most often realised by the process of introducing, with Mei-Ling being the sayer (eight cases). As mentioned, the process of introducing is part of Louisa's formulaic representations. The reason for discussing this process here is that it appears much more often in the representations of Florence than in the other participants' cases, although it does not account for a large proportion because of the larger number of verbal processes in her case. The eight processes of introducing are

not confined to Louisa's narration, but also Mei-Ling's comments. (39) is an example. Such processes of introducing function to highlight Mei-Ling's efforts to 'help' Florence, and along with the representations of her having no interest in any of the suitors, invoke the judgement of her 'pickiness'.

In the social actor analysis, other than the reference 大都會三高女性 *(a cosmopolitan three-high woman)* (see (8)), Florence's 'pickiness' is also targeted, but implicitly, in (41):

(41)

94	**Eva:**	Florence	係	女	版	嘅	**Johnny**
		Florence	be	**female**	**version**	**LP**	**Johnny**
		Florence is **the female version of Johnny**.					

Eva, a communication skills tutor, refers to Florence as 女版嘅 *Johnny (the female version of Johnny)*, which is a very indirect appraisement. Johnny is the only suitor Florence is interested in, but the interest is non-reciprocal. He gives a long list of requirements for his ideal partner, e.g. being sexy, at least 1.65 metres tall and having a good body shape. By saying that Florence is 女版嘅 *Johnny (the female version of Johnny)*, Eva is implying an evaluation that Florence is as 'choosy' as Johnny.

As indicated above, the characterisation of Florence as a 'leftover woman' is evident. The show problematises her age and 'pickiness' and steers the audience into seeing that she fits well the stereotype that 'three-high' women are potential spinsters.

Idealistic attitude to love

The representations of Florence also focus on her idealistic attitude to love. In terms of social actor representations, Louisa twice classifies Florence as a *浪漫主義者 (romanticist)*, e.g.

(42)

95	**Louisa**:	佢	39	歲(.)		只係	拍過一次拖(.)
		She	39	years old(.)		only	go-out-EXP-one-time(.)

She is 39 and has only been in one romantic relationship.

96		係	一	個(.)	浪漫主義者
		Be	**one**	**CL**(.)	**romanticist**

She's **a romanticist**.

Similarly, Louisa twice refers to her in the [PM]+[N] construction as *一直等待白馬王子嘅 Florence (Florence, who is waiting for her prince on a white horse all along)*, e.g.

(43)

97	**Louisa:**	…仲有	一直	等待(.)
		…and	**all along**	**wait**(.)

…and **Florence, who is waiting for**

98		白	馬	王子	嘅	**Florence**
		white	**horse**	**prince**	**LP**	**Florence**

her prince on a white horse all along

This reference is a hybrid of nomination and classification. While it is not an appraisement semantically, it creates a fairy tale atmosphere and implies that Florence is not living in reality, or more specifically, that her attitude to love is overly idealistic.

The programme also points to Florence's idealistic attitude to love via various process types. In terms of mental processes, among the 22 desiderative processes in which Florence is the senser, 18 are processes of (not) wanting/pursuing/hoping, with the phenomenon role being filled by the kind of love/men she desires. Louisa, for example, uses the term *追求/追尋 (desire)* four times to describe the kind of love Florence desires. She twice puts in the phenomenon position *兩小無猜嘅愛情 (love between two innocent youngsters)*, e.g.

(44)

99	**Louisa**:	39	歲		嘅	Florence(.)	仍然	**追求**
		39	years old		LP	Florence(.)	still	**desire**

39-year-old Florence still **desires**

100		嗰	種	兩	小	無	猜	嘅	愛情(.)
		that	kind	two	little	not-have	suspicion	LP	love(.)

the kind of love between two innocent youngsters

101		**希望**	**等待**	年輕有為嘅		嘅
		hopes	**wait**	young and promising		LP

and **hopes to wait for** the appearance of a young and promising

102		白	馬	王子	出現
		white	horse	prince	appear

prince on a white horse.

As mentioned in Note 43, *兩小無猜* is an idiom literally meaning two youngsters who never have suspicions about each other. Here, Louisa means that Florence desires the kind of pure and innocent love between young lovers. By representing Florence as desiring the kind of love between *youngsters* and foregrounding her age in the senser position, Louisa highlights a mismatch between Florence's age and her desire. She further strengthens this mismatch by using the adverb *仍然 (still)* (line 99). Apart from the process *追求/追尋 (desiring)*, Louisa also similarly makes Florence the senser of the desiderative process of *希望等待 (hoping to wait for)* and *年輕有為嘅白馬王子出現 (the appearance of a young and promising prince on a white horse)* the phenomenon. This representation points to the immaturity of Florence's attitude to love.

In eight cases, Louisa and the 'experts' mention what kind of men Florence wants just for the sake of criticising her attitude to love, e.g.

(45)

103	**Mei-Ling:**	佢	想	搵
		She	**want**	**find**

She **wants to find**

104		一	個(.)	細過	佢	五	年	嘅	男士	呢(.)
		one	CL(.)	younger	her	five	years	LP	man	VTIP(.)

a man 5 years younger.

105   Um(.)   機會   係   零(.)   嘿嘿嘿(.)

Um(.)   chance   be   zero(.)   hahaha(.)

Um, the chance is zero. Hahaha.

106   佢   **想**   **搵**

She   **want**   **find**

She **wants to find**

107   一   個(.)   大   佢   五   年   嘅   男士   呢(.)

one   CL(.)   old   her   five   years   LP   man   VTIP(.)

a man 5 years older.

108   機會   頂隆   係(.)   一   兩   個   percent

chance   at the most   be(.)   one   two   CL   percent

The chance is at the most 1 or 2 percent.

Mei-Ling represents Florence as the senser of wanting to find a man five years younger and that of wanting to find a man five years older in order to comment on the impossibility/unlikelihood of her achieving her desire. Mei-Ling employs this strategy again below:

(46)

109 **Mei-Ling:**   咁   妳   **要**   啲   年輕   貌美   嘅   男人

Then   you   **want**   CL   young   good-looking   LP   men

Then you **want** some young and good-looking men.

110	有無		呢(.)	有(.)	不過	人哋	未	必
	have-not-have		SFP(.)	have(.)	but	they	not	necessarily

Do I have any? I have, but they aren't necessarily

111	肯	要	妳	呢
	willing	have	you	SFP

willing to have you.

Here, Mei-Ling represents Florence's desire to get to know some young good-looking men so that she can point to Florence's inability to attract such men, and to her overly idealistic attitude to love.

There are also five cognitive mental processes of Florence choosing a partner. Louisa, for example, describes how Florence chooses a boyfriend in (47)-(48):

(47)

112	**Louisa:**	**揀**	男朋友	唔睇	錢(.)
		Choose	boyfriend	not-look-at	money(.)

She doesn't look at money when **choosing** a boyfriend.

113		最	緊要	搵	真	愛
		The most	important	find	true	love

The most important thing is to find true love.

(48)

114	**Louisa:**	佢	**揀**	男朋友(.)	唔睇	錢(.)
		She	**chooses**	boyfriend(.)	not-look-at	money(.)

She doesn't look at money when **choosing** a boyfriend.

115   最   緊要   外型

the most   important   appearance

The most important thing is appearance.

Significantly, the process of choosing a boyfriend only occurs in the representations of Florence, but not any other participant. This is probably to draw attention to Florence's attitude to love, i.e. to look for true love.

Apart from mental processes, behavioural processes also play an important role in problematising Florence's idealistic attitude to love. The behavioural process appears ten times in Louisa's representations of Florence, all being processes of waiting for her 'prince on a white horse'/true love, e.g.

(49)

116   **Louisa:**   佢   對   愛情(.)   仍然   好   執着(.)

She   to   love(.)   still   very   adamant(.)

She is still very adamant about love,

117   一直   **等緊**(.)   白   馬   王子   出現

all along   **wait-PROG**(.)   white   horse   prince   appear

and is **waiting for** her prince on a white horse all along.

(50)

118   **Louisa:**   Florence(.)   對   十   年   前   嘅   男朋友(.)

Florence(.)   to   ten   years   ago   LP   boyfriend(.)

Florence

185

119   仍　未　忘　情(.)

still　not-yet　forget　love(.)

is still fixated on her boyfriend of ten years ago,

120   亦　一直　活　喺　自己　嘅(.)　世界　入面

and　all along　live　in　self　LP(.)　world　inside

and is living in her own world all along.

121   要　**等待**　白　馬　王子　出現

Insist　**wait**　white　horse　prince　appear

She insists on **waiting for** her prince on a white horse.

The wordings of the behavioural process of waiting are almost the same in (49) and (50). Such representations are formulaic and function to highlight that Florence does nothing, but to wait for her 'prince', and therefore to shape negative views on her idealistic attitude to love.

Similarly, two 'experts' use the verb *停留 (stay)*, and convey the same message in a more figurative sense, e.g.

(51)

122 **Angel:** 佢　係　**停留咗**　喺

She　be　**stay-PFV**　in

She **is staying in**

123   一　個(.)　童話　嘅(.)　世界　裡面

one　CL(.)　fairy tale　LP(.)　world　inside

the world of a fairy tale.

Angel, an image consultant, represents Florence as the actor of staying in the world of a fairy tale. Despite no mention of what Florence is doing in the fairy tale world, it is easily retrieved via the shared knowledge that in a fairy tale, the princess is waiting for her prince. This is especially so owing to the strong fairy tale atmosphere in the programme, with Florence and Bonnie being linked to different fairy tales.

A point worthy of attention is that although the show often represents Florence as doing nothing, but waiting for her 'prince', she is not as passive as she is represented. In Episode 9, she becomes attached to a suitor. In their second meeting, she does take the initiative to ask him for his number and add him as a friend on Facebook.

The repeated representations of Florence's idealistic attitude to love indicate that the programme draws the viewers' attention to this trait of hers and claims relevance of her marriageability. It is apparent from the above discussion that the viewers are made to see Florence's attitude to love as an obstacle to her finding a partner.

Strong personality

Florence's strong personality is also highlighted in the representations of her. Throughout the programme, she often refuses to be 'transformed' by the 'experts' and shows indifference to the suitors introduced to her, which may be why she is seen as such. The foregrounding of her strong personality is obvious in the social actor representations of her. Louisa explicitly classifies her in terms of her strong personality. Louisa uses the term 有性格 *(have a strong personality)*, i.e. being opinionated and not caring about what others think, in the [PM]+[N] construction six times, e.g.

(52)

124	**Louisa**:	最	有性格[46]	嘅	女	主角(.)
		The most	**have-personality**	**LP**	**female**	**protagonist**(.)

The female protagonist with the strongest personality,

125		**Florence**(.)	佢	揀	男朋友(.)	唔	睇	錢(.)
		Florence(.)	she	chooses	boyfriend(.)	not	look at	money(.)

Florence, doesn't look at money when choosing a boyfriend.

126		最	緊要	外型
		the most	important	appearance

The most important thing is appearance.

Louisa nominates Florence as *Florence*, functionalises her as a protagonist, classifies her based on her gender and appraises her as having a strong personality. By appraising Florence as 最有性格 *(with the strongest personality)*, Louisa is implicitly pointing to Florence's insistence on looking for the type of man she loves and criticising that she is hard to please. In another instance, Louisa refers to Florence as 性格巨星 *Florence (personality superstar Florence)*:

(53)

127	**Louisa**:	第四	位(.)	係	**性格**	**巨星**	**Florence**(.)
		Fourth	CL(.)	be	**personality**	**superstar**	**Florence**(.)

The fourth [female protagonist] is **personality superstar Florence**.

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[46] Many Cantonese adjectives are formed by the character 有 *(have)* along with a noun (Matthews and Yip, 2011). 有性格 *(have personality)* is an adjective in the 'have+[noun]' construction modifying the noun 女主角 *(female protagonist)*. The idiomatic English translation does not quite reflect the reference.

128   佢   39   歲(.)   只係   拍過一次拖(.)

She   39   years old(.)   only   go out-EXP-one-time(.)

She's 39 years old, and has only been in a relationship once,

129   因為   堅持(.)   要   等   真愛

as   insists(.)   must   wait   true love

as she insists that she must wait for her true love.

This reference is a hybrid of appraisement and nomination in the [PM]+[N] construction. By referring to Florence as a *性格巨星 (personality superstar)*, Louisa foregrounds her strong personality sarcastically, implying that she always self-importantly insists on having her own way, which is a bit similar to the term 'diva'.

The transitivity analysis also shows that Florence is represented as the carrier of the attribute of a strong personality in ten relational processes. In four cases, she is explicitly represented as *有性格/有個性 (have a strong personality)*, all pointing to her not taking the advice of the 'experts' and insisting on her own ideas, e.g.

(54)

130 **Louisa:** Florence(.) 仍然 **好**   **有性格**(.)

              Florence(.) still **very** **have-personality**(.)

              Florence still **has a very strong personality**,

131   堅持(.) 要   男士(.) 發掘   佢   嘅   內在 美

      insist(.) require men(.) discover her LP inner beauty

      insisting that men should discover her inner beauty.

Louisa describes Florence as *好有性格 (have a very strong personality)* because she refuses to have cosmetic surgery as per the advice of the 'experts' and insists that men look at her inner self. Some other expressions are also used to convey the same meaning, but in a more negative sense, e.g.

(55)

| 132 | **Mei-Ling:** | 阿 Florence[47] | 有時係(.) | 激 | 死 | 我 | 架(.) |
| | | Ar-Florence | sometimes(.) | anger | death | me | SFP(.) |

Florence sometimes angers me to death.

| 133 | | 好 | 牙擦(.) | 好 | 高竇(.) | 非常之 | 難 | 搞 |
| | | **very** | **cheeky**(.) | **very** | **arrogant**(.) | **very** | **hard** | **deal with** |

She **is very cheeky, very arrogant and very hard to deal with**.

Besides directly representing Florence as having a strong personality, Louisa also instantiates this feature by reporting some conversations between Florence and the 'experts'. She represents Florence as the sayer of a range of verbal processes with strong agency, e.g. *堅持 (insist)*, *拒絕 (refuse)* and *答應 (promise)* (seven times). They all appear after Florence is represented as the receiver of the processes of suggesting, asking or advising, e.g.

(56)

| 134 | **Louisa:** | 謝醫生(.) | **建議** | 佢(.) | 做 | 啲 | 微整形 | 療程(.) |
| | | Dr Tse(.) | **suggest** | she(.) | do | CL | micro-plastic | treatment(.) |

Dr Tse **suggests** she do some micro-plastic treatments

---

[47] The prefix *阿 (ar)* is attached to *Florence* to show 'familiarity' (see Matthew and Yip, 2011, p. 43).

| 135 | 令(.) | 自己 | 後生啲(.) |
| | make(.) | self | younger(.) |

to make herself younger,

| 136 | 但係(.) | Florence(.) | 一 | 口 | 拒絕(.) |
| | but(.) | Florence(.) | one | mouth | **refuse**(.) |

but Florence **refuses** immediately.

Here, Florence is first represented as the receiver of the process of Dr Tse suggesting she have micro-plastic surgery and then the sayer of refusing. As she often does not comply with the 'experts'' advice/instructions, Mei-Ling describes her as cheeky, arrogant and hard to deal with, as discussed above.

I find such representations of Florence's strong personality interesting. A strong personality is not a negative trait *per se*, but it is obviously evaluated negatively in the programme. More specifically, it is seen as negative in women, probably because it is against traditional femininity: it is a Confucian requirement for women to be obedient.

(Un)desirability for men

Florence is represented as an undesirable woman for men. Probably because of the exclusion of many conversations between Florence and the 'experts', some 'experts' explicitly comment on her marriageability in their solo slots, all using cognitive mental processes (six cases). For example, Florence's thoughts are stated and disagreed with immediately in three cases, all by Mei-Ling, e.g.

(57)

137	**Mei-Ling:**	佢	覺得(.)	佢	自己	嘅(.)	條件
		She	**think**(.)	her	self	LP(.)	qualification

She **thinks** her own qualification

138		係(.)	非常之	高(.)	事實	唔係
		be(.)	very	high(.)	fact	not-be

is very good, but that isn't the case.

Mei-Ling invalidates Florence's self-perception and implies that Florence is not well-qualified and has no right to be 'choosy'. Kenji, a stylist, also makes a similar comment, but in relation to the process of not knowing:

(58)

139	**Kenji:**	佢	唔知	自己	個	market value	跌緊	呀(.)
		She	**not-know**	self	CL	market value	fall-PROG	SFP(.)

She **doesn't know** her market value is falling.

140		唔知	自己	嘅	位置(.)
		Not-know	self	LP	position(.)

She **doesn't know** her position.

By representing Florence as the senser of *not knowing* her falling market value and *not knowing* her position, Kenji is suggesting that Florence over-estimates her own value in the 'market' of finding boyfriends.

The programme also includes some suitors' comments on Florence, which function as evidence for her unattractiveness to men. A suitor, Johnny, for example, makes a very lengthy remark, which is dominated by relational processes:

(59)

141　**Johnny:**　Florence　呀(.)　　第一　次　　見　Florence　嗰陣時(.)

　　　　　　　　Florence　VRIP(.)　first　time　see　Florence　that-time(.)

　　　　　　　　When I first saw Florence,

142　　　　　　其實　　就(.)　ar(.)　　係　囉(.)

　　　　　　　actually　just(.)　VRIP(.)　right　VRIP(.)

　　　　　　　actually, um, right,

143　　　　　　覺得　**好　高**　囉(.)

　　　　　　　think　**very　tall**(.)　SFP(.)

　　　　　　　I thought she**'s very tall**.

144　　　　　**好　高　大**　啦(.)　**好　高　大**　啦

　　　　　Very　tall　big　SFP(.)　**very　tall　big**　SFP

　　　　　She**'s very tall and big**. She's **very tall and big**.

145　　　　　咁樣(.)　　係　呀(.)　但係　就(.)　即係

　　　　　Such-way(.)　yes　SFP(.)　but　then(.)　that's

　　　　　Yes, this was the case. But, that's,

146 唔係　好(.)　即係　好(.)　女性化(.)

not-be **very**(.) that's **very**(.) **feminine**(.)

she **wasn't very**… that's, **very feminine**.

147 覺得　都　**幾**　**中性**(.)

Thought even **rather unisex**(.)

I thought she**'s** even **rather unisex**.

148 服裝　上　嘅　話(.)　就　唔好　着

Clothing on LP say(.) just don't wear

Clothing-wise, just don't wear

149 嗰　啲　格仔　衫　囉(.)

those CL check shirts SFP(.)

those check-pattern shirts.

150 格仔　衫(.)　格仔　衫(.)　真係　好(.)

Check shirts(.) check shirts(.) really very(.)

Check-pattern shirts. Check-pattern shirts are really very…

151 睇　妳　個　樣　好　似

See your CL appearance very like

I saw that her appearance was very much like…

152 少少　似　林亞珍　嗰　啲　咁

a-bit-a-bit like Ah Chun Lam those CL SFP

She**'s a bit like Ah Chun Lam**.

…

This is just part of Johnny's comment, but it already contains five relational processes, relating Florence to the attributes *好高 (very tall)*, *好高大 (very tall and big)*, *唔係好女性化 (not very feminine)*, *幾中性 (rather unisex)* and *少少似林亞珍 (a bit like Ah Chun Lam)*. Such representations are interesting in that they are the opposite of the representations of Suki as being petite and 'feminine' (to be discussed below). As regards the last attribute, *林亞珍 (Ah Chun Lam)* is a classic 'ugly character' always wearing a check-pattern shirt in a drama and film series in the 1970s-1980s, as shown below:

Figure 5.6: Ah Chun Lam

According to Chan (2005), in the drama/film series, Ah Chun Lam is portrayed as a 'tomboy' and is often mocked because of her 'unisex' clothing: a shirt and jeans. Coincidentally, Florence also wears a check-pattern shirt and jeans in her first meeting with Johnny:

Figure 5.7: Florence in her first meeting with Johnny

(Broadcast in Episode 9 – 19th April, 2012)

I think that Johnny relates Florence to Ah Chun Lam so as to strengthen the force of his previous comment that Florence is unisex and not very 'feminine'. In the remainder of his remark, Johnny continues commenting on Florence's skin, hair and age. Johnny's comment is highly sexist, seeing women as sex objects and judging them by appearance. He later also describes the kind of women he loves regarding appearance, e.g. being sexy and at least 1.65 metres tall. The programme obviously seeks to draw the viewers' attention to this ruthless comment, which is evidenced by its re-appearance as a cut-in in the last episode. I argue that this serves a special purpose. My point is that altogether four suitors have talked about Florence, and two of them evaluate her positively. There are two possible reasons why Johnny's comment reappears. First, he is the only suitor Florence is interested in while he is also the one who criticises her baldly. Before Johnny's appearance, the 'experts' always said that Florence is ineligible for being

'choosy' and suggested she be more pragmatic. Johnny's comment functions to support the 'experts'' opinions. The other reason is that the programme seeks to reinforce the idea that men judge women very much by their appearance, and invite the audience to see that Florence should have listened to the 'experts' and had the micro-plastic surgery and done all sorts of beautifications. Therefore, by repeating what Johnny says about Florence, the programme concludes that Florence herself is to blame for her singleness and implicitly advertises for plastic surgery.

The programme clearly characterises Florence as a typical 'leftover woman'. It attempts to direct the audience to seeing those traits associated with 'leftover women', i.e. her age, educational and career attainment, and 'pickiness' when choosing a partner, as a hurdle to her finding a partner, which is further diminished by her unrealistic attitude to love and her strong personality.

The programme has quite successfully steered the desired response in Florence's case. The TVB forum is full of posts criticising Florence. For example, the following post negatively comments on her in relation to her age, 'pickiness' and idealistic attitude to love and points to the difficulty for her to find a boyfriend, which covers most of points discussed above:

(60)

153 F 小姐　　依家　　四十　歲　　　　啦,

    F Miss　　now　　40　　years old　SFP

    Miss F, you're now already 40 years old,

154 仲　　咁　Q　　多　　要求,　　　　食　自己　好過　　啦,

    still　so　damn　many　requirements　eat　self　better　SFP

    but you still have so damn many requirements. It's better for you to be alone.

155	就算	找	到	自己	既	白	馬	王子,
	Even	find	VTIP	self	LP	white	horse	prince

Even if you could find your prince on a white horse,

156	王子	都	怕	你	係	高齡產婦
	prince	even	afraid	you	be	advanced maternal age pregnant woman

the prince would be afraid of you being an advanced maternal age pregnant woman.

(b) Bonnie

The representations of Bonnie centre on her 'non-femininity', and her learning and transformations in the show. As will be shown below, she is shaped as an embodiment of the exact opposite of traditional femininity and an undesirable type of woman for Hong Kong men, and her participation of the show as a learning and transformation process for her. Below I present my analysis in relation to three aspects: 'non-femininity', (un)desirability for men, and learning and transformations.

'Non-femininity'

The most prominent finding of the representations of Bonnie is the shaping of her as a 'non-feminine' woman. Her 'masculine' traits are highlighted in the social actor representations of her, particularly by Louisa. Louisa refers to Bonnie using the [PM]+[N] construction 17 times, in which 14 references relate to her 'masculine' traits. Many of the references involve several PMs. Among the 14 references, 13 involve the PM 男仔頭嘅 *(tomboy)*, i.e. classification. For example, Louisa nominates and classifies Bonnie as 好男仔頭嘅 *Bonnie (Bonnie, very much a tomboy)*:

(61)

157	**Louisa**:	呢	日(.)	**好**	**男仔頭**	**嘅**	**Bonnie**(.)
		This	day(.)	**very**	**tomboy**	**LP**	**Bonnie**(.)

Today, it is the first time for **Bonnie, very much a tomboy**,

158		第一	次	去	參加
		first	time	go	take part in

to take part in

159		speed-dating	嘅	男	女	交友	活動(.)
		speed-dating	LP	male	female	make-friends	activity(.)

speed-dating, an activity for people to make friends with their opposite sex.

男仔頭 is originally a noun in Cantonese and is equivalent to *tomboy* in English, but in (61), it is used as an adjective, so that we have part-of-speech conversion.[48] Since this kind of conversion is inapplicable to English, the idiomatic English translation does not quite reflect the original Cantonese reference.

As well as referring to Bonnie as a tomboy, Louisa appraises Bonnie in terms of her 'masculine' traits, e.g.

(62)

160	**Louisa**:	粗粗魯魯		嘅	Bonnie
		Coarse-coarse-crude-crude		LP	Bonnie

Coarse and crude Bonnie

---

[48] Matthews and Yip (2011) discuss this kind of part-of-speech conversion in Cantonese, and compare it to the way the English word *cut*, which is originally a verb, is sometimes used as a noun. An illustration given is the noun 靚仔 (literally *good-looking boy*), which can be used an adjective as well as a verb.

Louisa draws on the evaluative prenominal adjective 粗粗魯魯嘅 *(coarse and crude)* to modify Bonnie, i.e. she uses an appraisement and nomination hybrid. This modifier involves the language-specific rhetorical device *reduplication*, i.e. to repeat the adjective. As shown by the word-by-word translation, the adjective 粗魯 *(coarse-crude)* has been reduplicated into 粗粗魯魯 *(coarse-coarse-crude-crude)*. Matthews and Yip (2011) point out that reduplication functions to intensify meaning. Therefore, Louisa is emphasising the evaluation that Bonnie is coarse and crude.

Besides, Louisa relates Bonnie to the concept of 義氣, which derives from the Confucian concept 義. 義 is one of the four sprouts, or innate dispositions of goodness, proposed by Mencius, a leading Confucian, and can be loosely translated as, e.g. *righteousness*, *rightness*, and *justice* (see Tan, 2014). Tan (2014) defines it as 'relational appropriateness' (p. 393), i.e. what we should do in relation to whom and under what circumstance. 義氣 is a derivative of 義, but is often regarded as a masculine trait. This can be seen by Hutton and Bolton's (2005) definition of 義氣: 'loyalty, brotherhood, honour' (p. 456), and Meng's (2014) translation of the term: 'fraternal loyalty' and 'fraternal righteousness' (p. 192). Another realisation of its strong association with masculinity is its pattern of use in the programme: Bonnie is evaluated as such for five times, and in four of the cases, it collocates with the term 男仔頭 *(tomboy)*. In two instances, on top of nominating Bonnie as Bonnie and classifying her as a tomboy, Louisa also explicitly uses the adjectival modifier 有義氣嘅 *(has fraternal righteousness)*:[49]

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[49] 有義氣 *(has fraternal righteousness)* is an adjective in the 'have+[noun]' construction (see Note 46).

(63)

161	**Louisa:**	男仔頭(.)	好	有義氣			嘅	Bonnie
		Tomboy(.)	very	have-fraternal-righteousness			LP	Bonnie

Bonnie, who is a tomboy and has strong fraternal righteousness

The reference 男仔頭,好有義氣嘅 Bonnie (Bonnie, who is a tomboy and has very strong fraternal righteousness) is a hybrid of nomination, classification and appraisement. The programme represents Bonnie as having fraternal righteousness probably because of her strong inclination to help and protect the people around her, as will be clear from the discussion of her self-representations in Chapter 6.

The programme clearly problematises Bonnie's fraternal righteousness, despite it being a good trait, as indicated by the following advice by Queenie, a beauty blogger:

(64)

162	**Queenie:**	我	覺得	女仔(.)	我哋	可以	嘗試(.)	唔好(.)
		I	think	girls(.)	we	can	try(.)	don't(.)

I think as girls, we should try not to

163		將	啲	使命	攬	喺	自己	身上(.)
		put	CL	missions	take on	on	self	body(.)

take on those missions on ourselves.

164		我(.)	我	諗	吓(.)	如果	我	係	男仔
		I(.)	I	think	SFP(.)	if	I	be	boy

I…I think if I were a boy,

165	都	會(.)	覺得(.)	太過	buddy	嘞(.)
	also	would(.)	think(.)	too	buddy	SFP(.)

I would also think you are too much like a 'buddy'.

166	太過	*哥們*(.)	即係	哥兒們(.)
	too	*buddy*(.)	that is	buddy(.)

Too much like a 'buddy', i.e. a buddy.[50]

167	我	絕對	feel	倒	妳	有(.)
	I	absolutely	feel	VTIP	you	have(.)

I can absolutely feel that you have

168	妳	嘅	好	女性(.)	好	希望
	you	LP	very	feminine(.)	very	hope

the very feminine side of you that hopes

169	被	男人	呵護(.)		嗰	一	面	嘅(.)
	by	men	take good care of(.)		that	one	side	SFP(.)

to be taken good care of by men.

170	釋放(.)	佢	出嚟	啦(.)	一齊
	Release(.)	it	out-come	SFP(.)	together

Let's release out together!

Queenie tellingly advises Bonnie not to take on the mission to help and protect people around her and release her 'feminine' self that thirsts for men's care and protection. In

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[50] In line 165, Queenie refers to Bonnie as a 'buddy', which implies that she is like a male friend for men, and in line 166, she repeats the term in Mandarin (italicised) and then in Cantonese.

other words, she suggests Bonnie give up her fraternal righteousness and let men play the hero role.

Closely linked to (63)-(64) are two references of relational identification to Bonnie as 兄弟 *(a brother)*, e.g.

(65)

171	**Louisa:**	身邊	嘅	男仔	只係	當	佢	**兄弟**
		Body-side	LP	boy	only	see	her	**brother**

Boys around her only see her as **a brother**.

This reference suggests that Bonnie's relationship with her male friends is of the brotherly type. It also implies that her male friends have no interest in her as a potential partner.

Bonnie's 'non-femininity' is also pointed to, but implicitly, in a social actor reference by Angel, an image consultant:

(66)

172	**Angel:**	我	覺得	佢(.)	係	一	個(.)	真係
		I	think	she(.)	be	**one**(.)	**CL**(.)	**really**

I think she's really **a**

173		好(.)	澳洲	返	嚟	嘅(.)	女仔
		very(.)	**Australia**	**back**(.)	**come**	**LP**(.)	**girl**

girl back from Australia.

The term 澳洲返嚟嘅女仔 *(girl back from Australia)* involves part-of-speech conversion from a noun to an adjective and is modified by the adverbial phrase 真係好

203

(really very), so the English translation does not quite reflect the original reference. This reference is complicated in that according to the semantic meaning, it classifies Bonnie as a woman returning to Hong Kong from Australia, but it can have many implications. Right after the comment, Angel explains it with three attributes: 動作大啲 *(doing things with a flourish)*, 好活潑 *(very lively)* and 好簡單 *(very simple)*. In other words, Bonnie does not fulfil the local standard of 'femininity', so the reference is also an appraisement. Jessica, a visagiste, also makes a metalinguistic comment on the reference and equates it with 不修邊幅 *(slovenly in appearance and dress)*, which Angel affirms immediately. While Angel's explanation and Jessica's comment are not quite the same, they both agree that Bonnie behaves like a returnee from Australia and point to her lack of 'femininity'. This appraisement is obviously based on national stereotype. Despite their different interpretations of the term 澳洲返嚟嘅女仔 *(girl back from Australia)*, they both associate 'non-femininity' with Australian girls and attribute what they perceive as 'non-feminine' in Bonnie to her background of living in Australia before.

In line with the social actor representation findings, the transitivity analysis of processes involving Bonnie also indicates that her 'non-femininity' is highlighted, mainly via attributive relational processes (18 cases), e.g.

(67)

174	**Jessica:**	佢	好	麻甩	呀(.)	我	覺得
		She	**very**	**inelegant and crude**	SFP(.)	I	think
		I think she **is very inelegant and crude**.					

Jessica describes Bonnie as 麻甩, which comes from the informal reference 麻甩佬, i.e. 'an inelegant, crude fellow' (So, 2002, p. 194). The referent of this expression is men,

so it is inappropriate to refer to Bonnie as such. Instead, Jessica just draws on the PM 麻甩 *(inelegant and crude)* and attributes it to Bonnie. As 麻甩佬 *(an inelegant, crude fellow)* is a collocation, even though Jessica only uses the PM, there is an underlying meaning that Bonnie behaves like a man.

Another example of relational processes highlighting Bonnie's 'non-femininity' is Mei-Ling's representation of how Chinese men think about Bonnie:

(68)

| 175 | **Mei-Ling:** | Bonnie | 個 | 人 | **好** | **活潑**(.) |
| | | Bonnie | CL | person | **very** | **lively**(.) |

Bonnie **is very lively**.

| 176 | | 嗱[51](.) | 中國 | 男仔 | 呢(.) | 就 | 會 | 覺得 |
| | | VTIP (.) | Chinese | boys | VTIP(.) | just | would | think |

There it is! Chinese boys would think

| 177 | | 佢 | 又 | **粗** | **啲** | 呀(.) |
| | | she | **both** | **coarse** | **a bit** | SFP(.) |

she **is a bit coarse**,

| 178 | | 講嘢 | 又 | 多 | 啲 | 呀 |
| | | talk | and | much | a bit | SFP |

and talks a bit too much.

---

[51] 嗱 is a Cantonese interjection meaning *look!* or *there it is*.

205

Mei-Ling makes this comment before talking about an Italian suitor's impression on Bonnie and how she is liked by foreigners, as will be discussed in (71). This comment involves two relational processes. First, Mei-Ling describes Bonnie as *好活潑 (very lively)*. On the surface, she is praising Bonnie, but I think that she is contrasting Bonnie with the image of women in the Chinese tradition, i.e. being reserved and restrained. After expressing her own opinion, she takes the perceived perspective of Chinese men and talks about how Chinese men think about Bonnie, i.e. a mental process with 'Chinese men' being the senser. The projected phenomenon involves a relational process attributing the quality *粗啲 (a bit coarse)* to Bonnie. I find it interesting that Mei-Ling draws on generalisations of different cultures and judges Bonnie differently, depending on the context – she is seen as 'non-feminine' in the Chinese context, whereas she can attract foreigners. Such representations are linked to Angel's reference to Bonnie as *一個真係好澳洲返嚟嘅女仔 (a girl back from Australia)* in (66). Both cases involve generalisations of femininity in different cultures and point to Bonnie's mismatch with Hong Kong femininity.

Bonnie is also represented as 'non-feminine' indirectly via some verbal processes. An interesting pattern in terms of the use of verbal processes is that when Bonnie is the sayer, what she says is not projected, except in two cases; the representations of her focus more on her talking manner (five cases). Three verbal clauses represent Bonnie as talking too much. As shown in (68), Mei-Ling suggests that Chinese men view Bonnie as *講嘢又多啲 (talking a bit too much)*. Below is another example:

(69)

179	**Louisa:**	Bonnie	呢	晚(.)		表現(.)	非常	淑女(.)
		Bonnie	this	evening(.)		performs(.)	very	lady(.)

This evening, Bonnie behaves very much like a lady,

180		無好似	平時	咁(.)	**吱吱喳喳**
		unlike	usual	like(.)	**chirping**

unlike her usual self − **chattering noisily**

(69) appears in Louisa's narration about Bonnie going to a ball. Louisa describes Bonnie's talking manner as *吱吱喳喳 (chattering noisily)*, an onomatopoeic expression of birds chirping which is often used to refer to children or women chattering noisily. What Louisa is doing is to contrast how Bonnie usually talks and how she talks at the ball. By using such a derogatory expression, Louisa seeks to shape a disapproving stance towards Bonnie's usual talking manner in the audience.

(Un)desirability for men

Similar to Florence, Bonnie is represented as undesirable for men. One way to do this is through emotive mental processes. She is represented as the phenomenon of 15 emotive mental processes, most frequently in terms of how different suitors feel/react to her. In Louisa's narration, Bonnie is, without exception, represented as unable to get men's interest or affection, e.g.

(70)

181	**Louisa**:	嬌滴滴		嘅	Suki(.)	大		受歡迎
		Delicately pretty		LP	Suki(.)	greatly		popular

Delicately pretty Suki is greatly popular.

182		但係	男仔頭	嘅	Bonnie(.)	就	**備受冷落**
		but	tomboy	LP	Bonnie(.)	but	**ignored**

but tomboy Bonnie **is ignored**.

While some 'experts' also similarly represent Bonnie as unable to get men's attention, Mei-Ling describes the positive impression that an Italian suitor, Luigi, has of Bonnie and evaluates her as being very much accepted by foreigners:

(71)

183	**Mei-Ling:**	佢	靚	得嚟	呢(.)	佢	係	唔會
		She	pretty	VTIP	SFP(.)	she	be	not-would

While she's pretty, she wouldn't

184		喺度(.)	特登		喺度	賣弄(.)
		be-here(.)	deliberately		be-here	flirt(.)

deliberately flirt.

185		所以	好	得(.)	外籍人士	嘅	**接受**
		Thus	very	get(.)	foreigners	LP	**acceptance**

Thus she **is** very much **accepted** by foreigners.

This example is interesting as Mei-Ling makes a generalisation that Bonnie is very much accepted by foreigners, yet before sharing Luigi's view on Bonnie, Mei-Ling

208

makes a remark on how Chinese men feel about her, i.e. being too talkative and crude and coarse (see (68)).

Besides, the programme includes some suitors' comments on Bonnie. The social actor analysis shows that many suitors' categorised references to Bonnie are evaluative. Sam is the only suitor negatively appraising her:

(72)

186	**Sam:**	佢	似	**港女**	囉
		She	like	**Kong girl**	SFP

She's like **a Kong girl**.

The term 港女 (literally *Kong Girls*) means 'troublesome and nasty Hong Kong women' (Chu, 2014, p. 134). Hence, Bonnie is not only classified as a Hong Kong woman, but also appraised as troublesome and nasty. The reason Sam gives for his comment is that she talked to him too actively in a matchmaking event. This accords with Mei-Ling's remark that Chinese men might find Bonnie too talkative (see (68)). Significantly, (72) is the only comment by a suitor which is repeated as a cut-in. Since it concerns Bonnie talking too much, the show is probably trying to draw attention to this.

<u>Learning and transformations</u>

Similar to other makeover series, *Bride Wannabes* emphasises change; in Bonnie's case, it does so by representing her as not well-equipped to find a partner and creating the need for her to learn and transform. Mental processes play an important role in problematising Bonnie as incapable of finding a partner. Bonnie plays the senser role in 57 mental processes, among which 28 are cognitive processes. A prominent feature of these cognitive processes is that Bonnie is often represented as not

knowing/misunderstanding various things (nine times), while she is the senser of knowing/understanding only three times, e.g.

(73)

187	**Louisa**:	男仔頭	嘅	Bonnie(.)	經常	俾	人	話
		Tomboy	LP	Bonnie(.)	often	by	person	say

Bonnie, a tomboy, is often said to be

188		粗魯(.)		唔	識	打扮
		coarse and crude(.)		**not**	**know**	**dress up**

crude and coarse by others. **Not knowing how to dress up**

189		又	唔	識	嗲	人
		and	**not**	**know**	**coquet**	**person**

and **not knowing how to be coquettish to others**.

Louisa represents Bonnie as not knowing how to dress up or act coquettishly to others, which indirectly points to Bonnie's lack of 'femininity'. Different 'experts' also evaluate Bonnie in terms of what she misunderstands/does not know. For example, Joven, a love and marriage consultant, talks about Bonnie's 'problems' after a consultation, and lists several things that Bonnie misunderstands/does not know:

(74)

190	**Joven:**	我	諗(.)	Bonnie	最大	嘅	問題	係(.)	佢(.)
		I	think(.)	Bonnie	biggest	LP	problem	be(.)	she(.)

I think Bonnie's biggest problem is that she

191	其實	佢	成	世	人	都	**唔知**
	actually	her	whole	life	person	still	**not-know**

actually **doesn't know**

192	做過	啲	乜
	do-EXP	CL	what

what she has done in her whole life.

…

193	佢	成日	**有**	**個**	**誤解**(.)		就	係
	She	always	**has**	**CL**	**misunderstanding**(.)	precisely	be

She always **has a misunderstanding**, namely that

194	你	自己	嘅	生活(.)	唔開心	呢(.)	嘩(.)
	you	self	LP	life(.)	unhappy	SFP(.)	wow(.)

your own life is unhappy. Wow,

195	你	拍咗拖(.)	你	有	一	個	男朋友	呢(.)
	you	go-out-PFV	you	have	one	CL	boyfriend	SFP(.)

once you have gone out and have a boyfriend,

196	佢	就	會	令到	你	嘅	快樂
	he	therefore	would	make	you	LP	happy

he'd make you happy.

Such repeated representations of Bonnie not knowing something imply her ignorance and function to justify the need for her to learn and change. Relating to this, she is also represented as the senser of the cognitive mental process of learning three times, e.g. learning to be a lady:

(75)

197	**Louisa**:	跟住	佢	接受	改造(.)
		Then	she	receive	transformations(.)

Then she undergoes transformations

198		學習	做	一	個	淑女
		learn	**do**	a	CL	lady

and **learns to be** a lady.

This example presupposes that Bonnie cannot perform femininity properly.

Corresponding to the above representations, Louisa points to Bonnie's attempt to change via material processes. For example, Bonnie performs the action of practising/having class three times in Louisa's narrations, e.g.

(76)

199	**Louisa**:	Bonnie	繼續	上	愛情	訓練	班
		Bonnie	**continue**	**has**	**love**	**training**	**class**

Bonnie **continues having love training class**.

Similarly, she is represented as the beneficiary of the process of teaching six times, e.g.

(77)

200	**Pierce:**	之前	我哋	教	佢	好多	技巧
		Previously	we	**teach**	her	many	skills

Previously we **taught** her many skills.

Such representations reinforce the idea that Bonnie is not good enough to find a partner and hence needs different kinds of training and teaching.

Apart from representing Bonnie in relation to various teaching and learning activities, Louisa and the 'experts' also talk about her performance in different matchmaking events. For example, Bonnie is featured in seven material processes of acting like/imitating Suki. Most of the examples are found in Episode 10, when the 'experts' explicitly discuss Bonnie's performance in the show and pinpoint her acting too much as a reason for her inability to find a boyfriend, e.g.

(78)

201	**Pierce:**	根本	個	形象	就	唔係	嗰	啲(.)
		Basically	that	image	precisely	not-be	those	CL(.)

Basically, her image isn't so,

202		但係	佢	又	去(.)	即係(.)	佢	係(.)	即係
		but	she	but	go(.)	that's(.)	she	be(.)	that's

but she tries to that's…she's…that's

203		佢	**模仿**	類似	Suki	嗰	類	嘅	女士(.)
		She	**imitate**	resemble	Suki	that	type	LP	women(.)

She **imitates** women of Suki's type.

204	**Winnie:**	佢	係	完全	知道	佢	自己
		She	be	completely	know	she	self

She completely knows she

205	扮緊(.)		好	可愛(.)	好	cutie cutie(.)
	pretend-PROG(.)	very		lovely(.)	very	cutie cutie(.)

is pretending to be very lovely, very cute.

There are also nine material processes specifically targeting Bonnie's performance of learning and acting. For example, Pierce, a 'love expert', shares some 'love strategies' that he and his fellow 'experts' taught Bonnie and then negatively evaluates her performance in a matchmaking meeting:

(79)

206	**Pierce:**	但係	佢	唔做(.)	佢	只會	犯	番
		But	she	**not-do**(.)	She	just	**commit**	**back**

But she **didn't use** the skills. She just **repeated**

207		佢	之前	錯	嘅	錯誤(.)
		her	**previous**	**mistake**	**LP**	**mistakes**(.)

her previous mistakes.

Significantly, all nine examples point to Bonnie not doing or not being able to do something.

Bonnie is also represented in terms of the transformations in her. For instance, she is the actor of three material processes of transforming, e.g.

(80)

208	**Louisa**:	變	身[52]	後(.)	Bonnie	第一	考驗(.)	就	係(.)
		Change	**body**	after(.)	Bonnie	first	task(.)	precisely	be(.)

After the **transformation**, Bonnie's first task is

209		參加	一	個	遊船河	派對(.)	識	男仔
		participate	one	CL	boat trip	party(.)	get to know	boys

to participate in a boat trip party to get to know boys.

Louisa's use of the expression 變身 *(transform)* is interesting, as it is normally used to refer to the transformation from a human to a superhero(ine) in films/cartoons, e.g. the case of Superman, with the change being so dramatic that the character has become non-recognisable. In the programme, Bonnie is repeatedly criticised for being 'non-feminine' and not taking care of her appearance. Louisa's use of the hyperbole implies that Bonnie can be a completely different woman if she pays more attention to her appearance. Similarly, Bonnie is also made the goal/scope of three material processes of transforming/beautifying, e.g.

(81)

210	**Louisa**:	呢	日(.)	我哋	安排	Bonnie(.)	見	形象	指導(.)
		This	day(.)	we	arrange	Bonnie(.)	see	image	consultant(.)

Today, we arrange for Bonnie to see

---

[52] 變身 is an active verb here. Its meaning is similar to 'transform' in English, but the two are grammatically non-equivalent in that 變身 can stand alone without a prepositional phrase. Owing to this grammatical difference, I cannot translate it into the verb 'transform', but need to use the noun 'transformation'.

211		兼	時裝	店	老闆	娘(.)		Angel(.)	
		and	fashion	shop	boss	female(.)		Angel(.)	

Angel, an image consultant and a female boss of a fashion shop,

212		仲有(.)	經常(.)	幫	模特兒(.)	化妝		嘅	Jessica(.)
		and(.)	always(.)	help	models(.)	make-up		LP	Jessica(.)

and Jessica, who always applies make-up to models,

213		**改造**(.)	粗粗魯魯			嘅	Bonnie
		transform(.)	coarse-coarse-crude-crude			LP	Bonnie

in order to **transform** crude and coarse Bonnie.

As shown in the above examples, all the transformations refer to Bonnie's appearance and aim to make her more 'feminine'.

The programme's emphasis on change can not only be seen in the actions which Bonnie is associated with, but also how she is referred to, which however focuses more on the results of the transformations. For example, after telling the audience that in order to find a partner, Bonnie is determined to be a 淑女 *(lady)*, and that she is going to her next matchmaking event in a ball gown, Louisa gives the following narration:

(82)

214	**Louisa:**	化妝師	Jessica(.)	同	形象指導		Angel(.)	幫
		Visagiste	Jessica(.)	and	image consultant		Angel(.)	help

Visagiste Jessica and image consultant Angel help

| 215 | | 呢 | 位(.) | 灰姑娘(.) | 大 | 變身(.) |
| | | **this** | **CL**(.) | **Cinderella**(.) | greatly | transform(.) |

greatly transform **this Cinderella**.

Here, Louisa refers to Bonnie as *呢位灰姑娘 (this Cinderella)*, possibly to echo Bonnie's self-representation: Bonnie compares herself to the princess in *Cinderella*, being transformed from a woman living in a public housing estate to a princess going to a ball. I nevertheless think that what the reference means is quite different from Bonnie's self-representation. Louisa might imply that Bonnie does not look good, like the way Cinderella looks before meeting the fairy godmother, and meanwhile setting up excitement that Bonnie will look completely different after Jessica's and Angel's help, like the way Cinderella is transformed. I interpret this reference as a negative appraisement targeting Bonnie's appearance, clothing style and posture.[53]

In contrast, Louisa refers to Bonnie with positive appraisements after various 'transformations' by the 'experts'. For example, in her narration of what is going on in the above-mentioned ball, Louisa refers to Bonnie as *淑女(lady)*:

(83)

| 216 **Louisa:** | Bonnie | 呢 | 晚(.) | 表現(.) | 非常 | **淑女** |
| | Bonnie | this | evening(.) | perform(.) | very | **lady** |

This evening, Bonnie performs very much like **a lady**.

---

[53] In the meeting, Jessica puts on make-up for Bonnie, and Angel advises Bonnie on what to wear for the ball and on her posture.

淑女 is originally a noun in Cantonese and is equivalent to 'lady' in English, but it is used as an adjective in another instance of part-of-speech conversion. Similarly, in (84), Louisa positively appraises Bonnie:

(84)

217 **Louisa:**	執	靚咗	樣	嘅	**Bonnie**(.)	好	快
	Fix	**beautiful-PFV**	**appearance**	**LP**	**Bonnie**(.)	**very**	**soon**

Very soon, **beautified Bonnie**

218	就	有	男仔	撩	佢	傾偈
	already	have	boy	approach	her	talk

is approached in talk by a boy.

執靚咗樣嘅 *Bonnie (beautified Bonnie)* is in the [PM]+[N] construction and is an appraisement and nomination hybrid. While it is a positive appraisement, it does not target Bonnie, but the change in her.

I think that in the above social actor representations, the programme tries to polarise the pre-transformed and post-transformed Bonnie, and invites the audience to see Bonnie negatively before undergoing all sorts of transformations, but to see the 'improvements' in her after the transformations.

As shown by the above discussion, the programme defines Bonnie in terms of her 'non-femininity', and foregrounds men's lack of interest in her and the need for her to change, which provides a frame to see her negatively. Some representations even draw on implicit cultural knowledge, e.g. 港女 (*Kong Girls*) and 澳洲返嚟嘅女仔 (*a girl back from Australia*) and construct her as a social misfit. All those findings imply

that she is not well-equipped to fight in the battle of finding a partner and is an undesirable woman for Hong Kong men.

The forum responses to the programme regarding Bonnie are mixed. Some posts accord with the above representations, and comment on her 'non-feminine' traits, particularly her way of talking, and represent her as unattractive to men, e.g.

(85)

219	至於	Bonnie,	性格	其實	係	點	唔緊要,
	As regards	Bonnie	personality	actually	be	how	unimportant

As regards Bonnie, it doesn't really matter how her personality is,

220	但	有時候	人際	溝通	技巧
	but	sometimes	interpersonal	communication	skills

but sometimes interpersonal communication skills

221	係	真係	要	學,
	be	really	need	learn

really need to be learnt.

222	一	出	口	就	粗粗地	咁,
	Once	go out	mouth	immediately	coarse-coarse-ish	SFP

Whenever she speaks, she sounds a bit coarse.

223	大多數	男人	天生	喜歡	比較	溫柔	的	女人…
	Most	men	born	like	relatively	gentle	LP	women…

Most men are born to like relatively gentle women.

While it appears that the commentators mostly agree that Bonnie is 'non-feminine', some do not see this negatively, e.g.

(86)

224 我 都 好 鐘意 BONNIE 呢 種 男仔頭 既 女仔,

I also very like Bonnie this type tomboy LP girl

I also like the type of tomboy like Bonnie.

225 短 頭髮 幾 爽快。

Short hair quite refreshing

It's quite refreshing to wear short hair.

226 我 自己 以前 2 個 女朋友 都 係 咁。

I self past 2 CL girlfriends also be so

My two ex-girlfriends were like this.

(c) Gobby

The programme represents Gobby as a miserable and unconfident person. She is referred to much less often than the other full participants, Bonne and Florence, and is apparently not the focus of the programme.[54] Below I discuss the representations of Gobby based on three aspects: her miserable life, her low self-esteem and her zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment.

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[54] As indicated in Figure 5.4, compared with Bonnie and Florence, Gobby is involved in far fewer processes.

Miserable life

Gobby is a divorcee with a daughter and this aspect of her is often foregrounded, especially in earlier episodes. In terms of social actor representations, Louisa from time to time highlights Gobby's miserable life, all in the [PM]+[N] construction, e.g.

(87)

227	**Louisa:**	經歷	情	傷(.)	好	苦	命	嘅	Gobby
		Experience	love	injury(.)	very	painful	life	LP	Gobby

Gobby, who has experienced an injury from her previous relationship and has a very painful life.

Louisa sometimes explicitly pinpoints Gobby's experience of getting divorced in the prenominal position, e.g.

(88)

228	**Louisa:**	而	情	路	多	波折(.)
		And	**love**	**path**	**many**	**twists and turns**(.)

And **Gobby, who has experienced many twists and turns in her relationships**

229		又	離過婚	嘅	Gobby(.)
		and	**divorce-EXP**	**LP**	**Gobby**(.)

and divorced,

230		做咗	醫學美齒療程
		do-PFV	a zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment

has received a zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment.

This reference involves a nomination, a classification based on Gobby's marital status and an appraisement concerning her miserable life.

Gobby's allegedly miserable life is also pointed to by Winnie:

(89)

231 **Winnie:** 我 覺得 佢 係 一 **個** **drama queen** 嚟嘅

I think she be **one** **CL** **drama queen** SFP

I think she's **a drama queen**.

Winnie refers to Gobby as a *drama queen* because all her self-stories seem miserable. The reference is therefore evaluative. In another instance, Winnie points to Gobby's miserable situation more explicitly:

(90)

232 **Winnie**: 即係(.) 妳 可唔可以 話 俾 我 知(.)

That's(.) you can-not-can tell to me know(.)

That's, can you tell me

233 邊個 會 鍾意 成日 對(.) 對住 一 個

who would like always face (.) face-CONT one CL

who would like to be always with…with a

234 即係(.) **咁**(.) **咁** **唔開心**(.) **咁** **苦** **嘅** **人** 呢

that's(.) **so**(.) **so** **unhappy**(.) **so** **bitter** **LP** **person** SFP

that's, **a person who is so…so unhappy and so bitter**?

Here, Winnie refers to Gobby as 一個咁…咁唔開心、咁苦嘅人 *(a person who is so…so unhappy and so bitter)*, which is again an appraisement. Apart from appraisements, Winnie also represents Gobby's miserable life via abstraction, as shown below:

(91)

235	**Winnie**:	一	開	門	係	直頭	嘩(.)	即係
		Once	open	door	be	completely	wow(.)	that's

Once I opened the door, it's completely wow! That's

236	嗰	隻	**苦**	唔係(.)
	that	kind	**bitterness**	not-be(.)

the kind of **bitterness** in her isn't…

237	唔係	普通	嘅	**苦**(.)
	not-be	usual	LP	**bitterness**(.)

isn't the usual kind of **bitterness**.

238	係	直頭	**苦**	到	澀	嘅
	be	completely	**bitter**	till	puckery	SFP

It's so completely **bitter** that it has a puckery taste.

In (91), Winnie depicts her reaction when first seeing Gobby. Instead of describing how Gobby was like, she ascribes a quality to Gobby: bitterness. Another interesting point about (91) is that Winnie draws a metaphor between Gobby's bitter life and bitter taste. She uses the adjective 澀 *(puckery)* to describe the extent of Gobby's bitterness. While the puckery taste is often associated with sourness in English, 苦 *(bitter)* and 澀*

(puckery) often collocate in Chinese. Through abstraction, Winnie is trying to exacerbate Gobby's miserable condition.

In terms of the transitivity analysis results, Gobby is represented as the actor of 11 material processes related to her marital/relationship status, i.e. 20 percent of the total number of processes in which she is the actor. Eight of the 11 cases are the process of divorcing, e.g.

(92)

239	**Louisa**:	Gobby	好	細個	因為	有咗
		Gobby	very	young	due to	pregnancy
		Gobby				

| 240 | | 而 | 同 | 男朋友 | **結婚**(.) |
| | | accordingly | with | boyfriend | **marry**(.) |

married her boyfriend when she was very young because of pregnancy.

| 241 | | 最後 | 因為 | 對方 | | 有 | 外遇 | **離婚**(.) |
| | | In the end | as | the other party | | had | affair | divorce(.) |

In the end, as the other party (her ex-husband) had an affair, she **got divorced**.

Gobby's marital status is clearly foregrounded in the programme. As the whole point of the show is to 'help' the participants find a partner, such repetitions serve to represent Gobby's experience of divorcing as a key factor for her inability to find a partner.

Gobby's miserable life is also highlighted via a set of representations of her negative emotions. She is the senser of eight emotive mental processes, all negative feelings, e.g. the process of regretting:

(93)

242 **Louisa:** 佢　　好　　**後悔**　　當初

She　　very　　**regrets**　　at that time

She **regrets** very much that at that time,

243 無聽　　　屋企人　　　　　勸(.)

not-listen　　family members　　advise(.)

she didn't listen to her family members' advice

244 揀咗　　　呢　　條　　路

choose-PFV　　this　　CL　　road

and chose this road.

Low self-esteem

In Louisa's social actor representations of Gobby, her lack of confidence is most often the target. Louisa refers to Gobby using the [PM]+[N] construction nine times, in which six references appraise Gobby as unconfident/self-basing, e.g.

(94)

245 **Louisa:** 而　　好　　**無自信**　　嘅　　**Gobby**(.)

And　　**very**　　**unconfident**　　LP　　**Gobby**(.)

And **very unconfident Gobby**

246 唔　　識　　得　　社交　　禮儀

not　　know　　can　　social　　etiquette

doesn't know social etiquette.

(94) appears in Louisa's narration of a red wine party. Louisa also mentions Bonnie in her narration, but she simply nominates Bonnie, without using the [PM]+[N] construction. Therefore, I think that the foregrounding of Gobby's lack of confidence in (94) serves a special representational purpose. Right after (94), Louisa also refers to an 'expert's' comment on Gobby's social awkwardness in the event. By emphasising Gobby's lack of confidence and pointing to her ignorance of social etiquette, more specifically that of the middle-class world, Louisa is suggesting Gobby's working-class background as a reason for her lack of confidence.

<u>Zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment</u>

Gobby undergoes a zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment in a medical beauty centre in Episode 5; interestingly, she is repeatedly represented relating to this. When narrating Gobby having the treatment, Louisa rather frequently refers to her different body parts (five times), i.e. objectivation. For example, Louisa refers to Gobby's face and teeth in (95)-(96):

(95)

247 **Louisa:** 醫生　　　亦　　認為(.)　　**佢　塊　面　太　凹**(.)

Doctor　　also　think(.)　　**her　CL　face**　too　concave(.)

The doctor also thinks that **her face** is too concave.

248 　　　　　係　骨膠原　流失(.)　　未老先衰　　　　　嘅　現象

Be　collagen　loss(.)　　pre-mature ageing　LP　sign

It's due to her loss of collagen, a sign of pre-mature ageing.

(96)

249	**Louisa:**	醫生	話(.)	**佢**	**棚**	**牙**	好	影響	儀容
		Doctor	say(.)	**her**	**CL**	**teeth**	very	affect	appearance

The doctor says **her teeth** affect her appearance very much.

According to Louisa's narration, the purpose of making Gobby have the treatment is to enhance her self-confidence. However, I think that the objectivated references function to problematise Gobby's appearance, so as to create the need for her to have the treatment. The programme here uses the marketing strategy of product placements. As mentioned in Chapter 4, *Bride Wannabes* has been widely criticised for referring to many commercial operators.

Another finding is that Gobby is represented as the beneficiary in ten material processes linked to her experience of undergoing the treatment. The doctor performing the operation is the actor of eight of the processes and four of them involve the coverb 幫 *(help)*, e.g.

(97)

250	**Louisa:**	…幫	佢	注射
		…**help**	her	**inject**

[The doctor] **injects** her with

251		醫學	界	認可	嘅(.)	聚左旋乳酸(.)
		medical	field	approved	LP(.)	Sculptra PLLA(.)

medically approved Sculptra PLLA

252		刺激	佢(.)	皮下		骨膠原	再生
		stimulate	her(.)	subcutaneous		collagen	reproduce

to stimulate the reproduction of her subcutaneous collagen.

I find it striking that such processes are repeated so many times. Gobby undergoes the treatment in Episode 5 and sees her post-treatment self in Episode 6. However, processes linked to the treatment appear in five episodes. The treatment clearly forms a large part of the representations of Gobby, which might result from the television station's use of product placements as a marketing strategy for the beauty centre.

I think that Gobby has been selected as a participant mainly because her miserable life and lack of confidence provide a good reason for the programme to bring her to the medical beauty centre and 'help' her increase her confidence by improving her appearance, i.e. advertise for their client.

Consistent with the above representations, many forum posts problematise Gobby's marital status as an obstacle to her finding a partner, e.g.

(98)

253	Gobby	深	表	同情,
	Gobby	deep	express	sympathies

I express my deep sympathies to Gobby.

254	離左婚	仲	有	個	女,
	divorce-PFV	even	has	CL	daughter

She has divorced and even has a daughter.

228

255 好多　　男人　　都　　唔　　會　　諗

Many　　men　　even　　not　　would　　consider

Many men wouldn't even consider her.

(d) Suki

The programme defines Suki in terms of her petiteness and 'feminine' traits, and constructs her as a success story and an ideal type of woman for men. Below I discuss the representations of her based on four aspects: success story, petiteness, 'feminine' traits, and desirability for men.

<u>Success story</u>

Suki is the only participant who could find a boyfriend in the end, and her success is foregrounded. As mentioned, the programme frames the process of the participants looking for partners as a war/race. In line with this, Suki is represented as a success story with war and racing metaphors. She is the actor of three material processes relating to battling and racing. First, Louisa draws on the idiom 突圍而出 *(break through the siege and rush out)*:

(99)

256 **Louisa:**　另一　　個　　女　　主角(.)

Another　　CL　　female　　protagonist(.)

Another female protagonist,

257 　　　　小　　鳥　　依　　人　　嘅　Suki(.)

little　　bird　　lie　　person　　LP　　Suki(.)

Suki, who is very thin, and belongs to the type of tender and lovely woman, just like a little bird lying against a person,

229

258	突	圍	而	出(.)	終於	識	倒	男朋友
	break	**siege**	**and**	**go out**(.)	finally	know	VTIP	boyfriend

has finally broken the siege and rushed out. She has found a boyfriend.

The character 圍 *(siege)* suggests that Suki is under siege and in danger of being a 'leftover woman'. The idiom involves two processes: 突圍 *(break the siege)* and 出 *(rush out)*. She is represented as achieving success in breaking through in the dangerous situation of being single and escaping from becoming a 'leftover woman'. The portrayal suggests that Suki has won the battle.

Louisa not only represents Suki as the winner of a battle, but that of a race as well:

(100)

259	**Louisa:**	盛女愛作戰	嘅	五	個	女	主角	當中(.)
		Bride Wannabes	LP	five	CL	female	protagonists	among(.)

Among the five female protagonists of *Bride Wannabes*,

260	第一	個	**跑**	**出**	嘅(.)	係	28	歲	嘅	Suki
	first	CL	**run**	**out**	LP(.)	be	28	years old	LP	Suki

the first one who **has run out** is 28-year-old Suki.

By using this racing metaphor, Louisa represents Suki as the champion in the race of finding a partner. Significantly, she refers to the participants collectively in the circumstance (line 259). She thereby implies that the other participants are losers. This

racing metaphor is ideological as it provides a frame to perceive what kinds of women are winners and what kinds are losers.

Suki is also represented as the winner with emotive mental processes. She is the senser of loving in five processes, e.g.

(101)

261	**Louisa:**	終於(.)	有	一	個	女	主角(.)
		Finally(.)	has	one	CL	female	protagonist(.)

Finally, there is a female protagonist

262		**蜜**	**運**	成功
		romantic	**spell**	successful

being in love successfully.

In the expression 蜜運, 蜜 literally means 'honey' or 'sweet', and 運 means 'fortune'. I translate it as *romantic spell*, following the 1953 Hong Kong film 蜜運 *(Romantic Spell)*, which is possibly its origin. The term is commonly used to refer to someone being in love. As indicated by the translation, it is originally a noun, but is used as a verb in this example, i.e. it is an instance of part-of-speech conversion. 蜜運 appears three times in the representations of Suki, and significantly, each time co-occurs with its collocate, 成功 *(successful)*. Such representations frame being in love as an achievement of Suki's, and reinforce the idea that she is the winner.

Petiteness

Suki's petiteness is a major focus in the social actor representations of her. Louisa makes heavy use of physical identification to refer to Suki and highlights her

231

petiteness. Among the 15 references in the [PM]+[N] construction, 11 involve physical identification, e.g.

(102)

263	**Louisa:**	瘦瘦削削(.)		小	鳥	依	人	嘅	Suki
		Thin-thin-slender-slender(.)		little	bird	lie	person	LP	Suki

Suki, who is very thin, and belongs to the type of tender and lovely woman, just like a little bird lying against a person.

Here, apart from nominating Suki as *Suki*, Louisa employs two PMs to describe her body size, i.e. physical identification: 瘦瘦削削 *(very thin)* and 小鳥依人 *(the type of tender and lovely woman, just like a little bird lying against a person)*, with the latter being an appraisement as well. 小鳥依人 is an idiom literally meaning a little bird lying on a person. It is commonly used to refer to petite women or children who look cute and helpless, like a little bird relying on a human to survive, which makes others respond with tender affection. Suki is also represented via physical identification and appraisement in (103)-(104):

(103)

264	**Louisa**:	嬌	小	玲瓏	嘅	Suki
		Delicate	tiny	exquisite	LP	Suki

Delicate, tiny and exquisite Suki

(104)

265	**Louisa**:	嬌滴滴		嘅	**Suki**(.)	大	受歡迎
		Delicately pretty		**LP**	**Suki**(.)	greatly	popular

Delicately pretty Suki is greatly popular.

Besides nominating Suki, Louisa uses the PMs *嬌小玲瓏嘅 (delicate, tiny and exquisite)* and *嬌滴滴嘅 (delicately pretty)* to categorise her via physical identification and appraisement. Crucially, the majority of physical identification references to Suki are positively evaluative markers used almost exclusively to describe women, which suggests that petiteness is something desirable in women. The above physical identification references recur in Louisa's representations. The idiom *小鳥依人 (the type of tender and lovely woman, just like a little bird lying against a person)* in (102) appears in no fewer than eight references to Suki.

The above references to Suki are similar to those to Gobby in that both foreground their body, but the ways of doing it and the purposes differ. In Suki's case, Louisa directs the audience's attention to her body size through physical identification, with the purpose of putting her into the 'petite woman' category and representing it as something desirable in women. In contrast, Louisa refers to Gobby's different body parts in order to problematise her appearance and create the need for her to have it fixed through medical treatments.

'Feminine' traits

Many representations point to Suki's 'feminine' traits (*cf.* the representations of Bonnie as a 'masculine' woman'). In terms of social actor representations, the programme does so by targeting her appearance and body size. As mentioned above,

most physical identification references Louisa employs to describe Suki's petiteness are positively evaluative markers used almost exclusively for women, which clearly highlight her 'femininity'. Besides, Louisa also represents her 'femininity' via classification, e.g.

(105)

266	**Louisa:**	似	鄰家		小	女	孩(.)
		like	**neighbourhood**		**little**	**female**	**child**(.)
		like	**a simple, pure and innocent little girl**				

Suki is classified as 鄰家小女孩 *(a simple, pure and innocent little girl)*, which is a slightly modified idiom. The original idiom is 鄰家女孩, which literally means a female child in the neighbourhood, and is commonly used to refer to simple, pure and innocent girls, i.e. a contrast to women wearing make-up and acting a lot. The character 小 *(little)* is added by Louisa. 鄰家小女孩 *(a simple, pure and innocent little girl)* is also a positive appraisement. It is nonetheless sexist, because Louisa clearly belittles Suki as a child. By adding the character 小 *(little)* to the idiom, she exacerbates her claim by not only suggesting Suki's resemblance to a female child, but a *little* one.

The transitivity analysis shows that the programme also highlights Suki's 'femininity' by representing her ways of thinking through mental processes. Suki is in the senser role in three desiderate processes. While the number is small, I find the three examples interesting as they are all in agreement with the messages the programme is promoting. First, two of the desiderative processes refer to her desire to marry:

(106)

267	**Louisa:**	拍拖	五	年	嘅	男友(.)	幾	個	月	前(.)
		Go out	five	years	LP	boyfriend(.)	a few	CL	months	ago(.)

A few months ago, the boyfriend who went out with her for five years

268		移	情	別	戀(.)	對
		shifted	love	another	lover(.)	for

shifted his love to another lover,

269		一心	**想**	結婚	嘅	Suki(.)	打擊	好	大
		wholeheartedly	**want**	marry	LP	Suki(.)	hit	very	largely

which has hit Suki hard, who wholeheartedly **wants** to marry.

(107)

270	**Louisa:**	Suki	話(.)	佢	好	**想**	喺	30	歲	之前(.)
		Suki	say(.)	she	very	**want**	at	30	years old	before(.)

Suki says she very much **wants**

271		搵	倒	結婚	對象
		find	VTIP	marriage	target

to find a marriage partner before the age of 30.

In Louisa's representations, Suki sees marriage as her goal. This corresponds to the portrayal that finding a partner is the finishing point of a race for women and something they battle for. The remaining desiderative process is as follows:

(108)

272	**Louisa:**	佢	**想**	知道(.)	點樣	可以	更加	有女人味
		She	**want**	know(.)	how	can	more	feminine

She **wants** to know how to be more feminine.

Suki is represented as 'hyper-feminine' in the programme, but in (108), Louisa represents Suki as wanting to know how to be more 'feminine'. The programme clearly embraces traditional femininity and Suki's desire undoubtedly accords with its standpoint.

Desirability for men

Suki, as the only success story in the show, is represented as a desirable woman for men. The transitivity analysis reveals that Suki is the phenomenon of six emotive mental processes, which are featured by (1) all having men as the senser; (2) all conveying positive feelings. In other words, she is represented in terms of how she is positively perceived by men. The process of welcoming appears three times, e.g.

(109)

273	**Louisa:**	Jamie	覺得	Suki	呢	類型	女仔(.)
		Jamie	thinks	Suki	this	type	girls(.)

Jamie thinks that girls of Suki's type

274		會	好	受	男士	**歡迎**
		would	very	by	men	**welcomed**

would be very much **welcomed** by men.

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Men's positive feelings for Suki are not only represented via mental processes, but also verbal processes. Suki is the receiver of five verbal processes, all having men as the sayer, e.g.

(110)

275 **Louisa:** 呢　　晚(.)　　入咗　　　一　　間　　club

This　　evening(.)　enter-PFV　one　CL　club

This evening, they enter a club.

276 　　之後(.)　　　唔　少(.)　男仔(.)

After that(.)　　not　few(.)　boys(.)

After that, quite a few boys

277 　　都　主動　　同(.)　Suki　**傾偈**(.)

all　actively　to(.)　Suki　**talk**(.)

actively **talk** to Suki.

278 　　甚至(.)　有　　男仔(.)　**問**　佢　攞　電話

Even(.)　have　boys(.)　**ask**　her　get　phone

There are even some boys **asking** her for her number.

(110) involves men being the sayer of the processes of talking and asking, and Suki being the receiver. Such processes function to show Suki's popularity among men.

Suki is also represented as a desirable woman by Zion, a suitor and later her boyfriend, as shown below:

(111)

279	**Zion:**	第一	眼	印象(.)	好	乖	囉(.)
		First	eye	impression(.)	**very**	**well-behaved**	SFP(.)

My first impression was that she**'s very well-behaved**

280		好	純	囉
		very	**innocent**	SFP

and **very innocent.**

In the above relational clause, Zion relates Suki to the attributes 好乖 *(very well-behaved)* and 好純 *(very innocent)*. While both are positively evaluative markers, they are strongly associated with children, and it is highly marked to evaluate Suki as such. Importantly, this comment re-appears as a cut-in in another episode. It shows that Suki's child-like traits are something the programme stresses about her and something men like about her.

The above discussion clearly indicates that Suki is represented as a success story and the ideal type of woman. By foregrounding Suki's petiteness and 'feminine' appearance, the programme obviously endorses such traits as desirable for men; by highlighting her embrace of traditional femininity and popularity among men, the programme steers the viewers into seeing her as a role model for women and upholds traditional, subordinate femininity.

The shaping of Suki as a desirable type of woman for men seems quite successful. Many forum posts express the same view, e.g.

(112)

281   Suki   好   弱,   係   好多   男仔   鐘意   嗰   種
      Suki   very gentle weak be   many   men   like   that   kind

      Suki is of a gentle and weak character and is the kind of woman many men like.

This post points to Suki's perceived gentle and weak character, which probably refers to her obedience and which is consistent with the programme's representations.

(e) Mandy

Mandy withdraws midway and receives very little attention in the show. She embodies a career woman, and this identity is correspondingly the focus of the representations of her. The social actor analysis indicates that Louisa represents Mandy as a (typical) career woman seven times. Five of them explicitly classify Mandy as such, e.g.

(113)

282   **Louisa**:   Mandy   係   **典型   事業   型   女性**(.)
             Mandy   be   **typical   career   type   woman**(.)
             Mandy is **a typical career woman**.

Two references are hybrids of nomination, classification and appraisement in the [PM]+[N] construction, e.g.

(114)

283   **Louisa:**   又   叻(.)   又   硬淨   嘅(.)
             Both   capable(.)   and   tough   LP(.)

             Mandy, who is a capable and tough

284		事業	型	女性(.)		Mandy
		career	type	woman(.)		Mandy

career woman.

Mandy is not only classified as a career woman, but also positively appraised in terms of professional performance. As well as (114), the PM(s) 叻 *(capable)* and/or 硬淨 *(tough)* appear(s) in three other references in the [PM]+[N] construction.

The only other point I can make about the representations of Mandy is that she is also described as 太辛苦*(too difficult to deal with)* in the following relational clause:

(115)

285	**Winnie:**	如果	Mandy	嗰	啲(.)	又	**太**	**辛苦**	喎
		If	Mandy	those	CL(.)	but	**too**	**difficult**	SFP

But those like Mandy are **too difficult to deal with**.

Winne's comment appears in a discussion by the 'expert' team about women like Mandy and those like Suki. Importantly, before (115), the 'experts' represent Suki as a popular type of woman for men and give the following reasons:

(116)

286	**Jessica:**	因為(.)	因為	唔需要	同佢
		because(.)	because	don't need	with her

because…because of the feeling that they don't need to

287		鬥	智(.)	鬥	力	嗰種感覺(.)
		compete	wisdom(.)	compete	strength	the feeling(.)

compete with her in wisdom and strength.

288	**Y.C. Tsao:**	即係(.)	你	返到	屋企(.)	你	唔會要(.)
		That is(.)	you	go back	home(.)	you	wouldn't need(.)

That is, after you go back home, you wouldn't need…

289		你	根本	唔洗	用	腦	對住	佢
		you	actually	don't need	use	brain	face-CONT	her

with her, your brain doesn't actually need to function at all.

Briefly, they impute Suki's popularity among men to her intellectual 'incapability'. In contrastive terms, Mandy's capability is what makes her too hard to deal with for men and hence not a good partner choice. Such polarised representations of Mandy and Suki show the programme's attempt to shape negative opinions on tough and capable career women like Mandy but positive opinions on women embracing traditional femininity like Suki.

Similar to the programme's shaping, many forum posts represent Mandy as a capable career woman and as very hard to deal with, e.g.

(117)

290	Mandy	姐姐[55]	就	真係	好	難	搞，
	Mandy	elder sister	definitely	really	very	hard	deal with

Mandy is definitely very hard to deal with.

---

[55] The kinship term 姐姐 *(elder sister)* is used here as a generic address term. While it is originally a polite term, the commentator uses it to foreground Mandy's relative older age.

291	佢	話	要	搵	個	有	好	收入	嘅	超級	大	男人
	She	say	need	find	CL	have	good	income	LP	super	big	man

She says she needs to find a 'super big man' with a good income.

After reporting the results of my social actor and transitivity analyses, in the next sub-section, I synthesise and discuss the findings.

5.2.3. Discussion

In this final sub-section, I synthesise the data analysis findings and relate them to RQ1:

RQ1. How are unmarried women talked about in *Bride Wannabes*?

- How are they represented as social actors?

- What types of actions are they associated with?

In *Bride Wannabes*, the five participants are talked about by being characterised as different kinds of women. The social actor analysis shows how they are directly characterised into different identities or roles, whereas the transitivity analysis indicates how they are indirectly characterised through what they do, think and say and what attributes they have. Below I briefly summarise how each of them is characterised:

Florence is characterised as a typical 'leftover woman', i.e. no longer young, highly educated and 'picky', who has an idealistic attitude to love and a strong personality. The programme characterises her as a 'leftover woman' by e.g. directly referring to her as a 'three-high woman', classifying her in terms of her age and invoking her 'pickiness' through the use of emotive mental processes and verbal processes to represent what kind of men she (dis)likes and what she says about different suitors. She is also repeatedly classified vis-à-vis her idealistic attitude to love, e.g. a romanticist. Her idealistic attitude to love is also pointed to by recurrently representing her as the behaver of waiting for a 'prince' and as the senser of different mental processes to

project what kind of men/love she is desiring and how she is choosing a boyfriend. Besides, her strong personality is highlighted in various references to her via classification and appraisement, and represented as an attribute of hers via relational processes. Verbal processes, e.g. insisting and refusing, are also used to imply that she must have her own way. The programme directs the viewers to judging Florence as an undesirable woman for men through e.g. the inclusion of Johnny's lengthy and ruthless comment which is full of relational processes linking her to different negative attributes, mainly relating to her appearance. The programme seems to use the comment to reinforce traditional femininity and imply that Florence is in no position to be 'picky'.

Bonnie is characterised as a 'non-feminine' woman and a social misfit. Her 'non-femininity' is a major focus of the social actor representations of her, for instance, by classifying her as a 'tomboy' and appraising her in terms of various 'non-feminine' traits, e.g. coarse and crude, and having fraternal righteousness. She is also linked to various 'non-feminine' traits, e.g. inelegant and crude, via relational processes, and problematised in relation to her 'non-feminine' way of talking via verbal processes, e.g. chattering noisily. Besides, she is constructed as not fitting into the normative definition of femininity in Hong Kong, e.g. by classifying her in relation to her background as a returnee from Australia. The programme obviously shapes negative views on Bonnie's marriageability. For one thing, various emotive mental processes are used to show men's lack of interest in her. For another, she is represented as ignorant about various things, and associated with a number of processes related to learning, teaching and transforming, which points to her need to change in order to find a partner.

Gobby is characterised as a miserable and unconfident divorcee. For example, she is classified as a divorcee and appraised in terms of her low self-esteem; the quality of bitterness is also ascribed to her through abstraction Similarly, her miserable life is

foregrounded via material processes related to her marital/relationship status, e.g. divorcing, and emotive mental processes of negative feelings, e.g. regretting. She is also frequently represented relating to the zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment that she undergoes. For example, she is objectivated in terms of her different body parts and represented as the beneficiary of different material processes related to the operation, e.g. injecting. Gobby is apparently not a focus of the programme, despite being a full participant, and as mentioned above, might be selected as a participant just because her miserable experience and low self-esteem make a good excuse for the programme to suggest she increase her confidence by improving her appearance via medical treatments.

Suki is characterised as a petite and 'feminine' woman and the ideal type of woman for men. The social actor representations of her positively foreground her petiteness through physical identification and appraisement. Her 'feminine' traits are also highlighted via classified and appraised references, e.g. 'a simple, pure and innocent little girl', and the use of desiderative mental processes to express her 'womanly' goal of marriage. The show also constructs her as a success story by metaphorically representing her as winning the battle and the first one reaching the finishing line through material processes. This kind of positive framing shows that the show embraces and upholds traditional femininity, which Suki embodies. Besides, through mental and verbal processes, she is also represented as the ideal type of woman for men.

Lastly, Mandy is characterised as a career woman through classification and positive appraisements vis-à-vis her working performance. However, she is described as too hard to deal with for men via a relational process. She is clearly not talked about much in the programme. I assume her parts are not edited out just for technical reasons.

Since she sometimes participates in various activities with one or more fellow participants, it might be hard to edit out all parts involving her. Moreover, it is through Mandy that Suki gets to know her boyfriend, Zion.

In conclusion, *Bride Wannabes* characterises the participants as different kinds of women and shapes views on them. It upholds traditional femininity by representing Suki, who embodies traditional femininity, as the winner and the ideal type of woman for men and problematising the other participants, especially Florence and Bonnie, who represent a 'leftover woman' who is accomplished in terms of education and career, and is 'picky', and a 'non-feminine' woman, respectively.

Chapter 6: How unmarried women talk about themselves

This chapter explores the parameter of how unmarried women talk about themselves in *Bride Wannabes* in terms of their use of appraisals. Appraisal concerns the use of linguistic resources to express attitudes and (dis)align with various value positions. It is particularly relevant to this parameter because how unmarried women express their attitude towards themselves and dis(align) themselves with various value positions in relation to gender is salient to their self-representations as a stigmatised group and is very much to do with their gender beliefs. I have selected Martin and White's appraisal framework (2005) as my analytical tool as it is very comprehensive taking into account a wide range of evaluative meanings, and has been successfully applied to many empirical studies (see Section 6.1.3). Below I first discuss the framework, and then present my appraisal analysis of the participants' self-representations in *Bride Wannabes*.

6.1. Appraisal theory

I employ Martin and White's appraisal theory (2005) to explore how unmarried women talk about themselves in my data. In this section, I first provide an overview of the theory, followed by a discussion of how Cantonese sentence-final particles can be used to express evaluative meanings. I then briefly review empirical research that has employed the appraisal framework. The last sub-section is a description of my methods of analysis.

6.1.1. Overview of appraisal theory

Appraisal theory, a derivative of SFG, is a systemic framework of evaluative resources in English developed by Martin and colleagues (see Martin, 1996, 1997, 2000;

Martin and Rose, 2003; Martin and Macken-Horarik, 2003; Martin and White, 2005). In line with SFG, Martin (2000) defines *appraisal* as 'the semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgements, and valuations, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations' (p. 145) and presents his framework as system networks. As mentioned in Chapter 5, key to SFG are the three metafunctions of language: experiential, interpersonal and textual functions. The appraisal framework is set within the interpersonal dimension of SFG, but with a slightly different focus. According to Martin and White (2005), 'language is a stratified semiotic system involving three cycles of coding at different levels of abstractions' (p. 8), namely phonology and graphology, lexicogrammar, and discourse semantics, respectively. While SFG focuses on the lexicogrammatical aspect, the appraisal framework focuses on the aspect of discourse semantics. In other words, SFG, with its orientation to lexicogrammar, models meaning lexicogrammatically and attends to meaning on the clause level; in contrast, the appraisal framework looks at interpersonal meaning beyond the clause level.

There are three domains in the appraisal framework, namely *attitude*, i.e. appraisal resources to express our feelings and opinions, *engagement*, i.e. resources for us to adjust our commitment to what we are saying, and *graduation*, i.e. resources for grading appraisals. They are especially related to the polarity and modality aspect of interpersonal meanings.[56] For instance, in terms of the attitude system, we can use appraisal resources to express our feelings and opinions on others' behaviours and things/events *between the good and bad parameters*; the *engagement* system corresponds to *orientation in modality* in SFG, i.e. whether we express our attitude
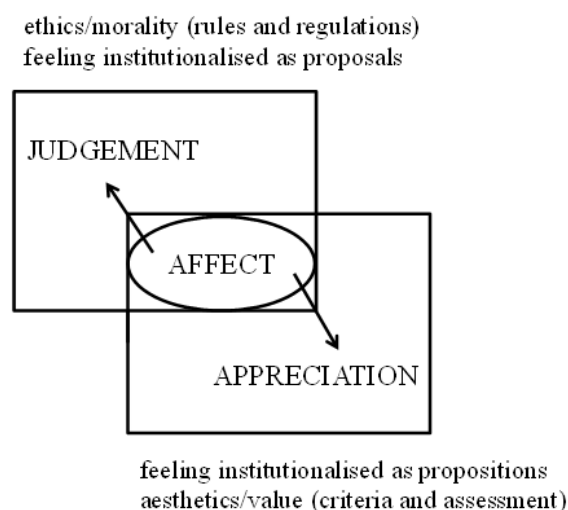
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[56] More parallels between the appraisal framework and the interpersonal dimension of SFG can be found in Halliday and Matthiessen's *An introduction to functional grammar* (fourth edition) (2014), which includes a table indicating how some categories of modal assessment in SFG correspond to those in different appraisal models, one of which is Martin and colleagues' (p. 608-612).

subjectively (e.g. 'I think' and 'must') or objectively (e.g. 'probably' and 'it's certain'), on the one hand, or explicitly (e.g. 'I think' and 'it's likely') or implicitly (e.g. 'will' and 'probably'), on the other. The discussion below mainly focuses on the attitude and engagement systems, which my research employs.

6.1.1.1. Attitude

Attitude refers to semantic resources deployed for expressing feelings, within which there are three systems: *affect*, *judgement* and *appreciation*, i.e. emotions, judgements of behaviours and evaluations of things/phenomena, respectively. Martin and White (2005) see judgement and appreciation as *institutionalised affect*. They explain that while *affect* is at the heart of feelings, judgement and appreciation can be seen as 'institutionalised feelings, which take us out of our everyday common sense world into the uncommon sense worlds of shared values' (ibid, p. 45) (Figure 6.1). In other words, judgement and appreciation are feelings of behaviours and things based on social values.

Figure 6.1: Judgement and appreciation as institutionalised affect

ethics/morality (rules and regulations)
feeling institutionalised as proposals

JUDGEMENT

AFFECT

APPRECIATION

feeling institutionalised as propositions
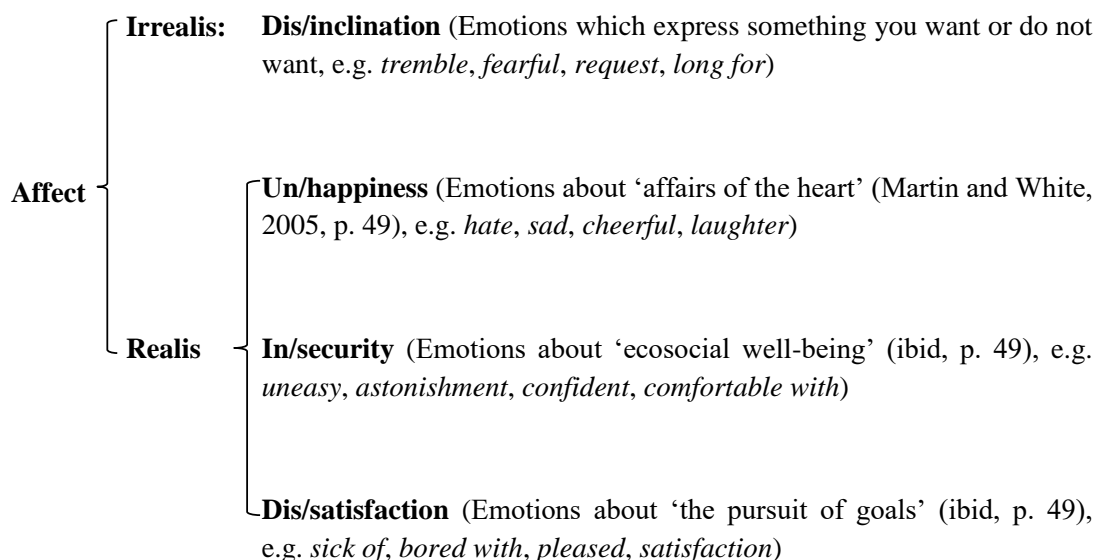aesthetics/value (criteria and assessment)

(See Martin and White, 2005, p. 45)

Martin and White (2005) further classify affect, judgement and appreciation into different sub-types, but they emphasise that the classifications are just their attempt to categorise different kinds of feelings lexically and should be treated as hypotheses. Below I provide an overview of each system.

(a) Affect

Affect refers to attitudinal meanings of emotions. Martin and White (2005) have proposed two broad categories in the affect system: *irrealis affect* and *realis affect*. While the former involves intention, the latter involves reaction, which can be illustrated by the distinction between 'I'd like' and 'I like'. They also propose one type of irrealis affect and three types of realis affect, as shown below:

Figure 6.2: The affect system

Irrealis: **Dis/inclination** (Emotions which express something you want or do not want, e.g. *tremble*, *fearful*, *request*, *long for*)

Affect

Un/happiness (Emotions about 'affairs of the heart' (Martin and White, 2005, p. 49), e.g. *hate*, *sad*, *cheerful*, *laughter*)

Realis **In/security** (Emotions about 'ecosocial well-being' (ibid, p. 49), e.g. *uneasy*, *astonishment*, *confident*, *comfortable with*)

Dis/satisfaction (Emotions about 'the pursuit of goals' (ibid, p. 49), e.g. *sick of*, *bored with*, *pleased*, *satisfaction*)

Since the appraisal framework looks at attitudinal meanings at the level of discourse semantics, realisations of affect are not tied to particular grammatical structures (the same for judgement and appreciation) and may refer to a quality, e.g. 'the captain was *sad*', a mental process, e.g. 'he *missed* him', a behavioural process, e.g.

'the captain *wept*', a comment, e.g. '*sadly*, he had to go', (ibid, 2005, p. 46), or the nominalised form of a quality or a mental/behavioural process, i.e. a grammatical metaphor (see Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). This explains the different parts of speech of the examples in Figure 6.2. Realisations of attitudinal meanings are discussed more thoroughly below.

Martin and White (2005) point out that the speaker/writer might not necessarily be the 'emoter' (the one experiencing the emotion), as we not only express our own emotions, but also, from our point of view, how *others* feel. In their sample appraisal analyses, they treat the emoter as the appraiser and also indicate from whose viewpoint the appraisal is made. This kind of 'third-person' or ascribed affect has been questioned by Thompson (2010) as to whether it can be dealt with analytically the same way as first-person affect: 'it is not easy to see how this enters directly into the interpersonal negotiation between interactants that is at the heart of appraisal' (p. 402). I have addressed this critique by contextualising the issue in my data, but still find third-person affect relevant to my analysis. First, some participants sometimes evaluate how men might feel about them or other types of women, rather than expressing their own emotions. For example, Gobby makes the following comment:

(118)

292	**Gobby:**	即係(.)	以前	我	就	覺得(.)	自己(.)	唉(.)
		That's(.)	previously	I	always	think(.)	self(.)	alas(.)

That's, previously, I always thought alas,

293		30	歲	嘞(.)	開始	老	嘞(.)	ar(.)
		30	years old	SFP(.)	start	age	SFP(.)	VTIP(.)

I was 30 years old, and started to age; um,

250

294		又	唔	夠	啲	靚	妹(.)	鬥	嘞

and   not   enough   CL   young   sister(.)   compete   SFP

I couldn't compete with those young women.

By evaluating herself as unable to compete with young women, Gobby expresses an ascribed affect of happiness that men preferred young women to her. While this kind of third-person affect does not involve any interpersonal negotiation between the appraiser and the audience, Gobby is negotiating emotions with the audience, who will infer why she thinks so and how it relates to her own feeling. Besides, as psychologists Brewer and Gardner (1996) note, we have 'personal self', 'relational self' and 'collective self' (p. 84), i.e. self-representations at the individual, interpersonal and group levels. It would be too individualistic to only look at how the participants feel about themselves. For example, Gobby from time to time refers to how her early marriage and subsequent divorce made her mother feel, e.g.

(119)

295 **Gobby:** 即係 當時 我 細個(.) 咁 細個 結婚(.)

That's   at that time   I   young(.)   so   young   get married(.)

That's, at that time, I was young. I got married at such a young age.

296 佢 都 好 嬲 呀(.)

She   also   very   angry   SFP(.)

She was also very angry

Here, Gobby expresses an affect of unhappiness that her mother felt angry with her for her early marriage, which not only refers to her mother's emotion, but also invokes a negative view on what she did in the past.[57] Hence, I consider both first-person and third-person affect in my analysis. While it might be potentially problematic to quantify the two in the same way, I do not foresee any problem to analyse them qualitatively.
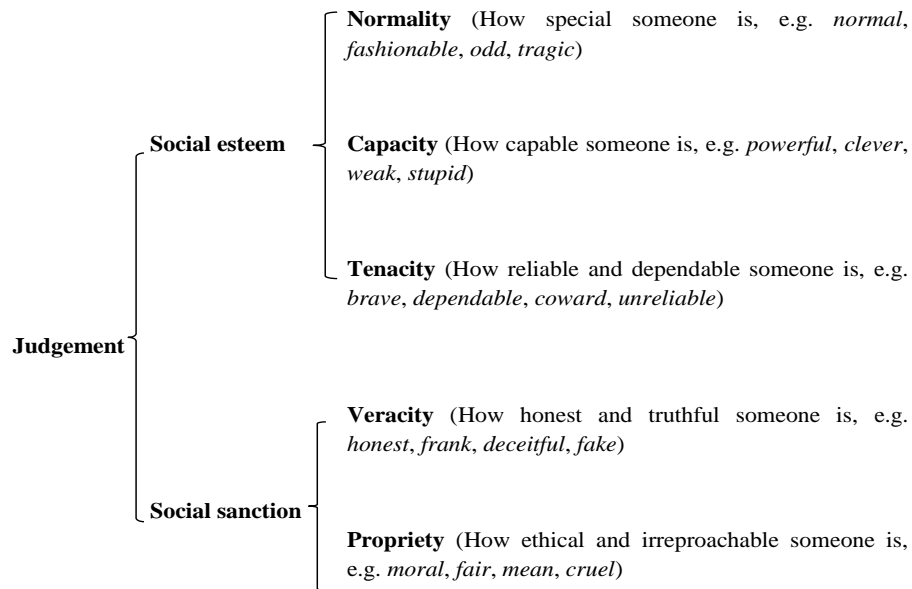
(b) Judgement

Judgement is concerned with evaluation of people and their behaviours. It is broadly categorised into *social esteem* and *social sanction*. Martin (2000) explains that judgement of social esteem refers to admiration for or criticism of a person or her/his behaviour while judgement of social sanction means praise or condemnation. Social esteem 'tends to be policed in the oral culture, through chat, gossip, jokes and stories of various kinds' (Martin and White, 2005, p. 52). In contrast, social sanction is often related to 'civic duty and religious observances' (ibid, p. 52) – law, rules and regulations in written form which are passed and enforced by governments and religious institutions.

Social esteem is divided into three sub-types: *normality* (how special someone is), *capacity* (how capable someone is) and *tenacity* (how reliable and dependable someone is), and social sanction into two: *veracity* (how honest and truthful someone is) and *propriety* (how ethical and irreproachable someone is). The judgement system is illustrated in Figure 6.3:

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[57] This example is related to appraisals of judgements and indirect appraisals, which will be discussed in more details below.
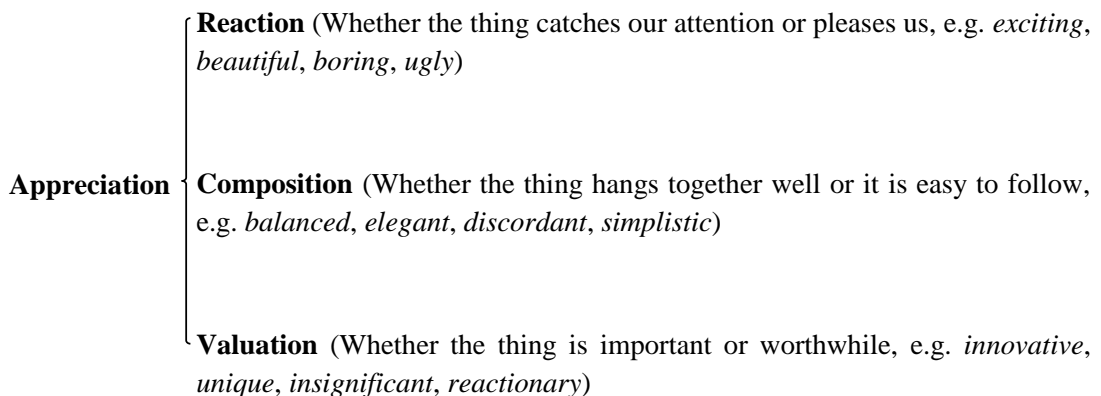
Figure 6.3: The judgement system

Normality (How special someone is, e.g. *normal, fashionable, odd, tragic*)

Capacity (How capable someone is, e.g. *powerful, clever, weak, stupid*)

Tenacity (How reliable and dependable someone is, e.g. *brave, dependable, coward, unreliable*)

Veracity (How honest and truthful someone is, e.g. *honest, frank, deceitful, fake*)

Propriety (How ethical and irreproachable someone is, e.g. *moral, fair, mean, cruel*)

The above examples are often context-dependent. As Martin and White (2005) emphasise, '[w]hen it comes to language use in context, it is often the case that a given lexical item will vary its attitudinal meaning according to that context' (p. 52). For example, in the normality category, it depends very much on the context whether it is good to be *special*.

(c) Appreciation

Appreciation is concerned with evaluation of things, including products, performance and phenomena. There are three sub-types, as illustrated below:

Figure 6.4: The appreciation system

Reaction (Whether the thing catches our attention or pleases us, e.g. *exciting, beautiful, boring, ugly*)

Composition (Whether the thing hangs together well or it is easy to follow, e.g. *balanced, elegant, discordant, simplistic*)

Valuation (Whether the thing is important or worthwhile, e.g. *innovative, unique, insignificant, reactionary*)

(d) Realisations

Attitudinal meanings, as mentioned, can be in the form of different grammatical categories. The examples in Figures 6.2-6.4 have been selected arbitrarily from Martin and White (2005) for illustrative purposes. In actual appraisal analyses, realisations of attitudinal meanings are much more complex than that. They can be directly realised by attitudinal lexis, i.e. *inscription*, which all the above-mentioned examples fall into. Below is an illustration from my data:

(120)

297	**Gobby:**	因為	我	後悔	以前	做	嘅	事	啦
		because	I	regret	past	do	LP	things	SFP

because I regret what I did

Gobby draws on the affective lexis *後悔 (regret)* to express an affect of dissatisfaction towards herself, so it is an inscription.

Apart from attitudinal lexis, attitudinal meanings can also be realised indirectly, i.e. *invocation*. For example, in *Bride Wannabes*, a group of 'career women' are invited to discuss what it means to them to be 'career women' in Hong Kong, and June, a guest speaker, shares her experience:

(121)

298	**June:**	我	試過(.)	有一次(.)	上[58]
		I	experience-EXP(.)	once(.)	up

I once

---

[58] 上 is a directional verb, but its meaning is more equivalent to the English preposition *up* (see Matthews and Yip, 2011).

299	一	間(.)	ar(.)	大	公司	嗰度(.)	開會(.)
	one	CL(.)	VTIP(.)	large	company	there(.)	have-meeting(.)

had a meeting in a, um, large company.

300	成	個	conference room(.)	話得事		嘅(.)
	Whole	CL	conference room(.)	could-call-the-shots		LP(.)

In the conference room, those who could make decisions

301	全部	都	係	女人(.)	全部	都	係	女人(.)
	all	all	be	women(.)	all	all	be	women(.)

were all women. All were women.

302	負責		做	會議	紀錄	嗰啲(.)	係	男人(.)
	In charge of	do	meeting	minutes	those(.)	be	men(.)

Those in charge of taking meeting minutes were men.

June's utterance implies that it was women who occupied all the managerial positions in the company she went to, while it was men who performed secretarial duties. As she utters this in a discussion of what it means to be a 'career woman' in Hong Kong, her utterance can be interpreted as an illustration of the general situation in Hong Kong. Therefore, despite the absence of attitudinal lexis, it is inferable from the broad content of the message that she is positively appraising Hong Kong women's career achievement, i.e. a judgement of capacity.

Realisations of attitudinal meanings are further complicated by the prosodic nature of attitude, i.e. an inscribed attitudinal item can *colour* other ideational items and *invoke* attitudinal meanings. Below is an example:

(122)

303 **Bonnie:** 咁樣(.) 啲 男仔(.) 就 ar(.)

Then(.) CL boys(.) all VTIP(.)

Then those boys, um,

304 無 特別 approach 我(.)

not-have especially approach me(.)

didn't especially approach me,

305 咁 我 又(.) 唔知道 究竟 係(.)

then I but(.) not-know whether be(.)

but I don't know whether this was because

306 我: 個 樣(.) 好 惡 吖(.) ar

my: CL appearance(.) very frightening SFP(.) VTIP

I look very frightening, um

307 我 唔 靚 吖(.)

I not pretty SFP(.)

I'm not pretty,

308 定係 ar(.) 我 短 頭髮(.) 定係 點樣(.)

or VTIP(.) I short hair(.) or what(.)

I wear short hair, or what.

In (122), Bonnie talks about men's lack of interest in her and lists several possible

reasons, including two inscribed appreciations of reaction regarding her appearance,

namely, 好惡 *(very frightening)* and 唔靚 *(not pretty)* (lines 306-307), which establish a prosody of negative evaluation and which have a colouring effect on the non-attitudinal item in the list, i.e. 短頭髮 *(wear short hair)* (line 308) (see (133) for a more thorough discussion about this example). Therefore, Bonnie is also making a negative appreciation of reaction concerning her short hair.

A point to bear in mind is the often hybridity of realisations of attitudinal meanings. Martin and White (2005) are well aware of this and propose a list of attitudinal lexical items which often realise hybrid meanings, e.g. 'guilty' and 'disgust'. For example, in their sentence 'I felt disgusted with them for provoking him' (p. 61), 'disgusted' can be seen as an affect as well as a judgement. They refer to this as an 'affectual inscription[s] invoking (i.e. implying) judgement' (p. 68).

After an overview of the attitude system, the next sub-section moves on to another dimension of appraisals: engagement.

6.1.1.2. Engagement

Engagement refers to semantic resources for stance-taking in relation to other voices. At the heart of the engagement system are the notions of *dialogism* and *heteroglossia* (see Bakhtin, 1981; Voloshinov, 1995), which point to the idea that 'to speak or write is always to reveal the influence of, refer to, or to take up in some way, what has been said/written before, and simultaneously to anticipate the responses of actual, potential or imagined readers/listeners' (Martin and White, 2005, p. 92). As indicated in the above quotation, engagement is concerned with how speakers/writers draw on semantic resources to position themselves in relation to other voices/value positions and with respect to their (putative) addressees. In the engagement system, locutions are categorised into two types: *heteroglossia*, i.e. locutions which make reference to other

voices and tolerate dialogistic alternatives, and *monoglossia*, i.e. bare assertions which are represented as factual, taken-for-granted or in the spotlight for discussion, with the former being Martin and White's (2005) main focus.

Heteroglossia falls into two categories *dialogic expansion* and *dialogic contraction*:

(a) Dialogic expansion

Dialogic expansion refers to locutions which open up the space for other voices or value positions. There are two sub-types of dialogic expansion. First, speakers/writers may *entertain* alternative positions. This type of dialogic expansion overlaps with modality of probability in SFG, and can be realised by, for example, modal verbs, e.g. 'might'; modal adjuncts, e.g. 'certainly'; mental verb projections, e.g. 'I think'; and 'expository' questions, i.e. 'pseudo' questions which 'are employed to raise the possibility that some proposition holds' (Martin and White, 2005, p. 105) (*cf. rhetorical questions*, which assume a particular answer). From a dialogistic perspective, such locutions represent a proposition as either uncertain or subjective, and recognise it as merely one of the many possible positions. Recognition of other alternatives, however, does not directly reflect a speaker's/writer's level of commitment to the proposition uttered. For example, in the locution 'A pair of Moroccan painted doors – probably 18th century – were evocative things in their own right and indicate the eclectic nature of this collection' (ibid, p. 107), the use of 'probably' indicates the writer's uncertainty of the proposition referred to; in contrast, in the locution 'The sad aspect of all this is that by giving support to this invasion Blair will be destroying the UN and I believe will have betrayed the British people' (ibid, p. 107), the use of 'I believe' enables the writer to show strong commitment to the value position expressed while indicating his/her recognition that

the viewpoint might not be shared by others. Martin and White (2005) therefore stress the need to attend to contexts and co-text before interpreting such locutions.

Dialogic expansion can also be achieved via *attributions*, i.e. 'formulations which disassociate the proposition from the text's internal authorial voice by attributing it so *[sic]* some external source' (ibid, p. 111). Since such formulations involve external voices, they are apparently dialogic. Attributions are often realised by reported speech/thoughts. There are two sub-categories of attributions: *acknowledging attributions* and *distancing attributions*. In terms of acknowledging attributions, while the authorial voice is presented as engaging with other propositions, there is no explicit indication of the speaker's/writer's stance vis-à-vis those voices. Such formulations often contain reporting verbs e.g. 'think' and 'say'. Acknowledging attributions often appear in hard news report in broadsheets, where reporters try to 'impersonalise' and 'neutralise' the text, and thus not to overtly (dis)align readers into particular positions. As regards distancing attribution, the label is self-explanatory, referring to locutions whose authorial voice overtly distances itself from the value position attributed. It may be realised by reporting verbs, e.g. 'claim' and scare quotes. By distancing himself/herself from an attributed value position, a speaker/writer is reluctant to take responsibility for that position. To put it in another way, the speaker/writer makes his/her stance explicit and tries to align his/her audience into it.

(b) Dialogic contraction

In contrast to dialogically expansive locutions, *dialogically contractive* ones exclude or restrict space for alternative positions. Dialogical contraction can be sub-categorised into *disclamation* and *proclamation*.

To disclaim a value position means to recognise it as an alternative, yet to represent it as inapplicable. One form of disclamation is *denials*, i.e. to reject a value position, which is realised by negation. When a denial is directed towards a third party's position, the addresser might try to convince the putative addressee against that position. In some cases, denials may be against some misunderstanding which the addresser assumes the addressee holds. Another form of disclamation is *countering*, i.e. formulations in which the authorial voice introduces a proposition to replace/supplant what would have been expected otherwise. Countering disclamation is often realised by connectives, e.g. 'although' and 'but', or comment adjuncts, e.g. 'surprisingly' and 'just'. Counters and denials often appear together, e.g. 'I would like to record that the picture was one of solemn dignity *but*, in fact, it was *not*' (Martin and White, 2005, p. 221' my emphasis). Martin and White (2005) suggest that in many cases, counters are aligning as the authorial voice represents itself as sharing the same view with the putative addressee.

Proclamation refers to formulations acting to restrict the dialogic space for alternative positions. Three sub-categories have been proposed: *concurrence*, *endorsement* and *pronouncement*. Concurring formulations involve the speaker's/writer's overt agreement with the assumed putative addressee's view, and are realised by terms e.g. 'of course' and 'certainly', or rhetorical questions, which do not require an answer as it is taken for granted. Martin and White (2005) make a further distinction between *affirming concurrence* and *conceding concurrence*. The difference lies in how far the authorial voice agrees with the position, with the latter involving a sense of reluctance and distancing on the part of the speaker/writer and appearing concomitantly with a countering formulation, e.g. '*Admittedly*, he was badly behaved, but look at what he has achieved' (ibid, p. 125; my emphasis). While formulations of
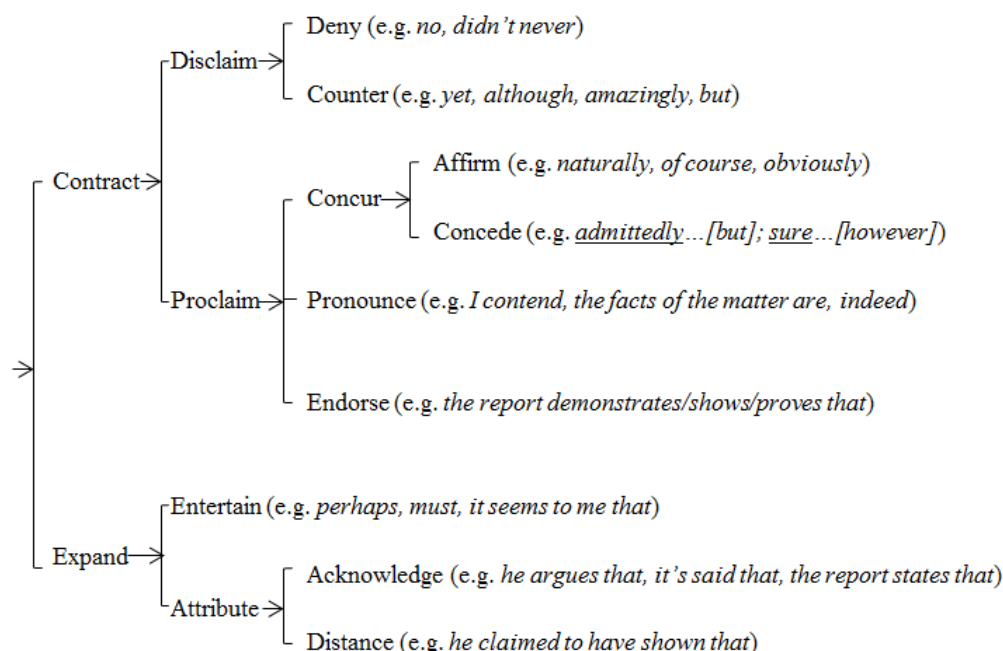
affirming concurrence present the particular proposition as shared by the putative audience and the wider community, in those of conceding concurrence, the putative audience is assumed to hold a different viewpoint and the speaker/writer, on the one hand, disaligns himself/herself into that position, and on the other, tries to establish solidarity by presenting that position as in some way valid and understandable.

Proclamation can also be achieved through *endorsements*, i.e. the authorial voice referring to an external source and representing it as correct, valid or warrantable. Formulations of endorsements are often in the form of projections including reporting verbs, e.g. 'show' and 'find', or their nominalised forms. Endorsements are similar to attributions in that both involve references to external sources via projections; they however differ in that while in endorsements, the authorial voice validates and shares the responsibility for the proposition cited, in attributions, the authorial voice does not indicate its stance or distances itself from it. Therefore, when a speaker/writer endorses an external position, he/she aligns the putative addressee into that position.

Lastly, pronouncements refer to formulations in which the speaker/writer explicitly interpolates himself/herself into the text and places emphasis on the (in)validity of the value position, and often involve emphasis markers, e.g. 'I contend', 'indeed' and 'really'. Pronouncements are contractive as the authorial emphases and interpolations often imply the existence of resistance against the authorial position or contrary positions. By using pronouncements, the writer/speaker might try to confront or challenge a third party or the putative addressee. When the target is a third party, the authorial voice confronts the counter position on the putative addressee's behalf and hence establishes solidarity. On the contrary, when the challenge is directed towards the putative addressee, the obvious disalignment might affect solidarity, and other dialogistic resources may be drawn on to provide enough reasons for the challenge.

Below is an overview of the engagement system:

Figure 6.5: The engagement system

Disclaim
- Deny (e.g. *no, didn't never*)
- Counter (e.g. *yet, although, amazingly, but*)

Contract → Proclaim
- Concur
  - Affirm (e.g. *naturally, of course, obviously*)
  - Concede (e.g. *admittedly*...[*but*]; *sure*...[*however*])
- Pronounce (e.g. *I contend, the facts of the matter are, indeed*)
- Endorse (e.g. *the report demonstrates/shows/proves that*)

Expand
- Entertain (e.g. *perhaps, must, it seems to me that*)
- Attribute
  - Acknowledge (e.g. *he argues that, it's said that, the report states that*)
  - Distance (e.g. *he claimed to have shown that*)

(See Martin and White, 2005, p. 134)

After an overview of the appraisal theory, the next sub-section discusses a distinctive linguistic resource to express evaluative meanings in Cantonese – sentence-final particles.

6.1.2. Use of Cantonese sentence-final particles to express evaluative meanings

As appraisals are realised based on semantic criteria, rather than grammatical ones, the English-based appraisal framework seems broadly compatible with Cantonese; nevertheless, when it comes to applying it to Cantonese, I argue the need to pay special attention to a distinctive feature of Cantonese – the extensive use of sentence-final particles. Below, I provide a brief introduction to sentence-final particles in Cantonese and justify their relevance to the study of appraisals in Cantonese.

Cantonese is well-known for its rich sentence-final particle system. As mentioned in Section 4.3, sentence-final particles occur in the final position of a sentence/clause and serve the pragmatic functions of showing speech-act types, marking evidentiality as well as emotional and affective colouring (see Matthews and Yip, 2011, p. 397-408). There are some thirty sentence-final particles in Cantonese (or more than a hundred, if particle clusters are taken into account), which according to some researchers (e.g. Luke, 1990 and Leung, 2005), might outnumber their counterparts in any other language examined so far.

The Cantonese sentence-final particle system is rather complex. Many particles have tonal variations, with different tones representing different meanings. I will illustrate this point with the sentence-final particle 喎 in the third and fifth tones.[59] To make a distinction between the variants of a particular particle, whenever I refer to a particle in text, I indicate its tone in both the original version and the word-by-word English translation using the Cantonese Jyutping Romanisation system, developed by the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong.Therefore, I refer to the third-tone variant of 喎 as *喎3 (wo3)*, and the fifth-tone variant as *喎5 (wo5). 喎3 (wo3)* can be used to express surprise at a discovery, e.g.

(123)

309	美金	升咗	喎 3
	US dollar	rise-PFV	wo3

Look, the US dollar has gone up! (see Matthews and Yip, 2011, p. 406)

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[59] There are altogether nine tones in Cantonese.

喎 5 (wo5), however, does not convey this meaning. It instead serves as, among other

functions, a '"hearsay" evidential particle' (ibid, p. 407) in reported speech, e.g.

(124)

310	天氣	報告	話	今日	會	落雨	喎 5
	Weather	report	say	today	will	rain	wo5

According to the weather report, it's going to rain today. (ibid, p. 407)

The Cantonese sentence-final particle system is further complicated by how far such particles carry semantic content. Early research suggests that they have no semantic content (e.g. Luke, 1990; Kwok, 1984). However, some recent studies, e.g. Wakefield, (2011) and Leung (2011), argue that sentence-final particles have core semantic content independent of the context. In my view, sentence-final particles convey a certain level of semantic meaning, but the meaning is highly embedded in the context. As Leung and Gibbons (2009) rightly note, sentence-final particles 'are frequently "demanded" by the preceding semantic content, with speakers seeking the appropriate filler for that slot. However, they may also be used independently to "colour" or shape the meaning in some way' (p. 192). Therefore, I think that Cantonese sentence-final particles fall into the stratum of discourse semantics.

Cantonese sentence-final particles do not have direct counterparts in English, but many linguists have pointed to the parallels between the functions of Cantonese sentence-final particles and those of English intonation.[60] For example, Leung and Gibbons (2009) investigated how legal interpreters translated Cantonese sentence-final

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[60] Apart from intonation patterns, Cantonese sentence-final particles sometimes also function like other linguistic resources in English, e.g. question tags (see Matthews and Yip, 2011; Leung and Gibbons, 2009).

particles to English in Hong Kong bilingual courtrooms and found that they often resorted to intonation patterns; Wakefield (2010, 2012) compared an audio corpus of naturally-occurring Cantonese conversations and the Cantonese-to-English translations by some Cantonese/English native bilinguals, and concluded that the Cantonese sentence-final particle 囉1 (lo1) functions similarly to the high-falling pitch contour in English. Research has shown that intonation is a linguistic resource to express interpersonal meaning (e.g. Painter, 2003; Wichmann, 2005). Similarly, Cantonese sentence-final particles also perform this function, which is apparently relevant to appraisals. While it makes sense for Martin and White (2005) not to look at intonation in their appraisal framework, it does not do for me to ignore sentence-final particles. The rationale is that Martin and White's (2005) focus is on appraisals at the stratum of discourse semantics, and intonation is clearly beyond the scope of their framework. In contrast, sentence-final particles fall within the stratum of discourse semantics. Hence, I find it necessary to examine the use of sentence-final particles in my appraisal analysis.

After pointing to the potentials of Cantonese sentence-final particles to convey interpersonal meanings, I now proceed to some specific meanings or functions of such particles and relate them to the appraisal framework. As mentioned, Cantonese sentence-final particles perform a wide variety of functions, but I only focus on those relevant to appraisal meanings and ignore the less relevant ones, e.g. indicating the grammatical mood. Cantonese sentence-final particles can be used to express various interpersonal meanings, which overlap with all the three systems in the appraisal framework. The limited scope of this research precludes me from providing a detailed mapping of individual sentence-final particles and different categories in each of the three systems. I just briefly describe how different functions of sentence-final particles are compatible to the attitude and engagement systems, which my research employs.

In terms of the attitude system, sentence-final particles can perform the function of affective and emotional colouring and shape meaning of non-attitudinal items (see Luke, 1990; Matthews and Yip, 2011; Botha and Barnes, 2013; Leung and Gibbons, 2009). For example, after going to a club with Suki and seeing that many men approached Suki but not herself, Bonnie makes the following comment:

(125)

311   **Bonnie:**   就算(.)   男仔(.)   介紹   男仔 識(.)

              Even if(.)   boy(.)   introduce boy   know(.)

              Even if a boy is introduced to another boy,

312   咁(.)   佢哋   都   會   傾偈(.)

              VTIP(.)   they   also   will   talk(.)

              they will talk;

313   咁   點解(.) ar   無人   同   我   講嘢   嘅 2

              then   why(.) VTIP   nobody   with   me   talk   ge2

              then why, um, did nobody talk to me?

The sentence-final particle 嘅2 *(ge2)* (line 313) here is used to express puzzlement (see Matthews and Yip, 2011), i.e. an affect of insecurity. This affective meaning will be lost if, for instance, 嘅2 *(ge2)* is replaced with another sentence-final particle 吖1 *(aa1)*, in which case the question expresses irritation or anger. In this example, 嘅2 *(ge2)* is obviously attitudinal. However, I have to point out that despite their semantic content, the meaning of sentence-final particles like 嘅2 *(ge2)* is determined very much by the

preceding content and is not as 'stable' as those referred to as inscriptions by Martin and White (2005). Many sentence-final particles can express different meanings in different contexts. *嘅2 (ge2)*, for example, can be an assertion and reservation marker (Matthews and Yip, 2011). A more indirect example can be found in Gobby's narration of her life story below:

(126)

314	**Gobby:**	十八	歲:		同	我	前夫	拍拖(.)
		18	years old:		with	my	ex-husband	go out(.)

At the age of 18: I went out with my ex-husband.

315	跟住	十(.)九	歲:		就	有咗	啦(.)
	Then	19	years old:		already	pregnant	SFP(.)

Then at the age of 19: I already got pregnant

316	跟住	就	結婚(.)
	then	then	get married(.)

and then got married.

317	跟住	到到(.)	五	年	後(.)	就	離婚	囉1(.)
	Then	until(.)	5	years	after(.)	then	divorce	lo1(.)

Then after 5 years, we divorced,

318	因為(.)	對方		有	第三者	囉1
	because(.)	the other party		had	third party	lo1

because he had an affair.

In this extract, Gobby mentions four life events: going out with her ex-husband at the age of 18, being pregnant at the age of 19, getting married, and divorcing after five years owing to her ex-husband's affair. Significantly, the sentence-final particle 囉1 (lo1) is attached to the two clauses in her narration of her divorce and her ex-husband's affair (lines 317-318). This particle functions here to invite sympathy (see Matthews and Yip, 2011). Gobby, on the one hand, indirectly makes a negative judgement on her ex-husband, and on the other, implicitly expresses her regret at what she did in the past, i.e. an affect of dissatisfaction.[61] The colouring effect of 囉1 (lo1) here is a bit different from the notion of invocation in Martin and White's (2005) discussion about the prosodic nature of attitude. What they refer to is an inscribed attitudinal item colouring other ideational items and invoking attitudinal meanings. In the case of 囉 1 (lo1), however, it is not attitudinal *per se*, but it can still shape meaning of other non-attitudinal items.

In terms of the engagement system, Cantonese sentence-final particles can be used to signal speakers' stance (see Botha and Barnes, 2013; Wakefield, 2011; Leung and Gibbons, 2009). Below is an example:

(127)

319	**Mandy:**	咁	我(.)	我	自己	會	覺得(.)	有時
		VTIP	I(.)	I	self	would	think(.)	sometimes

I…I'd sometimes think

---

[61] This example only forms part of Gobby's narration. She also directly expresses her regret elsewhere in her narration, which has a synergistic effect in combination with the use of the sentence-final particle 囉 1 (lo1). A more thorough analysis can be found in (137).

320	就算	我	唔拍拖(.)
	even though	I	not-go-out(.)
	even though I'm not in a relationship,		

321	我	嘅	生活	我	都	已經	哈哈
	my	LP	life	I	already	already	haha
	my life has already been, haha,						

322	好	OK	㗎3	喎3
	very	okay	gaa3	wo3
	very okay.			

In this example, Mandy ends her assertion that she leads a very good life even not being in a relationship with the sentence-final particle cluster *㗎3 喎 3 (gaa3wo3)* (line 322). *㗎3 (gaa3)* is a marker of strong emphasis, and *喎 3 (wo3)* functions to indicate contrast (Leung, 2010). The contrast here is what, in Mandy's opinion, many people think and what she thinks. Therefore, the assertion means something like 'despite what many people think, my life is very okay'. This example involves an implication of some resistance against Mandy's (or women's) singleness, and her challenge to such views, and hence an instance of pronouncement.

As shown above, Cantonese sentence-final particles are a useful resource to express appraisal meanings and should be taken into consideration when doing appraisal analyses in Cantonese. After justifying the relevance of Cantonese sentence-final particles to my appraisal analysis, the next sub-section surveys empirical studies employing the appraisal theory in the literature.

6.1.3. Empirical studies employing the appraisal framework

Martin and White's appraisal theory (2005) has proved a popular analytical tool in studies in various linguistic areas, e.g. academic discourse, pragmatics and discourse analysis (see, for example, Love, 2006; Gallardo and Ferrai, 2010; Fuoli, 2012). Below I review studies which are in some way related to my research.

First, the appraisal theory has been widely adopted in media studies, e.g. Meadows and Sayer (2013), Pounds (2012), White (2012), and Marshall and Pienaar (2008). Meadows and Sayer (2013), for example, conducted an appraisal analysis to investigate the controversy triggered by an episode of a BBC television show, *Top Gear*, where demeaning stereotypes of Mexico were drawn on in the hosts' humorous conversation about a sports car manufactured in Mexico. They first focused on that controversial conversation and found that one of the hosts negatively appreciated Mexican cars as 'lazy, feckless, flatulent, overweight' (ibid, p. 105). Since the host previously made an explicit claim that 'cars reflect national characteristics' (ibid, p. 105), his negative appreciations of Mexican cars became transferrable to Mexicans. The researchers then examined how the incident was recontextualised in a radio interview with the car company owner concerned. The company owner denied the demeaning comment on Mexican cars (and people), made negative judgements on the hosts of *Top Gear*, and pronounced various positive judgements of Mexicans. The last focus of the research was on how the BBC responded to the controversy in their public statement. The statement, on the one hand, entertained opposing voices, but on the other, denied their bad intention and proclaimed their positions. Meadows and Sayer suggested that *Top Gear* reproduced nationalist ideology through humour and that while the national stereotypes drawn on in the programme were challenged, nationalism was taken as common sense.

The appraisal theory, despite being entirely English-based, has been successfully applied to data of different languages, such as Spanish, e.g. Gallardo and Ferrari (2010) and Santaemilia and Maruenda (2014); Mandarin, e.g. Wang (2008) and Wang (2014). Significantly, it has also been used to analyse data in Cantonese, the main language of my data. Lam and Yu (2013) examined Cantonese and English call centre communication involving complaints in an insurance company in Hong Kong. As part of their research, they employed the attitude and graduation systems in the appraisal framework to compare how the Cantonese-speaking and English-speaking clients expressed their negative feelings when making complaints to the customer service representatives, whose native language was Cantonese, in the call centre. The appraisal analysis indicated that the two groups of clients shared the similarities of drawing on appreciation resources, e.g. appreciating a question as 'silly', and constantly increasing the force of their appraisals; they however differed in that the English-speaking clients showed a preference for deploying resources of affect, i.e. expressing their emotions directly, e.g. explicitly mentioning they were 'confused', whereas the Cantonese-speaking clients mostly made judgements, e.g. criticising the staff for always 'making mistakes'. Lam and Yu (2013) pointed to a tendency for English-speaking clients to personalise their complaints, and the Cantonese-speaking clients to base their complaints on social values.

This brief literature review indicates that the appraisal framework is empirically sound, with different sub-systems being employed successfully in various linguistic fields and data in various languages.

6.1.4. Methods of analysis

Following a review of studies employing the appraisal framework, this sub-section describes how I apply it to my data. I first discuss the coverage of my appraisal analysis. As I employ the framework to explore how unmarried women talk about themselves, my analysis focuses on the participants' self-representations in their solo slots in *Bride Wannabes*.

Regarding the analysis procedures, I apply the attitude and engagement systems in the appraisal framework (including the use of Cantonese sentence-final particles) to all the participants' self-representations in their solo slots, and analyse how different participants talk about themselves qualitatively, with a particular focus on those related to gender, relationships or marital status. A major reason for my qualitative focus is the rather different orientations of the participants' talk, e.g. their past experience, their emotions and their beliefs. As will be shown below, the attitude system is more relevant in some cases, whereas the engagement system is more so in others. It is therefore infeasible to quantitatively compare different participants' self-representations. Besides, semantic meanings are not always easy to quantify. As discussed above, an inscription can colour other non-attitudinal items and make them evaluative. It is problematic to quantify this kind of semantic prosody. Admittedly, it is possible to only focus on inscribed appraisals at the expense of ignoring the dynamic nature of attitudinal language. However, it is equally difficult to dichotomise attitudinal meaning as either positive or negative. Below is an example from the forum discussions about *Bride Wannabes*:

(128)

323	以	我	身為	麻甩佬	講	句	真心	說話,
	From	me	as	inelegant-and-crude-fellow	speak	CL	frank	words

Frankly speaking as an inelegant and crude man,

324	5	位	女士	大鑊[62]	次序	係
	5	CL	women	big-wok	order	be

the order of seriousness of the 5 women's troubled situations is

325	Florence, mandy, gobby, bonnie, suki

Florence, Mandy, Gobby, Bonnie and Suki.

This comment compares the participants' troubled situation, or more specifically, the degree of being unwanted (by men). In Florence's case, it is beyond doubt a negative affect of disinclination. In Suki's case, it seems a *relatively* positive, or at least, a non-negative affect. The cases of Mandy, Gobby and Bonnie are even harder to judge as it is a continuum between negativeness and positiveness. In terms of engagement, while a quantitative analysis may reveal some frequencies of the use of different categories, it cannot show how and under what circumstance they are used. Thus, I find it more fruitful to conduct a qualitative analysis.

Before proceeding to my data analysis section, I have to stress two points. First, what I examine in this chapter is not how the participants actually talk about themselves, but how the programme re-presents their self-representations. *Bride Wannabes* is not a live programme. The participants' talk broadcast has gone through various selection and editing processes, so it is not the same as the participants' actual voice, but part of

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[62] 大鑊 is a colloquial Cantonese expression meaning 'of a seriously bad situation'.

the programme's representations. Second, the participants are undoubtedly aware of the existence of the production crew and the fact that what they say will likely be broadcast, so what they talk about may not fully reflect what they actually think.

After explaining how I analyse my data, in the next section, I present the appraisal analysis results.

6.2. Data analysis

This section concerns the appraisal analysis of the participants' self-representations in *Bride Wannabes*, and addresses the following research question:

RQ2. How do unmarried women talk about themselves in terms of self-appraisals in *Bride Wannabes*?

I first report my data analysis findings, followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to RQ2.

6.2.1. Findings

In this sub-section, I describe the findings of my appraisal analysis of the participants' talk about themselves in *Bride Wannabes*. In Chapter 5, I discussed how the five participants are represented by being characterised as different kinds of women. In line with this, this chapter discusses how they represent themselves differently.

(a) Florence

Florence's self-representations primarily concern her beliefs about love, rather than herself *per se*. This is the case even in her first appearance, when she says nothing about herself, but insisting on finding her soulmate and 'Mr Right'. Below I illustrate with

three excerpts how she defends her attitude by disaligning herself with the value positions of the 'experts'.

After her first meeting with Mei-Ling, a marriage agent, she defines love and talks about the functions of marriage agencies to indirectly counter Mei-Ling's value position that she should marry herself off without any requirements.

Context: In Episode 2, Florence and Mandy have a meeting with Mei-Ling. In the meeting, Mei-Ling asks the two participants which age group of men they are looking for. After Florence says that she would like one who is five years older or younger than herself, Mei-Ling baldly replies that it is impossible for her to find a boyfriend who is five years younger, and her chance of finding one who is five years older is also very slim. After the meeting, Florence responds to Mei-Ling's comment:

(129)

326　**Florence:**　無　　可　厚　　非(.)

　　　　　　　　Not-have　can　severely　censure(.)

　　　　　　　　You can't completely invalidate their position.

327　　　　　　佢哋(.)　係　用　statistics(.)　去　定位　　呀(.)

　　　　　　　　They(.)　be　use　statistics(.)　go　orientate　SFP(.)

　　　　　　　　They orientate their position towards statistics,

328　　　　　　去　講　　哋(.)　實質　　嘅(.)

　　　　　　　　go　talk　CL(.)　substance　LP(.)

　　　　　　　　and talk about some material

329   fact   嘅   嘢   吖1   嘛3(.)

fact   LP   thing   aa1   maa3(.)

and factual issues,

330   咁   我(.)   其實   我(.)   believe in(.)

VTIP   I(.)   actually   I(.)   believe in(.)

but I …actually I believe in

331   感情   嘅   嘢(.)   其實(.)

feeling   LP   things(.)   actually(.)

feelings; actually,

332   你   係   一路   講   感性   嘅   嘢(.)

you   be   one-way   talk   sensibility   LP   thing(.)

all along, you're talking about sensibility.

333   你   唔係   講   理性(.)

You   not-be   talk   rationality(.)

You aren't talking about rationality.

334   唔係(.)   好似   數字   咁   樣(.)

not-be(.)   like   figure   such   way(.)

It's unlike figures.

335   年齡(.)   乜乜乜乜(.)   等等等(.)

Age(.)   what-what-what-what(.)   etc.-etc.-etc.(.)

Age is blah, blah, blah, blah, etc.

336 嗰　　啲　　係(.)

Those　CL　be(.)

Those are

337 列　晒　出嚟　　嗰　　啲　嘢　　　囉 1(.)

list　all　out-come　those　CL　thing　lo1(.)

listed items.

338 我　唔　信(.)　　愛情　係　咁　樣　　囉 1(.)

I　not　believe(.)　love　be　such　way　lo1(.)

I don't believe love is like this.

…

339 如果(.)　我　剩　係　想　　結婚　　嘅 3　啫 1(.)

If(.)　I　just　be　want　marry　ge3　ze1(.)

If I just want to get married

340 有　個　人　　呀(.)　好好哋　　　呀(.)

have　CL　person　VTIP(.)　good-good-ish　SFP(.)

and have a fine person,

341 佢　就算　　六七十　歲(.)　　俾　我　呀(.)

he　even if　60 or 70　years old(.)　give　me　SFP(.)

and even if you give me a 60- or 70-year-old man,

342 我　都　OK(.)

I　still　okay(.)

and I still find it okay,

343   咁   你(.)   即管   去 婚姻   介紹所   囉1(.)

then   you(.) by all means go marriage agency   lo1(.)

then go to a marriage agency by all means.

344   但係   如果   你   可能(.)

But   if   you   perhaps(.)

But if you perhaps

345   對 自己(.) 都   仍然 有   些少   要求(.)

for self(.)   still   still   have a little requirement(.)

still have a little bit of requirements,

346   唔係   喎(.)   嗰   啲 我 唔得   架(.)

not-be SFP(.) those CL   I   not-can SFP(.)

thinking 'No, I can't take those',

347   咁   我 勸喻(.) 真係(.)

then I advise(.) really(.)

then I really advise

348   慳 返 啲 錢(.)   唔使   上 去

save back CL money(.) not-need up go

you to save some money and not to go there.

349   [laughing]

In this excerpt, Florence discusses Mei-Ling's value position that it is very unlikely for a woman in her late thirties to find a boyfriend of a similar age. She goes back and forth

between Mei-Ling's position and her own, and invalidates Mei-Ling's step by step. First, Florence expresses her partial agreement with Mei-Ling's position by pointing to the validity of her claim statistics-wise (lines 326-329), which is a formulation of conceding concurrence. Her use of the idiom 無可厚非, which means 'cannot severely censure', is significant here. It is often used to describe a viewpoint or behaviour which is *understandable* and not subject to severe censure, despite some *flaws*. On the one hand, she shows understanding of the claim; on the other, she represents it as invalid. The sentence-final particle attached to this formulation, 吖 *1* 嘛 *3 (aa1maa3)*, functions to mark the obviousness of Mei-Ling's standpoint (see Matthews and Yip, 2011). Following this partial agreement, she counters the claim by explaining her belief that love is about feelings or sensibility (lines 330-332). In this countering formulation, there is a shift of the use of pronouns from the first-person 我 *(I)* to the generic second-person pronoun 你 *(you)*. I think that Florence first uses the first-person pronoun to show her commitment to her own position, and then shifts to the second-person pronoun to make her definition of love sound more objective. Her strong commitment to her own position is also evidenced by her use of the emphasis marker 其實 *(actually)* twice (lines 330-331), which is also a formulation of pronouncement.

After defining love as feelings and sensibility, Florence continues to define love in terms of what it is not. She argues that love is not something to do with rationality, figures or age (line 333-335), i.e. in denials of the way Mei-Ling deals with love. She then further comments that what Mei-Ling understands as love are just listed items and ends the comment with the evidential particle 囉 *1 (lo1)* (see Matthews and Yip, 2011) (lines 336-337) to suggest what she says as self-evident. Therefore, it is an instance of affirming concurrence. She then shifts back her focus to her own position and ends her counter-argument with an entertaining formulation that she does not believe that love

is to do with rationality or listed items (line 338), which functions to express her strong commitment to her position. She again uses the sentence-final particle 囉1 (lo1), which marks the obviousness of the invalidity of Mei-Ling's position and which signals Florence's oppositional stance.

At the last stage of her counter-argument, Florence explicitly pinpoints marriage agencies as the target of her opposition, whereas at earlier stages, she only referred to Mei-Ling's ideas implicitly. She creates two scenarios under which circumstance one should (not) go to a marriage agency. The first one is Florence's perception of the way that Mei-Ling believes Florence should behave, i.e. only aiming to marry herself off, regardless of other factors (lines 339-343). I consider this an instance of conceding concurrence because instead of completely opposing the practice of finding partners through marriage agencies, she points to when they can be of help. Nevertheless, her resistant stance is apparent. In line 339, she makes use of the sentence-final particle cluster 嘅3 啫1 (ge3ze1). 嘅3 (ge3) means an assertion, and 啫1 (ze1) serves to play down an assertion (Matthews and Yip, 2011). That is to say, the particle cluster here serves to play down the function of marriage agencies as of little significance. Furthermore, in line 343, the sentence-final particle 囉1 (lo1) adds a sarcastic tone to the scenario (see Leung and Gibbons, 2009). The second scenario concerns under which circumstance one should not go to marriage agencies, namely when having some requirements. (lines 344-348). This reflects Florence's position and serves as a countering formulation to Mei-Ling's. What she means is that she has some requirements for her partner and is not the kind of woman who just wants to marry herself off. This formulation challenges the usefulness of marriage agencies. It is an instance a pronouncement, as realised by the emphasis marker 真係 (really) (line 347).

In line with (129), in (130), Florence represents herself by defending her attitude to love, but this time, what she resists is improving her appearance through micro-plastic surgery.

Context: In Episode 2, after the afore-mentioned meeting with Florence, Mei-Ling advises that she beautify herself before going to any matchmaking activity. Winnie, a life coach, then brings Florence to a medical beauty centre to see Vanessa, a doctor. Vanessa suggests that Florence undergo micro-plastic surgery in order to make herself look younger, but Florence refuses straight away. After the consultation, she justifies her decision:

(130)

350 **Florence:** 人　　都　係　會　　老　呀(.)

Human　all　be　would　age　VTIP(.)

All humans experience ageing,

351 各　　樣　　嗰　　啲　啦(.)　咁(.)　佢

all　　sort　those　CL　SFP(.)　VTIP(.)　he

and all sorts of things, so he

352 應該　　係(.)　鍾意　我(.)　as is(.)　好多　　嘢　　囉 1(.)

should(.)　be(.)　love　me(.)　as is(.)　many　thing　lo1(.)

should love me as I am in many aspects,

353 而　唔係(.)　鍾意　我　自己(.)　再去(.)　加工(.)　花巧(.)

and　not-be(.)　love　me　self(.)　re-do(.)　process(.)　fancy(.)

rather than me reprocessing my face

281

354	去	製造	好多(.)	靚啲	嘅	外表	囉 1(.)
	go	create	many(.)	prettier	LP	appearance	lo1(.)

to create a prettier appearance.

355	咁	我	覺得(.)	呢	啲	都	係(.)
	Then	I	think(.)	these	CL	all	be(.)

Then I think such things are all

356	好	表面(.)	表面	囉 1(.)
	very	superficial(.)	superficial	lo1(.)

very superficial.

…

357	咁	如果(.)	我	嗰	個	男人(.)	係	咁	在乎(.)	咁
	Then	if(.)	my	that	CL	man(.)	be	so	care(.)	such

Then if my man cares so much about such…

358	呢	啲	咁(.)	表面	嘅	嘢(.)
	these	CL	such(.)	superficial	LP	thing(.)

such superficial things,

359	咁	我	覺得(.)	唔係(.)	我	搵	嗰	個	囉 1(.)
	then	I	think(.)	not-be(.)	I	find	that	CL	lo1(.)

then I think he isn't the one I'm looking for.

Florence starts her talk by pointing to the inevitability of ageing in the life cycle (lines 350-351), which is presented as a monoglossic assertion. She then uses this to justify her position that her future partner should love her as she is, instead of being attracted

by her transformed appearance after micro-plastic surgery (lines 351-354). This formulation contains a denial of micro-plastic surgery, as realised by 而唔係 (*rather than*) (line 353), so Florence indicates a clear stance against undergoing micro-plastic surgery and the 'experts'' intention to make her do so. Lastly, she ends her talk by expressing an affect of disinclination that she does not want a man who only cares about her appearance (lines 357-359), which further justifies her resistance to having micro-plastic surgery to attract men. Interestingly, the sentence-final particle 囉1 *(lo1)* appears four times in this short excerpt (lines 352, 354, 356 and 359) to mark the obviousness of her arguments. In other words, she represents her standpoint as incontrovertible.

While in (129) and (130), Florence represents herself by defending her beliefs of love against the comment/imposition targeting her age and appearance, in (131), she does so by challenging Mei-Ling's definition of a good husband.

Context: In Episode 10, i.e. the last episode, while the 'experts' have meetings with Gobby and Bonnie and arrange matchmaking events for them as before, nothing is arranged for Florence. Louisa just tries to summarise her situation, along with two cut-ins. In one of the cut-ins, Mei-Ling points to the extreme imbalance between single men looking for a wife and single women looking for a husband and asks Florence to reflect on her own situation. Below is the other cut-in, which seems to be Florence's response to what Mei-Ling always says about the suitors she introduces.

(131)

360　**Florence:**　妳　　剩　　係　　話(.)

　　　　　　　　You　only　be　say(.)

　　　　　　　　You only said,

361 呀(.) 佢 係 一 個 好 老公 呀(.)

Er(.) he be one CL good husband SFP(.)

'Er, he is a good husband

362 好 好 條件 呀(.)

very good qualification SFP(.)

with very good qualifications.'

363 點解 好 條件 呢(.)

Why good qualification SFP(.)

Why is he well-qualified?

364 就 係 因為(.) 嘑(.)

All be because(.) VTIP(.)

'It's all because right,

365 佢 又 搵 倒 錢 呀(.) 等等等(.)

he and find VTIP money VTIP(.) etc.-etc.-etc.(.)

he could earn lots of money, and so on.'

366 咁 我 都 唔係 要 呢 啲 嘢(.)

VTIP I but not-be need these CL thing(.)

But I don't need such things.

367 我 唔 理 佢 有 幾多 錢 啦 1(.)

I not care he has how-much money laa1(.)

I don't care how much money he has.

368	我	要	搵	我	嘅	真	愛
	I	need	find	my	LP	true	love

I need to find my true love,

369	唔係	through	佢哋	囉 1(.)
	not-be	through	them	lo1(.)

but not through them.

…

In lines 360-365, Florence quotes what Mei-Ling said to her makes a good husband, i.e. wealth, which is a distancing attribution. Florence overtly distances herself from Mei-Ling's position by immediately countering it and expressing an affect of disinclination that she does not need a rich husband, nor does she have any interest in how much money her potential partner has (lines 366-367). The sentence-final particle 啦 1 (laa1) is used in this appraisal (line 367), which marks the obviousness of the content (see Leung and Gibbons, 2009). In lines 368-369, she even makes explicit her disinclination of finding a partner through Mei-Ling, or perhaps some other 'experts' as well, which not only invokes an affect of disinclination, but also a judgement of incapacity that Mei-Ling (and other 'experts') could not help her at all. She again highlights the obviousness of her appraisal, but this time with the evidential particle 囉1 (lo1) (line 369).

As discussed in Chapter 6, the programme problematises Florence in terms of her age, 'pickiness', idealistic attitude to love and strong personality; the analysis of Florence's self-representations shows that she uses her solo slots to defend her love attitude against different 'experts'' criticisms, impositions and advice and assumes a strong oppositional stance throughout. As the 'experts' uphold traditional femininity, Florence's strong resistance to their value positions lays bare her opposition to traditional femininity. On the one hand, as shown in the three excerpts illustrated, she

overtly rejects the value positions of the 'experts', including that women should marry themselves off just because they reach a certain age, that women should attract men by making themselves look attractive through cosmetic surgery, and that it is women's desire to marry a wealthy man, which are all based on traditional gender expectations. On the other, she defends her own beliefs of love assertively and represents them as self-evident and valid.

(b) Bonnie

Bonnie's self-representations are characterised by the focus on *others*. As will be shown below, she makes ascribed appraisals on how men see her and implicitly refers to and positions herself in relation to various stereotypes of single women of her age; she also evaluates herself in comparison with other women.

In her first appearance, Bonnie represents herself by sharing her opinion on how men would see her and evaluates herself in relation to it.

Context: In Episode 1, before Bonnie's first appearance, Louisa briefly introduces her as a 'tomboy' and 一個有義氣嘅女仔 *(a girl with fraternal righteousness). After that, the following excerpt is broadcast:*

(132)

370	**Bonnie**:	男仔	可能	分	女仔	做
		Boys	may	categorise	girls	do

Boys may categorise girls into

371 好多 種 唔同 嘅 女性 咕(.)

many kinds different LP women(.) SFP(.)

many different types.

372 咕呀(.) 我 就 好多時 都 會 係(.)

Then(.) I then very often all would be(.)

Then I'm very often,

373 即係 拍 膊頭 呀(.) 兄弟 呀(.)

that's pat shoulders VTIP(.) brother VTIP(.)

that's, being patted on shoulders, as a brother.

374 即係 玩 係 好 開心 囉1(.)

That's play be very happy lo1(.)

That's, we play together very happily.

375 一齊 玩 咕(.)

together play(.) SFP(.)

We play together,

376 但係 就 唔會 以妳為 一 個 對象(.)

but then not-would see-you-as one CL target(.)

but then they wouldn't see you as a target.

377 無論 你 係 真係(.) 講真

No matter you be really(.) frankly

Frankly, no matter you're really, say,

378

喺	街	無	錢	搭	車	返	屋企(.)
in	street	not-have	money	take	car	go back	home(.)

in the street, having no money to pay for the (mini)bus fare back home,

379

到	ar	即係(.)	有	啲	乜嘢	ar
till	VTIP	that's(.)	have	CL	what	VTIP

or, um, that's, require me to do anything, um

380

赴	湯	蹈	火[63]	嘅	事(.)
go to	boiling water	step	fire	LP	thing(.)

that I have to defy all difficulties and dangers by going into boiling water or stepping onto fire,

381

嘩	我	真係	會	仆	出嚟	救	你	嘅
oh	I	really	would	rush	out-come	save	you	SFP(.)

oh, I would really rush out to save you.

382

我(.)	我	敢	講	如果	有日	有	個	小朋友(.)
I(.)	I	dare	say	if	one day	have	CL	child(.)

I…I dare say that if one day, a child,

383

即係	過	馬路	唔睇	車	咁樣樣	吖(.)
that's	cross	road	not-see	car	such-way-way	SFP(.)

is, that's like, unaware of a car when crossing the road,

[63] See Note 22.

384   有　　架　　車　　撞　　埋　　　嚟(.)

have　CL　car　hit　VTIP　come(.)

and the car is going to hit her/him,

385   我　　一定　　　會　　撲出　　　去　　救　　　佢(.)

I　　certainly　will　jump-out　go　save　her/him(.)

I'll certainly jump out to save her/him.

386   This is right(.)

This is right.

387   應該　　咁樣　　　做　　嘅　　嘢(.)　　我　　就　　　會

Should　such-way　do　LP　thing(.)　I　　then　would

When the thing should be done this way, I'm

388   衝出　　　去　　做　　嘅　　人　　　嚟　　嘅(.)

rush-out　go　do　LP　person　SFP　SFP(.)

the kind of person who would then rush out to do it.

389   而　　我　　覺得　我　　身邊　　　嘅　　男人

And　I　　think　me　body-side　LP　men

And I think that men around me

390   係　　要　　　接受　　呢　　一　　樣　　嘢(.)

be　need to　accept　this　one　CL　thing(.)

need to accept this trait.

391	係	我	嘅	優點(.)	兼且	係	我	最大	嘅	缺點(.)
	Be	my	LP	virtue(.)	moreover	be	my	biggest	LP	flaw(.)

It's my virtue and also my biggest flaw.

Bonnie starts her self-introduction by categorising herself into the type of woman whom men see as a 'brother' (lines 372-375), which involves three ascribed affects of happiness. First, she uses the attitudinal expression 好開心 *(very happily)* (line 374) to suggest that her male friends can get along well with her. She even refers to her brotherly bond with her male friends using the terms 拍膊頭 *(being patted on shoulders)* and 兄弟 *(as a brother)* (line 373). Such appraisals point to her 'masculine' character and correspond to Louisa's, the compere's, representation of her as a 'tomboy' (see Chapter 5). Significantly, despite the literally positive meaning of these affects, the sentence-final particle 囉 1 *(lo1)* (line 374) adds a subtly sarcastic tone to the statement (see Leung and Gibbons, 2009) and turns them into negatives. Bonnie then explains that such brotherhood is not good because her male friends never see her as a target (line 376), which invokes an ascribed affect of unhappiness. That is to say, she is liked by her male friends as a good 'brother' but not regarded as a potential partner.

After evaluating herself as being liked and disliked by men under different circumstances, she continues making polarised evaluations of herself. In lines 377-385, she illustrates how she will defy all difficulties to help and protect people around her with three scenarios: (1) when her friends have no money to pay the (mini)bus fare; (2) when they require her to go into boiling water or step onto fire; (3) when a child is unaware of a car when crossing the road and is about to be hit. She then expresses her determination to do what she considers right (lines 386-388). What she says corresponds to the Confucian concept of 義 *(righteousness)* and its derivative 義氣 *(fraternal*

righteousness) (see Chapter 5 for a thorough discussion about the concepts). As Meng (2014) points out, fraternal righteousness 'legitimately promotes a stronger sense of mutual aid and trust and loyalty to each other' (p. 193). Bonnie's insistence on doing what she considers right and her determination to defy all difficulties to help and protect people around her are realisations of her fraternal righteousness. She evaluates this kind of righteousness as both her virtue and her biggest flaw (line 391), i.e. inscriptions of positive and negative judgements of propriety, respectively. As mentioned in Chapter 5, fraternal righteousness is strongly, although not exclusively, associated with 'masculinity'. This is probably why Bonnie judges her righteousness negatively. This appraisal implicitly links her 'masculine' character to her unpopularity among men as a partner.

I find Bonnie's self-representations very interesting, as she keeps oscillating between self-evaluations based on two different sets of criteria: her own criteria and perceived men's criteria. Thus, she judges her sense of righteousness differently in different contexts, and expresses ascribed affective appraisals that she is liked by her male friends as a good friend, but not as a partner. Such context-dependent evaluations manifest the conflicting expectations she is facing. Her self-representations also indicate her resistance to traditional femininity, as realised, for example, by her refusal to compromise her sense of righteousness and her insistence that her future partner has to accept this aspect of her (lines 389-390).

Bonnie also, on several occasions, represents herself in relation to the activities/events arranged by the 'experts'. Since many of her conversations with the 'experts' are broadcast (see Chapter 7), her solo slots mainly concern her experience in various matchmaking events, which often involves her self-evaluations in comparison with her fellow women in those events, be it her fellow participant or women she just

happened to meet. In (133), after participating in a matchmaking event together with Suki and finding that the men just paid attention to Suki, but not herself, Bonnie problematises herself relating to her appearance.

Context: In Episode 3, Bonnie and Suki are made to go to a bar in the hope that they can get to know some men. While Suki easily gets many men's attention, Bonnie is not approached by any. After the activity, Bonnie comments on her inability to catch men's attention.

(133)

392 **Bonnie**:   Suki(.)   即係(.)   咁   就   同   我   一齊(.)

Suki(.)   that's(.)   VTIP   then   with   me   together(.)

That's, Suki and I

393   參加   呢   個   節目(.)

join   this   CL   show(.)

join this show together.

394   如果(.)   譬如   我哋   兩   個(.)   一齊   出現(.)

If(.)   for example   we   two   CL(.)   together   appear(.)

For example, if we appear together,

395   咁   好多時(.)   目光   或者   嗰   個   嘅   注意力

then   very often(.)   gaze   or   that   CL   LP   attention

then very often, all the gaze and attention

396　都　係(.)　落咗喺　　　佢　嘅　身　上(.)

all　be(.)　fall-upon-PFV　her　LP　body　on(.)

will fall upon her.

397　咁(.)　我　會　去　諗(.)　即係(.)　點解(.)

Then(.)　I　would　go　think(.)　that's(.)　why(.)

Then I'd think, that's, why.

398　點解　每　一　次(.)　我　都　係(.)　比下去　　感覺(.)

Why　each　one　time(.)　I　all　be(.)　made inferior　feeling(.)

Why do I feel like I'm entirely made inferior each time?

399　咁樣(.)　啲　男仔(.)　就　ar(.)

Then(.)　CL　boys(.)　all　VTIP(.)

Then those boys, um,

400　無　　特別　　approach　我(.)

not-have　specially　approach　me(.)

didn't specially approach me,

401　then　我　又(.)　唔知道　究竟　係(.)

then　I　but(.)　not-know　whether　be(.)

but I don't know whether this was because

402　我:　個　樣(.)　　好　惡　　吖(.)　ar

my:　CL　appearance(.)　very　frightening　SFP(.)　VTIP

I look very frightening, um

403   我　唔　靚　　吖(.)

I　not　pretty　SFP(.)

I'm not pretty,

404   定係　ar(.)　我　短　頭髮(.)　定係　點樣(.)

or　VTIP(.)　I　short　hair(.)　or　what(.)

I wear short hair, or what.

405   即係　總之(.)　佢　就算(.)　我　唔知　　呢(.)

That's　in short(.)　she　even if(.)　I　not-know(.)　SFP(.)

That's, in short, even if she… I don't know…

406   就算(.)　男仔(.)　介紹　　男仔　識(.)

Even if(.)　boy(.)　introduce　boy　know(.)

Even if a boy is introduced to another boy,

407   咁(.)　佢哋　都　會　傾偈(.)

VTIP(.)　they　also　will　talk(.)

they will talk;

408   咁　點解(.)　ar　無人　同　我　講嘢　嘅2(.)

then　why(.)　VTIP　nobody　with　me　talk　ge2(.)

then why, um, did nobody talk to me?

Bonnie starts her talk by contrasting herself with Suki. She first positively appraises Suki for always attracting men's attention in matchmaking activities (lines 394-396), which is an invoked ascribed affect of satisfaction. This positive appraisal of Suki's popularity also invokes an affect of dissatisfaction that men are uninterested in Bonnie

and pay no attention to her. She then starts to problematise herself by asking three (indirect) questions about herself. First, she asks a rhetorical question to express her feeling of inferiority in comparison with Suki (line 398), which contains an inscribed affect of insecurity. That is to say, she does not feel comfortable whenever she is with Suki. After that, Bonnie shifts her focus to herself. She first states that no men approached her in the bar (lines 399-400) and then asks an indirect expository question to entertain three negative self-appraisals as possible reasons for this, namely *個樣好惡 (look very frightening)*, *唔靚 (not pretty)* and *短頭髮 (wear short hair)* (lines 401-404). Tellingly, all these three appraisals are related to appearance, i.e. negative appreciations of reaction. While *短頭髮 (wear short hair)* is more descriptive than attitudinal, it is coloured by the two negative inscriptions *個樣好惡 (look very frightening)* and *唔靚 (not pretty)* and carries negative meaning. This invocation also points to how women wearing short hair might be seen negatively in society in Bonnie's opinion. She is obviously uncertain about why men show no interest in her, yet she seems to regard the cause as related to her appearance, as all the possible reasons entertained relate to that. She ends her utterance by questioning why nobody talked to her, given that even if a man is introduced to another man, they will talk (lines 405-408). This question invokes the evaluation that she not only could not catch men's attention as a woman, but as a person they would like to talk to, i.e. an affect of dissatisfaction. As briefly mentioned in (125), the sentence-final particle attached to this question, *嘅2 (ge2)* signals Bonnie's puzzlement, so it is also an affect of insecurity.

What strikes me in Bonnie's self-representations is that, like the case of (132), instead of directly appraising herself, she appraises herself from men's perspective, and in comparison with Suki. I think that this might be linked to the meeting between her, Suki, Winnie, and Jamie, a stylist, in Episode 2, when Winnie asked Jamie to comment

on Suki and Bonnie from a man's perspective, and Jamie praised Suki as very 'feminine' and attractive but implicitly criticised Bonnie for not taking care of her appearance.[64] Bonnie's appraisals of Suki as popular and herself as unpopular among men are then of symbolic significance, which explains her feeling of insecurity with Suki and her entertainment of three possible reasons why men lack interest in her which all concern her appearance and which are based on traditional femininity. This finding is also consistent with the transitivity analysis result that the 'experts' repeatedly represent Bonnie in the material processes of imitating and acting like Suki (see Chapter 5).

While in (133), Bonnie evaluates herself in relation to Suki, in (134), after attending a speed-dating event with two 20-year-old girls, she evaluates herself in relation to how people might think of her and in comparison with the two girls, and expresses her worries about her marriage prospects.

Context: In Episode 1, Bonnie is made to take part in a speed-dating activity with two other women who are undergraduates and three men. After the event, she gives the following comment.

(134)

409	**Bonnie**:	我	雖然	係(.)	即係	一	個	吓2(.)
		I	though	be(.)	that's	one	CL	haa2(.)

Though I'm, that's,

410	30	歲(.)		嚟緊	嫁[65]	唔	出	嘅	女仔(.)
	30	years old(.)		come-PROG	marry	not	out	LP	girl(.)

a 30-year-old girl that can't be married off, right?

411	但係(.)	我	唔係	一	個	籮	底	橙	囉1(.)
	but(.)	I	not-be	one	CL	basket	bottom	orange	lo1(.)

I'm not a reject, like a low-quality orange at the bottom part of a basket unpicked by anyone.

412	咁(.)	ar(.)	但係	點解	我	喺	香港(.)
	Then(.)	VTIP(.)	however	why	I	in	Hong Kong(.)

Um, however, I.., in Hong Kong, why

413	我	會	覺得	即係(.)
	I	would	think	that's(.)

would I think that, that's,

414	識	一	個	即係	普通(.)	ar(.)
	know	one	CL	that's	average(.)	VTIP(.)

it's so hard to know, that's, an average, um,

415	正正常常(.)
	standard-standard-common-common(.)

normal

---

[65] In Cantonese, there are separate expressions to refer to a woman marrying a man and a man marrying a woman. Here, *嫁* means a woman marrying a man. Its counterpart for men is *娶*.

416 正正經經　　　　　　　　嘅　男仔(.)　係　咁　困難　嘅呢(.)

standard-standard-regular-regular　LP　boy(.)　be　so　hard　SFP(.)

and decent boy?

…

417 基本上　　係　一　個

Basically　　be　one　CL

Basically, it's an

418 香港　　　　　　社會　　嘅　縮影　　囉(.)

Hong Kong　　society　LP　epitome　SFP(.)

epitome of Hong Kong society

419 20　歲　　　女仔　啦(.)　　咁　　　　出嚟　　就

20　years old　girl　VTIP(.)　　in this way　out-come　then

when 20-year-old girls came out

420 同　我(.)　一齊　去　做　speed-dating　嘅　時候(.)

with　me(.)　together　go　do　speed-dating　LP　when(.)

to do speed-dating with me.

421 喂(.)　妳　真係　又　靚　　過　我(.)

Hey(.)　you　really　both　pretty　than　me(.)

Hey, you're really prettier,

422 妳　又　本事　　過　我(.)

you　and　capable　than　me(.)

more capable

298

423 書 又 讀 得 多 過 我(.)

book and study ADV more than me(.)

and more educated than me.

424 咁 點 算 呀(.) 我(.) 不能夠 不擔心 囉1(.)

Then how choose SFP(.) I(.) not-can not-worry lo1(.)

Then what should I do? I can't help worrying.

425 而 佢哋(.) 都 話

And they(.) all say

And they already said

426 佢哋 自己 好 擔心 囉1(.) 已經(.)

they self very worried lo1(.) already(.)

they're very worried about themselves.

427 香港 係咪 真係

Hong Kong be-not-be really

Has Hong Kong got really

428 僧 多 粥 少

monk many gruel little

so many monks while so little gruel

429 到(.) 去 到 一 個 咁 嘅 地步 囉1(.)

until(.) go until one CL such LP extent lo1(.)

to such an extent (i.e. so many women while so few men)?

Bonnie starts her talk with a formulation of conceding concurrence that she is a 30-year-old woman that cannot be married off (lines 409-410), which invokes the evaluation that she is unwanted by men, i.e. an ascribed affect of disinclination. This formulation suggests her belief that she is viewed as such by others. The particle 吓2 (haa2) has a similar function here. According to Matthews and Yip (2011), it 'presupposes the addressee's agreement, expecting compliance' (p. 399). In this present case, however, it just indicates Bonnie's presupposition of the audience's agreement that she is a 30-year-old woman that cannot be married off, without any expectation of compliance. It is also an emphasis marker functioning like a question tag in English (see Leung and Gibbons, 2008; Matthews and Yip, 2011). Therefore, I translate it as 'right?'. This interpretation is also supported by the fact that she does not refer to her real age, 29, but the age of 30, which is often thought to be the point when single women start to be labelled as 'leftover women'. Despite her open recognition of this value position, she immediately counters and disaligns herself into it by denying that she is a *籮底橙* (line 411), a Cantonese expression for something/someone (mostly a woman) that is of poor quality and hence unwanted by anyone. Bonnie's use of this expression is tricky. It overlaps with the appraisal in the concurring formulation in that they both convey the feeling of being unwanted. However, she denies that she is a *籮底橙*, which implies that some people might see her as such. I think what she means is that while she might be unwanted by men, she is not of low quality. Therefore, this appraisal is not so related to the affective meaning conveyed by the attitudinal expression, but the quality of Bonnie, i.e. an appreciation of reaction. Her denial of being a *籮底橙* is further strengthened by her use of the sentence-final particle *囉1 (lo1)* (line 411), which marks her oppositional stance (see Leung and Gibbons, 2009). Considering the concurring and countering

formulations altogether, Bonnie seems to suggest that despite what many people think, her singleness is nothing to do with her inherent quality.

After making the above self-evaluations, Bonnie shifts her focus to Hong Kong society. First, she asks the rhetorical question why it is so hard for her to get to know an average, normal and decent man in Hong Kong (lines 412-416), which invokes her feeling of helplessness, i.e. an affect of insecurity. Such helplessness is further intensified by her specification of the kind of men she is looking for: 普通 (*average*), 正正常常 (literally, *standard-standard-common-common*; idiomatically, *normal)* and 正正經經 (literally, *standard-standard-regular-regular*; idiomatically, *decent*). These evaluative-laden terms are certainly not negative, but somewhere between neutral and slightly positive. As shown by the word-by-word translation, the latter two expressions involve the use of the rhetorical device of reduplication, which boosts the meaning. Bonnie is probably trying to emphasise that in contrast to what many people may think of 'leftover women', she indeed has very low requirements, yet she still finds it difficult to find a partner. Therefore, I consider this an instance of pronouncement.

Bonnie then more specifically relates her experience of joining the speed-dating event with two 20-year-old women to the situation in Hong Kong. In lines 421-423, she evaluates the two women in relation to herself and points to their edge over herself in every respect, which includes an appreciation of reaction in terms of appearance and two judgements of capacity in terms of capability and educational levels. This comparison is followed by her expression of worries, i.e. affects of insecurity. A realisation is the question 咁點算呀 (*Then what should I do?*) (line 424), which is 'a *despairing* form of rhetorical question' (Matthews and Yip, 2011, p. 387; my emphasis). She also more explicitly expresses her worries with the attitudinal expression 不能夠 不擔心 (*can't help worrying*) (line 424). In lines 425-426, she even tries to exacerbate

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the level of her worries by saying that the two 20-year-old women are also very worried, which invokes the idea that she has every reason to worry. Lastly, relating to her experience in the speed-dating event, she asks the rhetorical question: *香港係咪真係僧多粥少到去到一個咁嘅地步囉 (Has Hong Kong got really so many monks while so little gruel to such an extent (i.e. so many women while so few men)?)* (lines 427-429). Here, Bonnie draws on the Chinese idiom *僧多粥少* to describe the gender imbalance in Hong Kong. While the gender imbalance is commonsense knowledge in Hong Kong and is not evaluative *per se*, Bonnie pins the blame for her singleness on it, so I consider it a negative appreciation of composition. Interestingly, the sentence-final particle *囉1 (lo1)* is attached to all the last three sentences, concerning Bonnie's and the two 20-year-old women's worries about their marriage prospects, and the gender imbalance in Hong Kong (lines 424, 426 and 429). *囉1 (lo1)* serves to mark something as obvious (see e.g. Matthews and Yip, 2011; Botha and Barnes, 2013). Here, Bonnie seems to suggest as common sense that Hong Kong women have no choice, but to worry about their marriage prospects, because of the gender imbalance.

As shown above, on the one hand, Bonnie assumes a rather oppositional stance to the common perception that unmarried women are to blame for their singleness; on the other, she represents herself through the lens of traditional femininity and evaluates the relative edge of the two young women she met in the speed-dating event over herself.

In the last episode, Bonnie has a chance to share her feelings relating to her participation in the programme, and she points to some change in herself. This is important in that makeover programmes emphasise change, and at the beginning of the programme, Louisa states that the 'experts' are to 'transform' the participants so that they could find a partner. The change that Bonnie refers to is her better feelings, as shown below.

Context: In Episode 10, just before the end of the whole programme, Bonnie shares her feelings about herself.

(135)

430 **Bonnie:** 2011 年(.) 我 覺得(.) 係 我 人生 之中(.)

2011 year(.) I think(.) be my life in(.)

I think the year 2011 is

431 轉逆 嘅(.) 其中 一 個 點 啦(.)

turning LP(.) in one CL points SFP(.)

one of the turning points in my life.

432 即係 喺 拍攝 嘅(.) 臨 完 之前

That's at filming LP(.) reach end before

That's, just before the filming ended,

433 就 過咗 我 29 歲 嘅 生日(.)

also have-PFV my 29 years old LP birthday(.)

I'd had my 29th birthday.

434 我 覺得(.) 我 對得住 我自己(.)

I think(.) I face-can-CONT myself(.)

I think I can face myself

435 因為 我 已經 可以 喺(.) 全 香港(.)

because I already can in(.) whole Hong Kong(.)

because I can already tell you, in front of the audiences in Hong Kong,

436

北美(.)   東南亞   嘅

North America(.)   South East Asia   LP

North America, and South East Asia,

437

嘅   觀眾   面   前

LP   audience   face   in front of

438

話   俾   你   聽(.)   我   今   年   29   歲(.)

tell   to   you   hear(.)   I   present   year   29   years old(.)

I am now 29 years old

439

我   單身(.)   我   無   男朋友(.)   但係(.)

I   single(.)   I   not-have   boyfriend(.)   but(.)

and am single. I don't have a boyfriend, but

440

我   會   更加   去   鍾意   我自己   反而(.)

I   would   even more   go   like   myself   on the contrary(.)

I'd like myself even more on the contrary.

441

我   會   更加   鍾意   我自己(.)   原來

I   would   even more   like   myself(.)   turn out

I'd like myself even more as I turn out

442

係   一   個(.)   就   係   咁   簡單   嘅   人(.)

be   one(.)   CL(.)   just   be   such   simple   LP   person(.)

to be such a simple person.

Bonnie makes her first self-appraisal in line 434, saying that she can face herself, which is an inscribed affect of satisfaction. What makes her satisfied is that she can now baldly tell audiences around the world that she is a 29-year-old single woman (lines 435-439). I find this declaration interesting because Bonnie appears concerned about how she is seen by others throughout the programme. For example, in (132), she evaluates how men might think of her and in (134), she evaluates herself in relation to some stereotypical attributes of 'leftover women'. Here, she explicitly addresses the declaration of her stigmatised identity to the audiences around the world. She then counters the common discriminatory attitude to unmarried women based on their age and marital status by saying that she would like herself even more (line 440) and repeating it right afterwards in almost the same wording (line 441). The countering formulation involves an affect of happiness, as realised by the attitudinal expression 鍾意 *(like)*. That is to say, contrary to many people's expectation, her age and singleness do not upset her, but make her love herself even more. She ends her talk by explaining that this is because she turns out to be such a simple person, which is a positive judgement of veracity (lines 441-442).

Bonnie's self-representations in this excerpt are rather inconsistent with those discussed previously. In previous examples, despite her oppositional stance, she seems to be bounded by how she is seen by others. In this present example, however, she has shifted the focus back to herself. The only other value position referred to is the implicit reference to the stigmatisation of unmarried women based on their age and marital status in the countering formulation. This seems to suggest that she has managed to release herself from others' expectations. Such representations are also rather unexpected. Throughout the show, the feelings she expresses are primarily negative. She often expresses her worries about her marriage prospects and her feeling of inferiority in front

of her 'competitors'. Even in the second last episode, she is still talked to impolitely by some 'experts' and subsequently expresses her dislike for those 'love strategies' taught. There seems to be a missing link, which might have been edited out. She merely mentions her change without referring to any element of the programme. It is hard to infer how she has such improved feeling because of the programme.

The above discussion shows that Bonnie defines herself very much in relation to how others might see her and in comparative terms. Therefore, her self-representations are rather fluid, moving between how she sees herself and how she might be seen by men, between appraisals on herself and those on other women, and between stereotypes surrounding women like her and her distancing herself from such stereotypes. Such fluidity indicates that she is, on the one hand, opposed to traditional gender expectations and the stereotypical views on unmarried women, but is, on the other, bounded by them, as manifested by, for example, her self-problematisation based on traditional femininity, e.g. appearance. It also shows that she does not fit into the normative definition of femininity in Hong Kong, which accords with how she is represented by the programme. She, however, shifts the focus back to herself at the end of the programme and seems to imply her release from others' views on herself.

(c) Gobby

There are three main foci of Gobby's self-representations: her background and past experience, her negative emotions, and her change since joining the programme (in later episodes). As will be shown below, her self-representations are very similar to how the programme represents her.

Throughout the shows, Gobby often problematises her background. This can be seen in her self-representation in her first consultation with Winnie, a life coach:

Context: In Episode 1, Gobby first meets Winnie. In the meeting, Gobby shares with Winnie her unhappy experience of getting married and giving birth to a daughter at a very young age and getting divorced. Winnie later comments on her negative attitude and attributes it to her not being loved by anyone. Gobby bursts into tears and makes the following comment on herself:

(136)

| 443 | **Gobby**: | [Sobbing] |

444

即係　我　都　會　　覺得(.)　因為　　可能(.)

That's　I　also　would　think(.)　because　maybe(.)

That's to say, I'd think… Maybe because

445

我　會　　覺得　自己　個　背景　　　唔係　咁　好(.)

I　would　think　self　CL　background　not-be　so　good(.)

I'd think that my background isn't very good.

446

ar(.)　　ar(.)　　學歷　　　　　　唔好　　　啦(.)

VTIP(.)　VTIP(.)　education qualification　not-good　SFP(.)

Um…um… My education qualification isn't good.

447

ar　　又　　離過婚　　　啦(.)

VTIP　both　divorce-EXP(.)　SFP(.)

Um, and I've both divorced

448

又　生過　　　　　小朋友　啦(.)　　ar　又　唔(.)

and　give-birth-to-EXP　child　SFP(.)　VTIP　and　not(.)

and given birth to a child before. Um, and not…

449	啲	工作	又	唔係	啲	咩
	CL	job	either	not-be	CL	what

I don't have

450	高尚	職業	呀(.)	或者	專業人士	呀(.)
	prestigious	occupation	VTIP(.)	or	professional	SFP(.)

a prestigious occupation, neither am I a professional.

451	ar	咁	我	會	覺得	ar(.)
	VTIP	VTIP	I	would	think	VTIP(.)

Um, I'd think um,

452	我	未必	襯	得	起	人	啦1(.)
	I	might-not	match	can	up	person	laa1(.)

I might not match others, might I?

453	唔(.)	係會	有啲	無信心
	VTIP(.)	be-would	a bit	unconfident

Um, I'd feel a bit unconfident

454	或者	自卑	囉1(.)
	or	self-abased	lo1(.)

or self-abased.

(136) is full of negative appraisals. First, in line 445, Gobby explicitly describes her background as not very good, which is an inscribed appreciation of reaction. She then specifies which aspects of herself are subject to this negative appraisal. The first aspect

is her perceived incapacity. She negatively judges herself in terms of her educational qualification (line 446) and her career achievement (lines 449-450), which are inscribed judgements of incapacity. She also negatively judges herself in terms of her experience of divorcing and giving birth to a child (lines 447-448). While divorcing and giving birth to a child is more descriptive than attitudinal, it is given as a reason for her negative appreciation of her background, and hence is an invoked judgement of propriety. Giving birth to a child, in particular, is not considered negative in many contexts, and the negative meaning invoked reflects Gobby's re-presentation of the negative attitudes to divorced women with a child looking for a partner in Hong Kong society.

After justifying why her background is not good, she concludes that she cannot match others (lines 451-452), which is an inscribed negative appreciation of reaction. This negative appreciation also invokes a sense of inferiority, so I also consider it an affect of insecurity. The sentence-final particle attached to this sentence 啦 1 (laa1) (line 452) plays a crucial role here. According to Leung and Gibbons (2009), it functions like a question tag in English, as also reflected in my idiomatic English translation. They suggest that in the courtroom context, 啦 1 (laa1) can be used to present a story in a slightly defensive manner. I think that the use of the particle in line 452 performs the same function. As mentioned, before the excerpt, Winnie criticised Gobby's negative life attitude and imputed it to her not being loved by anyone, and Gobby immediately burst into tears. This explains why in this excerpt, Gobby negatively evaluates different aspects of herself and defensively justifies her negative life attitude and her feeling of inferiority. I thus see it as a pronouncement. Lastly, she expresses her lack of confidence and self-abasement (lines 453-454), i.e. affects of insecurity. These affects can be seen as Gobby's response to Winnie's comment on her negative life attitude. She indicates her agreement with Winnie's comment, as seen by her use of the sentence-final particle

309

囉 1 (lo1) (line 454) to mark her lack of confidence and self-abasement as beyond doubt. Therefore, it is an instance of affirming concurrence.

In Episode 6, Gobby refers to the above meeting with Winnie and explains her anger towards herself by relating to what she went through in the past. As in (136), her self-representations are dominated by negative attitudinal meanings.

Context: In Episode 1, Gobby has her first encounter with Winnie. Winnie explicitly comments that Gobby looks older than her age, and Gobby immediately bursts into tears. Seeing this, Winnie asks Gobby whether she is angry and why so. In Episode 6, Gobby talks about this meeting and explains why she is angry.

(137)

455	**Gobby:**	咁	原來(.)		我	一直	嬲緊		自己	嘅(.)
		Then	it turns out to be(.)	I	all along	angry-PROG	self	SFP(.)

Then it turns out to be that I've been angry with myself all along,

456		因為	我	後悔	以前	做	嘅	事	啦(.)
		because	I	regret	past	do	LP	things	SFP(.)

because I regret what I did

457		對	屋企	人	啦(.)	對	自己	啦(.)
		to	family	person	VTIP(.)	to	self	SFP(.)

to my family members and to myself.

458 十八 歲: 同 我 前夫 拍拖(.)

18 years old: with my ex-husband go out(.)

At the age of 18: I went out with my ex-husband.

459 跟住 十(.)九 歲: 就 有咗 啦(.)

Then 19 years old: already pregnant SFP(.)

Then at the age of 19: I already got pregnant

460 跟住 就 結婚(.)

then then get married(.)

and then got married.

461 跟住 到到(.) 五 年 後(.) 就 離婚 囉 1(.)

Then until(.) 5 years after(.) then divorce lo1(.)

Then after 5 years, we divorced,

462 因為(.) 對方 有 第三者 囉 1(.)

because(.) the other party has third party lo1(.)

because he had an affair.

463 我 就 覺得(.) 哎吔(.)

I then think(.) alas(.)

I then thought, 'Alas,

464 我 真係 好 對唔住 阿媽 呀(.)

I really very face-not-CONT Mum SFP(.)

I feel very sorry and ashamed to Mum.'

465   即係   當時   我   細個(.)   咁   細個   結婚(.)

That's   at that time   I   young(.)   so   young   get married(.)

That's, at that time, I was young. I got married at such a young age.

466   佢   都   好   嬲   呀(.)

She   also   very   angry   SFP(.)

She was also very angry

467   即係(.)   為   我   流咗   好多   眼淚   呀(.)

That is(.)   for   me   shed-PFV   lots of   tears   SFP(.)

That is, she shed lots of tears for me.

468   咁(.)   我   又   好   嬲   呀   我   自己(.)

Then(.)   I   also   very   angry   VTIP   I   self(.)

Then I was also very angry with myself.

469   對   自己   啦(.)

With   self   SFP(.)

I was angry with myself,

470   因為   以前(.)   其實   我   讀書   ok   嘅(.)

as   in the past(.)   actually   I   study   okay   SFP(.)

as I actually studied okay in the past.

471   咁(.)   ar(.)   就   走去(.)   掛住(.)

Then(.)   VTIP(.)   but   go-to(.)   keep-thinking-about-CONT(.)

But then, um, I was preoccupied with

472	拍拖(.)	咁	樣(.)	荒廢	學業(.)
	dating(.)	such	way(.)	neglect	studies(.)

dating in such a way that I neglected my studies.

473	咁	我	覺得(.)	唉(.)	如果	俾	我	重新嚟過(.)
	Then	I	think(.)	alas(.)	if	let	me	start-afresh-EXP(.)

Now I think 'Alas, if I had started afresh,

474	我	真係	會	一路一路[66]
	I	really	would	one-way-one-way

I'd really have gradually

475	讀	上去	囉 1(.)
	study	go-up levels(.)	lo1(.)

studied to higher levels.'

In this excerpt, Gobby gives a descriptive narration of what she experienced in the past, but the various negatively affective feelings expressed have a colouring effect on the narrative and invoke various negative judgements. She first uses the affective lexis 嬲 *(angry)* (line 455) and 後悔 *(regret)* (line 456) to explicitly express her anger with herself and regret for what she did, both being affects of dissatisfaction. These inscriptions invite a negative reading of what follows: going out with her ex-husband when she was 18, being pregnant and marrying when she was 19, and getting divorced after five years (lines 458-461), which all carry a social stigma and hence fall into the category of judgements of propriety. Interestingly, in line 462, she mentions that the

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[66] 一路 idiomatically means 'gradually'. Here, the expression is reduplicated to add emphasis.

cause of her divorce was her ex-husband's affair, which implies that she is a victim and is not to blame for her divorce. This interpretation is supported by her use of sentence-final particle 囉 1 (lo1) in lines 461-462. As mentioned earlier, it serves to invite sympathy. Hence, Gobby indirectly makes a negative judgement on her ex-husband, and implicitly expresses her regret at marrying and giving birth to a child at her teenage, i.e. an affect of dissatisfaction.

After the description of what she did in the past, the prosody of negative appraisals continues, but the focus is on the influence of her previous behaviours on her mother. She first expresses feeling very sorry and ashamed to her mother (line 464), which is an inscribed affect of dissatisfaction. She explains her feeling of shame to her mother by evaluating how her mother felt about her early marriage at that time: 好嬲 *(very angry)* and 流咗好多眼淚 *(shed lots of tears)* (lines 466-467), i.e. ascribed affects of dissatisfaction and unhappiness. These negative evaluations can be interpreted in terms of filial piety, a key virtue in Confucian ethics and a salient teaching in Chinese Buddhism (see Guang, 2005, 2010). In traditional Chinese culture, one should always behave properly and avoid bringing shame to one's parents (Lim and Lim, 2003). By representing her mother's anger and unhappiness and her own feeling of shame towards her mother, she points to the shamefulness of her previous behaviours.

Gobby then shifts the focus back to herself and continues evaluating herself negatively. She repeats the affect of dissatisfaction that she is angry with herself (line 468) and provides an explanation in the form of negative judgements of what she did in the past. She first positively evaluates her academic performance (line 470), which is an inscribed judgement of capacity. She then makes negative judgements of propriety in relation to her preoccupation with dating and neglect of her studies (lines 471-472). She concludes with the conditional sentence that if she had started afresh, she would

really have studied all the way to higher levels (lines 473-475), which clearly invokes an affect of dissatisfaction. That is to say, her perception has clearly changed and she regrets her choice. Her regret is also realised by the exclamative before it, i.e. 唉 *(alas)* (line 473), and the sentence-final particle 囉1 *(lo1)* (line 475), which invites sympathy.

While Gobby's self-representations centre on her background and negative emotions in earlier episodes, those in later episodes highlight her changes since joining the programme. Unlike Bonnie, who points to her change without linking it to any element of the show, Gobby explicitly represents how she has benefited from the 'transformations' by the 'experts'. As mentioned in Chapter 5, she has a zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment, which is recurrently referred to in the programme. In line with this, Gobby represents herself relating to the treatment.

Context: In Episode 5, Gobby is brought to a medical beauty centre to receive a zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment. The whole treatment lasts for a month. In Episode 6, she goes to the centre again and sees what she looks like after the treatment. She is clearly happy with the treatment result and comments to the doctor that her teeth have become much more even. After that, she is given a chance to comment on herself.

(138)

476	**Gobby:**	以前	我	就	覺得(.)	自己(.)	唉(.)
		Previously	I	always	think(.)	self(.)	alas(.)

Previously, I always thought alas,

477	30 歲	嘞(.)	開始	老	嘞(.)	ar(.)
	30 years old	SFP(.)	start	age	SFP(.)	VTIP(.)
	I was 30 years old, and started to age; um,					

478	又	唔	夠	啲	靚	妹(.)	鬥	嘞(.)
	and	not	enough	CL	young	sister(.)	compete	SFP(.)
	I couldn't compete with those young women;							

479	ar(.)	又	開始	肥	嘞(.)
	VTIP(.)	and	start	fat	SFP(.)
	um, I started to become fat;				

480	ar(.)	好多	嘢	都	好似	唔吸引|	呀(.)
	VTIP(.)	many	thing	all	seem	unattractive	SFP(.)
	um, I was unattractive in many aspects.						

481	即係(.)	經過	改造咗	之後(.)
	That is(.)	after	transform-PFV	after(.)
	That is, after being transformed,			

482	我 對 自己	自信心	大咗	囉 1(.)
	I in self	self-confidence	big-PFV	lo1(.)
	I have more self-confidence.			

After seeing herself after the treatment, Gobby comparatively represents her 'before' and 'after'. Her evaluations of her pre-treatment self target her appearance and are all negative. In line 476, before sharing what she thought about herself before the treatment, she utters the exclamative 唉 *(alas)*, which signals her sadness, i.e. an affect of

unhappiness. Saliently, it also invites the audience to take a negative reading of what she is going to say. Right after the exclamative, she mentions her age of 30 (line 477), which despite being a fact, could be read as a token of a negative appreciation of reaction that she is no longer young. This interpretation is not only supported by the negative prosody created by the exclamative 唉 *(alas)*, but also the subsequent explicit problematisation of her age: 開始老嘞 *(started to age)* (line 477), which is a negative appreciation of reaction. I think that Gobby here equates ageing to the ageing of appearance, and the target of the negative appreciation is her appearance. This focus of appearance becomes more obvious in lines 478-480. In line 478, she points to her inability to compete with young women, which invokes an appreciation of reaction that she was not as pretty as young women, and an ascribed affect of happiness that men preferred young women to her. This is followed by two inscribed negative appreciations of reaction targeting her body shape (line 479) and attractiveness (line 480), respectively. After a long list of negative evaluations on her appearance, she points to her change – her increased confidence (line 482), which is an affect of security. The sentence-final particle 囉1 *(lo1)* is used to mark its obviousness. Even though this appraisal only refers to her *increased* confidence, she clearly represents the treatment as influencing her favourably.

Gobby's representation of her change completely accords with the programme's stated purpose of making her have the treatment, i.e. to rebuild her self-confidence. Throughout the show, the 'experts' accentuate physical attractiveness, as realised by them arranging different sorts of body modifications, e.g. slimming treatments, for all the participants but Mandy. In Gobby's case, the programme draws on the postfeminist idea that beauty is about pleasing oneself and links appearance to self-confidence. Gobby's representation of her increased confidence because of the treatment proves the

programme's success in 'transforming' her. What is more, as mentioned in Chapter 5, the treatment might be related to a product placement strategy, in which case, Gobby may make a good target for promoting for the beauty centre.

The above analysis clearly shows that Gobby's self-representations accord with the programme's stance. Gobby evaluates her previous behaviours, background and appearance very negatively based on traditional gender expectations and attributes them to her lack of confidence. Instead of trying to change Gobby's mindset, the programme suggests she increase her confidence by beautifying herself. Her self-representation of her post-treatment self seems to convey the idea that beauty makes her confident, which is probably what the programme seeks to promote via her.

(d) Suki

Suki, as mentioned in Chapter 5, is an embodiment of traditional femininity, and, as will be shown below, she is very much bounded by normative gender expectations, especially vis-à-vis age and marriage.

Suki's self-representations all concern her age, marriageability and negative emotions. In her self-introduction in Episode 1, she narrates her experience of being jilted by her ex-boyfriend and expresses various negative emotions caused by her uncertain marriage prospects at the age of 28.

Context: In Episode 1, Louisa narrates Suki's recent experience of being jilted by her ex-boyfriend and her drastic weight loss. Suki then gives the following self-introduction.

(139)

483	**Suki**:	一	散咗	嗰	吓(.)

		Once	break-up-PFV	that	CL(.)

From the moment when we broke up,

484		嘩(.)	死	啦[67](.)	無	人	要	嘞(.)

		oh(.)	die	SFP(.)	not-have	person	want	SFP(.)

I thought 'Oh no, no one wants me.

485		佢	都	唔要	我	嘞(.)	咁	點	算	呀(.)

		He	even	not-want	me	SFP(.)	so	how	choose	SFP(.)

Even he doesn't want me. What should I do?

486		嘩	世界	末	日	呀(.)	嗰	啲	囉(.)

		Oh	the world	end	day	SFP(.)	those	CL	SFP(.)

Oh, it's the end of the world!' Something like that.

487		我	又	已經	呀	28	歲	啦(.)

		I	and	already	VTIP	28	years old	SFP(.)

'And I'm already 28.

488		咁	樣(.)	咁	ar

		Such	way(.)	VTIP	VTIP

Like this, like um…

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[67] 死啦 is a Cantonese exclamative. It literally means 'die', and is often used when you are in a difficult situation and have no way out. Since I cannot find an equivalent term in English, I just translate it as 'oh no'

489   啲   時間 擺 晒 喺 佢 度 嘞3(.)

CL   time put all on him there laak3(.)

I've spent all my time with him.

490   咁 我 以後 點 算 呀(.)

Then I from now on how choose SFP(.)

Then what should I do from now on?'

491   係 個 人 係 即刻(.) 係 ar

Be CL person be immediately(.) be VTIP

It's like my whole self was immediately… was um…

492   個 感覺 係 好(.) 好 empty 呀(.)

CL feeling be very(.) very empty SFP(.)

Feeling very…very empty.

493   會 即刻 會 諗(.) 呀 會唔會

Would immediately would think(.) VTIP would-not-would

I would… would immediately think,

494   即係 唉 我 就 咁 度過

that is alas I just such spend

that is, 'Alas, would I just spend

495   餘 生 架 嘞 咁 樣 呢(.) 係 嘞(.)

remaining life SFP SFP such way SFP(.) Yes SFP(.)

my remaining life like this?' Yes, like this.

496	即係	會	有	呢	個	諗法	嘅(.)
	That is	would	have	this	CL	thought	SFP(.)

That is, I'd have such thoughts.

In (139), Suki reports her thoughts when breaking up with her ex-boyfriend. Her worries about her marriage prospects are evident. In line 484, she uses the exclamative 死嘞 *(Oh no)* to express her panic and despair (see Matthews and Yip, 2011), i.e. an affect of insecurity. This is followed by an ascribed affect of disinclination that she is unwanted (line 484). She continues expressing her anxiety and helplessness by asking the question 咁點算呀 *(What should I do?)* (line 485), which as mentioned, marks despair, and by describing the break-up as the end of the world (line 486), which invokes an affect of insecurity. She then problematises her age, i.e. 28, by saying that she has spent all her time with her ex-boyfriend (lines 487-489). Her use of the emphasis markers 已經 *(already)* (line 457) and 晒 *(all)* (line 489) is quite telling. She appears to suggest that there is barely any time left for her to find a boyfriend. Her use of the sentence-final particle 嘞3 *(laak3)* (line 489) is equally telling. It functions to affirm what has just been said (see Leung and Gibbons, 2009). In other words, line 489 is an affirming concurrence, and Suki firmly believes that she has spent *all* her time with her ex-boyfriend. Right after the problematisation of her age, she once again expresses her anxiety and asks a similar rhetorical question as in line 485 (line 490), i.e. an affect of insecurity. She then makes her feeling explicit by drawing on the affective metaphor lexis: 好 empty *(very empty)* (line 492), i.e. an affect of insecurity. Lastly, she expresses an affect of insecurity by asking the expository question whether she would remain single the rest of her life (lines 493-495).

Age is an important theme in (139), which is dominated by affects of insecurity, or more specifically, Suki's worries about her marriage prospects because of her age. In her talk, she neither makes any judgement on herself nor any appreciation in terms of her appearance. Instead, she merely talks about her affective feelings. This finding is consistent with a message repeatedly conveyed in the programme – Hong Kong women, especially those who have reached the suitable age for marriage, are having difficulty in finding partners. Suki seems to see the age of 30 as the end of a woman's marriage prospects. Another realisation is that she repeatedly mentions that she will be 30 soon and Louisa also repeatedly mentions Suki's desire to marry before the age of 30. Another interesting point about (139) is that all the negative affective appraisals target her marriageability in relation to her age, rather than the end of the relationship *per se*.

As indicated by the above analysis, Suki embodies traditional femininity in the sense of her 'womanly' goal of marriage, and is bounded by normative gender expectations insofar as she is desperate to marry before the age of 30 and proceed to the next conventional heterosexual life stage. Suki's self-representations are consistent with the way she is represented in the programme. Her 'womanly' concerns about marriage are exactly what the programme attempts to promote.

(e) Mandy

Mandy represents herself by positioning love in her life.

Context: In her first appearance in Episode 1, Mandy gives the following self-introduction.

(140)

497 **Mandy**: 愛情　對　我　嚟　講(.)　唔(.)　唔(.)

Love　to　me　come　speak(.)　not(.)　not(.)

To me, love, not…not…

498 唔係　　所有　　嘢　　　囉 1(.)

not-be　all　things　lo1(.)

isn't everything.

499 我(.)　我(.)　我　好　平均　　嘅(.)

I(.)　I(.)　I　very　balanced　SFP(.)

I…I…I strike a balance.

500 即係(.)　我　唔係　話(.)

That's(.)　I　not-be　say (.)

That's, I don't mean

501 我　完全　　可以　巴閉　　到　我　唔需要(.)

I　completely　can　arrogant　until　I　not-need(.)

I can be so arrogant that I don't need it at all,

502 但係　我(.)　對　我　嚟　講(.)

but　I(.)　to　me　come　speak(.)

but I…to me,

503 我　會　覺得　ar　可能　　係　30(.)

I　would　think　VTIP　probably　be　30(.)

I'd think that um… it's probably 30% of my life,

504　即係(.)　家庭(.)　屋企　family　啦(.)　做　嘢(.)

　　　that's (.)　family(.)　home　family　VTIP(.)　do　thing(.)

　　　that's, family and home, work

505　and then　妳　嘅　愛情(.)

　　　and then　your　LP　love(.)

　　　and then your love.

506　咁　可能　我　會(.)

　　　Then　maybe　I　would(.)

　　　Then maybe I would…

507　我　都　係　愛情　係　三分一　嘅(.)

　　　I　still　be　love　be　a-third　SFP(.)

　　　I'd still see love as a third [of my life].

508　咁　我(.)　我　自己　會　覺得(.)　有時

　　　Then　I(.)　I　self　would　think(.)　sometimes

　　　Then I…I'd sometimes think

509　就算　　　我　唔拍拖(.)

　　　even though　I　not-go-out(.)

　　　even though I'm not in a relationship,

510　我　嘅　生活　我　都　已經　哈哈

　　　my　LP　life　I　already　already　haha

　　　my life has already been, haha

511		好	OK	㗎3	喎 3(.)
		very	okay	gaa3	wo3(.)
		very okay.			

512		咁	但係	我	唔係	話	我	唔需要(.)
		VTIP	however	I	not-be	say	I	not-need(.)
		However, I don't mean I don't need it.						

Mandy starts her talk by making an appreciation of valuation that love is not her everything (lines 497-498). Significantly, this appraisal is in the form of a denial, which shows her oppositional stance to women placing romantic relationships as central to their life. This reading is also supported by her use of the sentence-final particle 囉 1 *(lo1)* (line 498), which not only reflects her opposition, but also adds a sarcastic tone (see Leung and Gibbons, 2009). She next makes a positive appreciation of composition that her life is balanced (line 499), followed by a denial that she does not need a relationship at all (lines 500-501), which contains an affect of inclination, albeit not a strong one. This denial counters the common perception that women have to choose between love and career, and her will to have both is clear. After that, she makes an appreciation of valuation that love is merely 30 percent (line 503) or a third (line 507) of her life. In lines 504-505, she lists three key components of her life, namely family, work and love. Her use of the adverb *then* (line 505) suggests that she does not list the components in random order, but in descending order according to their importance; hence, love is outweighed by family and career in Mandy's life. Such ordering reinforces her previous evaluation that love is not her everything. She then moves on to evaluating her present single life as very okay (lines 509-511), which is an appreciation

of reaction concerning her life quality and an affect of satisfaction that she is quite pleased with her life. As discussed in (127), the sentence-final particle cluster 㗎3 喎3 *(gaa3wo3)* (line 511) turns the assertion into meaning something like 'despite what many people think, my life is very okay', which implies some resistance against Mandy's (or women's) singleness, and her challenge to such views. This evaluation is hence an instance of pronouncement. She ends her talk by repeating her previous denial that she does not need love at all (line 512), which is again an affect of inclination.

Mandy's self-representations show her resistant stance to traditional femininity. She challenges the gender expectation that sees marriage as women's everything and represents it as merely a third of her life, after her family and career. Briefly, her value position contradicts the one disseminated by the programme, which might be the reason for her midway withdrawal.

6.2.2. Discussion

After reporting the findings of how the five participants talk about themselves, I now discuss them in relation to RQ2:

RQ2. How do unmarried women talk about themselves in terms of self-appraisals in *Bride Wannabes*?

My analysis indicates that the five participants' self-representations are rather different, but they share the similarity of being all linked to various gender expectations, either evaluating themselves based on such expectations or resisting them. I now briefly systhesise how they use different kinds of appraisal resources to represent themselves differently.

Florence assumes a strongly resistant stance to traditional gender expectations, which the programme upholds. She heavily draws on engagement resources to defend

her love attitude against different 'experts'' criticisms, impositions and advice. She articulates her beliefs about love and invalidates value positions that women should have hardly any partner selection requirement when they reach a certain age, that women should beautify themselves to attract men, and that women love wealthy men.

Bonnie does not hold a consistent stance to traditional gender expectations. On the one hand, she expresses her opposition to stereotypical views on unmarried women of her age, e.g. that they remain single because of their 'pickiness', which mainly relies on engagement resources. On the other, she negatively evaluates herself through the lens of traditional gender expectations, mainly using attitudinal resources. Her attitudinal appraisals are most crucially characterised by the focus on *others*. She makes a number of ascribed appraisals to evaluate how men might see her and evaluates herself in comparative terms with her fellow women in various activities. This is often followed by her expression of worries about her marriage prospects.

Unlike Florence's and Bonnie's cases, Gobby's self-representations are full of attitudinal self-appraisals and are featured by her self-problematisation based on traditional gender expectations. Her appraisals are dominantly negative, including negative judgements regarding her previous behaviours and her perceived low educational and career attainment as well as negative appreciations about her appearance and background. She also often expresses her regret at what she did in the past and her lack of confidence. However, towards the end of the show, she points to her increased confidence because of her modified appearance after undergoing a zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment.

Similar to Gobby, Suki embraces traditional femininity, but she talks about herself very differently from Gobby in that she mainly draws on one type of attitudinal appraisals – affects. Her self-representations all surround her different negative feelings

towards her marriage prospects after being jilted by her ex-boyfriend at the age of 28. She is apparently bounded by traditional gender expectations and has the 'womanly' desire for marriage.

Lastly, Mandy, like Florence, articulates her resistance to traditional gender expectations, but the ways they do it differ. Both attitudinal and engagement appraisals play a crucial role in Mandy's self-representations. In terms of attitudinal appraisals, in contrast to Bonnie, Gobby and Suki, Mandy evaluates herself positively. She appreciates her present single life as balanced and 'very okay' and expresses her satisfaction with it. On the other hand, she employs engagement resources, especially denials, to challenge stereotypical perceptions that love is central to women's life and that women have to choose between romance and career.

The participants' self-representations form an important part of the programme's representations of them, and the above analysis findings are closely linked to my discussion in Chapter 5. Suki's and Gobby's self-representations accord with the values that the programme disseminates. In Suki's case, the programme represents her as the ideal type of women for men, which implicitly endorses how she talks about herself, i.e. desiring to marry before the age of 30. As regards Gobby, for one thing, her self-problematisation and her later positive evaluation of the change in her lend credence to the solution offered by the 'experts', i.e. to enhance her confidence through cosmetic surgery; for another, they enable the programme to advertise for the beauty centre concerned.

The programme needs different kinds of participants to create excitement, so it not only needs participants like Suki and Gobby, but also resistant participants like Florence and Mandy. Florence's self-representations mainly concern her attitude to love, which is also foregrounded in the programme's representations of her. By

problematising her attitude to love in relation to her age, the programme directs the audience to seeing her self-representations as realisations of her 'pickiness', strong personality and unrealistic attitude to love. Mandy's self-representations mainly concern her positioning love as just part of her life. The programme shapes negative views on her value position by characterising her as a career woman who is hard to deal with.

Lastly, Bonnie representations manifest her struggles between how she sees herself and how others see her, and between how she resists traditional gender expectations and how she is bounded by such expectations, which lends weight to the programme's representation of her as not fitting into the normative definition of femininity in Hong Kong and which directs the viewers to seeing the need for her to learn to be 'feminine'.

In conclusion, the participants' self-representations indicate that they are all under the influence of traditional gender norms, but they (dis)align themselves into such norms to different extents and in different ways. Such representations are closely linked to and form part of how the programme represents the participants. The programme seeks to direct the audience to seeing the participants' self-representations according to the frame it provides.

Chapter 7: How unmarried women are talked to

This chapter focuses on how unmarried women are talked to in *Bride Wannabes* in terms of impoliteness. A salient reason for this focus is that impoliteness plays an important role in reality television (see Subsection 3.2.1). As will be shown below, impoliteness is also a feature of *Bride Wannabes*, particularly in the conversations between the 'experts' and the participants, whose relationships are asymmetrical. This chapter is formed of two major parts: (1) a description of my analytical frameworks and methods of analysis, and (2) a report of my data analysis results.

7.1. Impoliteness

I explore how unmarried women are talked to in *Bride Wannabes* using Culpeper's bottom-up impoliteness model (2011), supplemented by that of Bousfield (2007, 2008) and Culpeper *et al.* (2003). This section is divided into four main parts. The first two parts concern the two respective models; the third part justifies why I have selected the two models; and the final part describes my methods of analysis.

7.1.1. Culpeper's impoliteness model

This sub-section first provides an overview of Culpeper's impoliteness model, followed by a review of research that has employed it.

7.1.1.1. Overview

Before discussing Culpeper's bottom-up impoliteness model (2011), I start by briefly depict its background. Culpeper first proposed his impoliteness model in 1996, and has made significant revisions throughout the years. His original model (Culpeper, 1996) is a reversal of Brown and Levinson's face-based politeness model (1978, 1987).

Following Brown and Levinson, he divides *face* into *positive face*, i.e. 'the want of every member that his *[sic]* wants be desirable to at least some others' and *negative face*, i.e. 'the want of every competent adult member that his *[sic]* actions be unimpeded by others' (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 62), and proposes a face-based impoliteness taxonomy, along with a list of output strategies. The model is speaker-based, as it relies on the speaker's use of impoliteness strategies to realise impoliteness. Since it departs from Brown and Levinson's politeness model, it has, as Culpeper himself points out (e.g. Culpeper, 2005, 2015), carried over various problems from Brown and Levinson's model, e.g. the problematic conceptualisation of face into positive face and negative face (see also Cashman, 2006; Bousfield, 2008).

I adopt as my analytical framework the latest version of Culpeper's impoliteness model (2011), which apparently moves away from Brown and Levinson's model. It no longer looks at impoliteness from a purely theoretical perspective, but emphasises laypeople's understanding of impoliteness, as reflected by his new definition of impoliteness:

> Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organisation, including, in particular, how one person's or a group's identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively – considered 'impolite' – when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be. Such behaviours always have or are presumed to have emotional consequences for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence. Various factors can exacerbate how offensive an impolite behaviour is taken to

be, including for example whether one understands a behaviour to be strongly intentional or not. (ibid, p. 23)

As shown in the definition, Culpeper's impoliteness model has shifted from a speaker-based to a hearer-based one. Impoliteness is more related to the hearer's perception of what the speaker did, than the speaker's actual behaviour. Besides, in contrast to his previous works, Culpeper (2011) no longer sees the speaker's intention or that perceived by the hearer as an essential condition for impoliteness, but a booster for the offence taken by the hearer.

Culpeper (2011) bases his model on Spencer-Oatey's conceptualisation of face and sociality rights and obligations, as advanced in her rapport management framework (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008), which falls into the relational line of (im)politeness research. Drawing on Goffman's definition of face, i.e. 'the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself *[sic]* by the line others assume he *[sic]* has taken during a particular context' (p. 5), and Brewer and Gardner's (1996) social psychological notions of 'personal self', 'relational self' and 'collective self' (p. 84) (see Section 6.1), Spencer-Oatey categorises face into *quality face*, *relational face* and *social identity face*:

1. **Quality face:** Quality face corresponds to positive face in Brown and Levinson's model, and is concerned with self at the individual level. Spencer-Oatey (2000) suggests that 'we have a fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities, e.g. our competence, abilities, appearance etc.' (p. 14).

2. **Relational face:** Relational face relates to self at the interpersonal level. Spencer-Oatey (2008) suggests that '[s]ometimes there can be a relational

application; for example, being a talented leader and/or a kind-hearted teacher entails a relational component that is intrinsic to the evaluation' (p. 15).

3. **Social identity face:** Social identity face is based on self at the group level. Spencer-Oatey (2005) suggests that a person can be face-sensitive about 'any group that [she/he] is a member of and is concerned about. This can include small groups like one's family, and larger groups like one's ethnic group, religious group or nationality group' (p. 106).

As Culpeper (2011) points out, there are overlaps between relational face and social identity, or collective, face. The two can be distinguished by the extent to which the person(s) is/are significant to us:

> Like relational selves, then, collective selves entail some degree of connection with others. However, whereas relational selves involve a connection with a known, identifiable significant other or group of significant others, collective selves designate connections with individuals whose identities may not be known. (Chen *et al.*, 2006, p. 160)

Spencer-Oatey (2008) considers face a partially universal phenomenon because on the one hand, everybody has face concerns; on the other, there are personal, contextual and cultural variations in terms of what makes people face-sensitive.

Another important notion in Spencer-Oatey's rapport management framework is sociality rights and obligations, which 'are concerned with social expectancies, and reflect people's concerns over fairness, consideration and behavioural appropriateness' (ibid, p. 13-14). They may be based on legal/contractual requirements or social norms. Two types of sociality rights and obligations have been proposed:

1. **Equity rights:** Equity rights correspond to negative face in Brown and Levinson's politeness model and are related to individualism. Spencer-Oatey

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(2008) explains: 'We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly: that we are not unduly imposed upon, that we are not unfairly ordered about and that we are not taken advantage of or exploited' (p. 16).

2. **Association rights:** Association rights are a more collective type of sociality rights. Spencer-Oatey (2008) suggests: 'We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to social involvement with others, in keeping with the type of relationship that we have with them' (p. 16).

Culpeper (2011) not only bases his impoliteness model on Spencer-Oatey's rapport management framework, but has also employed it to compare impoliteness events reported by undergraduates from the UK, China, Finland, Germany and Turkey, and found some cross-cultural variations in offence types (see also Culpeper *et al.*, 2010). That is to say, the framework is not just applicable to Anglo contexts. In fact, when Spencer-Oatey first introduced her framework in her edited book *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures* in 2000, she also included an empirical study of the framework (co-conducted by Spencer-Oatey and Xing, 2000, 2008) which examined the face issues in a business visit by a group of Chinese business people to a British company. She and her co-author found that owing to cultural differences in welcome meeting arrangements, the Chinese group felt that their relational face had been threatened and their sociality rights had been violated.

Apart from adopting Spencer-Oatey's conceptualisation of face and sociality rights and obligations, Culpeper (2011) has taken a different track from his previous works in that he approaches impoliteness in a bottom-up manner. Instead of 'mapping out a logical means-ends framework of choices and then testing it against the data', he '[analyses] the data and [lets] the "strategies" emerge from it' (Culpeper, 2015, p. 436).

Owing to its association with top-down approaches, the term 'strategy' is replaced with 'trigger'. He no longer sees impoliteness as realised by the speaker's use of impoliteness strategies. Instead, he has proposed four sources of evidence to claim impoliteness: (in descending order of reliability) (1) co-text, e.g. metapragmatic comments on impoliteness, such as 'That's rude!'; (2) retrospective comments, e.g. in weblogs; (3) certain non-verbal reactions, e.g. expression of emotions such as embarrassment; (4) use of conventionalised impoliteness formulae (to be discussed below), e.g. an insult (Culpeper, 2011, p. 11). He emphasises that the use of conventionalised impoliteness formulae alone is inadequate to realise impoliteness as they are sometimes used in banter.

Culpeper's bottom-up impoliteness model has been driven by his comprehensive dataset, which involves both everyday contexts, such as 100 informants' diary reports of impoliteness events, and contexts in which impoliteness plays a central role, such as exploitative television shows, e.g. *The Weakest Link*.[68] He notes that his data are largely based on Anglo-American contexts, and does not attempt to claim universality of his model. He argues that impoliteness is neither wholly inherent nor non-inherent in linguistic expressions: '(Im)politeness can be more determined by a linguistic expression or can be more determined by context, but neither the expression nor the context guarantee an interpretation of (im)politeness: it is the interaction between the two that counts' (ibid, p. 125). His model deals with different levels of impoliteness as inherent in linguistic expressions and contexts.

There are two types of impoliteness triggers in Culpeper's model (2011): conventionalised impoliteness formulae and implicational impoliteness. Inspired by Terkourafi's frame-based politeness approach (2002, 2003, 2005a, b), he draws up a list

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[68] For details about the dataset, see Culpeper (2011, p. 8-11).

of conventionalised impoliteness formulae, which involve impoliteness realisations that co-occur within a particular context so regularly that the particular linguistic features have become associated with the particular context and the meaning has become unchallenged. That is to say, the meaning does not go unchallenged in all contexts, but can be presumed with minimal contextual information. To find out such formulae, Culpeper looks at regular co-occurrences of particular linguistic realisations of impoliteness and particular contexts in his data of diary reports on impoliteness events, and then checks such formulae against the Oxford English Corpus, filtering out those which go with impoliteness evidence in less than half of the cases. Below, I list the conventionalised formulae that Culpeper (2011) has obtained and for each formula, I quote an original English example and a Cantonese one from either *Bride Wannabes* or my forum data, unless otherwise specified:

Insults

1. *Personalised negative vocatives*

   - you moron

   - 嗰條女[69] (that woman)

2. *Personalised negative assertions*

   - you are so stupid

   - 妳成個人係唔似三十歲囉,個狀態老啲囉 (Your condition doesn't look like a

     30-year-old, but older)

---

[69] *條女* is a disrespectful and sexist reference to women. What makes it disrespectful is the classifier *條*, which is often used to modify objects. It also has strong connotations of sex. Such disrespectful meaning is not reflected in the English translation. This impoliteness formula will be elaborated in my report of the findings in Section 7.2.

3. *Personalised negative references[70]*

- your little act

4. *Personalised third-person negative references (in the hearing of the target)*

- she's nutzo

- 嗰條女[71] (that woman)

<u>Pointed criticisms/complaints</u>

- that is absolutely bad

- 廢話嚟嘅 (Rubbish)

<u>Unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions</u>

- what's gone wrong now?

- 妳寧願係嘩,嗰條女又無,又無身材,又唔靚女,又乜嘢,仲咁假,慳啲啦,定還是 呢…? (You'd rather others saying 'wow, that woman has no… doesn't have a good body shape, isn't pretty, and blah, blah, blah. And she even acts so much. Save it!', or…?)

<u>Condescensions</u>

- that's babyish

- 妳真係天真 (you're really naïve)

<u>Message enforcers[72]</u>

- do you understand? (tag)

---

[70] I could not find any personalised negative reference in my data.

[71] I could not find any personalised third-person negative reference in my data. I use the same example, 嗰條女 *(that woman)*, given for personalised negative vocatives, as it can also function as a personalised third-person negative reference.

[72] I could not find any message reforcer in my data.

Dismissals

- go away

- 你返歸啦 (you go away)

Silencers

- shut up

- 慳啲啦 (save it)

Threats

- I'll box your ears if you don't [X]

- 如果你做唔到以上我所提嘅野,你注定,我再打多次,係注定,做「籠低橙」[73]

    (If you don't do what I mentioned, you'll be doomed, I repeat, doomed to be on

    the shelf.)

Negative expressives (e.g. curses, ill-wishes)

- damn you

- 咒衰你 d 賤種男 (curse you despicable men)

(see Culpeper, 2011, p. 135-136)

Culpeper (2011) suggests that 41 percent of his diary report data involves one or more conventionalised impoliteness formula.

The other type of impoliteness trigger is implicational impoliteness, i.e. 'an impoliteness understanding that does not match the surface form or semantics of the utterance or the symbolic meaning of the behaviour' (ibid, p. 17). The inferencing of implicational impoliteness is very much dependent on the particular context.

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[73] *籠低橙* literally means oranges in the bottom of a basket. It is a derogatory Cantonese expression for something/someone (mostly a woman) that is of poor quality and hence unwanted by anyone.

Implicational impoliteness has been classified into three types, each involving mismatches of some sort:

1. **Convention-driven**

   Convention-driven implicational impoliteness overlaps with the metastrategy *sarcasm or mock politeness* in Culpeper's previous model (2005) and involves mixed features of politeness and impoliteness. Culpeper (2011) suggests that impoliteness might be triggered by an internal mismatch within the behaviour or an external one in relation to the context, and hence proposes two sub-categories:

   (a) Internal

   There are two forms of internal convention-driven implicational impoliteness. The first form is multimodal mismatches, i.e. clashes between the verbal and non-verbal elements of a message. An example given by Culpeper (2011) is that in *The Weakest Link*, the host says to a participant whose only job duty is to put traffic cones in the road 'well what an interesting person you turned out to be' (p. 171) in a falling tone, which suggests boredom. Internal convention-driven implicational impoliteness can also be in the form of verbal formula mismatches, i.e. a mix of conventionalised politeness and impoliteness formulae. For example, in Culpeper's (2011) army training data, a sergeant says to a recruit 'you really impress people with your little act, girl' (p. 174), with 'you really impress people' being a conventionalised politeness formula of complement, and 'little act' and 'girl' being conventionalised impoliteness formulae of sexist condescension and an insult for an adult.

(b) External

External convention-driven implicational impoliteness refers to mismatches between what is said and the context of the utterance. Culpeper (2011) illustrates this with, among others, a complaint letter in a staff bulletin ending with 'Thank you SO VERY MUCH', which does not match the context.

2. Form-driven

Form-driven implicational impoliteness refers to mismatches between the surface form or semantic content and the context, and overlaps with *off-record impoliteness* in Culpeper's model (2005). Inferencing of this kind of implicational impoliteness can be dealt with using Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975). Culpeper (2011) illustrates this with John McCain's response to his wife's tease concerning his thinning hair: 'At least I don't plaster on make-up like a trollop, you cunt' (p. 160). On the surface, this response seems irrelevant, so McCain is flouting the Maxim of Relation and his response is an implicature that his wife 'plasters on make-up like a trollop' and that doing so is worse than having thinning hair.

3. Context-driven

Context-driven implicational impoliteness involves behaviours interpreted as impolite because they deviate from expectations in the context. There are two sub-types of context-driven implicational impoliteness:

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(a) Unmarked behaviour

This category involves a mismatch between an unmarked and non-conventionalised behaviour, and the context, and overlaps with *bald on record impoliteness* in Culpeper's earlier model (1996, 2005). It is rather rare. An example given by Culpeper (2011) is drawn from an informant's diary report:

> Mum: Have you sorted your finance
>
> Vikki: Yea kind of
>
> Mum: Vikki, you need to do it, you are going to be in trouble.
>
>   Go tomorrow and go to student finance
>
> Vikki: Mum stop going on I know
>
> Mum: Stop leaving things till the last minute
>
> Vikki: Right I'm going your *[sic]* doing my head in. Love you
>
>   (p. 182)

He suggests that the mother's behaviour is unmarked in parent-child talk; however, the informant thinks that she is old enough to be responsible for her own actions and describes her mother's behaviour as 'irritating and annoying' (ibid, p. 182).

(b) Absence of behaviour

This category involves a mismatch in that a particular behaviour is absent when expected in the context. It overlaps with *withholding politeness* in Culpeper's earlier model (1996, 2005).

Culpeper's bottom-up impoliteness model (2011) is summarised in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Culpeper's bottom-up impoliteness model
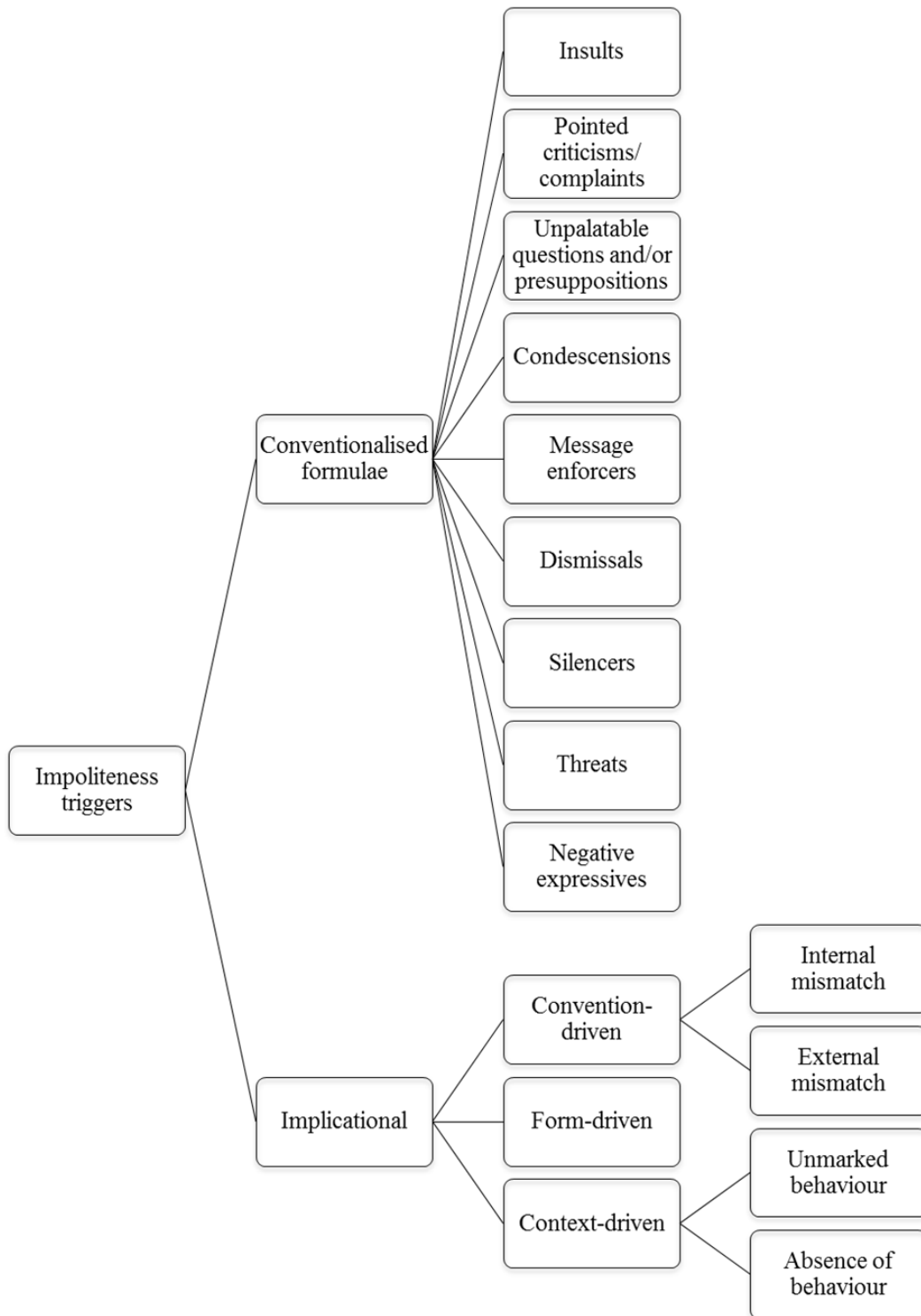
(Adopted from Culpeper, 2015, p. 441)

Culpeper (2011) not only looks at the forms of impoliteness, but also its functions. He has identified three instrumental functions of impoliteness:

1. Affective impoliteness: Affective impoliteness refers to the impoliteness producer's intense emotional display, usually anger, directed at the target, which implicates that the target is the wrongdoer and is responsible for the negative emotion displayed.

2. Coercive impoliteness: Coercive impoliteness is the value realignment between the impoliteness producer and the target via coercive means, e.g. imposing harm on the target's social identity or forcing compliance, so that the producer can gain benefits or maintain the status quo of benefits. The benefits can be tangible ones or symbolic ones, e.g. enhancing one's own self-image by belittling others. Culpeper (2011) also points out that coercive impoliteness is more often used by those with structural social power.

3. Entertaining impoliteness: Entertaining impoliteness is the exploitation of a target for entertainment purposes, such as game shows, e.g. *The Weakest Link*. Culpeper (2011) explains that impoliteness can provide five sources of pleasures: emotional pleasure, aesthetic pleasure, voyeuristic pleasure, the pleasure of being superior, and the pleasure of feeling secure (p. 234-235).

As well as the above instrumental functions of impoliteness, Culpeper (2011) also discusses the functions of institutional impoliteness. He suggests that '[i]nstitutional impoliteness is underpinned by power structures, and has associated

dominant ideologies by which the specific kinds of impoliteness associated with an institution are legitimated and (typically) unchallenged' (p. 253). He has described two functions of institutional impoliteness:

1. **Institutional mortification:** Institutional mortification refers to institutions e.g. military training schools and prisons promoting activities which aim to break down one's sense of identity and to force conformity to the norms and values of the institution, i.e. the mortification of the self. For example, the use of impoliteness in army training is often legitimated by the institutional power structure.

2. **Institutional exploitation:** Institutional exploitation refers to institutions (often media ones) promoting activities which humiliate and insult individuals for the sake of entertaining others, e.g. *The Weakest Link*.

After giving an overview of Culpeper's bottom-up impoliteness model, I will provide a literature review of research that has drawn on it.

7.1.1.2. Empirical studies employing Culpeper's bottom-up impoliteness model

Culpeper's impoliteness model (2011) has been employed in various empirical studies. An example is Murphy's (2014) research on (im)politeness in Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs), a weekly session when the Prime Minister (PM) answers questions from backbench Members of Parliament (MPs) in the UK Parliament. Murphy conducted his impoliteness analysis using the conventionalised impoliteness formulae proposed by Culpeper (2010), despite some adaptations or changes of labels. He

identified five formulae in his data: unanswerable questions, personalised negative characterisations, unrelenting pointed criticism, accusation of hypocrisy, and patronising or condescending (Murphy, 2014, p. 91-93). His quantitative analysis indicated the close relationship between impoliteness and the speaker's role in the Parliament. He found that impoliteness was never used by any government backbencher, whereas it characterised many opposition MPs' questions, with the Leader of Opposition using it almost all the time. His analysis also suggested that the PM only used impoliteness when responding to an impolite question.

While Culpeper's model (2011) is based on English data, research has started to apply it to data in other languages, including German (Kleinke and Bös, 2015) and Japanese (Kim, 2014). For example, in Kleinke and Bös' (2015) research on intergroup rudeness, i.e. 'rudeness directed at groups and the group affiliation of individuals' (ibid, p. 49), they categorised all tokens of intergroup rudeness according to Culpeper's conventionalised impoliteness formulae (2010) in their data of an English forum thread and a German one about The Pope's visit to the U.S. in 2008. Their data analysis showed that in both threads, the most frequent realisation of intergroup rudeness was pointed criticisms. There were, however, some notable differences between the two. First, intergroup rudeness tokens appeared much more frequently in the English thread, especially in terms of insults and multiple realisations in a single post. Another difference was that in the German thread, the tokens were more often directed at personal targets. Kleinke and Bös also examined the metapragmatic comments in the threads, and found that such comments were made much more frequently in the German thread, often targeting individuals, as there were more interactions between posters. They concluded that the posters in the German thread preferred intergroup rudeness at

the personal level, while those in the English thread tried to avoid personal hostility and resorted to rudeness at the group level.

This brief review shows that Culpeper's bottom-up impoliteness model (2011) has gained some empirical support, despite being relatively new. Moreover, the conventionalised impoliteness formulae in his model, although being English-based, have also proved applicable to non-English data, including German and Japanese.

7.1.2. Bousfield and colleagues' impoliteness model

In line with the pattern in Subsection 7.1.1, this sub-section starts by providing an overview of Bousfield and colleagues' impoliteness model, and then reviews some empirical studies employing it.

7.1.2.1. Overview

Bousfield and colleagues's impoliteness model (Bousfield, 2007, 2008; Culpeper *et al.*, 2003) is a reformulation and extension of Culpeper (1996). I will only focus on the part that my research draws on, namely, the extended part, which looks at impoliteness at the utterance level, i.e. how impoliteness utterances begin, develop and end, and at the discoursal level, i.e. how an impoliteness event is triggered, reacted to and ends, and how impoliteness is performed through exploitations of the turn-taking rules and preference organisation. This is a crucial step in the impoliteness literature in that impoliteness is looked at beyond single turns and the role of the recipient of impoliteness is also taken into consideration.

In terms of impoliteness at the utterance level, Bousfield (2008) has proposed three stages:

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1. **Utterance beginnings:** This stage concerns how impoliteness is prepared for, or 'an utterance preparing the ground for the onset of the impolite utterances which follow' (Bousfield, 2008, p. 149). It can be a pre-request, e.g. 'I'd like to ask you…?' (p. 147), an attention seeker, e.g. 'listen' (p. 151), or a pre-announcement, e.g. 'I'd just like to say something' (p. 147). Such pre-impoliteness sequences can be polite or impolite.

2. **Utterance middles:** This stage concerns the use of strategies to perform impoliteness. In most cases, impoliteness strategies are combined in a single turn of talk or across turns. There are different patterns of the way impoliteness strategies are used. For example, a particular word, phrase or grammatical structure is used repeatedly to exacerbate the face-damage inflicted. An example given by Bousfield (2008) is a driver's repeated use of the taboo word 'fuck(ing)' when talking to a bailiff who is to enforce a court order to remove her car: 'what the fuck you doing excuse me', 'what are you fucking doing' and 'really you want some fucking money right' (p. 162).

3. **Utterance ends:** In some cases, impoliteness utterances may end with a post-intensifying interrogative to force feedback from the hearer, e.g. 'Do you understand?' (ibid, p. 166). Such interrogatives can function as a booster for the force of the face-threatening act (FTA).

Similarly, three stages have been proposed for impoliteness at the discoursal level:

1. **Discourse beginnings:** This stage involves situations triggering the onset of impolite exchanges. Bousfield (2008) argues that '[t]he contexts in which impoliteness appears and is utilised strategically must have been previously invoked, that is, with all other things being equal, the interactant who utters impoliteness must have felt sufficiently provoked at some point prior to actually delivering the impoliteness' (p. 183). Drawing on Jay's (1992) study of cursing and his concept of 'offending events', i.e. phenomena triggering cursing, Bousfield (2008) refers to phenomena triggering impoliteness as 'offending situations', which may involve sequences of events. Impoliteness triggers might be elements related to the offender, e.g. age and sex, or those related to the phenomena, e.g. behaviour and language.

2. **Discourse middles:** This stage concerns how the recipient of an offending situation responds to the situation. There are two choices:

   (a) Not to respond: The recipient of the offending situation may keep silent out of various reasons, e.g. to defend her/his own face, or to accept the FTA (Bousfield, 2008).

   (b) To respond: There are two ways to respond to an offending situation:

       I. To accept the face-attack by e.g. apologising for a complaint or agreeing to a criticism.

II. To counter the face-attack offensively or defensively, which might sometimes overlap:

  (i) Offensive counters: To respond to a face-attack with a face-attack.

  (ii) Defensive counters: To defend herself/himself. Bousfield (2008, p. 195-202) has listed six types of defensive counters:

  - Abrogation (role switching as deference), e.g. in his data, a car owner blames a clamper for clamping his car and the clamper switches his role from a private citizen to a public servant whose responsibility is to clamp illegally parked cars

  - Dismiss: make light of face-damage

  - Ignore the face-attack

  - Offer an account

  - Plead

  - Opt out

Below is a summary of response options to an offending situation:

Figure 7.2: Summary of response options to an offending situation
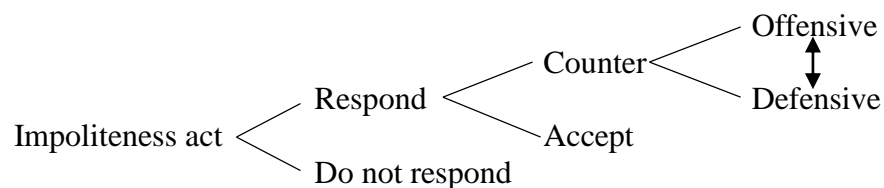
(see Culpeper *et al.*, 2003, p. 1563)

3. **Discourse ends:** This stage concerns how the conflict ends. Bousfield (2008) has employed Vuchinich's conflict termination model (1990) and proposed five ways that an impolite exchange ends:

    (a) Submission to opponent: One of the participants submits and takes the opponent's position.

    (b) Dominant third party intervention: A third party comes and ends the impolite exchange.

    (c) Compromise: Participants make a compromise between each other's position.

    (d) Stand-off: No participant is willing to compromise or submit and the exchange usually ends with a change of topics.

    (e) Withdrawal: A participant withdraws from the conversation.

After introducing the part of Bousfield and colleagues' impoliteness model my research employs, the next sub-section reviews research that has employed it.

7.1.2.2. Empirical studies employing Bousfield and colleagues' impoliteness model

Bousfield and colleagues' impoliteness model has been employed successfully in different empirical studies. For example, Lorenzo-Dus (2009) applied Bousfield's taxonomy of discourse beginnings, middles and ends in impolite exchanges (2007, 2008)

to exchanges between the experts and the contestants in the UK reality show *Dragons'*
Den. She found that the contestants often suffered from face-attacks by the experts and
what triggered those face-attacks was often their inability to provide some information.
While many contestants tried to counter the face-attacks defensively, they mostly
submitted after many unsuccessful attempts to defend themselves. In many cases, the
show presenter intervened and terminated the exchanges to the advantage of the experts.
Lorenzo-Dus (2009) therefore pointed to an imbalance of interactional power in the
studio.

Bousfield's taxonomy of discourse beginnings, middles and ends in impolite
exchanges (2007, 2008) was also employed by Dobs and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich
(2013) on their data of polylogal interactions, i.e. interactions 'involv[ing] three or more
participants' (p. 112), in the classroom setting. They have even expanded Bousfield's
taxonomy to account for response choices available to face-attack witnesses. They have
found that face-attack witnesses also play a dynamic and integral role in the construction
of impoliteness.

After this brief review of research employing Bousfield and colleagues'
impoliteness model, I move on to explaining my choice of analytical framework.

7.1.3. Justification for my analytical frameworks

There are several reasons why I have selected Culpeper's impoliteness model (2011)
and complement it with that of Bousfield and colleagues (Bousfield, 2007, 2008;
Culpeper *et al.*, 2003). I first directly justify my choice, and then argue against the
potential critique that I adopt some 'Anglo' frameworks for my Hong Kong data. My
choice of Culpeper's bottom-up impoliteness model is due to the central role of
impoliteness in *Bride Wannabes*, which makes it necessary to choose a model which

studies impoliteness in its own right. Moreover, it is very comprehensive, drawing on notions from different research traditions, e.g. Spencer-Oatey's rapport management framework (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008) and Terkourafi's frame-based politeness approach (2002, 2003, 2005a, b), and strives for a good balance between laypeople's and the analyst's understanding of impoliteness. As regards my choice of Bousfield and colleagues' model, I think that it can help gain a clear picture of the dynamics of impoliteness in my data, especially in terms of the co-construction of impoliteness between the speaker and the hearer.

I also find it necessary to justify against the potential critique that I apply some 'Anglo' frameworks to my Hong Kong data. First, I do not consider Culpeper (2011) an Anglo model, although his original model (Culpeper, 1996) probably is. A salient rationale is that the model is based on Spencer-Oatey's conceptualisation of face, which is 'both universal, but extremely context-sensitive' (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010, p. 541). Besides, as previously mentioned, Culpeper has tested it against impoliteness events reported by undergraduates from the UK, China, Finland, Germany and Turkey (see Culpeper *et al.*, 2010; Culpeper, 2011), and found some cross-cultural variations.

Second, as said earlier, Culpeper's model realises impoliteness by the hearer's interpretation. I do not rely on his conventionalised impoliteness formulae or implicational impoliteness categories to determine whether an utterance is impolite, but on the *Bride Wannabes* participants' metapragmatic comments and/or reactions. Therefore, I only use the two models as analytical tools to describe what is interpreted as impolite by the participants. Admittedly, categories in the models are primarily based on the UK context, but individual researchers can add new data-driven categories in the case of incompatibilities.

Another crucial point is that there seems to be a research gap in Hong Kong impoliteness, or more broadly Chinese impoliteness. To my knowledge, there is no impoliteness model based on Hong Kong/Chinese contexts. At least, I cannot find any trace in the Linguistics and Language Behaviour Abstracts database. In the literature, most 'impoliteness' studies about various contemporary Chinese communities examine specific FTAs, e.g. disagreements (e.g. Zhu and Boxer, 2013; Zhu, 2014) and refusals (e.g. Pan, 2012; Ren and Woodfield, 2016), or specific linguistic features, e.g. terms of address/reference (e.g. Kádár *et al.*, 2013). These studies mainly focus on how various FTAs are performed *politely*, or in what way they are considered acceptable, i.e. in Watts' (2003) term 'politic behaviour' (p. 20), which strictly speaking is not impoliteness. What I am interested in, however, is the use of impoliteness *per se* in *Bride Wannabes*, rather than the use of specific FTAs, and how FTAs are performed *impolitely*, rather than *politely*. Thus, to my knowledge, there is no compatible existing impoliteness model/framework in the literature based on the Hong Kong/Chinese context, and Culpeper's impoliteness model and that of Bousfield and colleagues are the most suitable models for my research.

After explaining my choice of the two models, the next sub-section proceeds to a description of my methods of analysis.

7.1.4. Methods of analysis

My first step is to identify impoliteness. As mentioned, Culpeper (2011) suggests that we can gain evidence of impoliteness through (1) comments in the co-text; (2) retrospective comments; (3) specific non-verbal reactions; and (4) use of conventionalised impoliteness formulae, but that (4) alone cannot serve as sufficient evidence to claim impoliteness. I will therefore mainly base my judgement on (1)-(3).

Owing to the hearer-based nature of (1)-(3), even though Culpeper's model is based on the English language in Anglo-American contexts, I will have no difficulty realising impoliteness in my Cantonese data.

Apart from the above, I propose two other sources of evidence of impoliteness which I have found in my data. First, certain verbal reactions indicate that the hearer is taking offence at what was said, e.g. showing reluctance when imposed on, as shown in the following conversation between Bonnie and Santino, a 'love expert':

(141)

513	**Santino:**	打 俾 佢 話(.) 我 今 個 禮拜 唔 得閒(.)
		Call to him say(.) I this CL week not free(.)
		Call him and say 'I'm not free this week.'

514	**Bonnie:**	佢 會唔會 覺得
		He would-not-would think
		Would he not think

515		我 係(.) 故意 去 create 嗰 個 tension 呢(.)
		I be(.) deliberately go create that CL tension SFP(.)
		I'm deliberately creating a tension?

In (141), after knowing that Bonnie initiated a date with a suitor, Santino forces her to call the suitor to cancel the date. Bonnie's response in lines 514-515 shows her unwillingness to do so.

Second, changes in the hearer's linguistic behaviour within a particular conversation can also manifest offence being taken. For example, in (142), Bonnie's linguistic behaviour obviously changes:

354

(142)

…

516 **Eva:** 呀 妳(.) 妳(.) 妳 其實(.)

VTIP you(.) you(.) you actually(.)

You… You… You actually

517 幾(.) 幾(.) 好 戲 嘅 嘢(.) 妳(.)

quite(.) quite(.) good act SFP SFP(.) you(.)

act too much. You…

518 **Bonnie:** [pointing her index fingers at each other and speaking in a high pitch]

519 都 OK 㗎(.) 哈哈哈(.)

all okay SFP(.) hahaha(.)

It's okay. Hahaha.

520 **Eva:** [speaking seriously]

521 太 好 戲 SFP(.)

Too good act SFP(.)

Acting too much.

522 **Bonnie:** 都 會 㗎(.)

All would SFP(.)

I sometimes do.

523	**Eva:**	太	好	戲	囉(.)
		Too	good	act	SFP(.)

Acting too much.

524	**Bonnie:**	習慣	吖	嘛 (.)
		Habit	SFP	SFP(.)

I've got used to it.

In line 517, Eva describes Bonnie as '好戲', which is an adjective. As I could not find an English equivalent, I just translate it as 'good act' in the word-by-word translation. This adjective is ambiguous in that it literarily means acting well, and is sometimes used to praise actors/actresses; on the other hand, it is sometimes used negatively to describe people acting too much. Bonnie probably takes the literal meaning in the first place and jokes laughingly that she is okay at acting. However, in lines 521 and 523, Eva repeats her comment, and Bonnie perceives Eva's meaning and responds seriously. Bonnie's linguistic behaviour has clearly changed from joking to serious, which I think shows that Bonnie feels offended.

After ascertaining that a conversation contains impoliteness, I will qualitatively analyse what the speaker has done, based on Culpeper's impoliteness model (2011), as summarised in Figure 7.1. If it does not match any category in the model, I will add a new category. After categorising all impoliteness triggers, I examine which type of face and/or sociality rights and obligations is threatened in each case, using Spencer-Oatey's rapport management framework (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008), and identify boosters for the force of the threat, if any. I look at verbal boosters, e.g. intensifiers and attitudinal lexis, as well as non-verbal ones, e.g. prosody and facial expressions (see Culpeper, 2011). What is more, I also take into account Cantonese-specific features which

function to amplify offensive meaning. An obvious example is Cantonese sentence-final particles, which, as mentioned in Chapter 6, often perform the functions of intonations in English, and which carry attitudinal meanings. Then, I will apply Bousfield and colleagues' impoliteness model (Bousfield, 2007, 2008; Culpeper *et al.*, 2003) to all impolite exchanges and analyse them at both the utterance and discoursal levels, i.e. how an impoliteness utterance begins, develops and ends and how an impoliteness event is triggered, reacted to and ends, respectively. Lastly, I discuss the functions of impoliteness in each exchange.

A problem of doing my data analysis is that conversations in *Bride Wannabes* have been heavily edited. It is obvious that conversations are not broadcast in full, with many parts being edited out and replaced with the compere's narration of what is going on. In some cases, several words in a sentence have been edited out. Such editing becomes noticeable when the same conversation is broadcast again as a cut-in in an earlier/later episode. I illustrate this point with a conversation between Winnie, a life coach, and Bonnie which is broadcast in Episode 7 and as a cut-in at the end of Episode 1, functioning as a teaser to make viewers curious about what will happen in later episodes (differences in italics):

(143)

Episode 7

525	**Winnie:**	妳	寧願	係(.)	嘩(.)	嗰	條	女(.)
		You	would-rather	be(.)	wow(.)	that	CL	woman(.)
		You'd rather others saying 'wow, that woman

526 又　無(.)　　又　無　　身材(.)

and　not-have(.)　and　not-have　body shape(.)

has no… doesn't have a good body shape,

527 又　唔　靚女(.)　又　乜嘢(.)

and　not　pretty(.)　*and*　*what(.)*

isn't pretty, *and blah, blah, blah.*

528 仲　咁　假(.)　慳　啲　啦(.)　定　還是　呢(.)

Even　so　fake(.)　save　a-bit　SFP(.)　*or*　*or*　*VTIP(.)*

And she is even so fake. Save it!', *or*

529 *喂　雖然　佢　未必　　係　一定　好(.)*

hey　although　she　not-necessarily　be　certainly　good(.)

'hey, although she isn't necessarily good,

530 *不過　佢　真　　㗎(.)*

but　she　genuine　SFP(.)

she is genuine.'?

(144)

<u>Episode 1</u>

531 **Winnie:**　*[shouting]*

532 *喂　可唔可以　俾　個　<u>真</u>　嘅(.)　人(.)　嚟　呀(.)*

Hey　can-not-can　give　CL　<u>real</u>　LP(.)　person(.)　come　SFP(.)

Hey, can you show your <u>real</u> self?

533		好	假	呀(.)				
		very	*fake*	*SFP(.)*				
		Very fake!						

534		妳	寧願	係(.)	嘩(.)	嗰	條	女(.)
		You	*would-rather*	*be(.)*	*wow(.)*	*that*	*CL*	*woman(.)*
		You'd rather others saying 'wow, that woman						

535		又	無(.)	又	無	身材(.)		
		and	*not-have(.)*	*and*	*not-have*	*body shape(.)*		
		has no… doesn't have a good body shape,						

536		又	唔	靚女(.)	仲	咁	假(.)	慳	啲	啦(.)
		and	*not*	*pretty(.)*	*even*	*so*	*fake(.)*	*save*	*a-bit*	*SFP(.)*
		and isn't pretty. And she is even so fake. Save it!'?								

537 **Bonnie:**   *[Silent, with her head down]*

The above differences can be attributed to the requirement for teasers to be concise. The inclusion of lines 531-533 and 537 in (144) is to give viewers a better understanding of what triggers Winnie's impoliteness utterance and its effect on Bonnie; in contrast, in (143), viewers have a chance to watch the development of the incident, and the exclusion of lines 531-533 and 537 does not affect their understanding. As regards the excluded part in lines 527-530, it could be due to its relative insignificance in Winnie's message. My imperfect but practical solution is to compare, where relevant, different versions of a conversation in different episodes, so that they can complement each other. However, there is still a limitation in that I cannot analyse conversations in their entirety.

I will also inevitably miss some impolite exchanges as in some cases, while the speaker's use of impoliteness formulae is broadcast, the hearer's reaction is not.

After a description of my methods of analysis, in the next section, I report my data analysis findings.

7.2. Data analysis

This section reports my impoliteness analysis findings of all conversations in *Bride Wannabes* and addresses RQ3:

RQ3. How are unmarried women talked to in terms of impoliteness in *Bride Wannabes*?

I will first present the findings of my analysis of different impolite exchanges identified in *Bride Wannabes*, which all take place in conversations between the 'experts' and the participants, more specifically either Bonnie or Gobby. I will then discuss the imbalanced distribution of impolite exchanges among the participants. Lastly, I will discuss the findings and relate them to RQ3.

7.2.1. Impolite exchanges involving Bonnie and Gobby

This subsection looks at how Bonnie and Gobby are talked to impolitely and organises my discussion around what triggers the particular impolite exchange.

(a) Bonnie

Bonnie is clearly targeted for impoliteness in the programme. As will be shown below, not only are there many impolite exchanges targeting her, they are also more lengthy and stronger in force. What triggers those exchanges broadly falls into three categories: 'non-feminine' behaviours, acting too much, and non-compliance with instructions.

'Non-feminine' behaviours

In Chapter 5, I discussed how Bonnie is characterised as a 'non-feminine' woman; in line with this, her 'non-feminine' behaviours are the most important trigger of impoliteness events targeting her. The following impolite exchange between Bonnie and Jamie, a hairdresser, for example, is triggered by Bonnie not taking care of her appearance (in Jamie's opinion).

Context: In Episode 2, Bonnie and Suki are brought to Jamie's salon to have their hair cut and styled. Jamie is asked to comment on them from a man's perspective. He first praises Suki for being very 'feminine', cheerful and attractive. He then comments on Bonnie in her presence as well as that of Suki and another hairdresser:

(145)

538	**Jamie:**	機會	係(.)	俾	有準備	嘅	人(.)
		Chance	be(.)	give	have-preparation	LP	person(.)

Chances are given to well-prepared people.

539		妳(.)	真係	一	轉	角(.)
		You(.)	really	once	turn	corner(.)

Once you turn around the corner,

540		咁啱(.)	妳	嘅	target	又	望	倒(.)
		coincidentally(.)	your	LP	target	and	see	VTIP(.)

your target may coincidentally see you.

541 咁啱(.) 妳 抽住 兩 袋 餸(.)

Coincidentally(.) you carry-CONT two bag food(.)

Coincidentally, you're carrying two shopping bags of food

542 踢住 人字拖(.)

kick-CONT flip flops(.)

and wearing flip flops,

543 呀 咁(.) 隻 腳趾 仲要 痴住

VTIP then(.) CL toe even stick-CONT

even with a sticking [plaster] on a toe.

544 塊 膠[布 嘅(.) 咁(.)]

CL sticking [plaster SFP(.) then(.)]

Then…

545 **Bonnie:** [咁 其實] 靚 女 都 要 去 廁所(.)

[But actually] pretty woman also need go loo(.)

[But actually], pretty women also need to go to the loo.

546 靚 女 都 要 食 飯 㗎 喎(.)

Pretty woman also need eat rice SFP SFP(.)

Pretty women also need to eat.

547 **Jamie:** 咁(.)

But(.)

But…

548	**Bonnie:**	其實	靚	女	都	要
		Actually	pretty	woman	also	need

Actually, pretty women also need to

549		撩	鼻屎	㗎	喎(.)
		pick	snot	SFP	SFP(.)

pick their nose.

550		Haha(.)

551	**Jamie:**	我	諗	都	唔好	喱喱啡啡[74](.)
		I	think	still	don't	le2-le2-fe2-fe2(.)

I think you still shouldn't be slovenly.

552		起碼	整整齊齊(.)	梳吓	頭(.)
		At least	neat-neat-tidy-tidy(.)	comb-DEL	head(.)

At least, look tidy and comb your hair.

553		學吓	化妝	囉(.)	我	覺得(.)
		Learn-DEL	make-up	SFP(.)	I	think(.)

I think you should learn to apply make-up.

554	**Bonnie:**	但係	吹	個	頭	又	三四個字(.)
		But	dry	CL	head	and	15-20 minutes(.)

But it takes 15-20 minutes to dry my hair,

---

[74] *喱喱啡啡* is an reduplication of the term *喱啡*, which means 'slovenly'. As *喱* and *啡* do not carry meaning in isolation, I put the Romanised form of the term in the word-by-word English translation so as to indicate the reduplication used.

| 555 | 化 | 個 | 妝 | 又 | 三四個字(.) |
| | do | CL | make-up | and | 15-20 minutes(.) |

and 15-20 minutes to apply make-up,

…

| 556 | 搞 | 咁 | 多 | 多 | 嘢(.) |
| | Do | so | many | many | thing(.) |

After doing so many things,

| 557 | 其實(.) | 無人 | appreciate | 妳 | 囉(.) |
| | actually(.) | nobody | appreciate | you | SFP(.) |

actually, nobody will appreciate.

Jamie starts his comment by saying that chances are given to well-prepared people (line 538), followed by a hypothetical situation of Bonnie seeing her target in the street when she is not dressed up (lines 539-544). Obviously, the semantic content of his comment is irrelevant to the context and he is flouting the Maxim of Relation and making an implicature that as Bonnie does not care for her appearance, she will have no chance of finding a partner. In other words, it is an instance of form-driven implicational impoliteness attacking Bonnie's quality face. Despite her apparent disagreement with Jamie's comment, Bonnie only half-jokingly responds that even pretty women need to go to the loo, eat and pick their nose (lines 545-546 and 548-549). In other words, she is offering an account and dismissing the impoliteness in order to make light of the face-damage. Her defensive counter, however, does not end the impoliteness event, as Jamie then starts another impoliteness utterance, in the form of giving advice (lines 551-553). Significantly, his advice presupposes that Bonnie is slovenly and untidy, and does not comb her hair or take care of her appearance, i.e. unpalatable presuppositions attacking

her quality face. This time, Bonnie becomes serious and responds by offering an account that after spending a long time wearing make-up and dressing up, nobody will appreciate it (lines 554-557). This change of linguistic behaviour from joking to serious indicates that she takes offence at Jamie's comments. Despite the relative indirectness in Jamie's face-threats, the force of the threats is still exacerbated by the presence of Suki and another hairdresser, and his very positive comments on Suki.

Besides the perception that Bonnie pays inadequate attention to her appearance, her talking manner is also a target of criticism in the programme. In (146), for example, she suffers from a long list of face-attacks because of her way of talking in a matchmaking activity.

Context: In Episode 2, Bonnie is accompanied by Eva, a communication skills tutor, and Winnie, a life coach, to a boat trip party. Right after the party, Winnie and Eva review Bonnie's performance.

(146)

558 **Eva:**　妳　　開　　口-

You　open　mouth-

You opened your mouth-

559 **Winnie:**　妳　　唔　開　　口　　今　晚

You　not　open　mouth　this　evening

If you hadn't opened your mouth this evening

560 　如果　我　係　男仔　呢(.)　我　就　真係(.)　暈一暈(.)

　　　if　I　be　boy　SFP(.)　I　then　really(.)　faint-one-faint(.)

　　　and I had been a boy, I'd have been attracted.

561 **Eva:**　妳　一　開　口　完全(.)

　　　You　once　open　mouth　completely(.)

　　　Once you opened your mouth, it completely…

562 **Winnie:**　[shaking her head]

563 　妳　一　開　口(.)　[一　開　口　完全]

　　　You　once　open　mouth(.)　[once　open　mouth　completely]

　　　Once you opened your mouth… [Once you opened your mouth, it completely…]

564 **Bonnie:**　[smiling and pretending to be keeping off Winnie's and Eva's comments with her hands]

565 　[<indistinct>]

566 **Winnie:**　妳　一　開　口　就　係　dar dar dar dar dar dar(.)

　　　You　once　open　mouth　just　be　blah blah blah blah blah blah(.)

　　　Once you opened your mouth, you would blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

567 　[Winnie and Eva turn to the camera crew. Bonnie is smiling.]

568 **Winnie:**　佢　個　樣　　由　中環(.)

　　　Her　CL　appearance　from　Central(.)

　　　Her appearance looked as if she had been in Central.

569 **Eva:**　　　去咗　　　中環　　　囉 1 (.)

Go-PFV　　　Central　　lo1 (.)

Going to Central.

570 **Winnie:**　　一　　　開　　　口

Once　　open　　mouth

Once she opened her mouth,

571　　　　　　　變咗　　　　　[去　　到　　旺角　　　呀 3]

change-PFV　　[go　　arrive　Mongkok　aa3]

she was like [being in Mongkok.]

572 **Eva:**　　　[而家　　去　　到　　旺角　　　囉 1]

[Now　　go　　arrive　Mongkok　lo1]

[Now going to Mongkok.]

573　　　　　　　[Someone is laughing off the scene. Winnie and Eva turn back to Bonnie.]

574 **Eva:**　　　講嘢　　係 (.)

Talk　　be (.)

She talked like…

575 **Winnie:**　　好　　　吱喳[75]　　囉 1 (.)

Very　　chirping　lo1 (.)

Chattering very noisily.

---

[75] '吱喳' is an adjective here, but I cannot find an equivalent in English.

576 **Eva:** 好　吇喳　囉1(.)　會[唔會　　　too much　呢(.)]

Very　chirping　lo1(.)　would-[not-would　too much　SFP(.)]

Chattering very noisily. Would [it be too much?]

577 **Bonnie:** [looking at Winnie and Eva inertly]

578 **Winnie:** <indistinct>

579 我　頭先　同　Eva　研究(.)

I　before　with　Eva　discuss(.)

I've discussed with Eva before.

580 妳　一　開　口　講嘢　呢(.)

You　once　open　mouth　talk　SFP(.)

Once you opened your mouth to talk,

581 一唔係　就　有　少少(.)　即係　粗粗(.)

either　then　have　a bit(.)　that's　coarse-coarse(.)

you're either a bit, that's, coarse.

582 又　唔係　粗魯　　　喎(.)　但係　即係

And　not-be　coarse and crude　SFP(.)　but　that's

Not exactly coarse and crude, but, that's,

583 都　好似　cheap cheap 哋　咁樣　啦(.)

all　like　cheap-cheap-ish　such-way　SFP(.)

a bit cheap.

584 一唔係 呢(.) 就 低能(.)

Otherwise VTIP(.) then feeble-minded(.)

Otherwise you're feeble-minded.

585 **Eva:** 低能(.)

Feeble-minded(.)

Feeble-minded.

586 **Winnie:** 係 嘞(.)

Right SFP(.)

Right.

587 **Eva:** 唔(.) 一唔係(.) 就 低低能(.)

Um(.) otherwise(.) then feeble-feeble-minded(.)

Um, otherwise, feeble-minded.

588 **Bonnie:** 頭先 我 無 低(.)

Before I not-have feeble(.)

I was not feeble-minded.

589 今日 無 低能 㗎(.)

Today not-have feeble-minded SFP(.)

Today, I didn't behave in a feeble-minded manner.

590 [Smiling and fixing her hair]

一唔係 呢(.) 就 低能(.)

591   今日　我　玩　啫　嘛(.)

Today   I   play   SFP   SFP(.)

Today, I was just playing.

592 **Eva:**   唔係　呀(.)　　妳　有　㗎(.)

Not-be   SFP(.)   you   have   SFP(.)

Yes, you did.

593 **Bonnie:**   [still fixing her hair]

594 **Eva:**   佢　係　想　係(.)　製造　個　營造

She   be   want   be(.)   create   CL   create

She wanted to create

595   個　氣氛　　係　開心

CL   atmosphere   be   cheerful

a cheerful atmosphere.

596 **Winnie:**   [coughing]

597 **Eva:**   我　明白　　嘅(.)　係　呀(.)

I   understand   SFP(.)   right   SFP(.)

Right, I understand it

598   但係　[有時　　會　　係]

but   [sometimes   would   be]

but [it's sometimes]

599	**Someone off the scene:**	[唔夠	力]	係咪	呀(.)			
		[Not-enough	strength]	be-not-be	SFP(.)			
		[Not enough strength,] right?						

600	**Winnie:**	唔夠	深度	呀 3(.)			
		Not-enough	sophisticated	aa3(.)			
		Not sophisticated enough.					

601	**Eva:**	係	無	乜	深度	呀 3(.)	係	呀 3(.)
		Be	not-have	what	sophisticated	aa3(.)	be	aa3(.)
		Right, not sophisticated at all.						

602	**Bonnie:**	唔可以	吓吓	都	深度	㗎(.)	
		Not-can	CL-CL	all	sophisticated	SFP(.)	
		We can't be sophisticated all the time.					

603	**Eva:**	唔係	話	吓吓	深度	呀(.)	
		Not-be	say	CL-CL	sophisticated	SFP(.)	
		I didn't mean being sophisticated all the time.					

604	**Winnie:**	唔係	say the thing(.)at the right place(.)		或者	right time(.)	
		Not-be	say the thing(.)at the right place(.)		or	right time(.)	
		You didn't say the thing at the right place or at the right time.					

605		咁樣	就	會	破壞咗(.)		
		Such way	then	would	ruin-PFV(.)		
		This would ruin					

606   成   件   事   囉(.)

               whole   CL   thing   SFP(.)

               the whole thing.

607   **Bonnie:**   [nodding her head]

608   **Eva:**   嘌(.)   而家   咪   幾   好   囉

               VTIP(.)   now   then   quite   good   SFP

               See, you're quite good now.

609   [silence]

610   **Eva:**   妳   聆聽   嘞(.)

               You   listen   SFP(.)

               You've finally listened to others.

611   **Winnie:**   出現   嘞(.)

               Appear   SFP(.)

               It's appeared.

612   **Bonnie:**   [laughing]

613   **Eva:**   如果   妳   可以

               If   you   can

               If you can

614   一路   keep 住(.)   咁樣   嘅   話   呢(.)

               one-way   keep-CONT(.)   such-way   LP   say   SFP(.)

               keep it this way continuously,

615	妳	無	理由(.)	學 Winnie 話齋(.)
	you	not-have	reason(.)	as-Winnie-said(.)
	there's no reason for you… as Winnie said,			

616	無	理由	嫁	得	唔好	嘅(.)
	not-have	reason	marry	can	not-good	SFP(.)
	no reason that you couldn't marry well.					

This conversation is the longest impoliteness event identified in my data, containing many very strong face-attacks. As shown in lines 558-559, once seeing Bonnie after the party, both Eva and Winnie are eager to criticise her linguistic behaviours. In the end, Winnie successfully takes the floor and starts her utterance with a hypothetical situation that if Bonnie had not opened her mouth in the boat trip and she had been a boy, she would have been attracted (lines 559-560), which serves as a pre-impoliteness act. It flouts the Maxim of Manner and implies a negative view on Bonnie's way of talking. Thus, it is an instance of form-driven implicational impoliteness attacking Bonnie's quality face. After that, both Eva and Winnie would like to take the floor to comment on Bonnie's way of talking (lines 561 and 563). In line 562, Winnie even shakes her head to show her disapproval of Bonnie's way of talking. Although at this point, neither Eva nor Winnie have specified what they think is wrong with Bonnie's way of talking, Bonnie can infer their negative view and attempts to make light of the face-threat by smiling and pretending to be keeping off Eva's and Winnie's comments with her hands (line 564):

Figure 7.3: Bonnie trying to make light of Winnie's and Eva's face-attacks

(Broadcast in Episode 2 – 10th April, 2012)

She however could not prevent further face-attacks.

Winnie then starts another attack by specifying what she considers a problem in Bonnie's way of talking. In line 566, she describes Bonnie's way of talking as *dar dar dar dar dar dar*, which is not a common expression in Cantonese and which is not entirely equivalent to *blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah* in English. Winnie just utters some sounds at high speed to suggest that Bonnie talked non-stop at the party. Therefore, she is flouting the Maxim of Manner and making the implicature of Bonnie talking too much, which is another example of form-driven implicational impoliteness attacking Bonnie's quality face. Bonnie once again tries to smile and make light of the face-threat (line 567), but to no avail.

Winnie and Eva then turn to the camera crew and perform the third face-attack collaboratively in Bonnie's presence. Winnie suggests that Bonnie looked as if she were from Central (line 568), but talked as if she were from Mongkok (lines 570-571). Central is the political and financial heart of Hong Kong. Government figures also show that not only is the Central and Western District constantly ranked as the (second) most affluent district in terms of median monthly household income, it also has the (second)

largest population of degree holders among all districts in Hong Kong (see e.g. Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2015b, 2016b, 2017). Central is therefore often associated with high class and people there are often considered more educated and wealthy than the average. In contrast, Mongkok is a working-class district where many trendy, yet cheap products can be found, and people there are often thought to mindlessly follow trends. Winnie's comment is a violation of the Maxim of Manner and an implicature that while Bonnie looked good, she talked in a poor manner like a working-class person, which is an instance of form-driven implicational impoliteness attacking her quality face. It is noteworthy that when associating Bonnie's talking manner with Mongkok, Winnie makes use of the sentence-final particle *呀 3 (aa3)* (line 571). It emphatically indicates that she is expressing her heartfelt belief (see Cheung, 2007), and hence amplifies the face-attack. In lines 569 and 572, Eva echoes Winnie's comments, which further reinforces the face-attack. Eva not only repeats the face-attack, but also uses the sentence-final particle *囉 1 (lo1)* in lines 569 and 572, respectively, which marks her oppositional stance and adds a sarcastic tone (see Leung and Gibbons, 2009). More saliently, Eva's support for Winnie's negative view on Bonnie further weakens Bonnie's position in the conversation. The force of the attack is increased even further by the fact that someone laughs because of it (line 573). Despite the exclusion of Bonnie's reaction to the attack, the likelihood of her face loss is high.

After that, Winnie and Eva continue to attack Bonnie's face collaboratively. Winnie describes Bonnie's way of talking as *好吱喳(chattering very noisily)* (line 575), an onomatopoeic expression of birds chirping which is often used to refer to children or women chattering noisily (*cf.* Louisa also uses this expression to describe Bonnie's way of talking (see Chapter 5)). It is therefore an insult in the form of a personalised negative assertion attacking her quality face. The force of the insult is exacerbated by

Eva's immediate repetition of it (line 576), and the fact that both Winnie and Eva use the sentence-final particle 囉 1 (lo1) (lines 575-576) to show their opposition to Bonnie's way of talking in a sarcastic manner. Eva then further attacks Bonnie's quality face by asking whether it would be too much (line 576), which is an unpalatable question. Bonnie keeps silent and looks at them inertly (line 577). Her change of behaviour from her smiling and playfulness in lines 564 and 567 to her silence in line 577 is a sign of her feeling of face loss.

Despite Bonnie's silence, Winnie and Eva do not stop their attack. Winnie criticises that when talking, Bonnie was either a bit 'cheap' (line 583) or feeble-minded (line 584). 'Cheap' is commonly used in Hong Kong in a figurative sense to say that a person is of little value. In traditional Chinese culture, it is a virtue for women to be reserved and restrained, and to distance themselves a bit from men. Winnie may think that Bonnie was 'cheap' because at the party, she talked to men actively and became too 'obtainable'. Winnie's comment on Bonnie is an insult in the form of a personalised negative assertion and condescension attacking her quality face. This face-attack is boosted by Winnie's claim that it is the conclusion of her discussion with Eva (line 579), i.e. not her personal opinion. Worse, the insult that Bonnie was feeble-minded is repeated by Eva in lines 585 and 587, which further strengthens the offensiveness of the face-attack. Bonnie obviously feels embarrassed, as indicated by her fixing her hair (line 590). She tries to make light of the face-threat by smiling (line 590), and denies Winnie's and Eva's comment (lines 588-589) and offers an account that she was just playing (line 591). This explanation is however rejected by Eva immediately in line 592, which causes further embarrassment for Bonnie, as realised by her continuous fixing of her hair (line 593).

After that, Winnie and Eva still continue criticising Bonnie's way of talking. Winnie makes a pointed criticism that Bonnie's talk was not sophisticated enough (line 600), which attacks Bonnie's quality face. Winnie's claim is immediately supported by Eva (line 601), which again boosts the force of the face-threat. Importantly, when making this criticism, both Winnie and Eva use the sentence-final particle 呀3 (aa3) (lines 600-601) to show their strong commitment to their claim. Bonnie then counters their criticism by offering an account that we cannot be sophisticated all the time (line 602). This leads to another pointed criticism that she did not say the right thing at the right place or at the right time (line 604), which attacks her quality face. This time, Bonnie nods her head (line 607), i.e. accepts the face-attack. Her submission to Winnie and Eva finally stops the impolite exchange. They then praise her for listening and say that if she can keep it this way continuously, she will certainly marry well (lines 608-616). This impolite exchange is clearly abusive and constitutes bullying. Winnie and Eva make use of their powerful position and repeatedly attack Bonnie's face, until they achieve their goal to make her submit.

In the above two exchanges, impoliteness is used to force Bonnie to stick to traditional femininity, i.e. it is coercive impoliteness. Bonnie suffers from face-attacks owing to her allegedly not taking care of her appearance and because of her 'non-feminine' way of talking. The impoliteness level is particularly high in (146), when Winnie and Eva share the same negative opinions on Bonnie's 'non-feminine' way of talking at the party and collaborate to repeatedly threaten Bonnie's face. Bonnie is in a powerless position in the conversation, and there is little room for her to defend her own face. Several defensive counters can be found in the exchange, yet they only result in further face-attacks. Winnie and Eva keep on abusing and bullying Bonnie until she nods her head and submits to them.

<u>**Acting too much**</u>

As discussed in Chapter 5, Bonnie is often represented as acting a lot and pretending to be someone else by the 'experts', and because of this, she also suffers from many face-attacks. Here, I focus on an impolite exchange between Winnie, a life coach, and Bonnie, which despite being triggered by Bonnie allegedly not being her real self in a training session, turns out to include very offensive personal remarks.

Context: In Episode 7, Winnie has arranged a training session for Bonnie and Florence which is run by Eva, a communication skills tutor. In one of the tasks, Bonnie and Florence are asked to read aloud a tailor-made script about what it is on their mind in the process of finding a partner. Winnie and Eva are unhappy with Bonnie's reading and think that she is not being her real self. Under pressure from Eva, Bonnie admits that she pretends to be a very cute woman, and explains that this group of women are often more popular among men. After this point, (147) takes place, which is also broadcast as a cut-in in Episode 1. Obviously, both versions have been edited, with different parts being excluded.[76] The Episode 7 version even excludes Bonnie's reaction to Winnie's response. Therefore, I also include the Episode 1 version in (148).

(147)

617	**Winnie:**	妳	寧願	係(.)	嘩(.)	嗰	條	女(.)
		You	would-rather	be(.)	wow(.)	that	CL	woman(.)

You'd rather others saying 'wow, that woman

---

[76] A discussion about the differences between the two versions and some possible reasons can be found in Subsection 7.1.4.

618
又　無(.)　　　　又　　無　　　　身材(.)
and　not-have(.)　　and　　not-have　　body shape(.)
has no… doesn't have a good body shape,

619
又　唔　靚女(.)　又　乜嘢(.)
and　not　pretty(.)　and　what(.)
isn't pretty, and blah, blah, blah.

620
仲　咁　假(.)　慳　啲　啦(.)　定　還是　呢(.)
even　so　fake(.)　save　a-bit　SFP(.)　or　or　VTIP(.)
And she is even so fake. Save it!', or

621
喂　雖然　　佢　未必　　　　係　一定　　好(.)
hey　although　she　not-necessarily　be　certainly　good(.)
'hey, although she isn't necessarily good,

622
不過　佢　真　　喎(.)
but　she　genuine　SFP(.)
she is genuine.'?

(148)

623　**Winnie:**　[shouting]

624
喂　可唔可以
Hey　can-not-can
Hey, can you

625		俾	個	真	嘅(.)	人(.)	嚟	呀(.)
		give	CL	<u>real</u>	LP(.)	person(.)	come	SFP(.)

show your <u>real</u> self?

626		好	假	呀(.)
		Very	<u>fake</u>	SFP(.)

Very <u>fake</u>!

627		妳	寧願	係(.)	嘩(.)	嗰	條	女(.)
		You	would-rather	be(.)	wow(.)	that	CL	woman(.)

You'd rather others saying 'wow, that woman

628		又	無(.)	又	無	身材(.)
		and	not-have(.)	and	not-have	body shape(.)

has no… doesn't have a good body shape,

629		又	唔	靚女(.)	仲	咁	假(.)	慳	啲	啦(.)
		and	not	pretty(.)	even	so	fake(.)	save	a-bit	SFP(.)

and isn't pretty. And she is even so fake. Save it!'?

630 **Bonnie:**   [Silent, with her head down]

In lines 623-625, Winnie starts her impolite utterance by shouting at Bonnie and asking her whether she can show her real self, which is an unpalatable question functioning as a pre-impoliteness act. What follows is an insult in the form of a personalised negative assertion that Bonnie is very 'fake' (line 626). Both of these impoliteness formulae attack Bonnie's quality face. Winnie's shouting has significantly boosted the force of the face-damage.

Winnie then continues attacking Bonnie's quality face by asking another unpalatable question (lines 617-622), but this time from men's perspective. It is an either-or question containing two hypothetical situations. The first situation is very face-threatening in that it presupposes that Bonnie does not have a good body shape and that she is not pretty. Worse, Winnie refers to Bonnie as 嗰條女 *(that woman)*. 條女 is a very disrespectful reference to women. The problem lies in the classifier 條, which classifies long narrow items/animals, e.g. hair and snake. Since it does not have an English equivalent, I only literally translate 嗰條女 as *that woman*, which by no means reflects the vulgarity of the reference. As pointed out by Matthews and Yip (2011), 條 is only used of humans in slang expressions for the sake of degrading them (p. 125). More importantly, while 條女 is a common reference to one's girlfriend, it has strong connotations of sex, as evidenced by the following Google picture search results for 條女:

Figure 7.4: Google picture search results for *條女 (that woman)*
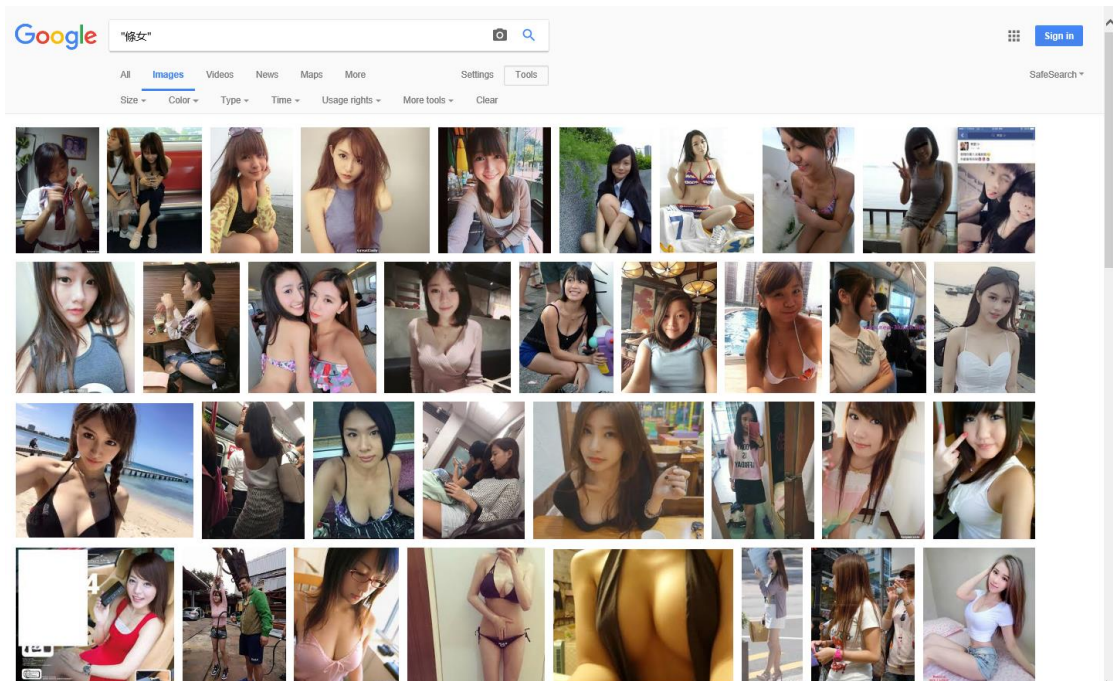
(accessed on 24th September, 2017)

The search results are all pictures of women (including a couple along with men), with most foregrounding women's breasts, legs or buttocks. Probably owing to its connotations of sex, 條女 is also commonly used to refer to prostitutes. The use of 條女 is therefore never acceptable on formal occasions. I consider it a highly sexist reference, despite the existence of its counterpart for men, i.e. 條仔. 條仔, similar to 條女, is a reference to one's boyfriend. It, nonetheless, is less common and does not have the same connotations of sex. Below is the Google picture search results for 條仔:

Figure 7.5: Google picture search results for 條仔 *(that man)*
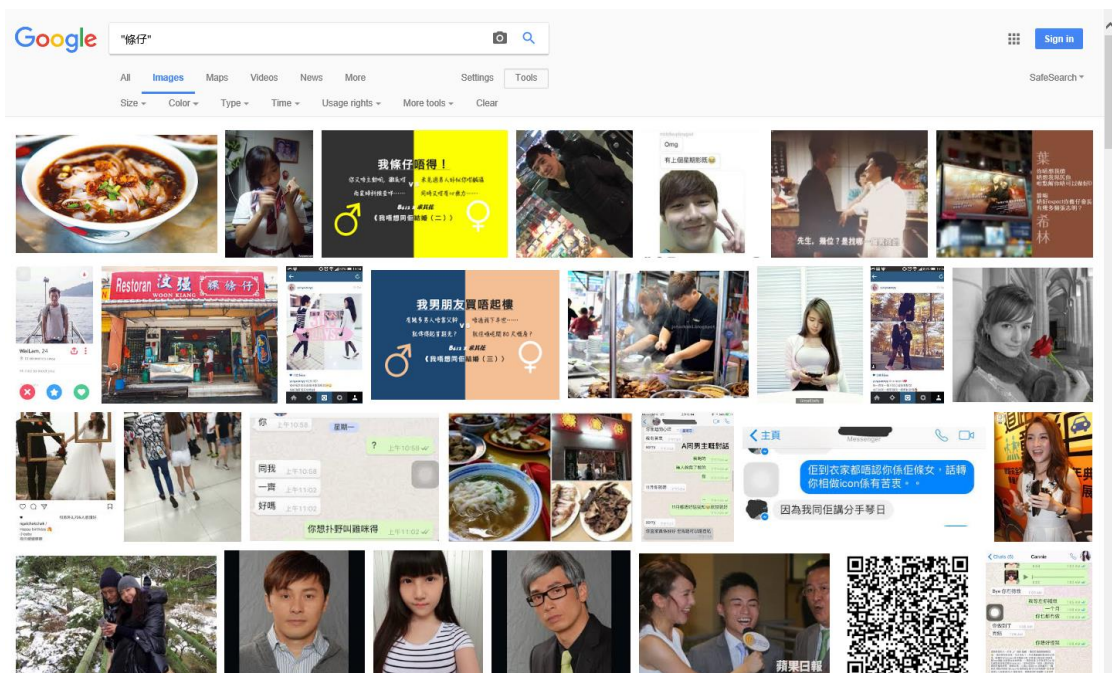
(accessed on 24th September, 2017)

The above results only include several pictures of men. That is to say, the use of 條仔 is not widespread enough to enable its corresponding pictures to top the search results. It is also obvious that all of the pictures are nothing to do with sex. I thus consider Winnie's reference to Bonnie as 嗰條女 an insult in the form of a personalised negative

vocative. Besides, as the first hypothetical situation concerns Bonnie's present state, by telling Bonnie to save it (line 620), Winnie is flouting the Maxim of Relation and is implying that if Bonnie remains 'fake' as she is, she will have no chance to find a boyfriend, which is an instance of form-driven implicational impoliteness. Winnie's impoliteness utterance is highly face-threatening not only because of *what* she says, but also *how* she says it. Apart from her shouting in line 623, her facial expressions and gestures also substantially exacerbate the offensiveness of the face-attack. For instance, in Figure 7.6, Winnie's facial expression clearly shows disgust.

Figure 7.6: Winnie's facial expression of disgust

(Broadcast in Episode 7 – 17th April, 2012)

As indicated in Figures 7.7-7.8, Winnie has very big and noticeable hand movements while talking to Bonnie:

Figure 7.7: Winnie's hand movements (1)

(Broadcast in Episode 1 – 9th April, 2012)

Figure 7.8: Winnie's hand movements (2)

(Broadcast in Episode 1 – 9th April, 2012)

Such movements may suggest her anger and dissatisfaction with Bonnie's performance in the training. The face-damage inflicted on Bonnie is even further amplified by the presence of Eva, Florence and another unknown person (probably an assistant). Her feeling of face loss is evidenced by her silence and looking down (line 630):

Figure 7.9: Bonnie keeping silent and looking down

In (147)-(148), Winnie attacks Bonnie's face for the sake of training, more specifically forcing her to be her 'real self', so it is an instance of coercive impoliteness. This is despite the fact that Winnie seems to make use of the chance to humiliate Bonnie in every possible way – attacking her appearance and body shape, implying that she cannot find a partner unless she changes herself, and maximising the face-damage on Bonnie with her non-verbal behaviours. Importantly, Winnie's problematisation of Bonnie's body as unattractive to men can be seen as encouraging her to see herself based on traditional femininity.

Non-compliance with instructions

Apart from her 'non-feminine' behaviours and allegedly not being her real self, Bonnie's non-compliance with instructions also triggers many attacks on her face or equity rights by Santino, a 'love expert', and his assistants, Pierce and Donald, who teach her various 'love strategies' and supervise her dating progress with different suitors. After Bonnie's dates with two suitors, Wood and Roxwell, Bonnie has a follow-up meeting with Santino and Pierce. The long conversation in the meeting is not broadcast in full, but different parts are broadcast in Episodes 8 and 9. Santino is clearly

unhappy with Bonnie not using the strategies that he taught her previously. (149) is an excerpt from their conversation:

Context: Previously, Santino gave a talk to the participants, except Florence, and told them not to show too much interest at the initial stage of a relationship so that the suitor would put forth more effort to pursue them. Santino also suggested that Bonnie attract her suitors by praising them strategically and indicating her understanding of their inner self. After her dates with two suitors, Wood and Roxwell (Episode 8), she has a follow-up meeting with Santino and Pierce, and Santino asks her what she praised about the suitors. After Bonnie's repeated failure to answer, he explains the importance of praising her suitors strategically. (149) takes place just after Santino's explanation.

(149)

631 **Bonnie:** 所以 其實(.) 我 上 一 次 都(.)

So actually(.) I last one time also(.)

So actually, last time,

632 即係(.) 食 完 飯(.) 我 都 特登(.) 即係(.)

that's(.) eat finish rice(.) I also specially(.) that's(.)

that's, after the dinner, I… I specially, that's,

633 補 補 個 message(.) 即係(.)

complement complement CL message(.) that's(.)

sent them a message, that's

386

634   say 個 thank you 咁(.) 覺得(.) [即係(.) 無(.)]-

say CL thank you SFP(.) think(.) [that's(.) not-have(.)]-

to say thank you. I think [that's no] -

635   **Santino:** [根本 無 用 嘅(.)]

[At all not-have use SFP(.)]

Not at all useful.

636   都 係 廢 話 嚟 嘅(.) 呢 啲(.)

All be rubbish word SFP SFP(.) this CL(.)

It's all rubbish.

637   **Bonnie:** 都 係 唔 work(.)

Still be not work(.)

It still didn't work?

638   **Santino:** 廢 話 嚟 嘅(.)

Rubbish word SFP SFP(.)

Rubbish.

639   **Bonnie:** 唔:

Um:

Um:

640   [pouting and blinking her eyes rapidly]

641   **Santino:** 係 呀(.) 呢 啲 係

Yes SFP(.) this CL be

Yes. It's

642		膚淺		嘅	示		好(.)
		superficial	LP	express			goodwill(.)

a superficial way to express goodwill.

643 **Bonnie:** [still pouting]

644 **Santino:** 妳　唔　對　對方

You　not　to　the-other-party

If you don't

645		表達	示	好	嘅	話(.)
		express	express	goodwill	LP	word(.)

express goodwill to the other party,

646 　　對方　　　覺得

the-other-party　think

he will think that

647		無	進度(.)	佢	一定	走(.)
		not-have	progress(.)	he	certainly	go(.)

there is no progress and will certainly go.

In lines 631-634, Bonnie reports to Santino that instead of praising her suitors, she sent them a thank-you message after the dates, which is ruthlessly criticised as not at all useful (line 635) and rubbish (line 636). It is a pointed criticism attacking Bonnie's quality face. Despite Santino's criticism, Bonnie responds by seeking a confirmation that what she did was unworkable (line 637). This triggers the same pointed criticism

that her thank-you message was rubbish (line 638). Bonnie then gives a minimal response to accept the face-attack (line 639). Her embarrassment is evidenced by her non-verbal reactions: pouting and blinking her eyes rapidly (line 640):

Figure 7.10: Bonnie pouting

Bonnie's acceptance of the attack does not end the impolite exchange. Santino continues attacking her quality face by giving another pointed criticism and describing what she did as a superficial way to express goodwill (lines 641-642). She does not respond and keeps on pouting (line 643). After repeatedly threatening Bonnie's quality face, Santino warns Bonnie of the consequence that the suitors will leave unless she follows his instruction and expresses goodwill to them (line 644-647). This warning contains no impoliteness formula and the understanding of it clearly depends on the context. Considering that Santino is now teaching Bonnie some 'love strategies', i.e. a sort of teacher-student interaction, Santino's comment does not seem marked. Hence, I consider it an instance of context-driven implicational impoliteness – unmarked behaviour. Santino's impoliteness utterance aims to force Bonnie to comply with his instruction, so it attacks her equity rights.

Another impolite exchange (150) takes place in the same meeting and is triggered by Bonnie doing something not instructed by Santino.

Context: After (149), Bonnie reports to Santino and Pierce what happened on her last dates with Wood and Roxwell and tells them that she has fallen in love with Roxwell.

(150)

648　**Bonnie:**　我　　就　　ar(.)　即係　去(.)

　　　　　　　　I　　then　um(.)　that's　go(.)

　　　　　　　　I, um, that's

649　　　　邀約　　Roxwell　啦(.)　　咁樣(.)

　　　　　　invite　Roxwell　SFP(.)　such-way(.)

　　　　　　have invited Roxwell. Right.

650　　　　我　　同　　佢　　講話　ar(.)　不如　　　　ar

　　　　　　I　　to　　him　say　　um(.)　might-as-well　um

　　　　　　I said to him, 'I might as well, um,

651　　　　我　　請　　返　　　你　　食　雪糕　　多謝　　你

　　　　　　I　　treat　in-return　you　eat　ice-cream　thank　you

　　　　　　treat you to ice-cream in return to thank you

652　　　　請　　我　　食　飯　啦　咁(.)　咁　　就(.)　[OK(.)]

　　　　　　treat　me　eat　rice　SFP　SFP(.)　then　then(.)　[okay(.)]

　　　　　　for treating me to dinner.' Then it's [okay].

653　**Santino:**　[No]

654 **Bonnie:** 咁　　就　　schedule咗　　個　　[時間(.)]　　唔(.)

Then　then　schedule-PFV　CL　[time(.)]　um(.)

Then we scheduled the [time], um…

655 **Santino:** [No(.)] You shouldn't do that(.)

[No.] You shouldn't do that.

656 **Bonnie:** Why not(.)

Why not?

657 **Santino:** 因為(.)　　未　　到　　回　　禮　　嘅　　時候　　囉(.)

Because(.)　not yet　reach　return　salute　LP　time　SFP(.)

Because it hasn't been the time to return a salute yet.

658 人哋　　為　　妳　　付出

He　　for　you　give

I think he hasn't given you.

659 未　　夠　　多　　囉(.)　　我　　覺得(.)

not-yet　enough　much　SFP(.)　I　think(.)

enough.

660 **Bonnie:** 唔(.)

Um(.)

Um.

661 **Santino:** 人哋 再 為 妳 付出 多啲(.)

He again for you give more(.)

After he gives you even more,

662 妳 先 回 禮(.)

you before return salute(.)

you then return a salute.

663 **Bonnie:** 咁 點 算 呢(.)

Then how choose SFP(.)

Then what should I do?

664 **Santino:** 打 俾 佢 話(.) 我 今 個 禮拜 唔得閒(.)

Call to him say(.) I this CL week not-free(.)

Call him and say 'I'm not free this week.'

665 **Bonnie:** 佢 會唔會 覺得 我 係(.) 故意

He would-not-would think I be(.) deliberately

Would he not think I'm deliberately

666 去 create 嗰 個 tension 呢(.)

go create that CL tension SFP(.)

creating a tension?

In lines 648-652 and 654, Bonnie tells Santino and Pierce that she has asked Roxwell out on a date, which goes against Santino's instruction that she should not show too much interest at the initial stage of the relationship. This has brought about a list of attacks on her equity rights. Santino immediately expresses his disapproval (lines 653

and 655), which is an example of context-driven implicational impoliteness – unmarked behaviour. Bonnie responds by asking for the reason (line 656). After Santino's explanation (lines 657-659 and 661-662), Bonnie accepts his attack on her equity rights and asks what she should do next (line 663). Then Santino lays an imposition on her, telling her to call Roxwell to cancel the date (line 664). Significantly, an imperative is used here without any mitigation and the imposition force is very high. It is again an example of context-driven implicational impoliteness – unmarked behaviour. Bonnie is apparently annoyed by this imposition. She asks Santino whether her cancelation of the date will make Roxwell think that she is deliberately creating a tension (lines 665-666), which shows her reservation about Santino's instruction and her reluctance to obey.

Context: After (150), Santino explains to Bonnie that if she is easily obtained, she will not be treasured, and continues imposing on her:

(151)

667	**Santino:**	可能	一	個	電話	內(.)	我	約	妳(.)
		Maybe	one	CL	phone	in(.)	I	date	you(.)

Maybe in a phone conversation, I date you.

668		跟住(.)	妳	話(.)	ar	我	唔得閒	喎:
		Then(.)	you	say(.)	um	I	unavailable	SFP:

Then you say, 'Um, I'm unavailable:

669		ar	應該	唔得閒	呀(.)
		um	probably	unavailable	SFP(.)

um, probably unavailable,

670   **Bonnie:**   [opening her mouth slightly]

671   **Santino:**   因為　　我　要　　點(.)點(.)點(.)

因為　　我　要　　點(.)點(.)點(.)

because   I   need   blah(.)blah(.)blah(.)

because I need to blah, blah, blah.'

672   **Pierce:**   而家　[打　　去　啦(.)]

Now   [call   go   SFP(.)]

[Call] him now.

673   **Santino:**   [pointing to the phone and then Bonnie]

674   [電話(.)]

[Phone(.)]

[Phone.]

675   **Pierce:**   [攞　個　電話　嚟(.)][77]

[Get   CL   phone   come(.)]

[Get the phone here.]

676   **Santino:**   [唔好　　講　　　啦(.)　　電話(.)]

[Don't   talk   SFP(.)   phone(.)]

[Don't talk any more. Phone.]

677   [pointing to the phone]

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[77] Pierce is talking to camera crew.

678		開	埋(.)	speaker(.)	等	我	都	聽倒(.)
		Turn on	VTIP(.)	speaker(.)	so that	I	also	can-hear(.)

Turn on the speaker so that I can hear.

679 **Bonnie**:   [calling Roxwell]

In (151), there are many impositions threatening Bonnie's equity rights, all being instances of context-driven implicational impoliteness – unmarked behaviour. First, in lines 667-669 and 671, Santino instructs Bonnie how to cancel the date with Roxwell. When hearing the instruction, Bonnie's only reaction is to open her mouth slightly (line 670), which suggests her shock and unwillingness:

Figure 7.11: Bonnie opening her mouth slightly

(Broadcast in Episode 9 – 19th April, 2012)

Not only does Bonnie's reaction not stop the imposition, Pierce and Santino even make her comply immediately. In line 672, Pierce orders Bonnie, in the form of an imperative, to call Roxwell at once. The force of the order is not only exacerbated by its directness, but also the specification of the time – *now*. After that, Santino also performs several direct orders, telling Bonnie not to talk, but to get the phone, and to turn on the speaker so that he can hear (lines 674, 676 and 678). His pointing to the phone and then Bonnie

in line 673 and pointing to the phone in line 677 also add strength to the force of the imposition. Bonnie accepts the attacks on her equity rights and complies with Santino's and Pierce's orders (line 679).

Realisations of Bonnie's negative feelings towards what she has been imposed to do are not only confined to her non-verbal reactions, but also her retrospective comments, e.g.

(152)

680	**Bonnie:**	我	唔鍾意(.)		即係					
		I	dislike(.)		that's					
		That's, when I dislike								

681		用	呢	一	套(.)	去	計算	其他	人	嘅	時候(.)
		use	this	one	CL(.)	go	calculate	other	person	LP	when(.)
		being calculating to others like that…									

682		即係(.)	我	唔鍾意	去	計		你(.)
		That's(.)	I	dislike	go	calculate		you(.)
		That's, I dislike being calculating to you,						

683		亦都	唔會	想	你	去	計		我(.)
		also	not-would	want	you	go	calculate		me(.)
		and wouldn't want you to be calculating to me either.							

In this comment, she makes it explicit that she *dislikes* using the 'love strategy' taught by Santino in the meeting.

In (149)-(151), it is obvious that Santino uses impoliteness as a tool to devalue the way Bonnie maintains her relationships with her suitors (attacking her face), and to force her to obey his instructions (attacking her equity rights). In other words, he engages in coercive impoliteness. Owing to their asymmetrical power relationship, Bonnie's defensive counters only result in further attacks, and she has no choice but to obey him, despite her unwillingness. I think that what Santino seeks to achieve through impoliteness is twofold. First, he tries to construct his 'expert' identity, like the case of Simon Cowell in *Idol* (see Garcés-Conejos Blitvich *et al.*, 2013), and cannot accept any challenge to his authority. More crucially, his use of impoliteness also serves to foster traditional gender expectations. What he coerces Bonnie to do relates to the notion of *經持 (reserved),*[78] which is often used to refer to the way women should behave in relation to men. As briefly mentioned above, in traditional Chinese culture, women are expected to be restrained and reserved, and distance themselves a bit from men. By instructing Bonnie to praise her suitors strategically, Santino tries to make her attract men in a more reserved manner; by criticising her for asking Roxwell out on a date and forcing her to cancel it, he attempts to stop her from being too 'obtainable'.

As is clear from above, impoliteness here performs the discourse function of upholding traditional femininity. In (145)-(146), impoliteness is directly used to attack Bonnie's 'non-feminine' behaviours, namely not taking care of her appearance and her 'non-feminine' manner of talking. In (147)-(148), although the impolite exchange is triggered by Bonnie allegedly not being her real self, she is humiliated in terms of her physical attractiveness to men, which indirectly encourages her to judge herself based on traditional femininity. In (149)-(151), impoliteness is used to force Bonnie to be more reserved and not to be too 'obtainable' to men. The use of impoliteness towards

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[78] Santino refers to the notion twice on two occasions, but not in his conversations with Bonnie.

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Bonnie accords with how she is talked about in *Bride Wannabes*. As discussed in Chapter 5, the programme explicitly characterises Bonnie in terms of her 'non-feminine' traits and shapes negative views on her.

(b) Gobby

Gobby is apparently not the focus of the programme, but she is still involved in several impolite exchanges. As indicated in Chapters 5-6, the programme's representations of Gobby and her self-representations surround her appearance, her zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment, her (lack of) confidence, and (her negative attitude to) her miserable life. These are also the key components of the impolite exchanges targeting her.

Impoliteness can be identified even in Gobby's first encounter with Winnie (also Gobby's first interaction with an 'expert'), which is triggered by her appearance but also relates to her attitude to her miserable life and her lack of confidence. The impolite exchange takes place in Episode 1, as shown in (153). I also complement it with (154) in Episode 5, which includes Gobby's retrospective metapragmatic comment on (153) and a cut-in of how the impoliteness event begins, which has been edited out in (153).

Context: In (153), Gobby has her first meeting with Winnie. She relates her story of getting married and giving birth to a daughter at a young age and expresses her regret. She is crying throughout the conversation. In (154), Gobby retrospectively talks about this meeting.

(153)

[Gobby is crying and fixing her hair throughout the conversation.]

684	**Gobby**:	都	嬲	我自己	無聽	媽咪	話	㗎(.)
		Also	angry	myself	not-listen	Mum	word	SFP(.)

I'm angry with myself for not listening to Mum's words.

685	**Winnie**:	無聽	媽咪	話	關於:
		Not-listen	Mum	word	about:

You didn't listen to your mum's words about?

686	**Gobby**:	其實	好多	人(.)	就算(.)	即係
		Actually	many	people(.)	even(.)	that's

Actually, many people even, that's…

687		我(.)	就算	大咗肚(.)		其實
		I(.)	even	pregnant-PFV(.)		actually

Actually, even though I was pregnant,

688		我	媽咪	都	唔贊成(.)
		my	mum	still	disagree(.)

my mum still disagreed.

689		就	喂(.)	妳	有咗(.)
		At once	hey(.)	you	pregnant(.)

She said, 'Hey, you're pregnant.

690		妳	有無	諗	清楚(.)
		You	have-not-have	think	clearly(.)

Have you thought about it carefully?'

691   佢   寧願   妳(.)   落咗   佢(.)

She   would rather   you(.)   abort-PFV   her(.)

She'd rather you aborted it.

692 **Winnie**:   唔(.)

Um(.)

Um.

693 **Gobby**:   因為   佢   覺得(.)

Because   she   think(.)

Because she thought

694   妳   已經   讀唔成書   嘞(.)

you   already   study-not-succeed(.)   SFP(.)

you already couldn't accomplish a high level of education.

695   因為   佢   擺咗   好多   希望

Because   she   put-PFV   many   hope

Because she pinned lots of hopes

696   喺   我   身   上(.)

on   my   body   on(.)

on me.

697 **Winnie**:   唔(.)

Um(.)

Um.

佢   寧願   妳(.)   落咗   佢(.)

698　**Gobby**:　我　覺得　自己(4)　唔好　　　囉(.)

I　think　self (4)　not-good　SFP(.)

I think I'm not good.

699　**Winnie**:　唔(.)　唔(.)

Um(.)　Um(.)

Um, Um.

700　**Gobby**:　如果　可以　　俾　　我　　返轉頭(.)

If　can　give　me　go back(.)

If I were allowed to,

701　　　　　我　　真係　　好　　想　　　返轉頭　囉(.)

I　really　very　wish　go back　SFP(.)

I really wish very much that I could go back (and make a choice again).

702　**Winnie**:　即係(.)　妳　每一　日(.)　喺(.)　後悔　入邊(.)

That's(.)　you　every　day(.)　in(.)　regret　inside(.)

This means that every day, you live in regret

703　　　　　又　　喺　憤怒　　入邊(.)　跟住　又　　覺得　自己

and　in　anger　inside(.)　then　and　find　self

and anger, and then find yourself

704　　　　　好　　自卑(.)　　好　　自卑(.)

very　self-abased(.)　very　self-abased(.)

very self-abased, very self-abased

705 又 好 無自信(.)

and very unconfident(.)

and very unconfident.

706 又 覺得 自己 樣樣 都 唔得(.)

And find self CL-CL all not-good(.)

And you find yourself not good in any aspect.

707 咁(.) 咩 人 會 鍾意

Then(.) what person would like

Then what kind of person would like

708 同 妳 喺 一齊 呢(.)

with you in together SFP(.)

to be with you?

709 唔 搵 妳 笨[79] 嗰 個(.) 都 傻 啦(.)

Not find you fool that CL(.) all fool SFP(.)

Those who don't take advantage of you are fools,

710 係咪 呀(.)

be-not-be SFP(.)

aren't they?

711 **Gobby:** [crying more seriously]

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[79] *搵笨*, literally 'to find a fool', means to deceive or take advantage of someone because she/he is stupid.

(154)

712 **Gobby:** Winnie 啦(.) 其實 嗰 次 佢 傾偈 呢(.)

Winnie VTIP(.) actually that CL her talk SFP(.)

Actually, when talking with Winnie that time,

713 其實 佢(.) 佢 嗰 句 嘢 係(.) 好似

actually her(.) her that CL thing be(.) like

her…the sentence she uttered was actually like

714 一 拳(.) 打 入 我 嘅 心 嘅(.)

one fist(.) hit enter my LP heart SFP(.)

giving me a punch through my heart.

[A cut-in]

715 **Winnie:** 妳 成 個 人 係(.) 唔似

You whole CL person be(.) unlike

Your condition doesn't look like

716 三十 歲 囉 1(.) 個 狀態(.) 老啲 囉 1(.)

30 years old lo1(.) CL condition(.) older lo1(.)

a 30-year-old, but older.

717 妳 好 嬲 呀(.) 其實 嬲 啲 咩 呢(.)

You very angry SFP(.) actually angry CL what SFP(.)

Are you very angry? What are you actually angry with?

[End of the cut-in]

Since parts of the conversation have been edited out, I cannot trace what exactly triggers this impoliteness event; however, it is likely to be Gobby's appearance. It is because just before (153) is broadcast, Winnie comments in her solo slot that the bitterness of Gobby's life is very visible in her appearance. From what is broadcast about this event, Winnie's impoliteness also begins with a face-attack on, in her opinion, Gobby's ageing appearance. She explicitly comments that Gobby looks older than her age (lines 715-716), which is an insult in the form of a personalised negative assertion attacking Gobby's quality face. Significantly, she even makes this offensive remark in a sarcastic manner, as seen by her use of the sentence-final particle 囉1 (lo1) twice in the insult (line 716) (see Leung and Gibbons, 2009). She then further strengthens the force of the face-attack by ending her utterance with two post-intensifying interrogatives. The first one is a rhetorical question asking Gobby whether she is angry (line 717). At that time, Gobby is crying, and Winnie certainly knows the answer. Gobby does not respond to this question. Winnie then asks what Gobby is angry with to force her to reply (line 717). There is strong evidence that Gobby is seriously offended by this face-threatening utterance. She cries and fixes her hair throughout the conversation, which indicates her sadness and embarrassment. She later even gives a metapragmatic comment on the utterance and compares it to Winnie giving her a punch through her heart (lines 713-714). Despite the offence, Gobby responds to Winnie's second question and says that she is angry with herself for not listening to her mother's words (line 684). This response does not fall into any category proposed by Bousfield (2008). I think that her response is to shift the conversation topic from her appearance to her previous experience. This however leads to another face-attack.

The second face-attack is triggered by Gobby's negative life attitude. After successfully shifting the topic, Gobby tells her story of giving birth to her daughter at a

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young age and expresses her regret for not taking her mother's advice (lines 686-691, 693-696 and 700-701). In lines 702-706, Winnie summarises what Gobby has said. While this can potentially be something that a proper therapist says to her/his patient and functions as a pre-empathy sequence, it is here used to prepare the ground for her upcoming impoliteness, i.e. it is a pre-impoliteness sequence. Winnie then starts to attack Gobby's quality face by asking rhetorically what kind of person would like to be with her (lines 707-708), which falls into the category of form-driven implicational impoliteness. Clearly, Winnie does not expect an answer, so is flouting the Maxim of Relation. She is implying that nobody could love Gobby. After that, in line 709, there is another instance of form-driven implicational impoliteness attacking Gobby's quality face, but this time, the meaning is highly culturally embedded. Winnie draws on the colloquial Cantonese expression 搵笨, which is a 'verb-object compound' (see Matthews and Yip, 2011, p. 58-62), literally meaning 'to find a fool'. Idiomatically, it means deceiving or taking advantage of someone because she/he is stupid. By saying that those who do not take advantage of Gobby are fools, Winnie is violating the Maxim of Relation and implying that Gobby is very stupid insofar as everyone takes advantage of her. The face-attack ends with a question tag (line 710), which functions as an amplifier. In Cantonese, question tags tend to presuppose an affirmative answer (Matthews and Yip, 1994). In other words, Winnie presupposes Gobby's acceptance of being a fool who is easily deceived. Interestingly, this face-attack sounds a bit like a parent telling off his/her child, in which case, the impoliteness is neutralised by the parent-child relationship. In the present case, however, it is very face-threatening, especially in view of the meeting being Winnie and Gobby's first encounter. Gobby noticeably cries more seriously after this point (line 711).

Apart from what Winnie says to Gobby, what she does not do is also worthy of attention. As mentioned, Gobby cries throughout the conversation. It is quite marked that Winnie talks to her as if nothing happened. Under the situation, handing Gobby some tissues is probably the most basic gesture of sympathy. Winnie's lack of response is also criticised by a poster on the TVB forum:

(155)

718　見　　到　　Gobby　喊　　到

See　VTIP　Gobby　cry　VTIP

Seeing that Gobby is crying so seriously that

719　鼻涕　　都　差D　　流　　曬　出　　黎,

mucus　all　almost　fall　all　out　come

her mucus almost falls down,

720　紙巾　都　　唔遞　　　張　　比　　人,

tissue　still　not-hand　CL　give　person

Winnie doesn't even hand her a tissue.

721　基本　人　　性　　都　　無

basic　human　nature　even　not-have

She doesn't even have a basic human nature.

From the above comment, it is obvious that Winnie's lack of reaction to Gobby's crying is considered inappropriate and impolite. Therefore, I consider it an instance of implicational context-driven impoliteness – absence of behaviour.

Despite Winne's abusive remarks and Gobby's face-damage in the above conversation, Winnie might not mean to humiliate Gobby. Winnie is a life coach. In the meeting that the conversation takes place, Winnie is to listen to Gobby's story and see how she can help. Considering this situational context, her face-attacks can be interpreted as a rhetorical strategy that highlights and exaggerates Gobby's negative aspects and motivates her to change. Therefore, Winnie may use impoliteness to transform Gobby, like the case of military training (see Culpeper, 1996; Bousfield, 2008). In other words, it may be an instance of coercive impoliteness.

Following the above meeting, Winnie suggests that Gobby increase her self-confidence by improving her appearance, and hence brings her to a medical beauty centre, where Gobby suffers from various face-attacks on her appearance.

Context: In Episode 5, Winnie brings Gobby to a medical beauty centre. (156) is a conversation between Gobby, Winnie and Wing, the manager of operating theatres of medical specialities in the centre. Wing tells Gobby what the doctor has suggested that she improve.

(156)

722	**Wing:**	可能	做咗	牙	就	改善()	大概	可能	四十()
		Maybe	do-PFV	teeth	then	improve()	about	perhaps	40()

Maybe after having a treatment on her teeth, it'd improve by perhaps 40%.

723 對林小姐[80]嚟講(.) 　　　就 係 個 牙齒 囉(.)

As-far-as-Miss-Lam-is-concerned(.) all be CL teeth SFP(.)

As far as Miss Lam is concerned, the problem is her teeth,

724 因為 醫生 覺得(.)

because Doctor thinks(.)

because Doctor thinks that

725 可能 同 人 講嘢 溝通 嘅 時候(.)

perhaps with person talk communicate LP when(.)

perhaps when talking and communicating with others,

726 個 笑容(.) 或者 個 牙齒(.)

CL smile(.) or CL teeth(.)

our smile or teeth

727 第一 個 感覺(.) 　　係 最強 嘅(.)

first CL impression(.) be strongest SFP(.)

have the strongest influence on the first impression we give to others.

728 咁 第二 樣 嘢 就 係(.)

Then second CL thing then be(.)

Then the second thing is

---

[80] 林小姐 *(Miss Lam)* refers to Gobby.

729   佢　面　上　嘅　太陽穴(.)　同埋

her　face　on　LP　temple(.)　and

the temple and

730   呢　個　面頰　嘅　凹咗　　　嘅　位置(.)

this　CL　cheek　LP　hollow-PFV　LP　position(.)

and dimples on her cheeks.

731   因為(.)　佢　顴骨　　高　呀(.)

As(.)　her　cheekbone　high　SFP(.)

As her cheekbones are high,

732   咁　如果　有　呢　啲　凹位(.)

then　if　have　these　CL　dimple(.)

if there're such dimples,

733   感覺　俾　人　　會(8)

feeling　give　person　would(8)

it'll give others a feeling that

734   好似　　苦啲(.)　同埋　　慘啲(.)

like　　bitterer(.)　and　　poorer(.)

she's bitterer and poorer.

735 **Gobby:** [Frowning and looking a bit embarrassed]

736   其實   醫生(.)   講(.)   我   啲   牙   唔齊(.)

Actually   Doctor(.)   say(.)   my   CL   teeth   irregular(.)

Actually, Doctor said that my teeth are irregular

737   唔   靚(.)   其實   我   知   嘅(.)

not   pretty(.)   Actually   I   know   SFP(.)

and aren't pretty. Actually, I know it.

738   ar   我   唔會   大笑   囉(.)

VTIP   I   not-would   laugh   SFP(.)

I wouldn't laugh.

739   知道   自己   牙   唔齊(.)

know   self   teeth   irregular(.)

I know that my teeth are irregular.

740   總之   我   唔會   露齒笑   囉(.)

Briefly   I   not-would   grin   SFP(.)

Briefly, I wouldn't grin,

741   或者   掁住   嘴   笑(.)

or   cover-CONT   mouth   laugh(.)

or alternatively, I cover my mouth when laughing

742   或者   微笑   囉(.)

or   smile   SFP(.)

or just smiling.

743	**Winnie:**	妳	真係(.)	天真(.)			
		You	really(.)	naïve(.)			

You are really naïve.

744		都	會	見	倒	㗎	嘛(.)
		still	would	see	VTIP	SFP	SFP(.)

They can still be seen.

The onset of (156) is triggered by Gobby's irregular teeth and the dimples on her cheeks. Wing has probably said something about Gobby's teeth prior to line 722, which has been edited out. This is realised by Gobby's reference to the doctor's comment that her teeth are irregular and not pretty in line 736-737. This negative remark on Gobby's teeth does not exist in Wing's utterance in lines 722-727. Wing then talks about the dimples on Gobby's cheeks, which she attributes to making Gobby look bitterer and poorer (lines 728-734), which is an insult in the form of a personalised negative assertion attacking her quality face. Although what Wing says seems to be a normalised practice in medical beauty centres, it leads to Gobby's embarrassment (line 735), as shown by her frown in the picture below:

Figure 7.12: Gobby frowning

Despite her embarrassment, Gobby accepts the attack by agreeing that her teeth are irregular and not pretty and describes how she hides her teeth (lines 736-742), which triggers a face-attack by Winnie. Winnie comments that Gobbby is naïve (line 743), which is an instance of condescension attacking her quality face. An interesting point about this impolite exchange is the discourse role of Wing as a spokesperson. As shown above, she is not the one behind the face-attacks, but the doctor is.

Right after the conversation between Wing, Gobby and Winnie, the screen shifts to the aforesaid doctor attacking Gobby's appearance, while she is lying on a dental chair in an operating theatre.

Context: (157) takes place in an operating theatre, where Gobby is about to receive a zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment. The doctor talks to Gobby when she is having different devices in her mouth.

(157)

745 **Doctor:** 我　睔　就(.)　妳　就　唔係　好　美觀　嘞 3(.)

I　see　just(.)　you　just　not-be　very　nice　laak3(.)

I see you just don't look very nice.

746 可以　咁　講(.)

Can　so　say(.)

I can say that

747 [in a rising intonation which sounds like talking to a child]

748 啲　牙　好　唔　美觀　呀 3(.)　咁　即係(.)

CL　teeth　very　not　nice　aa3(.)　then　that's(.)

your teeth look bad. Then that's

749 如果　係(.)　將　佢　改　返　ar　齊　返(.)

if　be(.)　put　them　fix　back　um　even　back(.)

if you have them reshaped,

750 可以　咁　講　啦　咁(.)

can　so　say　SFP　then(.)

I can say that then

751 妳　睔　落去　就　會(.)　即係(.)

you　look　continue　then　would(.)　that's(.)

you'll look, that's,

413

752	個	人	舒服	好多(.)	靚	好多(.)
	CL	person	comfortable	much more(.)	pretty	much more(.)

much more comfortable and much prettier.

753 **Gobby:** [silence]

As is the case in (156), what triggers the impoliteness event in (157) is Gobby's irregular teeth. The doctor starts by saying that Gobby *唔係好美觀 (does not look very nice)* (line 745), and using the sentence-final particle *嘞3 (laak3)* to highlight the present relevance of his comment (see Matthews and Yip, 2011), which is an insult in the form of a personalised negative assertion attacking Gobby's quality face. His use of the adjective *美觀* is highly marked. It is not completely equivalent to 'nice' in English, as it is normally used to describe objects. There are two readings of this usage: it might be a mistake, or he uses it intentionally to boost the force of his insult. The doctor immediately repeats a similar insult in line 748, but this time, instead of *唔係好美觀 (does not look very nice)*, he uses a more forceful term *好唔美觀* (literally *very not nice*). The force of the insult is even further exacerbated by his use of the sentence-final particle *呀3 (aa3)* (line 748), which serves an emphatic function (see Cheung, 2007). Significantly, he utters it in a rising intonation which sounds like talking to a child. Therefore, it is not only an insult in the form of a personalised negative assertion, but also condescension. The face-threat of this insult and condescension is very strong. As well as the use of the forceful expression *好唔美觀* (*very not nice*) and the emphatic marker *呀3 (aa3)*, the repetition itself and the combination of the two impoliteness formulae also strengthen the force of the face-threat (see Bousfield, 2008). After considering the very strong force of the face-threat in the second insult, I am inclined

to take the reading that the adjective 美觀 *(nice)* in line 745 is intentionally used to objectify Gobby, although in the second usage, it is unmarkedly used to modify Gobby's teeth. Another noteworthy point about this conversation is the timing of the face-attacks. The doctor insults Gobby when she is lying on a dental chair and having different devices in her mouth. In other words, she is deprived of the chance to respond to the face-attacks. As mentioned above, before this conversation, the doctor already attacked Gobby's appearance through Wing (see (156)). He could also do this before putting all those devices into Gobby's mouth. Therefore, I think that he probably takes advantage of this opportunity to humiliate Gobby. Since Gobby is wearing safety glasses at that time, her facial expressions can hardly be seen. However, in view of her expression of embarrassment in (156), when the face-threat is much weaker, she is likely to take offence at the doctor's repeated insults.

The impolite exchanges in (156) and (157) are both transactionally oriented, i.e. communicating to get things done. In beauty centres, it appears to be a common practice to attack clients' appearance so as to promote various treatments to them, so such face-attacks are to a certain extent normalised. In (156), the doctor, through Wing, problematises Gobby's appearance in order to convince her to receive a zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment. In (157), he once again criticises her appearance for the sake of promotion. It is because the more she finds her pre-treatment self problematic, the more she may appreciate her post-treatment self. Thus, both (156) and (157) are instances of coercive impoliteness.

The above analysis shows that the 'experts' use impoliteness to transform Gobby in terms of her self-confidence and appearance. Importantly, all the aforementioned impolite exchanges are closely linked. Winnie attacks Gobby's negative life attitude, and to a lesser extent her appearance, in order to motivate her to

change. She then suggests Gobby enhance her self-confidence by improving her appearance, and brings her to a medical beauty centre. The doctor in the centre attacks Gobby's irregular teeth and the dimples on her cheeks, and persuades her to have a zygomatic implant and contouring treatment. The programme obviously links physical beauty to confidence, and accentuates the post-feminist idea that beauty is about pleasing oneself. It is quite liable to be advertising for the centre, which is also supported by the findings discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

7.2.2. Uneven distribution of impolite exchanges

After reporting how Bonnie and Gobby are talked to impolitely, I now address the phenomenon of the uneven distribution of impolite exchanges among the participants. While most impolite exchanges identified involve Bonnie, and to lesser extent, Gobby, none involves Mandy or Suki. One possible reason is that Mandy and Suki quit in Episode 6. There are only two conversations between Mandy and the 'experts'.[81] Crucially, Mandy is never made to see any visagiste or image consultant, or go to any medical beauty centre or salon, which is very different from all other participants' cases. In other words, she is not exposed to an environment where FTAs are normalised. There has been doubt whether Mandy is a real participant as it has been revealed that she is a close friend of the playwright-director (see Apple Daily, 13th April, 2012), which might be why she is not humiliated in the programme. In Suki's case, she has three conversations with the 'experts', with two involving FTAs. One takes place in a medical beauty centre, where the doctor points out what she considers defects in her face and suggests some treatments – quite a standard way of talk in such a context. While Suki's

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[81] In one of the conversations, Mei-Ling, a dating agent, discusses with her and Florence what type of men they are looking for; in the other, Y.C. Tsao, a clinical psychologist, asks her to do an Enneagram of Personality test and then discusses the results with her.

response is not broadcast, she does not show any non-verbal reaction of unhappiness or embarrassment. In the other conversation, Queenie, a 'beauty expert', is commenting on Suki's appearance:

(158)

754 **Queenie:** 我　覺得　Suki　妳(.)　　最大　　嘅　優　點

I　think　Suki　your(.)　biggest　LP　good　point

I think, Suki, your strongest point

755 就　　　　係(.)　　眼　　囉(.)

precisely　be(.)　　eye　SFP(.)

is precisely your eyes,

756 但係(.)　妳　　唔好　介意　　我　　講(.)

but　　　you　　don't　mind　　me　　say(.)

but please don't mind me saying.

757 我　覺得(.)　如果　妳　　可以　ar(.)

I　think(.)　if　　you　could　um(.)

I think what you could um

758 改善　　　少少　　　嘅

improve　　a-little-bit　LP

improve a little bit

759		就	係(.)	皮膚	方面	嘅(.)
		precisely	be(.)	skin	aspect	SFP(.)

is precisely your skin.

Although (158) involves an FTA, Queenie noticeably tries to mitigate the force of the threat, e.g. giving praise beforehand and being indirect. That is to say, Queenie is performing an FTA *politely*. There are several possible reasons why Suki is barely talked to impolitely. First, she is the only participant who could find a boyfriend in the show and represents a success story. Second, she is characterised as a very 'feminine' woman, and embodies the kind of woman that the programme approves of. Owing to different reasons, Mandy and Suki are not targeted for impoliteness in the programme. Their exemption from impoliteness might have been agreed before the programme started.

Only a couple of impolite exchanges involving Florence have been identified in the data. I was surprised at this finding at the beginning because as discussed in Chapter 5, she is one of the major foci of the programme, and different traits of her are represented as undesirable for men. I would expect at least some impolite exchanges involving her, especially considering the many strong disagreements between Florence and Mei-Ling, a dating agent, as realised by Mei-Ling's repeated criticisms against Florence's 'pickiness' and idealistic attitude to love (see Chapter 5), and Florence's resistant stance to Mei-Ling's value positions in her self-representations (see Chapter 6). I think that Florence is humiliated, like Bonnie and Gobby, but the relevant conversations might have been excluded deliberately. This is supported by the many traces of FTAs on her. For example, in Episode 7, Louisa, the compere, gives the following narration:

(159)

760	**Louisa:**	Mei-Ling(.)	叫	佢	執	靚	個	樣(.)
		Mei-Ling(.)	ask	her	fix	pretty	CL	appearance(.)

Mei-Ling asks her to fix her appearance

761		先	去	相睇(.)
		before	go	matchmaking(.)

before going to a matchmaking activity,

762		佢	又	堅持	以	真	面目	示	人(.)
		she	but	insist	with	real	face	show	others(.)

but she insists on showing others her real face.

In lines 760-761, Mei-Ling asks Florence to fix her appearance before going to a matchmaking activity. This is an FTA, as it not only involves an imposition, but also a presupposition that Florence is not pretty. Below is another example:

(160)

763	**Louisa:**	謝醫生(.)	建議	佢(.)	做	啲	微整形療程(.)
		Dr-Tse(.)	suggest	she(.)	do	some	micro-plastic-surgery(.)

Dr Tse suggests she do some micro-plastic surgery

764		令(.)	自己	後生啲(.)
		make(.)	self	younger(.)

to make herself younger,

765	但係(.)	Florence(.)	一	口	拒絕(.)
	but(.)	Florence(.)	one	month	refuses(.)

but Florence refuses immediately.

Dr Tse's suggestion presupposes that Florence does not look young and needs micro-plastic surgery, and is again an FTA. A possible reason for the exclusion of impolite exchanges involving Florence is that she could stand up to the face-attacks, and impoliteness often cannot achieve its desired results in her case. Take (159) and (160) as illustrations. Florence has strong agency: despite being imposed upon by Mei-Ling and Dr Tse, she refuses to comply. Throughout the programme, she is not very 'co-operative' with the 'experts' and is often considered arrogant and hard to deal with. Since in many cases, the 'experts' fail to humiliate her with impoliteness, those exchanges are excluded, or only snapshots of them are broadcast, so as to avoid showing how the 'experts' lose their power in conversations. While Florence's voice can still be heard, it is often in the form of solo talk. In this case, the 'experts' still have a chance to attack her points in their solo talk (see Chapter 5).

Most impolite exchanges target Bonnie, and they are noticeably longer than those targeting Gobby. A major reason is that Bonnie does not fulfil, and sometimes even resists, traditional gender expectations, whereas Gobby's value position is often in agreement with that of the programme (see Chapter 6). It is also perhaps because Bonnie does not have strong agency like Florence; neither does she accept all face-threats without questioning, like Gobby. As shown in the above analysis, Bonnie often gives defensive counters to face-threats, but each time she submits to the 'experts' in the end. Impoliteness seems to 'work well' in her case. For one thing, the 'experts' can always 'win' in the end and construct their power; for another, her defences provide them with

more chances to further attack her and with stronger force. Bonnie hence makes a good victim for public humiliation and is in the spotlight.

7.2.3. Discussion

In this last sub-section, I synthesise my data analysis findings and relate them to RQ3:

> RQ3. How are unmarried women talked to in terms of impoliteness in *Bride Wannabes*?

In particular, I focus on the functions of impoliteness in the programme's representations of the participants.

I argue that impoliteness serves different functions in the programme. The first is the function that impoliteness serves in conversations between the 'experts' and the participants. The data analysis shows that impoliteness only characterises the conversations between the 'experts' and Bonnie, and to a lesser extent, those between the 'experts' and Gobby; in such cases, impoliteness seems to be institutionalised, with many examples falling into institutionalised mortification. Like other makeover programmes, *Bride Wannabes* is all about change. At the beginning of the programme, Louisa, the compere, explicitly states that the 'experts' are there to transform the participants, so that they can find a partner. Impoliteness becomes an important tool for the 'experts' to transform the participants, at least in Bonnie's and Gobby's cases. As shown in the impolite exchanges discussed above, impoliteness is primarily used for coercive purposes. In many cases, the 'experts' try to transform Bonnie and Gobby in a way which resembles military training to a certain extent (see (146)-(151) and (153)-(154)). Since the 'experts' enjoy the institutionalised power to transform them through humiliation, and are represented as helping and benefiting them, their impoliteness is sanctioned (see Culpeper, 2005). This renders it difficult for the participants to defend

themselves in face-attacks. As in Bonnie's cases, she often tries to counter face-attacks defensively, but it only leads to more face-attacks. In the end, she has no choice but to submit.

While the 'experts' undoubtedly use impoliteness for the sake of transforming Bonnie and Gobby, I am suspicious whether they may not have other motives. My suspicion arises from the fact that many of the 'experts' run/work in commercial organisations that make profits through promoting consumerist femininity or offering 'scientific' approaches to gender relationships. I illustrate this point with the 'experts' that appear in the above impolite exchanges. Jamie is a stylist (see (145)); Winnie is not only a life coach, but also a beauty columnist and blogger (see e.g. (146)-(148)); Wing and the doctor work in a medical beauty centre (see (156)-(157)); Santino is a 'love expert' teaching people about gender relationships and how to communicate effectively with suitors based on principles of psychology, communication studies and clinical hypnosis (see (149)-(151)). They might take advantage of their institutionalised power to humiliate Bonnie and Gobby, and force them to change, so that they can demonstrate to the audience in what way they can 'help' them find a partner. If interpreted this way, their use of impoliteness also falls into institutional exploitation. To put it another way, they exploit Bonnie and Gobby for advertising purposes. While this is a possible interpretation, I do not know for certain their real intentions and cannot rule out the possibility that they believe what they do is beneficial to Bonnie and Gobby.

The last function of impoliteness in the programme goes beyond the conversation level to the level of representations, more specifically, how the programme represents the use of impoliteness by the 'experts' towards the participants, and what functions such representations serve. Despite being a reality television show, *Bride Wannabes* is a media construct, and it is also under the programme director's control

whether to include a particular impolite exchange, and if so, whether to broadcast it in its entirety or just fragments of it. A manifestation of the programme director's intervention is the highly uneven distribution of impolite exchanges among different participants. As mentioned, impoliteness only features the 'experts'' conversations with Bonnie and those with Gobby. While it is probably the 'experts' who do not target Suki or Mandy for impoliteness, it is apparently the programme director's deliberate exclusion of impolite exchanges involving Florence, who could always stand up to the attacks by the 'experts'. As regards Bonnie's and Gobby's cases, although they both suffer from impoliteness by the 'experts', the functions of including their respective impolite exchanges differ. By representing how the 'experts' offensively disapprove of Bonnie's 'non-feminine' behaviours and force her to change, the programme upholds traditional femininity – women should take care of their appearance, talk in a 'feminine' manner, see themselves based on traditional femininity, and be reserved and modest in relation to men. By representing how the 'experts' humiliatingly problematise Gobby's low self-esteem and appearance, the programme disseminates the message that beauty is about pleasing oneself, probably for the sake of advertising for the medical beauty centre concerned. As discussed previously, the use of impoliteness in other conversations might also serve advertising purposes, but in those cases, it is the 'experts' themselves who try to promote their product/service. In Gobby's case, the programme gives prominence to the treatment that she has in the medical beauty centre, as reflected by the recurrent references to the treatment and her post-treatment self (see Chapter 5). It is suspicious whether the television station is advertising for the centre through the product placement strategy. As shown above, the programme clearly seeks to make use of the discourse functions of impoliteness to achieve different ends by exploiting Bonnie and Gobby. The kind of exploitation I refer to is not as direct as Culpeper's

(2011) discussion of institutional exploitation, which concerns institutions promoting activities to humiliate individuals for entertainment purposes. In the present case, it is not the impoliteness producer's humiliation that constitutes the exploitation, but the programme's representations of such humiliation; besides, the impoliteness serves coercive purposes to a greater degree than entertainment ones. More specifically, the programme exploits Bonnie and Gobby by broadcasting how they are humiliated and suffer from face loss, in an attempt to foster traditional gender expectations and promote the medical beauty centre concerned.

In conclusion, *Bride Wannabes* is very much an exploitative show that uses targeted impoliteness, up to the point of bullying and abuse, to foster traditional gender expectations on the one hand, and to gain commercial benefits on the other. Although the 'experts' are there to transform the participants and do them good, and their impoliteness is sanctioned, they, who run or work in various commercial organisations, possibly use the chance to showcase what they can do to help women find a partner. At the level of representations, impoliteness serves as a controlling mechanism to keep up a heteronormative order in Bonnie's case, and functions to link appearance to self-confidence for the sake of advertising for the medical beauty centre concerned in Gobby's case.

Chapter 8: Discourses and ideologies in relation to unmarried women

This chapter will link the micro-level of textual analysis findings discussed in Chapters 5-7 to the social macro-level. First, I summarise the major findings. I then move on to discuss some discourses surrounding unmarried women that I have identified based on those findings, and some gender ideologies expressed therein. Last, I explicate the findings in relation to the relevant social contexts in Hong Kong.

8.1. Summary of major findings

This research has been undertaken with the primary purpose of unveiling ideologies through which unmarried women are stigmatised and how the media helps reproduce unequal gender orders. Informed by feminist theories, especially Gill's theorisation of postfeminist media culture (2007a, b), and CDS, especially van Dijk's sociocognitive approach to ideology (1998a), I explored representations of unmarried women in the Hong Kong makeover series *Bride Wannabes*, in which five single women look for a partner under some 'experts'' guidance.

In Chapter 5, I examined how unmarried women are talked about in relation to how they are referred to and the types of actions involving them using van Leeuwen's social actor framework (2008) and the transitivity system in SFG (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014), respectively. I found that the programme characterises the participants as different types of women and relates their traits to their marriageability. Suki, the only participant who could find a boyfriend in the show, is represented as a 'hyper-feminine' woman and a success story, which is done by highlighting her petiteness, 'feminine' traits and attractiveness to men, and metaphorically representing

her as winning the battle and as the only one reaching the finishing line. Unlike Suki, the other participants are problematised based on traditional femininity in different ways and represented as undesirable for men. Bonnie is characterised as a 'tomboy' and a social misfit. The show foregrounds her 'non-feminine' traits and constructs the need for her to change by representing her as ignorant and as involved in various learning, teaching and transformation activities. Some 'experts' also represent her as not fitting into the normative definition of femininity in Hong Kong and link this to her background as a returnee from Australia. Florence, the oldest participant, is characterised as a 'leftover woman'. She is represented in terms of different features surrounding this stereotypical identity including her age, educational background and 'pickiness'. Her idealistic attitude to love and strong personality are also constructed as an obstacle to her finding a boyfriend. Gobby is characterised as a miserable and unconfident divorcee, especially in earlier episodes. She is later made to undergo a zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment with the stated purpose of boosting her confidence, and is recurrently represented in relation to the treatment. It is suspicious that the broadcaster is explicitly advertising the beauty centre concerned. Lastly, Mandy is characterised as a career woman, with the 'experts' suggesting her capability as what makes her hard to deal with and undesirable for men.

In Chapter 6, I drew on Martin and White's appraisal framework (2005) to investigate how unmarried women talk about themselves in terms of self-appraisals. The analysis showed that the participants employ different kinds of appraisals to talk about different aspects of themselves. Suki and Gobby clearly embrace traditional femininity. Suki's self-representations surround her 'womanly' goal of marriage and are dominated by negative emotions directed at her uncertain marriage prospects after being jilted by her ex-boyfriend at the age of 28. Gobby's self-representations are

featured by her self-problematisation based on traditional gender expectations. She negatively evaluates her past behaviours and background, e.g. her early motherhood and divorce, and expresses negative feelings and mental states, e.g. regret and a lack of confidence. Nevertheless, she points to her increased confidence owing to her transformed appearance following the aforesaid cosmetic treatment. Unlike Suki and Gobby, Florence and Mandy assume a resistant stance to traditional gender expectations. Florence's self-representations mainly rely on engagement resources. She defines love in terms of feeling and sensibility and invalidates value positions that women should have hardly any requirement for their partner when they reach a certain age, that women should beautify themselves to attract men, and that women love wealthy men. Mandy employs both attitudinal and engagement resources to oppose traditional gender roles. She appreciates her present single life as balanced and 'very okay' and articulates her satisfaction with it. She also uses various engagement resources, especially denials, to challenge value positions that love is women's everything and that women have to choose between career and romance. Lastly, Bonnie does not hold a consistent stance to traditional femininity. She makes both attitudinal and engagement appraisals and oscillates between negatively evaluating herself through the lens of traditional gender expectations and resisting such expectations. Her self-representations very much focus on *others*. She contrasts how she sees herself and how she might be seen by men, and negatively evaluates herself in comparison with her fellow women in different activities. She also distances herself from stereotypes surrounding women like her.

In Chapter 7, I examined how unmarried women are talked to in terms of impoliteness using Culpeper's impoliteness model (2011), supplemented by that of Bousfield (2007, 2008) and Culpeper *et al.* (2003). The analysis indicated that impolite exchanges are unevenly distributed among the participants. Suki and Mandy are clearly

not targeted for impoliteness. The programme also seems to deliberately exclude impolite exchanges involving Florence, as evidenced by many traces of face-attacks on her, probably because she can always stand up to humiliation by the 'experts'. All impolite exchanges identified involve either Bonnie or Gobby. Bonnie suffers a number of attacks on her face and equity rights triggered by and/or in relation to her 'non-feminine' behaviours. While she repeatedly tries to counter the attacks defensively, this only leads to further attacks until she finally submits. As regards Gobby, at the beginning of the show, she is humiliated by Winnie, a life coach, in relation to her perceived ageing appearance and lack of confidence, which constitutes a prelude for Winnie to later bring her to a beauty centre to have the above-mentioned zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment to enhance her confidence. In the centre, Gobby is further insulted in terms of her appearance by the staff in order to persuade her to have the treatment. It is obvious that impoliteness is only used by the 'experts' to transform the participants and as such is sanctioned. However, considering the 'experts'' commercial backgrounds, they possibly take advantage of the air time to showcase how they can help single women find a partner. At the level of representations, the programme is exploitative in that it strategically includes only impolite exchanges leading to the participant's submission. Impoliteness serves as a controlling mechanism to foster traditional gender expectations in Bonnie's case, and functions to link appearance to self-confidence for the sake of advertising the beauty centre concerned in Gobby's case.

Following this summary of my data analysis findings, the next section will proceed to a discussion of some discourses surrounding unmarried women identified in such findings.

8.2. Discourses surrounding unmarried women

This section addresses the following research question:

> RQ4. What discourses surrounding unmarried women can be identified when they are talked about, when they talk about themselves and when they are talked to?

The analysis shows that five main discourses are manifested in the representations of the five participants in *Bride Wannabes*: (1) a traditional discourse on femininity; (2) a traditional discourse on women's singleness; (3) a postfeminist discourse on femininity; (4) a postfeminist discourse on women's singleness; and (4) an ageist discourse on unmarried women. Koller (2014a) suggests that in order to identify ideology in discourse, it is necessary to analyse a discourse in relation to its discourse goals, discourse strategies and linguistic features (see Chapter 2). In what follows, I will discuss the discourse goals of the above-mentioned discourses, and explain how they are pursued via the discourse strategies of social actor representations, process types and participant roles, as well as impoliteness, and the linguistic features described in Chapters 5-7.

8.2.1. Traditional discourse on femininity

The traditional discourse on femininity plays a dominant role in the representations of the five participants in *Bride Wannabes*. To begin with, I will discuss how the programme expresses the discourse, and organise my discussion around how different aspects of traditional femininity are reinforced via the discourse. I will then describe how the participants draw on the discourse differently in their self-representations. This structure will be followed in the discussion of the other four discourses.

The programme draws on the traditional discourse on femininity with the main discourse goal of in-group favouritism and out-group derogation based on traditional gender expectations. First, it reinforces a binary view of female 'masculinity' and 'femininity', which is achieved through the negative representations of Bonnie and positive representations of Suki. Bonnie is characterised as a 'masculine' woman. In terms of social actor representations, she is referred to as 男仔頭 *(tomboy)* and her 'masculine' traits are also foregrounded in different references to her, e.g. her perceived coarseness and crudeness, her fraternal righteousness and her talkativeness. Similarly, she is also linked to various 'non-feminine' traits, e.g. inelegant and crude, through relational processes. Besides, impoliteness is used to humiliate Bonnie with regard to her 'non-feminine' behaviours. For example, she suffers a long list of face-attacks because of her 'non-feminine' manner of talking and her unreserved manner to her suitors in a matchmaking event. The programme also shapes negative views on her 'non-feminine' traits by showing men's lack of her interest in her through emotive mental processes. In contrast, Suki is positively characterised as a 'hyper-feminine' woman. In terms of social actor representations, Louisa, the compere, draws on a range of positively evaluative markers which are almost exclusively used for women to depict Suki's petiteness and appearance via physical identification, e.g. 嬌小玲瓏 *(delicate, tiny and exquisite)*, 嬌滴滴 *(delicately pretty)* and 小鳥依人 *(the type of tender and lovely woman, just like a little bird lying against a person)*. Such terms not only highlight Suki's petiteness, but also her dependence, and imply that she needs to be protected. Suki is therefore represented as the embodiment of traditional, subordinate femininity. Different process types are also used to achieve the discourse goal of positively representing Suki as a popular type of woman for men. For example, she is represented as being liked and welcomed by men through mental processes, and being

talked to by various suitors through verbal processes. All such representations reflect that the programme represents Bonnie and Suki from a largely stereotypical view of femininity and judges them according to the narrow lens of traditional femininity.

The traditional discourse on femininity is also articulated through the evaluative representations of the participants based on the traditional norm that prioritises appearance in women and diminishes their intellectual capability and career attainment. There is a Chinese idiom *郎才女貌 (men's talent and women's beauty)*, which describes what is considered a compatible couple in traditional Chinese culture. This belief still seems to hold today. As Lee and Collins (2008) suggested, in Hong Kong, women are still often judged in terms of their appearance, rather than their capability. Zheng (2015) even found that many matchmaking companies in Guangzhou, China still stuck to the 'men's talent and women's appearance' principle.

Bride Wannabes emphasises women's beauty and physical attractiveness. As mentioned, Suki is positively represented in term of her petiteness and appearance via physical identification and as attractive to men via mental and verbal processes. In contrast, both Bonnie and Florence are derogated in relation to their appearance. For example, Winnie, a life coach, insults Bonnie's appearance and body shape as unattractive to men in the wake of Bonnie failing to read a script in the way desired. The programme also directs viewers to seeing Florence's appearance as unappealing to men through Johnny's, a suitor's, ruthless comment on her. Johnny makes use of a long list of relational processes to criticise Florence's appearance and physical attractiveness, e.g. her body shape, dress style and hair. Significantly, his comment re-appears as a cut-in in the 'experts'' concluding remarks of the five participants' performance in the last episode.

Mandy is the only participant who is not represented in terms of her appearance, yet her intellectual capability and career attainment are diminished. In traditional Chinese society, as in many other societies, women were confined to the domestic sphere, and their intellectual talent was not appreciated, as reflected in the well-known Chinese saying 女子無才便是德 *(the virtue of a woman lies in her lack of talent)* (To, 2015, p. 50). This saying obviously no longer applies to today's Hong Kong, but the idea is still traceable in the negative representations of Mandy. Through social actor representations, Louisa characterises her as a successful career woman. Despite receiving little attention in the programme, she is directly referred to as a 事業型女性 *(career woman)* five times. She is also positively appraised in terms of her professional performance, e.g. 叻 *(capable)* and 硬淨 *(tough)*. Different 'experts', nonetheless, direct viewers to seeing Mandy's intellectual capability and career achievement negatively in their discussion about the participants' performance. Winnie draws on a relational process to ascribe to Mandy the attribute 太辛苦 *(too difficult to deal with)*. Some other 'experts' also directly contrast Mandy with Suki, who is represented as a desirable woman for men because of her incapability. In other words, Mandy's capability and career success are problematised as rendering her undesirable for men. The programme apparently shapes negative opinions on women's career attainment and claims that women's (in)capability makes them more or less marriageable.

Another aspect underpinning the traditional discourse on femininity is the superiority of men and subordination of women in a couple, which is closely linked to the prioritisation of women's appearance and downplay of their intelligence and career attainment, as discussed above. In the days when arranged marriages were still prevalent, the most significant marital criterion was the two families' comparable socio-economic status, but the man's family background should always be better (see To, 2015; Ting,

2014). In Hong Kong, following drastic social changes over the past decades, e.g. the disappearance of arranged marriages and women's improving social status, the male superiority norm has transformed to a more individual level. This can be realised e.g. by Ting and Lam's (2012) finding that most of their married women informants earned less than their husbands, and by Choi *et al.*'s (2012) finding that most of their men informants saw their wife as a competitor and their self-esteem would be adversely affected if their wife had a higher salary (see Chapter 1). In *Bride Wannabes*, the traditional discourse on femininity concerning the norm of male superiority is expressed not only in terms of socio-economic status, but also other 'masculine' sites, e.g. career achievement and heroic traits. A manifestation is the negative representation of Mandy's career accomplishments and capability and the positive representation of Suki's perceived incapability, as discussed above. Mandy's career success and capability are problematised as what makes her too hard to deal with for men; conversely, Suki's perceived incapability is glorified as what makes her desirable for men. To put it another way, with Mandy, men might find it difficult to maintain their superiority, whereas Suki poses no threat to them whatsoever. Such representations of Mandy and Suki imply that men prefer less capable women as they are easier to control.

The traditional discourse on femininity concerning the male superiority norm can also be identified in the negative representations of Bonnie. Bonnie's 義氣 *(fraternal righteousness)* is foregrounded in the social actor representations of her. More concretely, her strong inclination to protect and take care of others is highlighted. The programme shapes negative views on this 'masculine' trait through different 'experts'' comments. For example, Queenie, a beauty blogger, tellingly advises Bonnie not to give herself so many missions to help and protect others; Queenie then says that she can feel the 'feminine' side of Bonnie that thirsts for men's protection and advises

her to release her 'feminine' self. Queenie's advice suggests that it should be men who play the 'hero' role, and women should be the one to be protected. She clearly reinforces the norm of men's superiority and women's subordination.

The traditional discourse on femininity is also manifested in a set of derogatory representations of Bonnie and Florence according to the traditional norm of proper womanhood. A crucial aspect governed by the norm is the way women should talk. In ancient China, it was a virtue for women not to talk; even when they did, they were supposed to talk gently. Despite the existence of similar ideas in other cultures (see Sunderland, 2007; Safdar and Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2015), women talking seemed particularly unacceptable in ancient China. This is realised in Confucian teachings, which list 婦言 *(meekness)* as one of the four virtues that women should have (see Section 1.2). Women talking are problematised insofar as 口多言 (literally *speaking too much*; interpreted by Hinsch (2007) as 'loquaciousness' (p. 402) and by Kung *et al.* (2004) as 'gossip' (p. 35)) is proposed as one of the seven legitimate reasons for a man to divorce his wife in Confucian divorce regulations. The reason given for silencing women is to maintain the benefits and harmony of the (extended) family (Lee, 2013). This seemingly old-fashioned idea is still traceable in *Bride Wannabes*. First, Florence transgresses the Confucian teachings by her outspokenness. She often voices her disagreements with the 'experts', and refuses to follow their advice. The programme pursues its goal of derogating Florence's outspokenness via social actor representations and process types. She is appraised as having a strong personality in various references to her, e.g. 性格巨星 *Florence (personality superstar Florence)*. This quality of hers is also highlighted through the use of different process types. For example, she is represented as the carrier of the attribute of having a strong personality in four relational processes, and as the sayer of seven verbal processes with strong agency, e.g. insisting

and refusing. She is therefore evaluated as stubborn, cheeky, arrogant and hard to deal with. Unlike Florence, what is problematised in Bonnie is her talkativeness. First, this is done through the use of verbal processes, which instead of projecting what Bonnie said, targets her talking manner. For example, she is represented as talking too much and her way of talking is described as *吱吱喳喳 (chattering noisily)*, an onomatopoeic expression of birds chirping. Apart from verbal processes, impoliteness is also employed to achieve the discourse goal of derogating Bonnie in terms of her talking manner. She is repeatedly insulted by two 'experts' because of her actively talking to her suitors in a matchmaking event. In that impolite exchange, her way of talking is again compared to a bird chirping noisily. Her talking manner is also evaluated negatively. She is insulted for not saying the right thing at the right place at the right time. The programme clearly directs the audience to seeing Florence's outspokenness and Bonnie's talkativeness as problematic.

Apart from talking manners, what is also expressed via the traditional discourse on femininity concerning proper womanhood relates to how women should behave in relation to men. More specifically, it surrounds the notion of *經持 (reserved)*, which requires women to be reserved and restrained, and to keep a measure of distance in relation to men. Bonnie is again the target for derogation. In the programme, Bonnie apparently does not conform to this traditional gender expectation. Impoliteness plays an important role in the derogation of Bonnie's unreserved manner towards men. As mentioned, following Bonnie actively talking to different suitors in a matchmaking event, she is repeatedly humiliated by two 'experts' for talking too much. Subsequently, one of the 'experts' even criticises her as 'cheap' because she made herself too 'obtainable' to the suitors. Another impolite exchange is also triggered by Bonnie's unreserved manner. After a date with Roxwell, a suitor, Bonnie asks him out on another

date. After knowing this, Santino, a 'love expert', immediately expresses his strong disapproval of Bonnie's behaviour and forces her to cancel the date. In addition, the problematisation of Bonnie's unreserved manner is also identifiable in Sam's, a suitor's, social actor reference to her with the derogatory label 'Kong girl'. He later explains that he finds Bonnie too active. Such representations indicate how the programme reinforces the traditional gender expectation of women's reserved manner towards men.

Following the discussion of the programme's polarised representations of Suki and the other participants through the traditional discourse on femininity, I will now proceed to how the discourse is drawn on by different participants, namely Bonnie and Florence. Their reactions are rather varied. As far as Bonnie is concerned, her stance is rather inconsistent. On the one hand, she articulates the discourse with the goal of self-derogation, particularly relating to the norm that prioritises women's appearance. She repeatedly problematises her appearance. For example, when talking about her inability to catch men's attention in a matchmaking event, she entertains three possible reasons: that she is not pretty, that she looks frightening and that she wears short hair, all being negative appreciations of reaction regarding her appearance. On the other hand, she also draws on the traditional discourse on femininity with the goal of resisting traditional femininity. She employs appraisals to negatively evaluate herself according to the essentialist view on 'masculinity' and 'femininity' as inherent traits. This is realised by her description of her brotherly bond with her male friends and the appraisal that men only like her as a friend, but not as a potential partner. She particularly focuses on one 'masculine' trait of hers: her strong inclination to help and protect the people around her, which is a realisation of the Confucian concept of 義 *(righteousness)* and its derivative 義氣 *(fraternal righteousness)*. She implicitly evaluates this as something men do not like in women despite it being a virtue, but insists that she will do what she

considers right and that her partner must accept this, which reflects her resistant stance to the essentialist view on 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. Furthermore, such self-appraisals also indicate her opposition to the male superiority norm, which only allows men to play the 'hero' role.

Unlike Bonnie, Florence refers to the discourse with the goal of utterly rejecting it. She makes use of the discourse strategy of appraisals to disalign herself from the value positions of various 'experts'. First, she justifies her refusal to have micro-plastic surgery by saying that her partner should love her as she is, and that she has no interest in men who only look at women's appearance. That is to say, she challenges the traditional norm that prioritises women's appearance. Besides, she also expresses her opposition to the male superiority norm. More specifically, she objects to Mei-Ling's, a marriage agent's, idea that a rich man is a good husband. Mei-Ling's idea is strongly embedded in traditional Chinese values concerning marital criteria. In the past, women were confined to the domestic sphere, so their living standard depended solely on their husband's economic condition. Florence overtly shows her indifference to the wealth of her suitors. By doing this, she implicitly points to her financial independence and suggests that she does not need any man to provide for her.

As shown above, the traditional discourse on femininity plays a crucial role in *Bride Wannabes*. Louisa and the 'experts' draw on it so as to show favouritism to Suki, who embodies traditional, subordinate femininity, and to derogate the other participants, who deviate from it to different extents and in different senses. This can be realised by, for example, the positive representations of Suki's petiteness and perceived incapability and the problematisation of Bonnie's talking manner, Florence's outspokenness and Mandy's career accomplishment. The discourse is also referred to by Florence and

Bonnie. Florence overtly challenges it, whereas Bonnie, on the one hand, draws on it to derogate herself, but on the other, expresses her opposition to it.

8.2.2. Traditional discourse on women's singleness

Another discourse identified in *Bride Wannabes* is the traditional discourse on women's singleness, which has the discourse goal of out-group derogation. In Hong Kong, women are traditionally expected to adhere to the following heterosexual life path: receiving schooling, working, getting married and having children. The programme particularly represents marriage as a very salient life course for women by stigmatising the participants' singleness. First, the discourse strategy of social actor representations is employed to denigrate the participants collectively. Various derogatory expressions are used to collectively refer to the participants in relation to their singleness including 剩女 *(leftover women)*, 姑婆屋 *(the house for spinsters)* and 災情 *(disaster)*, which highlight them being unwanted and 'left over' by men.

The traditional discourse on women's singleness is particularly drawn on in the representations of Florence, who is derogated as a 'leftover woman'. As mentioned in Chapter 1, in the Hong Kong context, the term refers to single women aged 30 or above and is strongly associated with high educational and career accomplishment; this group of women is often thought to remain single because of their 'pickiness'. The programme negatively represents Florence in terms of the traits associated with this derogatory reference through social actor representations and various process types. For example, she is categorised as 大都會三高女性 *(a cosmopolitan three-high woman)*, i.e. high in educational level, income and partner selection requirements, which as mentioned in Chapter 5, is strongly associated with 'leftover women'; her educational background is highlighted in various relational processes. She is also represented in relation to other

features of 'leftover women'. Her age is especially emphasised by Louisa, the compere, and various 'experts'. She is categorised in terms of her age in many social actor references to her and many relational processes. Her 'pickiness' is also invoked through the recurrent references to the kinds of men she (dis)likes via mental processes and what she says about different suitors through verbal processes. Importantly, such representations are often followed by the 'experts'' criticisms. For example, she is criticised for not being an eligible single woman and for not knowing her falling market value, i.e. she is in no position to be 'picky'. The programme clearly stereotypes Florence as a typical 'leftover woman', who is 'choosy' and hence responsible for her own singleness.

The traditional discourse on women's singleness is identifiable in different participants' self-representations, but there are variations in their discourse goals. First, Suki clearly espouses the discourse and draws on it to express her 'womanly' goal of marriage. She heavily relies on appraisals, especially affective meanings, to do so. When relating her experience of being jilted by her ex-boyfriend, Suki's focus is not on the breakup itself, but her marriage prospects. She compares the breakup to the end of the world, and expresses her worries about her marriage prospects because of her age.

In Florence's and Mandy's cases, both refer to the traditional discourse on women's singleness with the discourse goal of downplaying the importance of marriage, which is pursued through self-appraisals. Florence heavily draws on engagement resources to distance herself from the programme's emphasis on the need for her to marry herself off, which can be seen in her response to Mei-Ling's, a marriage agent's, problematisation of her partner selection requirements in view of her age. She counters Mei-Ling's value position that she should lower her requirements and marry herself off by defining love as feelings and sensibility. She also makes it clear that she is not *just*

looking for a man to marry her. That is to say, she is looking for her true love or a life partner, rather than trying to adhere to the heterosexual life path. As regards Mandy, she plays down love as just a third of her life and expresses her satisfaction with her present singleness. She also denies the value position that romance is women's everything.

Lastly, the discourse is also implicitly drawn on by Bonnie with the discourse goal of resisting the social attitude that holds single women responsible for their inability to find a boyfriend. This is realised in how she evaluates herself in her narration about her speed-dating experience together with two 20-year-old women. She refers to how others might see her as a 30-year-old woman that cannot be married off and shows her opposition by stressing that her singleness is nothing to do with her quality. She also emphasises that she has difficulty finding a boyfriend even though she is just looking for an average, normal and decent man. Such representations point to the stereotypes that 'leftover women' are unwanted by men and are 'choosey'. While she agrees that she might be unwanted by men, she disagrees that she is 'choosey' and implies that she should not be to blame for her inability to find a partner. She also explicitly attributes her singleness to the severe gender imbalance in Hong Kong.

It is obvious that the traditional discourse on women's singleness reinforces the conventional heterosexual life script for women. It is closely related to the traditional discourse on femininity. As shown above, the participant particularly derogated through this discourse is Florence, who seriously transgresses traditional femininity in terms of her great educational and career attainment and her strong agency in refusing to be moulded according to traditional femininity. Such transgressions are shaped by the programme as what renders her less marriageable. Despite all the participants' attempts to find a partner through the programme, only Suki subscribes to the discourse. Florence

and Mandy de-emphasise the traditional life script for women in their life, whereas Bonnie rejects the social attitude that problematises single women in relation to their singleness.

8.2.3. Postfeminist discourse on femininity

Another major discourse identified in *Bride Wannabes* is the postfeminist discourse on femininity. As will be shown below, the programme draws on the discourse with the discourse goal of problematising different aspects of women in order to promote consumerist femininity. First, the discourse is expressed through accentuating the need and power of transformation, which is unsurprising, given the emphasis of change in makeover programmes. It plays a particularly significant role in the representations of Gobby, which centre around the zygomatic implant and tooth contouring treatment she is made to have. The programme problematises her, especially in terms of her appearance, miserable life and lack of confidence. Through social actor representations, it foregrounds her miserable life and low self-esteem. For example, she is appraised as a *drama queen* and 好無自信嘅 *Gobby (very unconfident Gobby)*; she is also ascribed the quality of bitterness in Winnie's, a life coach's, description of her feeling when first seeing Gobby. The programme also employs various process types to problematise Gobby. For instance, she is repeatedly represented as the actor of material processes related to her marital status, e.g. divorcing, and the senser of negative-laden emotive mental processes, e.g. regretting. As shown above, social actor representations and various process types are only employed for the sake of problematising Gobby. It is mainly through impoliteness that the programme promotes consumerist femininity. Winnie ruthlessly humiliates Gobby as looking older than her age and criticises that her low self-esteem and bitterness are the reasons why she is often taken advantage of. After

that, Winnie comments in her solo slot that Gobby's bitter life is very visible on her face and stresses the need to help Gobby boost her self-esteem. In other words, Winnie identifies as Gobby's 'flaws' her perceived ageing appearance and low self-esteem. Winnie then brings Gobby to a medical beauty centre and suggests she increase her self-confidence by improving her appearance. In the centre, Gobby is again attacked in terms of her appearance by the medical staff there and is persuaded to have the aforesaid treatment. Winnie and the medical staff evidently pathologise Gobby's bodies so as to convince her that she needs the treatment. Winnie even claims relevance of appearance to one's self-worth and promotes the idea that beauty is about pleasing oneself. This kind of construction of the connection between the female body and her inner self is a key feature of postfeminist media culture (see e.g. Gill, 2007a, b, 2009; Gill and Herdieckerhoff, 2006; Marwick, 2010; Tincknell, 2011). While Winnie's ostensible goal of making Gobby have the treatment is to enhance her confidence, her real aim seems to be stressing the need for women to monitor and, if necessary, transform their own body, and advertising the beauty centre concerned. This is realised by the recurrent references to Gobby in relation to the treatment. For example, Louisa, the compere, often refers to Gobby in terms of her body parts, e.g. her teeth, to highlight the 'flaws' in her appearance; she also often represents Gobby as the beneficiary in various material processes relating to the treatment, e.g. injection. Furthermore, all the impolite exchanges targeting her are triggered by her appearance, with two even taking place in the centre.

Apart from Gobby, the programme also points to the need for Bonnie to transform herself and showcases the power of transformation. As discussed in Subsection 8.2.1, through the traditional discourse on femininity, the programme represents Bonnie as a 'non-feminine' woman exhibiting 'masculine' traits e.g. coarse

and crude. Through the postfeminist discourse on femininity, the programme further represents her as unable to perform femininity properly and creates the need for her to change. For example, through cognitive mental processes, she is represented as 'ignorant' about different activities which signify 'femininity', e.g. not knowing how to dress up and not knowing how to speak coquettishly; she is also directly represented as learning to be a lady. There is also a set of social actor references emphasising the results of the transformations that the 'experts' make on Bonnie through make-up and dress-up. For example, different appraisements are used to negatively represent her pre-transformed self, e.g. *呢位灰姑娘 (this Cinderella)*, and positively represent her post-transformed self, e.g. *淑女 (lady)*. Such representations stress the importance of self-maintenance and the commodification of difference. In other words, Bonnie is not inherently 'masculine'; she can look 'feminine' and behave like a 'lady' by making appropriate lifestyle choices and seeking help from lifestyle 'experts'.

Bonnie is not only problematised in terms of her inability to perform 'femininity', but also her lack of understanding of men. She is made to receive training by Santino, a 'love expert', and his assistants about men and how to communicate with them. There is thus a set of representations of her being involved in various teaching and learning activities relating to the training. For instance, she is represented as the actor of the material process of having love training class and as the beneficiary of being taught many skills. Her unsatisfactory performance is also highlighted through material processes e.g. making mistakes. Impoliteness is also employed by Santino to highlight Bonnie's 'ignorance' about men and her lack of skills to communicate with them. After knowing that Bonnie did not obey his instruction to praise her suitors strategically so as to reveal her understanding of their inner selves, Santino fiercely criticises that the way Bonnie gets along with the suitors does not work and forces her to comply with his

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instruction. Worse, Bonnie invited a suitor out on a date without Santino's approval, and is attacked repeatedly by him on grounds that the suitor will not treasure her if she is too 'obtainable'. Santino even coerces her into calling the suitor to cancel the date immediately. Such representations are based on the premise that men can be understood 'scientifically', and Bonnie can use different skills to make her suitors fall in love with her. This accords with a postfeminist interpretative repertoire Gill (2009) identified in her study of sex and relationship advice in a UK women's magazine, namely 'intimate entrepreneurship', which views relationships as 'a professional, rational, quasi-scientific affair' (p. 353; see also Chapter 3). By foregrounding Bonnie's lack of understanding of men and showing how various skills can be used to attract men, the programme represents learning about men as empowering and seeks to achieve a wider discourse goal of promoting the need for women to seek 'professional help' so as to be better equipped to find a partner.

The postfeminist discourse on femininity is also articulated in the representations of Florence, who embodies the opposite of postfeminist femininity, by derogating her in relation to her attitude to love. Ideas of intimate entrepreneurship play a crucial role in the derogation of Florence. First, the programme foregrounds her attitude to love, which emphasises feeling. This relies heavily on the use of the behavioural process of waiting. She is recurrently represented as the behaver of waiting for her 'prince'. Florence waiting for her 'prince' is also foregrounded in various social actor references to her, e.g. *一直等待白馬王子嘅 Florence (Florence, who is waiting for her prince on a white horse all along)*. The programme not only foregrounds Florence's attitude to love, but also problematises it. This is achieved mainly through the use of mental processes, but sometimes also verbal processes. Florence is repeatedly made to list her partner selection requirements, as reflected by the vast numbers of

processes of wanting, choosing and saying, which is often followed by the 'experts'' criticisms. The presence of marketing discourse is quite noticeable in the 'experts'' criticisms of her requirements. For example, with reference to Florence's desire to find a partner who is no more than five years older or younger than herself, Mei-Ling, a marriage agent, precisely evaluates her chance of finding a partner who is five years younger as nought while that of finding someone who is five years older as no more than one or two percent. Some 'experts' also point to her 'overestimation' of her value in the 'marriage market' through mental processes. For example, Kenji, a stylist, represents Florence as the senser of not knowing her own market value or her position in the 'marriage market'; Mei-Ling represents her as the senser of finding herself very eligible, which is followed by her immediate rejection of the thought. The 'experts' apparently evaluate Florence's partner selection requirements quasi-scientifically as if there were concrete criteria to estimate a woman's market value. As shown above, the programme problematises Florence's attitude to love as unrealistic and negatively represents her as unqualified to be 'picky' and unable to achieve her goal.

Other than the problematisation of Florence's attitude to love, the postfeminist discourse on femininity is also expressed via the negative representations of her defiant attitude to the 'love strategies' developed by the 'experts'. This is achieved through social actor representations and various process types, but not impoliteness. This is despite the fact that the programme probably attempted to adopt impoliteness as a discourse strategy in the first place, as evidenced by many traces of FTAs targeting Florence. As she does not submit to the 'experts'' FTAs and refuses to adopt the 'love strategies' set out for her, impolite exchanges involving her are probably excluded deliberately so as to save the 'experts'' face. This renders impoliteness an ineffective discourse strategy for the programme to pursue the discourse goal of promoting

consumerist femininity. Instead of using impoliteness, the programme only relies on Louisa's narration of what is going on between Florence and the 'experts'. First, Florence's 'uncooperativeness' is highlighted via a range of verbal processes with strong agency, e.g. 堅持 *(insist)* and 拒絕 *(refuse)*. Her defiant attitude to the 'love strategies' is also represented as her having a strong personality. A manifestation is Louisa's frequent use of negative appraisements highlighting this quality of hers, e.g. 性格巨星 *Florence (personality superstar Florence)*. Florence is also represented as the carrier of the attribute of having a strong personality in various relational processes. The programme clearly directs the audience to negatively seeing Florence's 'uncooperativeness' with the 'experts', as realised by Mei-Ling's criticism of her as cheeky, arrogant, and hard to deal with via a relational process. Florence is apparently represented as the opposite of what intimate entrepreneurship promotes, i.e. women are supposed to work hard to find their partner, rather than believing in a kind of fairy tale romance (Gill, 2009). Since the programme cannot effectively promote consumerist femininity via Florence, it derogates her relating to her attitude to love and her defiance to the love strategies proposed by the 'experts'.

The postfeminist discourse of femininity can also be identified in Gobby's and Florence's self-representations. Gobby draws on it with the discourse goal of affirming and reinforcing consumerist femininity. The discourse plays a salient role in her self-representations, which are full of attitudinal appraisals. Her talk is very much featured by her self-problematisation, particularly pertaining to her background and her status as a divorcee, in earlier episodes. However, after seeing her post-treatment self in the beauty centre concerned, she explicitly contrasts her 'before' and 'after'. She highlights different 'flaws' in her body before the treatment and evaluates herself as unappealing to men and unable to compete with young women, whereas she points to her improved

confidence after the transformation. As indicated above, Gobby evaluates herself very much based on her body and even links it to her self-worth. She even seems to be giving her testimony to how women can favourably transform themselves by consuming various services.

As regards Florence, she refers to the postfeminist discourse on femininity in order to reject the quasi-scientific approach to love and consumerist femininity in relation to finding partners. To this end, she heavily draws on engagement resources to disalign herself from various value positions associated with the postfeminist discourse on femininity. First, her resistant stance to intimate entrepreneurship is evident in her self-representations. In response to Mei-Ling's bald criticism about her desire to find a boyfriend who is no more than five years older or younger than herself, Florence justifies her standpoint by expressing her belief that love concerns feeling and sensibility, rather than figures or quantifiable items, and stresses that she is looking for her true love instead of just marrying herself off. It is clear that Florence believes in feelings and fate and opposes the quasi-scientific approach to love that intimate entrepreneurship proposes. Another postfeminist idea that Florence rejects is the need for women to work on and transform their bodies. Mei-Ling suggests that Florence beautify herself before going to her first matchmaking event; Florence is then brought to a beauty centre, and the doctor there identifies some 'flaws' on her face and tries to persuade her to have micro-plastic surgery. Florence utterly refuses to be transformed and expresses her defiance against the idea that women should beautify themselves through cosmetic surgery, and justifies her standpoint by describing ageing as an inevitable life process. She also stresses that her future partner should love her as she is, and that she has no interest in men who only superficially care about women's

appearance. Florence apparently distances herself from the notion of consumerist femininity.

As indicated above, through the postfeminist discourse on femininity, the programme promotes consumerist femininity by negatively representing different aspects of the participants, most probably for advertising reasons. It is also clear that the discourse is closely linked to the traditional discourse on femininity. As Gill (2014) comments, '[p]ractices that might once have attracted critique from feminists are 'repackaged' by postfeminist culture as the "autonomous choices" of empowered postfeminist subjects' (p. 118). As shown in the above discussion, all the participants are represented as having agency, but only in relation to conforming to traditional femininity. In Gobby's case, she is persuaded to have cosmetic surgery, so that she better fits the normative standard of feminine beauty. Here, instead of being represented as a sex object, she is subjectified. She does not have the cosmetic surgery for the sake of pleasing men, but making herself more confident. Having cosmetic surgery is therefore represented as an empowered choice for her. As regards Bonnie, she is represented as an active agent of learning about men and how to be 'feminine'. Such representations are problematic in that women are made responsible for internalising the male gaze and judging themselves based on it (see Gill, 2007a, b). Florence is the only participant who resists the postfeminist discourse on femininity, and hence consumerist femininity, and indicates her agency to refuse to be moulded according to traditional femininity. This is problematised, however. It is obvious that the programme, on the one hand, directly upholds traditional femininity via the traditional discourse on femininity, and on the other, 'repackages' some traditional gender expectations through the postfeminist discourse on femininity.

8.2.4. Postfeminist discourse on women's singleness

Another postfeminist discourse the programme draws on is the postfeminist discourse on women's singleness, which has the discourse goal of in-group favouritism and out-group derogation. Unlike the traditional discourse on women's singleness, the postfeminist discourse on women's singleness does not represent the single participants as unwanted by men or 'left over' in the 'marriage market', but rather focuses on them exercising agency to drastically fight for a partner. Through the discourse strategies of metaphors and process types, the programme frames the process of the participants looking for partners as a war/race and shapes them as either a winner or a loser. They are collectively and, in some cases, individually, represented as the actors of various material processes surrounding wars or racing, e.g. *出擊 (sallying forth)* and *最後衝刺 (having the final sprint)*. Significantly, the programme shows favouritism to Suki, the only participant who could find a boyfriend in the show, by representing her as the actor of *突圍而出 (breaking siege and rushing out)* and *跑出 (running out)*. Suki is thus represented as the winner whereas the other participants are by implication losers. By representing the participants as fighting for a boyfriend and evaluating them as a winner or a loser according to their ability to find a partner, the programme constructs the ideas that women's singleness is undesirable and that their life cannot be complete without a partner.

The postfeminist discourse on women's singleness is also briefly drawn on by Bonnie and Gobby with the discourse goal of self-derogation. Both metaphorically represent themselves as competing for a partner with other women. They both negatively appreciate their own appearance and age, and judge themselves as unable to compete with their younger 'rivals' (see Subsection 8.2.5 for a more detailed discussion on how Bonnie and Gobby problematise their age).

The above discussion indicates that the postfeminist discourse on women's singleness, in consonance with the traditional discourse on women's singleness, reinforces marriage as an essential life stage for women, but it follows the postfeminist logic and repackages the traditional idea by representing single women as exerting their agency to fight for the 'award' of a man in order to make their life complete.

8.2.5. Ageist discourse on unmarried women

The last discourse I focus on is the ageist discourse on unmarried women. The programme draws on it to pursue the discourse goal of derogating women who are considered no longer young. The derogation mainly, but not exclusively, targets Florence for the obvious reason that she is the oldest participant. She is derogated through the discourse in two ways. First, it is achieved through the accentuation of the influence of age on women's marriageability. Social actor representations and relational processes play a particularly important role to this end. She is repeatedly categorised in terms of her age in Louisa's references to her. Her age is also repeatedly mentioned via relational processes. The programme not only foregrounds Florence's age, but also problematises it vis-à-vis her marriageability. As mentioned, Mei-Ling, a marriage agent, recurrently refers to Florence's desire to find a boyfriend no more than five years younger or older than herself via mental processes in order to criticise it. She comments that there is no chance for Florence to find someone younger and no more than one or two percent of chance to find someone five years older. Right after Florence shares with Mei-Ling her partner selection requirement in terms of age, Mei-Ling even claims that all 39-year-old, 49-year-old and 59-year-old men are looking for 29-year-old women, and that no men would like a woman older than themselves. Such representations have three implications. First, women's marriageability declines with age. Second, the man

is always expected to be the older one in a heterosexual couple, which seems to be the case in many other societies, e.g. Setswana (see Bagwasi and Sunderland, 2013) and China (see To, 2015). Third, men's marriageability is not affected by their age. Even a 59-year-old man can find a 29-year-old woman. Thus, when women reach a certain age, they have no choice, but to look for a man much older than themselves. It is not a unique phenomenon that Hong Kong society seems to show higher acceptance for men to have a much younger partner than the other way round. For example, a female informant in To's (2015) Shanghai-based research shared her experience of being rejected by a 37-year-old suitor because she was *just* ten years younger than him; Kane (2008) also found that while half of his undergraduate informants in Florida regarded it as socially acceptable to see an older man kissing a young woman, only a fourth considered it socially acceptable to see an older woman kissing a young man.

The ageist discourse on unmarried women is also articulated through the derogation of the participants' perceived ageing appearance. For example, Winnie, a life coach, uses three relational clauses to refer to Florence in terms of her age, pointing to her real age, whether she is considered old, and the age of her appearance, respectively. Similarly, through impoliteness, Winnie insults Gobby by saying that she looks older than she is. In both instances, Winnie compares the respective participant's appearance against her actual age, which implies that what is at issue is not how old they are, but how old they look. This accords with postfeminist media culture, which problematises women's ageing bodies and which celebrates successful agers who could retain their youthful appearance (see Chapter 3), and the research finding that ageism often intersects with sexism, with ageing signs in women's bodies being particularly pathologised (see e.g. Coupland, 2003; Woodward, 1999). As Coupland (2003)

comments, 'in contemporary Western culture women's symbolic capital is still, to a greater extent than men's, derived from their appearance' (p. 129).

The ageist discourse on unmarried women can be identified in both Gobby's and Bonnie's self-representations. In line with the programme's representations, both employ attitudinal resources to derogate themselves in terms of their age. In Gobby's case, the discourse is very manifest when she negatively evaluates her age in an explicit manner and relates it to her inability to compete with younger women in the 'marriage market'. Her negative evaluation particularly targets her perceived ageing body, e.g. her body shape. Similarly, Bonnie negatively evaluates herself in comparative terms with two 20-year-old women in a speed-dating event. As mentioned, she negatively evaluates herself as a 30-year-old woman that can't be married off, while positively evaluating the two women's edge over herself in every respect. She also expresses her worries about her marriage prospects because of this. It is clear that both Gobby and Bonnie problematise their age and represent themselves as inferior to younger women in the 'marriage market'.

As shown above, through the ageist discourse on unmarried women, the programme stigmatises the participants in terms of their age and the ageing signs in their appearance, and links it to their marriageability; Gobby and Bonnie derogate themselves in the same vein. It is also apparent that the discourse is linked to all the four discourses discussed above. It is related to the traditional discourse on femininity and the postfeminist discourse on femininity in that it highlights the importance of appearance for women and promotes the idea that women should take control of their body and 'fix' their ageing signs. The ageist discourse on unmarried women is in particular interwoven with the traditional discourse on women's singleness. This can be realised by how Florence, the oldest participant, is targeted for derogation via the two

discourses. The programme emphatically represents age as a crucial factor affecting her marriageability through both discourses. Lastly, the ageist discourse on unmarried women is also linked to the postfeminist discourse on women's singleness, as seen by how Bonnie and Gobby draw on both discourses to problematise their age and ageing appearance in relation to their competitiveness in the 'marriage market' (see also Subsection 3.1.3 for a discussion of the intersection of age and singleness in postfeminist representations of women).

As is clear above, all the discourses discussed are interdiscursively linked. They all underpin traditional gender expectations, either directly or being repackaged through a postfeminist ethos of empowerment and agency. Following a discussion of the discourses identified in *Bride Wannabes*, I will proceed to interpret what ideologies are articulated in and via these discourses.

8.3. Ideologies surrounding unmarried women in Hong Kong

This section deals with what ideologies surrounding unmarried women are expressed through the traditional discourse on femininity, the traditional discourse on women's singleness, the postfeminist discourse on femininity, the postfeminist discourse on women's singleness, and the ageist discourse on unmarried women, which corresponds to the following research question:

RQ5. What ideologies are expressed through the discourses identified?

I argue that *Bride Wannabes* subscribes to ideologies of patriarchy, postfeminism and ageism; while some participants share the same ideological standpoints, some resist them and subscribe to an egalitarian ideology. In what follows, I describe how these ideologies are expressed via the discourses identified, more specifically, their ideological goals, discourse structures and contents.

8.3.1. Patriarchy

With its ideological goal to show up traditional femininity and reproduce the power imbalance between men and women, patriarchy is the dominant ideology in *Bride Wannabes*. It is most clearly articulated via the traditional discourse on femininity and the traditional discourse on women's singleness, which, as mentioned, serve the discourse goals of in-group favouritism and out-group derogation based on traditional femininity and one's ability to pursue the traditional heterosexual life course of marriage. The ideology therefore particularly exhibits itself in the group polarisation format. It is very noticeable that Suki is represented as Us and the other participants as Them in both discourses. Suki, who is characterised as the embodiment of traditional, subordinate femininity, is positively represented as the ideal type of woman for men via the traditional discourse on femininity, and as a success story owing to her successfully finding a boyfriend in the show and getting closer to her 'womanly' goal of marriage via the traditional discourse on women's singleness. On the other hand, through the traditional discourse on femininity, Florence, Bonnie and Mandy are negatively represented based on traditional femininity in different ways. For example, Florence's outspokenness, Bonnie's 'non-feminine' traits and Mandy's career achievement are all problematised. Through the traditional discourse on women's singleness, all participants but Suki are also stigmatised as losers because of their inability to move forward on the traditional heterosexual life path for women. Florence, who is characterised as a 'leftover woman', is particularly derogated in relation to her singleness. Her age and educational background are problematised as adversely affecting her marriageability. She is also represented as 'picky' and responsible for her own singleness.

After describing the ideological discourse structure of patriarchy, I now turn to the contents of the ideology, i.e. evaluative and normative beliefs in support of patriarchy. First, I focus on a set of evaluative beliefs as to womanhood articulated in the traditional discourse on femininity and the traditional discourse on women's singleness. What is believed to be desirable in women includes beauty, petiteness, youth, dependence, subordination to men, being easy to control and intellectual incapability; in contrast, what is believed to be undesirable in women includes talkativeness, outspokenness, discerning attitude, heroic traits, unreservedness in relation to men, intellectual capability, and great educational and career attainment. Most of these evaluative beliefs only apply to women, but not men. When the above-mentioned traits are exhibited by men, the evaluations, in most cases, reverse. More specifically, petiteness, dependence, subordination to women, being easy to control and intellectual incapability would become undesirable traits, whereas outspokenness, heroic qualities, intellectual capability, and great educational and career accomplishment would become desirable ones. Besides, through the traditional discourse on women's singleness, a set of beliefs is expressed vis-à-vis women's marital status, namely that marriage is a life course that every heterosexual woman should go through, and single women who have reached the suitable age for marriage are unwanted by men; that highly accomplished women are too 'picky' for their partner and are responsible for their own singleness; and that women, especially those who are no longer young, should try to marry themselves off and should not be 'picky'. It is obvious that the above beliefs are grounded in traditional gender expectations and values. By disseminating such beliefs, the programme attempts to foster patriarchal attitudes and values and reproduce the domination of men over women.

8.3.2. Postfeminism

Another important ideology identified in *Bride Wannabes* is postfeminism, whose ideological goal is to show up consumerist femininity and conceal the power imbalance between men and women. It is expressed through the postfeminist discourse on femininity and the postfeminist discourse on women's singleness. As discussed above, via the postfeminist discourse on femininity, the programme problematises different aspects of the participants, probably for advertising ends. In line with this, postfeminism clearly manifests itself in the problem/solution format. The programme highlights various problems in the participants, except Suki and Mandy,[82] and provides different solutions. Gobby is problematised with regard to her perceived ageing appearance, low self-esteem and miserable life, and she is made to have cosmetic surgery in order to boost her self-confidence. Bonnie's perceived inability to perform femininity properly and her lack of understanding of men are highlighted, and she is transformed via make-up and dress-up and is made to learn to be a 'lady', on the one hand, and is made to learn about men and how to communicate with them, on the other. As regards Florence, what is problematised is her idealistic attitude to love and her perceived ageing appearance, and she is advised to lower her partner selection requirements and have micro-plastic surgery. As she assumes a defiant attitude towards the 'love strategies' proposed by the 'experts', and refuses to be imposed upon by them, she is further problematised in terms of her strong personality. Besides, postfeminism is expressed through the postfeminist discourse on women's singleness and is structured in the group polarisation format. Suki, who could find a boyfriend in the show, is constructed as a success story while the other participants are represented as losers.

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[82] Mandy's intellectual capability and career achievement are problematised, but no solution is provided. This is probably due to her midway withdrawal.

A set of normative beliefs concerning consumerist femininity can be identified in support of the postfeminist ideology: (1) women should monitor their body and make transformations when necessary, in order to please themselves; (2) women should learn how to be a 'lady', including 'feminine' activities e.g. how to wear make-up and dress up; (3) women should learn to understand men and how to communicate with them; (4) women should set realistic goals for partner selection; and (5) women should work hard and take drastic measures to find their partner as there is no fairy tale. These beliefs correspond to the solutions that the 'experts' propose to different participants' 'problems', namely Gobby's lack of self-confidence and perceived ageing appearance, Bonnie's perceived inability to perform femininity properly, Bonnie's lack of understanding of men, and Florence's idealistic attitude to love, respectively. A consumerist ideology is embedded with this set of beliefs. The beliefs apparently promote consumerist femininity – women should improve the 'flaws' in their appearance in beauty centres, learn how to be a 'lady', what men (dis)like and how to communicate with them, seek professional advice about how to set realistic partner selection requirements, and take part in various matchmaking activities. This also explains the appearance of so many commercial organisations in the programme. The programme reproduces such beliefs with regard to consumerist femininity, ostensibly for the sake of helping the participants, but probably for advertising purposes. Thus, the postfeminist ideology serves to conceal the programme's and the 'experts'' advertising agenda.

The postfeminist ideology is interwoven with patriarchy. As discussed in Subsections 8.2.3 and 8.2.4, the postfeminist discourse on femininity and that on women's singleness are inextricably linked to the traditional discourse on femininity and that on women's singleness in that the participants are represented as free agents

making choices that conform to traditional femininity, e.g. choosing to have cosmetic surgery to please themselves and to fight for a marriage partner. In the same vein, the postfeminist ideology is, to a certain extent, a repackaging of patriarchal beliefs. For example, according to the first two postfeminist beliefs mentioned above, women are made to conform to the normative beauty standard and make themselves 'sex objects', and to perform femininity based on normative gender expectations, which accord with patriarchy. Therefore, postfeminism serves to obscure the inequality of power between men and women. That said, there are sometimes ideological tensions between postfeminism and patriarchy. For example, according to postfeminim, women should work hard to find their partner, rather than just passively waiting, as shown by how Florence's idealistic attitude to love is problematised through the postfeminist discourse on femininity; however, according to patriarchy, being passive and reserved is considered desirable in women, as shown by the negative representation of Bonnie actively talking to various suitors via the traditional discourse on femininity.

8.3.3. Ageism

Apart from patriarchy and postfeminism, an ageist ideology can also be identified, which consistently intersects with sexism. With the ideological goal of marginalising women who are considered no longer young, the ageist ideology is particularly realised in the ageist discourse on unmarried women, and is structured in the representational format of outgroup derogation. The derogation mainly targets Florence, but also Gobby. Florence's age is foregrounded in a negative light, and her requirement to find a boyfriend five years older or younger than herself is especially problematised as hardly achievable because of her age. Besides, both Florence and Gobby are denigrated in terms of their perceived ageing appearance.

The ageist ideology is formed by the following beliefs concerning women's age: (1) women's marriageability declines with age, but age is irrelevant to men's marriageability; (2) when women reach a certain age, they have to accept men who are far older than themselves; and (3) women's actual age is not as significant as the age that their appearance suggests. These beliefs indicate the interwoven relationship of ageism with patriarchy and postfeminism. The first two beliefs apparently show an inequality between women and men – age crucially impacts only women's marriageability, but not men's. Women therefore suffer from ageism more than men. As regards the last belief, it fosters the importance of youthful appearance for women, which is in consonance with the postfeminist belief that women should monitor their appearance and make transformations when necessary, in order to please themselves.

As shown above, the programme's ideologies, namely patriarchy, postfeminism and ageism, converge to reproduce men's power over women. Women are expected to subscribe to traditional femininity, learn to understand and please men, and transform themselves according to the normative standards of youthful beauty and femininity; unmarried women, in particular, are supposed to strategically lower their partner selection criteria in view of their age, and try to marry themselves off. These norms and beliefs all function to sustain men's higher status in society and are highly sexist. In *Bride Wannabes*, all the participants (Mandy to a lesser extent) desire to find a marriage partner, which provides a very good reason for the programme to reinforce the conventional heterosexual life path for women and legitimise some blatantly sexist representations, e.g. the desirability of petiteness, dependence, obedience and intellectual incapability in women. Since the participants would like to marry but could not find a partner, they have no choice but to do what men like. This view is clearly manifested in Jessica's, a visagiste's, sarcastic comment on Bonnie:

(161)

766 **Jessica:** 係　人　　都　知(.)　　咩　女人(.)

Be　person　all　know(.)　what　women(.)

Everyone knows what kinds of women

767 先　　男人　鍾意　架(.)　靚靚哋　　　　呀(.)

only　men　like　SFP(.)　pretty-pretty-ish　VTIP(.)

men like – a bit pretty,

768 ar　　身形　　　　　　標準　　呀(.)

VTIP　standard body shape　standard　VTIP(.)

having a standard body shape,

769 唔會　　駁嘴　呀(.)　好　聽話　　嗰　啲　咁(.)

not-would　argue　VTIP(.)　very　obedient　those　CL　SFP(.)

never arguing with others, and very obedient.

770 咁　　妳　做齊　呢　　啲　嘢(.)

Then　you　do　all　these　CL　thing(.)

Then if you do all these,

771 唔會　　　無　　囉(.)　我　覺得(.)

not-would　not-have　SFP(.)　I　think(.)

I think it is impossible that you cannot find a boyfriend.

772 咁(.)　只不過(.)　唔係　　喎(.)

Then(.)　but(.)　not-be　SFP(.)

But then if you, like, I can't;

460

773   我　又　要　有　　尊嚴　呀(.)

I　　and　need　have　dignity　SFP(.)

I have dignity;

774   我　又　唔鍾意　聽　　你　話(.)

I　　and　dislike　listen　you　word(.)

I dislike to obey you;

775   我　又　鍾意　駁嘴　呀(.)　我　又　鍾意

I　　and　like　　argue　SFP(.)　I　　and　like

I like to argue with you; and I also like

776   喱喱啡啡[83](.)　　　呀(.)　　咁(.)　　咁(.)　　即係

le2-le2-fe2-fe2(.)　　SFP(.)　　Then(.)　　then(.)　　that's

to be slovenly. Then that's

777   妳　個　目標(.)　唔係(.)

you　CL　target(.)　not-be(.)

your target isn't…

778   唔係　一定　要　有　男人　囉(.)

not-be　must　need　have　man　SFP(.)

You don't necessarily need a man.

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[83] See Note 74.

The programme apparently disseminates the idea that since unmarried women are unwanted by men, they should make an effort to marry themselves off by adhering to traditional femininity and learning to please men.

8.3.4. Egalitarianism

Following a description of the programme's ideologies, I now turn to how egalitarianism emerges as a resistant ideology in Florence's, Mandy's and Bonnie's self-representations. With the ideological goal of equality, the egalitarian ideology exhibits itself in the form of countering and rejecting beliefs that oppress women. First, Florence overtly expresses her defiant attitude towards the programme's ideological standpoints. Her oppositional stance to the patriarchal ideology is evident. In relation to the belief which stresses marriage as a life course that every woman should go through, Florence negotiates it by making a distinction between finding a marriage partner and finding a life partner/true love. She also shows her indifference to her potential partner's socio-economic status and directly challenges the belief that the man should be the superior one in a heterosexual couple and should support his wife financially. She is equally against the postfeminist ideology, as realised by her refusal to transform her appearance on grounds of the inevitability of ageing, and her emphasis that her partner should love her as she is. In addition, she also contests the postfeminist belief that women should set realistic goals for partner selection and work hard to find their partner by defining love as feeling and sensibility and opposing the programme's quasi-scientific view on marriage. It is obvious that Florence expresses a more egalitarian relationship with men as a value. Mandy and Bonnie also indicate their challenging attitude to the patriarchal ideology, but less overtly. As far as Mandy is concerned, she downplays love as just a third of her life and expresses her satisfaction with her present

singleness, which challenges the belief that marriage is central to women's life. As regards Bonnie, she articulates her determination to take care of and protect the people around her, which contradicts the evaluative belief of 'heroic' traits as something undesirable in women. She also implicitly invalidates the belief that 'leftover women' are picky and justifies her point by imputing her singleness to the sex imbalance in Hong Kong. One aspect I would like to point out about Bonnie is that while she sometimes expresses her opposition to various patriarchal gender expectations, she does not indicate a very consistent ideological stance like Florence or Mandy. As shown in my discussion about the traditional discourse on femininity, Bonnie sometimes draws on the discourse to negatively evaluate herself based on traditional gender expectations, e.g. problematising her appearance vis-à-vis marriageability.

As shown in the above discussion, *Bride Wannabes* attempts to reinforce the patriarchal norm and fosters sexism. Despite the emergence of the egalitarian ideology in some participants' self-representations, it only forms a small part of the programme. More importantly, as mentioned above, the participants' self-representations are only the programme's representations of how they talk about themselves. The programme producer apparently suppresses the resistant ideology. A realisation is that as mentioned above, many impolite exchanges involving Florence, the main participant who contests the programme's ideologies, are noticeably edited out, which functions to reduce her air time to challenge the programme's ideological stance. Another important point is that the programme obviously shapes opinions on the participants' self-representations to its advantage. For example, Florence's talk is often followed by the 'experts'' criticisms, which holds sway over attitudes towards her ideological standpoint. It is evident that the programme seeks to maintain the power imbalance between men and women by suppressing the egalitarian ideology.

After discussing how patriarchy, postfeminism, ageism and egalitarianism are articulated in *Bride Wannabes*, the next section will proceed to interpreting how they are related to the social contexts in Hong Kong.

8.4. Discussions of the findings in relation to the social contexts in Hong Kong

This last section deals with the following research question:

RQ6. How are the discourses and ideologies surrounding unmarried women related to the social contexts in Hong Kong?

I start by comparing the programme's representations of unmarried women and the relevant social situation in Hong Kong. I then interpret how the programme's ideological representations are linked to various social changes over recent decades.

To begin with, I discuss how far the ideological representations of unmarried women reflect the social situation in Hong Kong. In Sections 1.4 and 1.5, I provided a general picture of the social attitude to the conventional heterosexual life script and single women. I will briefly recapitulate the main points and compare them against the representations of unmarried women in *Bride Wannabes*. As discussed in Section 1.4, the conventional heterosexual life script is losing influence, as evidenced by the trends of late marriage, the increasing divorce rate and the decreasing fertility rate (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2016a); this is also supported by the Hong Kong Women's Commission's (2011) and Koo and Wong's (2009) research finding of the growing acceptance of singleness and childlessness, although long-term cohabitation and non-marital parenthood are still not widely accepted. In relation to women's singleness, Nakano's (2016) comparative study on single women in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo revealed that among the three societies, Hong Kong single women were under the least pressure to marry and marriage was just regarded as 'a lifestyle

choice rather than a requirement' (ibid, p. 375); in a similar vein, Ng and Ng's (2009) study on single working women showed that financially independent women increasingly considered remaining single and childless an alternative life choice (see Section 1.5). The above findings show that Hong Kong is changing towards accepting women's singleness. The programme's representations clearly deviate from the real situation in Hong Kong. It stigmatises the participants' singleness and evaluatively represents them based on traditional femininity and their ability to proceed to the next heterosexual life stage, which contradicts the growing social acceptance of women's singleness.

After showing the mismatch between the programme's problematisation of women's singleness and the finding of the increasing acceptance of women's singleness in the literature, questions arise as to why the programme represents unmarried women this way and how this pertains to the social contexts in Hong Kong. I argue that women's declining 'marriage market' in Hong Kong and the enduring force of the conventional heterosexual life script play an important role in the stigmatisation of unmarried women in *Bride Wannabes* or even in the wider society. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Hong Kong has been experiencing significant social changes with regard to gender roles over the past decades. Despite women's increasingly equal opportunities in terms of education and career advancement, they are facing a shrinking 'marriage market', which is very much attributable to the gender imbalance as a consequence of the popularity of cross-border marriages between Hong Kong men and mainland Chinese women (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2016a). Some researchers also point to many Hong Kong men's preference for mainland Chinese women perhaps because they are considered more conservative and submissive (see Kang, 2013; Choi *et al.*, 2012). While women's singleness is becoming increasingly

acceptable, the deep-rooted conventional heterosexual life script still endures, despite its waning influence, and a large proportion of people still see marriage as an extremely salient life course. As indicated in the aforesaid research by the Hong Kong Women's Commission (2011), about a third of the informants found it unacceptable to be single.

In my opinion, the programme's representations far lag behind the situation in Hong Kong because it takes advantage of the shrinking 'marriage market' for women and the fact that the participants (Mandy to a lesser extent) desire to marry but could not find a partner to legitimise its promotion of various patriarchal, postfeminist and ageist beliefs. On the one hand, it problematises women's singleness and judges the participants according to their ability to proceed on the heterosexual life path for women; on the other, it represents the participants based on traditional gender expectations and makes them transform accordingly. I see this as a gesture to sustain men's relative power in society and to stand against the shifting social attitude towards marriage as an important life course for women, and women's improving social status.

Apart from women's declining 'marriage market' and the enduring force of the conventional heterosexual life script, I think that the programme's ideological representations of the participants also pertain to the impact of cultural globalisation. An obvious realisation of this is the ubiquity of the global discourse of postfeminism in *Bride Wannabes*. As shown in Subsections 8.2.3 and 8.2.4, the postfeminist discourse on femininity and that on women's singleness play an important role in the representations of the five participants, and many patriarchal practices are repackaged with a postfeminist ethos of empowerment and agency. For example, Gobby is represented as making the empowered choice of undergoing cosmetic surgery to boost her confidence. Moreover, *Bride Wannabes* is a makeover series, which was originally an Anglo-American genre, but which has proliferated globally (see Lewis, 2010, 2011).

The genre is notorious for its sexist nature and its advertising agenda (see Subsection 3.2.1), and this also applies to *Bride Wannabes*. The makeover format of the show enables the 'experts' to publicly humiliate the participants based on traditional femininity in an environment where impoliteness is sanctioned. The advertising agenda of the show can also be seen by the appearance of many commercial operators and its use of the product placement strategy. In my view, it is out of commercial concern that the programme fosters patriarchal, postfeminist and ageist beliefs against social change favouring women.

After relating the programme's ideological standpoints to the social contexts in Hong Kong, I now move on to interpret what social circumstance gives rise to the egalitarian ideology articulated by Florence, Mandy and, to a certain extent, Bonnie. It is probably not a coincidence that both Florence and Mandy, who consistently resist the programme's ideologies, hold managerial roles and enjoy relatively high socio-economic status, whereas Gobby and Suki, who consistently subscribe to traditional gender expectations, are on the lower end of the socio-economic ladder, with the former even belonging to the working-class. Bonnie, whose socio-economic status is in between the two extremes, opposes the patriarchal ideology, but not in a consistent and firm manner, as evidenced by how she sometimes evaluates herself based on traditional femininity. I argue that Hong Kong women are often judged according to two conflicting sets of criteria. On the one hand, as shown in the above discussion, women who adhere to traditional femininity are still deemed to be more desirable for men; on the other, as Hong Kong is a knowledge-based capitalist society, women who follow the traditional script of femininity are also stigmatised and are in a disadvantaged position in the workplace (see e.g. Ho, 2007a; Lim, 2015). In *Bride Wannabes*, Florence and Mandy belong to, in van Dijk's (1998a) term, the elite group in the knowledge-

based society and enjoy socio-economic power, and they quite understandably strive for a more equal relationship with men in the context of romance and marriage. In sharp contrast, Gobby does not seem to have power in any context, at least as far as the programme's representations of her are concerned. She is under the double burden of her working-class background and her transgression of various traditional gender expectations, and is in no position to challenge the status quo.

In conclusion, *Bride Wannabes* disseminates various sexist and ageist beliefs in an attempt to uphold the present patriarchal norm and gain commercial benefits via advertising. It takes advantage of the fact that despite the changing attitude towards women's singleness, many women still desire to marry but could not find a partner because of their shrinking 'marriage market', and legitimises its attempt to mould the participants according to traditional femininity. The participants' reactions to such patriarchal beliefs vary. Social stratification seems to be a crucial factor affecting their ideological stance, with the degree of resistance to patriarchy declining with one's socio-economic power.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

In the previous chapter, I synthesised the major findings of the textual analyses conducted in Chapters 5-7, discussed some discourses surrounding unmarried women identified from the findings and some ideologies articulated therein, and linked the discourses and ideologies to the broader social contexts in Hong Kong. In this final chapter, I will first draw some implications from the findings and point to some contributions, where I also address my last research question:

> RQ7. How can Cantonese data be analysed in terms of social actor representations, appraisals and impoliteness using English-based linguistic frameworks?

This will be followed by a discussion of some limitations of this study and directions for further research.

9.1. Implications and contributions of the research

This section sets out implications of this research for media regulatory policies and education, and discusses how it contributes to the fields of feminist critical discourse studies, media studies, gender studies and the analysis of Cantonese data using English-based linguistic frameworks.

First, my research has important implications for media regulatory policies in Hong Kong. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Hong Kong Communications Authority followed up public complaints about *Bride Wannabes*, but found all of them to be unsubstantiated and did not take further actions (Hong Kong Communications Authority, 2012). In relation to complaints targeting the denigration and insulting of single women based on their gender, age and marital status, the authority gave the following response:

> [A]lthough the personal opinions of the advisors and consultants on individual participants of the reality show might be blunt and candid sometimes, they were comments on these participants under certain circumstances. It was unlikely that such opinions would be considered as denigration or insult to women in general. The programme did not conclude that it was a must for women to get married (ibid, p. 7).

This is clearly incongruent with my research findings, which indicate the reproduction of various sexist and ageist beliefs in *Bride Wannabes*. My research shows that instead of overtly denigrating unmarried women who are considered no longer young, the programme mainly adopts an individualist approach. It characterises the participants as different types of women, and problematises and humiliates them in different ways under different circumstances, which is made possible by the makeover television format. Despite such differences, the representations of individual participants are underpinned by patriarchy, postfeminism and in some cases, ageism. The Hong Kong Communications Authority did not consider the accumulative effect of such sexist and ageist representations and the possible incitement of negative attitudes to single women who are considered no longer young. In a similar vein, although the programme does not overtly disseminate the message that it is a must for women to get married, it appears to uphold the primacy of heterosexual partnerships. It follows a postfeminist logic in representing the participants as making the empowered choice to transform themselves and fight for the 'prize' of a man. It also constructs Suki, the only participant who could find a partner during the show, as a winner, and the others as losers. My research therefore reveals the limits of the present media regulatory practice in Hong Kong in tackling the kind of sexist representations in *Bride Wannabes*, i.e. postfeminist sexism.

My research findings are also supportive of an educational implication – the need to promote media literacy education in Hong Kong (*cf.* the same recommendation by Kwan (2015) and Saidi (2015)). Media literacy is 'a life skill which enables young people to critically understand, analyze, use and influence the media' (Lee, 2010, p. 3). As pointed out earlier, under the influence of postfeminist media culture, *Bride Wannabes* stigmatises and humiliates the participants differently under different circumstances. Its makeover format even enables the 'experts' to publicly humiliate the single women participants in an environment where impoliteness is sanctioned. Considering that the present media regulatory practice in Hong Kong cannot effectively deal with this kind of sexism, it seems to be a good idea to promote media literacy education so as to reduce the adverse impact of sexist media representations on viewers. This is especially the case when, as commented by many scholars (e.g. Cheung, 2009; Lee, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2016), the development of media literacy education in Hong Kong far lags behind that in many Western countries, e.g. Australia and the UK. It was not integrated into the formal school curriculum until 2009 as an elective component of Liberal Studies, a new core senior secondary school subject (Lee, 2010).

Apart from the above social implications, my research makes a number of scholarly contributions. First, it lends empirical support to Lazar's (2005, 2007) call for bringing together feminist studies and CDS in order to challenge patriarchal norms. My research demonstrates how sexism in media discourse can be effectively deconstructed through in-depth linguistic analyses, i.e. social actor representations, process types, appraisals and impoliteness, and van Dijk's sociocognitive approach to ideology (1998a), and how a critical feminist perspective serves as a useful interpretative lens to understand sexist media representations, especially in relation to features of postfeminist media culture, how sexism is embedded in the generic structure of

makeover television and the intersectionality of gender and other social identities. My research therefore showcases the synergy of combining insights from feminist scholarship and CDS to examine sexist media representations.

My research also contributes to the field of media studies in several ways. First, it adds an empirical case study to the under-explored area of Asian makeover television, and is, to my knowledge, the first dedicated to a locally produced relationship reality series directed at single women in a non-Anglo-American context (see Chapter 3). It also lays bare how the Hong Kong media is under the strong influence of cultural globalisation, particularly in relation to postfeminist media culture and makeover culture. What is more, it provides further understanding of the exploitative nature of makeover television by showing how *Bride Wannabes* serves as a platform for the 'experts' to publicly humiliate the single women participants in an environment where impoliteness is sanctioned, ostensibly for the participants' good, but most likely for commercial ends.

In relation to the field of gender studies, my research illuminates the knowledge gaps in Hong Kong single women as well as gender and media in the Hong Kong context (Fung and Yao, 2012). My research is, to my knowledge, the first study on media representations of single women in Hong Kong. It provides solid linguistic evidence how this group of women is stigmatised in the media through the interplay of patriarchy, postfeminism and ageism. Other than casting light on gender issues in Hong Kong, my research also contributes a case study to the literature concerning how makeover television reproduces sexist norms and shows that it is a rich site for exploring gender and the media.

Another contribution of my research concerns applying English-based linguistic frameworks including van Leeuwen's social actor framework (2008), Martin and White's

appraisal framework (2005) and Culpeper's impoliteness model (2011) to Cantonese data, which corresponds to my last research question:

> RQ7. How can Cantonese data be analysed in terms of social actor representations, appraisals and impoliteness using English-based linguistic frameworks?

To my knowledge, this research is the first to employ van Leeuwen's social actor framework (2008) and Culpeper's impoliteness model (2011) to analyse Cantonese data.

When analysing my data with the English-based frameworks, I looked at whether the categories in each framework are compatible with Cantonese as well as possible Cantonese-specific linguistic realisations. In terms of social actor representations, I focused specifically on the categories of categorisation, nomination and impersonalisation in van Leeuwen's framework (2008). I have found no special issue applying them to Cantonese,[84] but have identified a recurring Cantonese-specific linguistic realisation, namely the [relative clause]+[name] construction, e.g.

(162)

779	一直		等待	白	馬	王子	嘅	Florence
	All along	wait		white	horse	prince	LP	Florence

Florence, who is waiting for her prince on a white horse all along

In Cantonese, all relative clauses are pre-modifiers of nouns and function very much like an adjectival modification (Matthews and Yip, 2011, p. 482). Because of this property of Cantonese relative clauses, the non-restrictive relative clause in the [relative

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[84] Here I only mean that categorisation, nomination and impersonalisation are broadly compatible with Cantonese and do not seek to claim compatibility for other categories in the framework. It is quite possible that it will be problematic to analyse categories, e.g. exclusion, because of the pro-drop feature of Cantonese (*cf.* the same case in Japanese (Tominari, 2011)).

clause]+[name] construction is closely linked to the proper noun and therefore unlike the case of English, it should be considered part of the social actor reference. I have also demonstrated how the narrator repeatedly uses this construction to define the participants and steer responses.

Turning to appraisals, as they are realised according to semantic criteria, rather than grammatical ones, Martin and White's appraisal framework (2005) seems broadly compatible with Cantonese; nevertheless, I have shown how Cantonese sentence-final particles are a useful resource to express appraisal meanings and can map onto the attitude and engagement systems in the framework, which as far as I know, is an original contribution to the literature. In terms of the attitude system, Cantonese sentence-final particles can serve the function of affective and emotional colouring and shape meanings of non-attitudinal items; in terms of the engagement system, they can signal the speaker's stance.

As regards Culpeper's impoliteness model (2011), it works well for my Cantonese data. As it relies on the hearer's metapragmatic comments and/or reactions to realise impoliteness, I did not encounter any problem identifying impolite exchanges. When analysing what is seen as impolite by the participants based on the model, I was mindful of possible incompatibilities, especially in relation to impoliteness triggers, but in the end, I found it unnecessary to make any adaptation. Nevertheless, I have demonstrated how Cantonese sentence-final particles can function to signal the speaker's stance and exacerbate the force of impoliteness.

After discussing these implications and contributions of this research, the next section considers some of its limitations.

9.2. Limitations of the research

There are several limitations to my research. The first limitation concerns the small data size. I only looked at one makeover series and cannot claim generalisability for my findings. For example, my analysis of the participants' self-representations points to a link between women's attitude towards sexist beliefs and their socio-economic status. This needs further supporting evidence considering that only five participants are involved. My research only focused on *Bride Wannabes* because I think the series deserves a detailed investigation in its own right, rather than being analysed as part of a large dataset. As mentioned in Chapter 4, it was the first relationship makeover series aired on TVB Jade and its popularity brought about a number of similar makeover series. Hence, between breadth and depth, I opted for depth and provided an in-depth examination of all episodes of the series, which serves as a useful case study of how unmarried women are stigmatised in the media.

The small scale of this research also precluded me from dealing with some analytical parameters of relevance. For example, representations of single women in *Bride Wannabes* are highly multimodal, but my research mainly took into account the linguistic aspect, despite the relevance of other semiotic modes, most noticeably visuals. Although I included some stills from the show to support my analysis, e.g. to indicate the participants' emotional response to the 'experts'' face-attacks in Chapter 7, the visual aspect of the show certainly deserves more attention. Another analytical parameter in question is appraisals. As mentioned in Chapter 5, apart from social actor representations, appraisals also form an important part of how unmarried women are talked about (in addition to how they talk about themselves), which is highly value-laden.

Another limitation of my research is that I mainly focused on how unmarried women are represented in *Bride Wannabes* and did not examine its audience reception in any detail. While I included some forum posts about the programme in my analysis, they only served as textual support for my interpretation. The significance of audience research is emphasised by many scholars (e.g. Gill, 2007a, p. 25; Kitzinger, 2004). As different viewers might have different readings of a media text, in order to gain a clear understanding of the media's role in reproducing various sexist beliefs and sustaining the present unequal gender orders, it is insufficient just to textually analyse *Bride Wannabes*, without looking at how the sexist representations are consumed.

In relation to the above limitations, the next section will set out directions for further research.

9.3. Further research

In this section, I suggest potential areas for further studies, mostly corresponding to the limitations listed in Section 9.2. First, whilst I addressed the issue of the media stigmatisation of unmarried women who are considered no longer young in Hong Kong by conducting a thorough analysis of one makeover series, i.e. *Bride Wannabes*, I believe it is also beneficial to investigate the issue by analysing a number of media texts to find out general patterns. For example, the issue can be explored by looking at a few Hong Kong relationship reality series, e.g. *To Woo a Dame* (2014) and *The Perfect Match* (2010), to see how single women are represented in the genre more generally or by conducting a corpus study on some media texts related to the topic.

Further research can also be conducted in relation to *Bride Wannabes*. I only explored how unmarried women are represented in the show in terms of social actor representations, process types, appraisals and impoliteness. I think this can be

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investigated further by focusing on other analytical parameters. For example, a multimodal analysis will certainly shed light on representations of unmarried women in the show. Besides, it is also important to look at how the sexist representations in the programme are received by the viewers so as to obtain a clearer picture of the media's role in maintaining patriarchal norms. A possible way to do this is to examine forum posts about the series on the TVB discussion forum (see Chapter 4).

This research can also be extended to include as data *Bachelors at War* (2013), a Hong Kong relationship reality series directed at single men which was produced in response to the accusation of sexism in *Bride Wannabes* (see Chapter 4), and a comparison could be made between how single women and single men are represented. For one thing, this can further illuminate how unmarried women are stigmatised in the media; for another, as mentioned in Chapter 3, makeover participants are predominantly women, so it would be interesting to see how single men are represented in this highly gendered genre and whether they are problematised, humiliated and made over like their female counterparts in *Bride Wannabes*.

9.4. Concluding remarks

My research has demonstrated how single women who are considered no longer young are stigmatised through various patriarchal, postfeminist and ageist beliefs in *Bride Wannabes* and how the programme fosters sexism against social changes in favour of women. What I aim to accomplish through this study is to lay bare the persistent patriarchal gender orders in Hong Kong and to stimulate further research in this area, which I hope will eventually increase awareness of the social problem and contribute to more just gender relationships in Hong Kong.

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