

Neoliberalism, Postfeminism, and Ideal Girls: A Semiotic Discourse Analysis of
Successful Girlhood in *Seventeen* Magazine

M.A. Thesis

Victoria Sands
University of Ottawa
Institute of Women's Studies

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Supervisor: Dr. Lori Burns

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Shoshana Magnet
Dr. Willow Scobie

Abstract

This thesis looks at how a contemporary notion of successful girlhood is negotiated in the social text of *Seventeen* magazine. Moreover, it demonstrates the ways in which *Seventeen's* representations of successful and ideal girls reflect and mediate timely values of postfeminism and neoliberalism. This thesis will also make visible how race, class, ability, and sexuality are negotiated within *Seventeen's* "success" framework, in order to illuminate intersectional issues implicit in conceptualizing ideal girlhood. The method for this research is a semiotic discourse analysis, looking at the visual and linguistic signs within the text in order to connect them with broader ideologies and themes surrounding contemporary ideal girlhood.

Drawing on girls' studies and feminist cultural studies literature, the discourse of ideal girlhood is situated in a so-called "postfeminist" moment, in which girls, as popular, highly visible subjects in contemporary society, are perceived to be poised for achievement and social ascension, all while being closely surveilled. These expectations of postfeminism intersect with current neoliberal principles of individualized success; analysis is therefore connected with and contextualized by discussion of late modern principles of neoliberalism and its economic, social, and political logic.

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Introduction

Discourses that inform notions of girlhood and experiences of being a 'girl' are increasingly present in Western cultural spaces and public imagination. A constructed subject position preceding stable adulthood, girlhood is frequently characterized by a state of becoming and transformation, which is regulated in various social spaces. The current amplified public interest in girlhood is supported by the perception of girls as perfectly acclimatized late modern citizens (Harris, 2004, 9). This new social order necessitates neoliberal and postfeminist ideals, which girls are said to embody. Consequently, public displays of girls' success are sought as models of exemplary citizenship, while their failures contribute to widespread moral panic. This thesis will investigate how a contemporary notion of ideal girlhood is represented and negotiated in the cultural space of *Seventeen* magazine, and how this social text is used to communicate current social and political ideology.

This research involves several main objectives. Firstly, it seeks to explore the concept of girl and girlhood as its own gendered subjectivity, recognizing that "girl culture" produces unique, gendered cultural artifacts and practices. The second goal of this thesis is to examine the contemporary representation of idealized, successful girlhood in *Seventeen*, recognizing the magazine as a popular culture mainstay and window into girls' and corporate media, as well as an important social text. Lastly, it aims to demonstrate how this representation is emblematic of social and political

norms, mainly, the intersection between postfeminism and neoliberalism. In doing so, the subsequent analysis will show that contemporary girlhood and its representations are not contained and insignificant, but rather, a marker of ideal citizenship, and therefore, important in shaping culture, society, and politics.

Specifically, this analysis looks at how the defined features of the magazine (Fashion, Love Life, Beauty, Health, and Your Life), are understood as unique and specific elements of the neoliberal success ideology. That is, these 'sections' are all used to both communicate an ideology to girls, as well as incorporate girl culture into political discourse. The subsections of the magazine are therefore understood as an organization of gendered neoliberal discourse. Each 'realm' of *Seventeen* creates a 'world' for girls to inhabit, while giving a unique perspective on gendered neoliberal discourse.

Intersectionality is a key element of this research, which looks for the implication of different identities, social positions, and marginalities in conceptions of girlhood. Both the term "girl" and the notions of success and neoliberalism are unpacked in order to determine how privileged identities and power structures play into their ideology. Therefore, intersections of race, class, sexuality, and ability are explicitly interwoven into the analysis. However, when marginalized identities are explicitly represented, it is important to note exactly how this is negotiated, and whether or not these representations rely on stereotypes or generalizing tropes. Moreover, the analysis should avoid definitively labeling or over-simplifying a

representation based on the association with a marginalized identity. Marnina Gonick (2006) discusses the theoretical implications of intersectional analysis in her study of queer girlhood, writing that “an intersectional analysis makes the connections between homophobia, power and privilege allowing for an analysis of the ways in which sexed, gendered, raced and classed social positions intersect in shaping experiences of structural, political, physical and representational exclusion against queer youth” (123). Therefore, such a theoretical standpoint means recognizing that identity is directly connected to privilege and access to power, and that our social identities interact and intersect to shape certain experiences.

Research Practices

The sample used is the 2011 publication year of *Seventeen* magazine. As *Seventeen* combines December/January and June/July, this means that a publication year contains 10 issues. As a whole, *Seventeen* does not alter its content significantly from issue to issue, which is a common feature of periodical magazines. Much of the variance in content is seasonally based, for example, “back to school”, summer, Christmas, Valentine’s Day, prom, etc. The year-long sample therefore covers all these seasonal events, although this seasonal content follows similar themes throughout the year. Nevertheless, this range of issues gives a complete look at the attitude/outlook/theme of *Seventeen* throughout a calendar year. Given that the central discourse studied is relevant in its timeliness, it is important that the sample is contemporary and recent. The one-year timeline provides a current

'snapshot' of the magazine, yet it also extends long enough that patterns and recurring themes are noted and analyzed.

The research practice for this project is a semiotic discourse analysis of *Seventeen* magazine, focusing on the main articles and photo-spreads in each issue. Importantly, this research does not involve a content analysis, which would count and chart the frequency of words or images in order to value content through measurement. Rather, the discourse is of central importance to this thesis; I do not wish to illuminate the makeup of the magazine, but instead, how socio-political ideology is signaled in the magazine through its discursive constructions of successful girls.

A semiotic analysis involves identifying several different layers of meaning in the magazine; these include: the visual and linguistic signs and patterns, which include page layout, visual techniques, common words and phrases, etc.; secondly, narrative structures and thematic categorizations; and lastly, the thematic and ideological elements. I take as my main point of interest the ideological themes of successful girlhood in the magazine, and how they intersect with neoliberal values of idealized citizenship. These themes will be illuminated within the magazine's categories of Beauty, Fashion, Health, Love Life, and Your Life. Working with the sample of *Seventeen* will bridge insight on the significance of girls' material culture with theories of how girlhood is discursively produced in popular culture spaces.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into two main parts. In Part I, the theory and context of this research is explored, specifically as it is situated in girls' studies, providing a strong framework for the discourse analysis in Part II. Therefore, the first half of the thesis looks at the concept of "girl" as subjectivity, followed by the popularization of the discourse that constructs girls as ideal succeeding subjects. As context for the development of this discourse, a general discussion of late modernity and neoliberalism is subsequently gendered in order to reveal its implications for girls' idealization. Postfeminism is also explored as a parallel to neoliberal ideology, looking explicitly at girls' role and the rise of girl power. The development of the ideal, successful girl concept (the 'can-do' girl) is thus explained, looking closely at the activities and characteristics attributed to this ideal girl. To close Part I, the concept of magazines as a social text regulating the 'successful girl' discourse is explored, looking at teen magazines more broadly, then at *Seventeen's* specific outlook.

Part II first lays out the analytic method of the semiotic discourse analysis of *Seventeen*. Next, the analysis and its conclusions are discussed in detail, drawing on the concepts and ideologies explained in detail in Part I. The analysis moves through each section of the magazine, showing how content signals main themes and concepts relating to girls and postfeminist neoliberalism. It uses specific sample articles from the magazine (Figures) as the basis for analysis, commenting on

various elements and signs in the given article. Conclusions summarize the thesis and show the connections between different elements of the magazine, highlighting the interaction of the main themes across the text.

PART ONE

Theory, Context, and Literature Review

This thesis engages with key literature in contemporary girls' studies. As with women's and gender studies, girls' studies is an interdisciplinary field, bridging various areas of scholarship through gendered analyses (Forman-Brunell and Paris, 2011, 3). For this research, I have also consulted texts that offer a feminist appraisal of cultural, media, gender and youth studies. Since conceptions of youth and gender need to be rooted in place and cultural context, it is important to establish that the 'girl' to be studied here is situated in a Western cultural context, which is the perspective that is appropriate to the chosen research sample and its pertinent literature.

What is "Girl"?

The term 'girl' is in itself complex and not easily definable. A feminist, post-structural approach to gender further complicates the use of the idea of "girl" as a catchall term denoting a specific, knowable identity on the gender binary (Gonick, 2006, 122). It is therefore necessary to interrogate the norms, ideas, and assumptions surrounding "girl" as a gendered subjectivity. In doing so, I wish to

make clear my intentions in using the term and find a way to work with the concept in my analysis.

The question of how to label and identify girlhood and the girl subject is central to girls' studies literature. Noting the "long and problematic history" (Harris, 2004, 191) of reproducing subjects on the gender binary, feminist scholars are wary to recognize gendered categories that are seemingly rooted in biological essentialism (Gonick, 2006, 122; Jiwani et al., 2006, viiii; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2008, 14). As a gender category, girlhood, like womanhood, is marked by "impossibility" (Griffin, 2004, 30) and performativity. Girlhood is often understood in mainstream discourse as natural or innate (Lipkin, 2009, 1), in which characteristics and behaviour are ascribed based on perceived biological function.

Moreover, in using a singular category in popular representations, "girl" will likely reflect a vision of idealized femininity that makes exclusions of race, class, and sexuality (Currie et. al, 2009, 43; Gonick, 2006, 122; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2008, 14; Griffin, 2004, 30). Conventions of normative femininity restrict the accessibility of the identity, often to those with social capital and privilege. Acceptable and conventional notions of femininity often centre around social norms of privilege, that is, heterosexuality, ability, and a notion of physical attractiveness, the latter of which is rooted in perceptions of race and the body (Bettis & Adams, 2005, 9; Gonick, 2006, 123; Harris, 2004, 191; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2008, 14). As with the category of 'woman', the idea of 'girl' would in fact be referencing a diversity of

young female subjects. The singular term ascribes a problematic universality and homogeneity, assuming a mythic identity that erases difference.

There is no specific definition or clear indication of what characteristics make up the popular conception of “girl”. While there is a tendency to want to ascribe a certain age to girlhood, or use physiological markers, such as puberty, as indicators of being girl (Mitchell and Reid Walsh, 2008, 20), the fluidity of society’s perception of the identity means that ‘girl’ can refer to a wide age range. Currently, Western concepts of girlhood are expanding (Harris, 2004, 191) so that pre-pubescent ‘tweens’ are considered participants and producers of girlhood (Mitchell and Reid Walsh, 2008, 15). Increasingly older and younger females are taking part in youth-oriented practices, leading to an “elongation of the state of girlhood” and a “reconstruction of youth” (Mitchell and Reid Walsh, 2008, xxvi). This speaks to the fluidity of the category and its changing status in different contexts and the performativity of youth itself.

The characteristics, spaces, and practices associated with girlhood are constantly shifting and adapting, dependent on time, place, and social, cultural, and historical contexts. Identifying, or being identified, as a girl can mean different things at different social and historical times (Jiwani et al., 2006, xi; Forman-Brunell and Paris, 2011, 3; Griffin, 2004, 29). Through this recognition of the subjectivity’s fluidity and transformations, it is therefore possible to engage with “girl” in a feminist post-structural framework. That is, in acknowledging that “girlhood is a

construction made and remade through the material realities and discursive practices of the society” (Adams & Bettis, 2005, 9), it is clear that “girl” is not bound by fixed characteristics, but is, rather, formed in various spaces. In order to identify how girls are being “made” and what is being made of them, this thesis will examine a specific social space the produces and represents them. *Seventeen* magazine performs this cultural work of producing material understandings of girlhood. Identifying how girls are being made, and what is being made of them, can be done through looking at specific social spaces that produce and represent them. We will see how this plays out in the analysis of *Seventeen* magazine, a social text that continually produces material understandings of girlhood.

Given that girlhood is not inherently definable, but is instead a construct that bears shifting social meanings, it is also important to consider how differences of race, sexuality, and class are included or left out of the ‘girl’ category. Illuminating the power, privilege, and marginalization in representations of girls reifies the theoretical view of girlhood as being discursively produced. An intersectional analytic approach to studying girls highlights this recognition, and looks for ways to deconstruct the hegemonic ideology in discourse surrounding girls. In theorizing intersectionality, Gonick argues that we cannot simply add marginalized groups of girls into the popular concept of girlhood, but rather, we must continue to interrogate and deconstruct the identities that are privileged (2006, 122). Moreover, it is important to look at how marginal bodies and identities are represented or possibly ignored. There are representations of girls in societies that have created

systems of oppression, and these systems, such as racism, homophobia, or ableism, “[mediate] expressions of girlhood” (Jiwani et al., 2006, xiii). An intersectional approach to girls’ studies seeks to find the gaps in representation where marginalized identities are disregarded or shown untruthfully, while also making privilege visible.

As Gonick asserts, the young female subject is “produced within shifting sociohistorical, material, and discursive contexts” (2006, 3), and it is therefore vital to understand and analyze these very contexts that define girls. This critical deconstruction involves looking at the various meanings and identities interwoven in girls’ subjectivity. The discourses that are produced from these meanings show how girls are understood and represented as significant subjects today.

Youth and Girls: The Foundation of Girls’ Studies

Girlhood represents an intersection of a number of identities, with youth being one of the important components. Indeed, the girl identity is marked by ideas of becoming and ‘growing up’ (Griffin, 2004, 30; Driscoll, 2002, 9), and is therefore constructed not only by gender, but is rooted in the concept of youth. Understood as a stage of life in which one experiences an autonomy of self, youth became a recognized, studied category in the mid to late 20th century as a visible ‘youth culture’ began to emerge (Adams & Bettis, 2005, 8). At this time, young people began to be understood as a social group with identifiable characteristics, practices,

and materials. The scholarly conception of youth blended both biological understandings of the stage with ideological notions of what it is to be young (Adams & Bettis, 2005, 9). One of the most notable characteristics associated with youth was, and continues to be, their conflation with social change (Harris, 2004, 16). Thus, young people are perceived as being representative of the future, as well as having disruptive potential. Youth are often paradoxically associated with both the hope for social revolution, as well as the cause of “moral panics” (Harris, 2004, 15) as they comprise a new, unstable and unpredictable force.

This category, however, was mainly understood on androcentric terms in its conception, and popular representations of youth were often centered on a male image. In the field of cultural studies, youth subculture was also conceptualized as an inherently male experience (McRobbie and Garber 105; Bettis and Adams 8; Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 6). Thus, while girls were understood as existing alongside boys, their own activities, rituals, and social spaces were not considered to be unique from boys. Young females instead existed in the margins, as a deviance of youth; any focus on girls would usually be based on “anxiety and fascination over sexuality” (Griffin 30). As feminist scholars began to challenge inherent male bias in work, however, the idea of studying girls’ subculture gained traction. Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber’s seminal study in the late 1970s on girls’ subculture gendered or ‘girded’ the field of youth subculture in order to analyze how girls produce unique social networks, norms, and traditions (105). The work of McRobbie and Garber led to an understanding that young women produced cultures

in different ways and spaces (such as the notion of ‘bedroom culture’), and that their seemingly insignificant activities and materials carried significant social meaning (McRobbie and Garber 105; Currie 66). The field of girls’ studies then emerged as a zone in which the people and practices implicated in girlhood could be treated to rigorous critical examination.

Girls’ Visibility and Social Significance

The emergence of girls’ studies, and the academic focus on girlhood, is a recent and timely trend, reflecting the current popular interest in girlhood. This interest has brought about an increased visibility of girls in discursive and cultural spaces. There is a proliferation of popular media representations of young femininity, from books, to web presence, to movies, to television, as well as to girl-centered academic texts and discussions (Harris, 2004, 2). Importantly, girls’ studies scholars have noted that, beginning around the 1990s, this interest placed girls as idealized, central figures in the public realm; that is, ‘girls’ are not simply isolated sub-cultural entities, to be seen as interesting but ultimately ineffectual. Instead, they are implicated in socio-cultural ideology and discourse (Negra, 2009, 5; Gonick, 2006, 1; Harris, 2004, 1). Indeed, girls have become emblematic of contemporary political ideology, and are associated with neoliberal ideals of success (Harris, 2004, 63; Gonick, 2006, 18). This political idealization of girls as neoliberal subjects typically manifests itself as a discourse defining girls as either “successful” or “failed”. In my analysis of *Seventeen*, I will show, in part, how this neoliberal “successful girl” ideal

is promoted through the magazine's descriptions of girls' spaces, activities, and behaviour, which consistently guides girl readers away from potential "failure". The following discussion therefore offers an exploration of the discourse of success vs. failure, and its impact upon the socio-political meaning of girls.

Successful vs. Failed Girls

While much is said about girls and girlhood, in a variety of spaces and meanings, there is a fundamental and consistent feature of the discourse, which suggests that girls are always already negotiating opposing subject positions. That is, girls are discursively constructed as successful and idealized figures, or, opposing this, failed and at-risk youth. Literature refers to the idealized girl in a variety of ways, including the 'can-do girl' or 'future girl' (Harris, 2004, 10; Duits, 2008, 19), as well as the 'super-girl phenomenon' (Mitchell and Reid Walsh, 2008, 13). Others attribute the identity to the recognizable social narrative of 'girl power' (Gonick, 2006, 8); (Currie et. al., 2009; Mitchell and Reid Walsh 13). The can-do girl is depicted as "self-making, resilient, and flexible" (Harris, 2004, 6), able to sustain herself independently, thus perfectly acclimatized to contemporary political and socioeconomic conditions. In contrast, the 'failed' girl, one who does not live up to girls' innate potential for accomplishment and success (Gonick, 2006, 15), is represented as either vulnerable to social pressures and changes, or transgressive and disordered, through her expression of sexuality, consumption, relationships, and so on (Gonick, 2006, 15; Duits, 2008, 22; Harris, 2004, 14). Both of these subject

positions, successful and failed, are constantly “operating together” (Gonick, 2006, 2); each is reliant on the other’s existence to sustain their relevance. It is through the persistent threat of becoming the ‘failed’ girl that the necessity of achieving a can-do girl subjectivity is maintained.

Importantly, this idealized girl subject does not simply exist in a separate, gendered space, but is in fact an indication of broader social patterns. In *Future Girl: Young Women in the 21st Century*, Anita Harris writes that girls have become symbolic of the ideal late modern subject resulting in increased social investment, interest, and surveillance of girls (2004, 16). Currently, this abstract individual “is one who is flexible, individualized, resilient, self-driven, and self-made and who easily follows nonlinear trajectories to fulfillment and success” (Harris, 2004, 16). The association of these characteristics with girlhood, coupled with the mainstream cultural focus on young women, is a timely phenomenon, involving emerging socio-political ideologies and stratification of power. Marnina Gonick’s study of the girl power/failed girl discourse notes that the timing of its popularization is significant, as it implicates a number of social trends that gained significance in the last twenty years (Gonick, 2006, 2). Specifically, the notion that girls fulfill model citizenship involves a number of contemporary, interweaving issues, mainly: the implication of youth in shifting notions of citizens and the state; the notion of postfeminism and the legacy of feminist activism for the contemporary young woman; and changing social structures as modernity gives way to neoliberal ideology (Gonick, 2006, 1; Harris, 2004; Genz & Brabon, 2011, 7). The following exploration of these recent

social, political, and economic changes contextualizes the subsequent study of contemporary ideology in *Seventeen* magazine, showing how girls in particular have come to symbolize and participate in the various ideals of the new social order. Given that this thesis looks specifically at the neoliberal, postfeminist representations of girls in *Seventeen*, it is important to conduct a thorough review of the logic and development of these ideologies.

Late Modernity, Risk Society and Neoliberalism

The current world order is one that is characterized by rapid social, technological, and economic change. Such transformative shifts continue to influence social structures, identities, and gender roles. Broader socio-political and economic changes have developed new modes of power and governmentality for contemporary citizens to negotiate. In order to conceive of these impacts, including the effect on the contemporary perception of girlhood, the onset and development of late modernity and neoliberalism in particular must be explored.

The move from modern to late modern society is a key element of this new social order. Previously, industrial modernity saw the prevalence of industrial capitalism, production, and manufacturing, with a “strong centralized government” (Harris, 2004, 3). Social networks were more pronounced through communities and institutions; the post-war period saw the establishment of welfare states as well as networks of social justice and activism (Gonick, 2006, 5; Harris, 2004, 3; McRobbie,

2009, 3). In the late 20th century and early 21st century, however, late modernity brought a shift in the orientation of power, a new “social and economic logic” (Harris, 2004, 2) of neoliberalism. As a result of globalization, markets expanded globally, became more fragmented and tenuous, while the state favoured privatization. Deindustrialization and information capital meant that work and labour that became less stable, and instead more part-time and temporary (Harris, 2004, 3). In this setting, individualism has become a corporate value, with citizens expected to exhibit flexibility, self-regulation, and choice easily and freely.

Late modernity has also had a considerable impact on the concept of citizenship. While early modernity centered on the state providing entitlements to its citizens, it now emphasizes citizens serving the needs of the state (Harris, 2004, 64). Contemporary social discourse asserts the ideal of rights balanced with inherent responsibility. Citizens must earn their rights through participation in the public realm, namely economic: “In a competitive, individualized, marketized world individuals ... are obliged above all to participate in paid work as their primary duty of citizenship” (Harris, 2004, 65). Yet economic changes have led to increased stratification between rich and poor, and fewer social services, with more regulations to the assistance that is provided, deterring individuals from relying on the state to help achieve economic stability (Harris, 2004, 65). However, it is through this individualization, the separation of one from the ‘state’, that one can achieve citizenship. That is, citizenship is contingent on secure, financial

independence (Harris, 2004, 71). It is the individual's responsibility to attain this security, and therefore, to attain one's own citizenship rights.

These shifting societal norms and volatile economic trends cause feelings of uncertainty and fluidity. Deindustrialization, the collapse of community structures, and a rhetoric of insecurity (Gill & Scharff, 2011, 8) all create conditions for what Anita Harris terms a 'risk society' (2004, 4). That is, "global insecurities and economic unpredictability are combined with weakening collective ties and identities... this feeling of risk, and a sense of the loss of what was known and enduring, are generated by real or perceived broader global trends..." (Harris, 2004, 4). The decentralization of community, social welfare, and institutions creates a sense of stability and, as a result, security is no longer rooted in society, but rather, within the cultivation of individual identity and subjectivity (Gill & Scharff, 2011, 8). Ultimately, the pressure to create and regulate a 'self' becomes a personal responsibility; life planning and choice is done free of social assistance.

Neoliberalism and the Neoliberal "Success" Ideal

The guiding principle of this new society of late modernity is neoliberalism. A political economic ideology, it finds at its core a market ethic of free enterprise and individualism (Gill & Scharff, 2011, 3). However, neoliberalism has moved beyond the political and economic realm in its influence, infiltrating a wide spectrum of popular rhetoric. It guides social relations, values, and establishes expectations for

individual behaviour. It therefore creates a governmentality in which individuals place themselves under the scrutiny of the neoliberal ideal. “Neoliberalism is a mobile, calculated technology for governing subjects who are constituted as self-managing, autonomous and enterprising” (Gill & Scharff, 2011, 5). Drawing on the ethics of “individualization and risk” (Gill & Scharff, 2011, 8) that characterize the socio-economic time, the neoliberal ideal sets a standard for self-regulation, consumerism, and individualism. Ideal succeeding neoliberal subjects “... must be flexible, adaptive, and prepared to be in a state of continual ‘becoming’... supported by a discourse of limitless choice” (Gonick, 2006, 18). This range of choice is offered in identities, relationships, and consumable products. Therefore, neoliberal citizens must develop individual identity and knowledge of the self in order to govern their own choices and freedom efficiently.

In this context of late modern individualism and citizenship, it is important to recognize that while success is attributed to individual action, so is failure. Due to the fact that the neoliberal ideology asserts one’s personal freedom to attain social and economic capital (Gonick, 2006, 16), little attention is paid to possible structural and systemic barriers to success. The value of self-determination, seen as essential in a ‘risk society’, is often perceived as progressive, as it can free individuals from tradition and conventional expectations, allowing them to express autonomy. However, “... apparent opportunities for self-invention and individual effort exist within circumstances that remain highly constrained for the majority of people” (Harris, 2004, 5). These barriers and constraints are often made invisible through

rhetoric that extols self-determining freedom. This logic assumes that individuals are on 'even footing' in the free market and society, an ideal that is perpetuated in the elimination of social welfare programs (Gonick, 2006, 16). Therefore, with the notion of systemic inequality and privilege incompatible with neoliberalism, "structural disadvantage is recast as poor personal choices, laziness, and (incompetency)..." (Harris, 2004, 25). The possibility of this failure is consistently present and one must be mindful to avoid it. In sum, neoliberal ideology has not only created a guiding economic principle, but a precedent for self-governance and individualism to which today's citizens must aspire. Indeed, certain groups are perceived as being well positioned to take up this ethic. The push to adhere to these ideals is placed especially on girls, who navigate late modernity's impacts on popular conceptions gender and youth.

Girls as Ideal Subjects and Citizens: Gendering Neoliberalism and Late Modernity

In the midst of the socio-political changes described above, girls are not positioned to merely react; rather, they have emerged as ultimate, perfectly acclimatized neoliberal subjects. It is common for societies to idealize certain qualities and identities in times of transformation; the discursive construction of an ideal citizen—one who can best handle new and tenuous conditions—makes new expectations and norms seem attainable (Harris, 2004, 2). In order to understand

the ascension of girls as ideal, the discussion to follow will explore the relevance of both gender and youth to the late modern, neoliberal society.

Youth in particular have often been perceived as key in guiding societies through social transitions and cultural shifts, and this is increasingly relevant today (Gonick, 2006, 17; Harris, 2004, 2). The new social order is considered a birthright of young people, who are therefore most capable of dealing with new technology, communication, and social norms. However, this hope and idealization is tempered by considerable anxiety over how youth will handle new, often volatile conditions, create their best selves, and negotiate their place in the world. Gonick writes that adolescence is used to symbolize anxiety over “the widespread social changes taking place in domains such as technologies of cultural production, the organization of work... the social relations of the modern city... racial progress, changing gender relations, and the character of the nation” (2006, 4). Regardless of society’s excitement, ambivalence, or negative feelings toward these transformations, youth are perceived as most closely attached to them; they both inherit and propel these new values and systems.

Late modernity brings tangible lived consequences for young people, such as the changing work and employment conditions. Most notably, the “collapse of the full time youth job market, the rise of the service and communications sectors, and the fragmentation of both workplaces and work trajectories” (Harris, 2004, 7) have meant new life trajectories for young people planning careers and seeking wealth.

Neoliberalism also marked a change in the state's responsibility to children and youth. For example, contemporary policies toward children often emphasize zero tolerance ideology, moving away from child saving programs of earlier periods (Gonick, 2006, 6). Youth must therefore be a hope and symbol for the future, while also adjusting to a society unwilling to support them. Young people must negotiate the reality of structural inequality and tenuous economies with the myth of their ideal youth.

Gender, Women, and Late Modernity

Many elements of late modernity give women in particular the opportunity to embody the model 'citizen' subjectivity. This is evident in two vital aspects of the social order, to be discussed here: the labour force and the consumer economy. The characteristics associated with the ideal subject might have traditionally been understood as masculine, as women have been routinely denied access to tools that would allow them to embody citizenship (Tincknell, 2011, 85; Gonick, 2006, 4). However, the disintegration of strong social structures allowed women to move away from communities in which they were tied to rigid norms and gender roles (McRobbie, 2009, 3). Moreover, contemporary changes in the economy and production explicitly implicate women in consumerism and the labour market. Central to the neoliberal social order is the work that is occupied mainly by women; the move to a service economy has made women increasingly essential to the labour force, as the service industry tends to be feminized (Gonick, 2006, 4). Late

modernity brought with it an emphasis on high levels of consumption, and females are perceived as key consumers, shopping and spending out of both necessity and leisure. Neoliberalism emphasizes a consumption in which one purchases tools to create the self, as a project, therefore making it a “privileged site, especially for women” (Tincknell, 2011, 86). Indeed, many of the values extolled by neoliberalism seem to align with expectations placed upon women. In describing how neoliberalism is a gendered concept, Gill and Scharff write that “... it is women who are called on to self manage, to self discipline, to work on and transform the self, to regulate every aspect of their conduct, and to present all their actions as freely chosen... Could it be that neoliberalism is always gendered, and that women are constructed as its ideal subjects?” (2011, 7). The feminization of the late modern citizen is therefore understood to be a central component of the neoliberal social order.

Postfeminism: An Intersection with Neoliberalism

Given the ways in which both youth and women fulfill the expectations of successful neoliberal citizenship, the logic of social investment in girlhood, as a signifier of both categories, becomes clear. However, there is another key element that informs contemporary neoliberal girlhood, which is that late modernity also occurs parallel to a current era of postfeminism. As Gonick and McRobbie point out, the rise of neoliberalism in the 1990s occurred around the same time that the popular notion of feminism shifted and became mainstream, suddenly watered

down to a more accessible level, with certain elements dismissed outright (Gonick, 2006, 2; McRobbie, 2006, 12). It is around this time that popular culture centered on a female 'empowerment' discourse that took girls as its main symbol. For example, "girl power", girl music groups, the Riot Grrrl phenomenon, etc., all became increasingly popularized (Gonick, 2006, 8; Griffin, 2004, 30; Harris, 2004, 1). The concept of postfeminism, then, is important as it shows how feminism and neoliberalism interacted, and continue to do so, in order to make meaning of "girls" as key cultural figures. Current social texts, and popular media especially use postfeminist rhetoric in order to articulate new conceptions of gender (Negra, 2009). Postfeminism thus becomes a key element of texts such as *Seventeen* in articulating the role of girls in contemporary society.

What is Postfeminism?

Postfeminism, received as a contentious term, ultimately perceives current society as negotiating a feminist legacy. While the term itself is flexible and debatable, it has had considerable impact on cultural and political rhetoric, "(emerging) in the intersections and hybridization of mainstream media, consumer cultural, neoliberal politic, postmodern theory, and, significantly, feminism" (Genz & Brabon, 2009, 5). It has been used to negotiate changing norms around gender, identity, family, and the generational divide, notably between older and younger women.

The use of 'post' theory in feminism can be understood alongside similar contemporary 'post' discourses, such as post-modernism or post-colonialism. That is, postfeminism is "indicative of a post traditional era, characterized by dramatic changes in basic social relationships, role stereotypes and conceptions of agency" (Genz & Brabon, 2006, 1). It therefore emphasizes a need to reevaluate social norms after the transformations perceived to be caused by a previous 'feminism'. Placing 'post' before 'feminism' thus offers several interpretations; it may assert that feminism has ended, or that it is still changing, or that the definition of the ideology itself is elusive (Genz & Brabon, 2006, 4). It therefore marks a dependence on and independence from feminism.

In a discussion of the complexities of postfeminism, Gill and Scharff offer several different versions and uses of the concept. Firstly, as discussed above, postfeminism can be understood as an "epistemological break within feminism" (2011, 3), alongside other "anti-foundationalist" theoretical movements. Secondly, the 'post' is understood as being after 'second wave' feminism, which means that feminism in this sense is either "noted, mourned, or celebrated" (Gill & Scharff, 2011, 3) as a movement which has passed. Next, postfeminism might represent a backlash or anti-feminism, declaring that women's empowerment movements have changed too much, brought uncomfortable 'political correctness', and that further activism would be unrealistic. Gill and Scharff note that this is often wrapped up in masculinity or men's rights movements that claim men have been oppressed by the changes brought forth from feminism (2011, 3). Lastly, "post-feminism as a

sensibility... an object of critical analysis" (2011, 4), is offered as another interpretation, wherein one can engage critically with the idea of postfeminism. In this way, postfeminism is used as a marker in order to understand the new expectations for girls. It is this final interpretation—that postfeminism is an ideology that has permeated contemporary thinking about gender, and must therefore be taken into account in examining contemporary gender representations—that guides this analysis. Specifically, *Seventeen's* depoliticized representation of a consumerist, fun, visually appealing, yet seemingly empowered girlhood is understood as emblematic of a postfeminist social text.

It is important to note that postfeminist discourse often reacts to a concept of feminism attributed to the second-wave movement, in the West throughout the 1960s and 1970s (Genz & Brabon, 2006, 12)ⁱ. Therefore any action centered on women's empowerment after this timeframe would be relegated to the 'post' era. The response to this 'second-wave', mainstream idea of feminism in a postfeminist era is varying and complex, and can exhibit both antagonism and admiration. Likewise, postfeminism itself can also be treated with contempt or dismissal, as it is seen to negate the need for gender equality activism today (Genz & Brabon, 2006, 15).ⁱⁱ It is within this tension that girls especially are implicated, presented as those who have been empowered as successors of feminism, but who must now act as gender-neutral individuals who seek the gains of modernity.

Girls and Postfeminism: Taking on the Feminist Legacy

Feminism, or, as it is understood in popular discussion, women's liberation activism of the 1960s and 1970s, is recognized as having tangible effects on the public lives of women and girls. Activism was directed explicitly at "state sanctioned discrimination" (Harris, 2004, 6) and policy change. The time of 'post'-feminism thus found in influx of women in waged jobs and higher education, as a result of the fight for "equal access" (Harris, 2004, 7). The changing employment conditions of late modernity intersected with this feminist push for equal opportunity, so that as men moved into higher paying jobs and new industries, such as technology and finance, more employment opportunities were opened up to women, especially part time work (Harris, 2004, 7). New expectations for girls, as the recipients of these benefits, are made known; they must seek out education and high paying employment, all relying on their own selves to sustain their lifestyle (Harris, 2004, 8). As individualism is a core value of the time, girls are told (using both neoliberal and postfeminist rhetoric) that the state, family, or specifically, men, do not have ownership or authority over their lives (Harris, 2004, 8). Feminism is acknowledged as having given liberal political rights to girls. The power and ability to succeed is therefore articulated as inevitable for them.

A postfeminist society asserts that the gains of feminism are inherited by the girls of today. Seemingly unencumbered by structural disadvantage, girls are said to be offered complete equality and boundless choices; therefore, they must follow an

ethic of liberal individualism (Genz & Brabon, 2006, 14), rather than community, group oriented feminist principles. “By means of the tropes of freedom and choice which are now inextricably connected with the category of young women, feminism is decisively aged and made to seem redundant” (McRobbie, 2009, 11). Feminism itself is therefore posited as now wholly unnecessary in the lives of girls. It is frequently presented as an ideology that cannot speak to girls’ current economic, social, or cultural experience. For example, the idea of adopting or conforming to a singular “feminist” identity is often rejected, as in a time of hyper-individualism, such an identifier “... doesn’t allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect personal histories” (Genz & Brabon, 2006, 14). One’s individual identity becomes increasingly significant, over an explicit gender identity (Budgeon, 2011, 287). Feminism, conceived as collective and gender-oriented, is presented to girls as out of touch with a more individualist, equality-based, gender-neutral contemporary social order.

Girls Rejecting Feminism

Representations of feminism are often presented to girls as incompatible with their true desires and regularly emphasize a generational divide that roots a women’s ‘liberation’ movement in the past. The tough ‘policewoman’ (Genz & Brabon, 2006, 15) figure of the second wave is perceived as an authoritative figure, keeping girls from experiencing an ideal, true female subjectivity. The idea that feminism has disordered true femininity and prevents women and girls from

experiencing their own selves is recurrent in postfeminist ideology. While the ideal late modern subject must have knowledge of the self and be continually perfecting her subjectivity, “postfeminist identity paradigms... frame the search for self with an attendant assumption that feminism has disturbed contemporary female subjectivity” (Negra, 2009, 5). Given this supposed hostility between feminism and neoliberalism, anti-feminism is made accessible, fun, even fetishized. Here, the ‘look’ or aesthetic of anti-feminism is rooted in hyper-femininity and sexuality, thus emphasizing female sexual characteristics perceived as pre-feminism, with the freedom to engage in ultra-feminine behaviours representing the choices of postfeminism (Press, 2011, 120). The rejection of feminist or gender equality values by girls is also sexualized or made exciting: “... Feminism is rejected by those who should ‘know better’, and thereby the rejection itself is made ‘naughty’” (Press, 2011, 120). Similarly, McRobbie notes that young women are encouraged to separate themselves from feminism “for the sake of social and sexual recognition” (2006, 11). As feminism is made incompatible with late modern ideals, girls’ choice to reject it is made desirable and necessaryⁱⁱⁱ ^{iv}. This rejection assures social acceptance, desirability, and upward mobility.

‘Taking and Leaving’ Feminism

Some elements of feminism, however, are not dismissed completely. Yet these parts are selected carefully and woven into a larger capitalist, neoliberal narrative. The postfeminist way of articulating gender equality or female

empowerment is not through an articulation of structural inequality, or systemic sexism, but rather through emphasis of individual choice and freedom (Gill & Scharff, 2011, 2; Currie et. al., 2011, 293). In *The Aftermath of Feminism*, Angela McRobbie argues that aspects of feminist rhetoric, specifically notions of “empowerment” and “choice” are used to further a contemporary idea of girls’ equality (2009, 1). This appropriation seeks to distort and ultimately negate feminism. It presents a new empowerment scheme that puts ‘feminism’ out of date, misrepresents its history and intent, so that both the word and ideology are exchanged for the more mainstream, capitalist-oriented version (McRobbie, 2006, 2). Girls and feminism are integrated into an idea of Western individual ‘freedom’ that relies on consumption and regulated contribution to the economy. “The young woman is offered a notional form of equality, concretised in education and employment, and through participation in consumer culture and civil society” (McRobbie, 2009, 2). Women who are considered ‘equal’ or empowered are those who have been given access to these capabilities—to be employed, earn money, spend money, and so on; wage earning becomes symbolic of “respectability, citizenship, and entitlement” (McRobbie, 2009, 2). Therefore, the excitement and investment in girlhood, and the expectations for young women, come with the condition of adhering to the neoliberal social structure. “The new female subject is, despite her freedom, called upon to be silent, to withhold critique in order to count as a modern sophisticated girl. Indeed this withholding of critique is a condition of her freedom” (McRobbie, 2009, 18). This exchange of feminist values is presented as harmless, however, as the present social order is deemed to be ideal for young

women. The implication of women and girls in practices of wage earning, consumption, and so on, is articulated as full equality and empowerment, a final realization of feminist work.

The depoliticized elements of feminist principles are adopted as necessary for success in contemporary society. However, what are considered more radical or less desirable aspects of feminism are dismissed. “A fanaticized feminism operates at the edges of acceptability indicating where female empowerment has ‘gone too far’” (Budgeon, 2011, 287). Ultimately, female empowerment is not articulated as something to subvert power relations or social structures, but is rather integrated into them. As a result, society sees the “co-existence of neo-conservative values in relation to gender, sexuality and family life... with processes of liberalization in regard to choice and diversity...” (McRobbie, 2009, 12), thereby blending conservatism with liberalism and choice. McRobbie terms this a “taken into accountness” (2006, 12)^v, in which the gains of gender equality activism are considered and appropriated in terms of their convenience to the narrative of girls’ place in late modernity.

Girl Power and ‘Fun’ Feminism: Connecting with the Neoliberal Ideal

The type of empowerment discourse offered to young women must then be liberal and individualistic, but it must also be made fun and accessible. The concept of ‘girl power’, also popularized in the 1990s and early 2000s, alongside the rise of

neoliberalism, encapsulates the values and expectations offered to girls in a postfeminist climate in an enjoyable, cool, and bold way, befitting of the contemporary girl (Mitchell & Reid Walsh, 2008, 13). This term became especially well known in the West in the late '90s with the rise of the girl music group the 'Spice Girls', who took it as their motto (Gonick, 2006, 8; Duits, 2008, 21). It has its roots, however, in the "Riot Grrrl" movement of several years prior. 'Riot grrrl' took as its main objective the empowerment of young females (Harris, 2004, 17), and their ability to be strong and autonomous. It represented the intersection of a punk, underground lifestyle, with a feminism that was becoming more mainstream and accessible to girls in particular (McRobbie, 2009, 12). Many of these Riot Grrrl values, however, were reoriented as they began to gain mainstream attention, and were considered resonant with neoliberal philosophy: "Its punk philosophy of DIY and individual responsibility for social change lent itself easily to its transformation into a discourse of choice and focus on the self" (Harris, 2004, 17). As 'feminism' itself was being increasingly dismissed as irrelevant, this specialized 'girl' movement eventually morphed into an accessible 'girl power' ideology.

Girl power denotes the characteristics of the desirable girl subject: assertiveness, confidence, resilience, strength, and tenacity to achieve. However, it is about embodying these characteristics in an explicitly feminine manner. Girl power strives to reclaim femininity and assert strength through "girly" activities and identity (Genz & Brabon, 2009, 76). Importantly, it signals an appraisal of feminism as boring and unattractive, unable to speak to a new generation, and thus girl power

emerges as an updated, 'girly' form of female strength. It asserts that girls "can compete successfully alongside their male counterparts and attain equality without sacrificing...femininity. On the contrary, their empowerment and assertiveness are seen to be directly linked to their feminine identities" (Genz & Brabon, 2009, 77). This discourse is usually represented in popular media, frequently as a "buzzword to connote (a) phenomenon" (Gonick, 2006, 8), playing on the idea that girls are cultural leaders, competing and outrunning boys and men, especially in popular media^{vi}. Girl power signals a 'fun' awareness of gender difference, and perhaps inequality, while also asserting that girls have the empowerment tools to break down barriers.

Criticisms of this discourse note that girl power is depoliticized and detached from any tangible social justice movement (Harris, 2004, 17). It is also deeply rooted in consumerism; 'girl power' as a slogan or idea is often used to sell products, television, music, etc. Girls seem to derive their 'power' in this context based on their ability to spend and be economically visible (Genz & Brabon, 2009, 79). These critiques are rooted in a wider debate within contemporary feminism of finding an 'authentic' vs. non-authentic feminism; frequently, the latter is associated with consumerism and capitalism (Gonick, 2006, 8; Lazar, 2011, 38). This type of marketized feminism is frequently judged as serving the needs of a patriarchal, capitalist economy, and is therefore simply being used as a symbol or token by corporations, and governments, at their convenience (McRobbie, 2009, 18). Moreover, the so-called 'girly' attributes of girl power, often embodied in an

aesthetic 'look' of female power, often adhere to traditional, patriarchal normative femininity (Genz & Brabon, 2009, 79). Some scholars, though, contend that outright dismissal of girl power rhetoric is unfair and shortsighted. The emphasis on femininity as a powerful subjectivity subverts the stereotypes of girls' "passivity, voicelessness, vulnerability, and sweet naturedness", which can "create a shift in the dominant paradigms of cultural production directed at girls" (Genz & Brabon, 2009, 78, 83). It allows girls the vocabulary and rhetoric to express agency. It might also serve as a motivator for young women to overcome gendered barriers (Gonick, 2006, 11). Indeed, in relying on a "reductive binary structure" (Genz & Brabon) of good/bad feminism, the nuances of contemporary gender discourse can be lost. The relationship of girl power to feminism can, in fact, be ambivalent. At times it is used to signal feminism's continued relevance, while it can also exemplify its end and insignificance (Gonick, 2006, 8). Either way, it signals a connection between the ideal, can-do girl, and various ever-changing understandings of feminism. Girl power is in fact relevant to the late modern order, as "... it resonates socially and culturally within a climate of 'compulsory success' " (Gonick, 2006, 11). It can then be linked with the neoliberal requirements of the ideal young female subject.

The Ideal "Can-Do" Girl

Girls, then, are key subjects in the intersections of neoliberalism and postfeminism, which emerge as key ideologies in the new social order. The categorization of young women as either 'can-do' or 'at risk' is rooted in these

ideologies. The labeling of succeeding or failed girls therefore signals the popular perceptions of young women and how they might negotiate new social trends (Taft, 2004, 74).^{vii} Both of these seemingly contradictory categorizations work together to construct an ideal neoliberal girl to which young women must aspire (Gonick, 2006, 2, 18). Indeed, the compulsory ‘success’ discourse positions girls as the “most likely candidates” to handle socio-economic conditions, given how, as a result of postfeminist neoliberal conditions, they are “self-making, resilient, and flexible” (Harris, 2004, 6). Moreover, the new social values of individualism, liberty, and choice, are seen to resonate with principles of female empowerment.

It is this can-do girl, informed by neoliberal and postfeminist sensibilities, that is situated in various popular mediums. The magazine chosen for this research, *Seventeen*, is one such cultural text. Several other studies have examined the various expressions of the ‘can-do’ girl that emerge from different realms and identities^{viii}. As a result, the idealized, successful girl has become a recognizable figure in girls’ studies literature. The analysis of this girl in *Seventeen* uses these conclusions as a framework, or starting point, for understanding her materialization in the magazine. As will be demonstrated in Part II of the thesis, *Seventeen* creates a vision of can-do, neoliberal girlhood through engaging with numerous elements of girls’ lives, bringing together different spaces, activities, and identities within a single text. As a primer for this analysis, the following sections show, in detail, how the ‘can do’ girl is generally understood, and how she functions as a neoliberal, postfeminist citizen.

School and Education

The ideal girl's attributes become increasingly necessary and emphasized as she takes up the various spaces and activities of a neoliberal young woman. Education is constructed as a key, essential element of girls' success today (McRobbie, 2009, 73; Harris, 2004, 8), a place in which girls begin their trajectory toward a lucrative career lifestyle. As feminism and late modernity has weakened traditional family and home structures, school becomes a new space of hierarchy and classification for young women (McRobbie, 2009, 73). Girls' achievement in this realm is held to high standard, even more so as it becomes understood as the postfeminism generation of girls benefitting from women's rights activism (McRobbie, 2009, 74). Indeed, the narrative of girls eclipsing boys in school is popularized, sometimes playing on a postfeminist panic of boys being 'left behind' as girls have become over-empowered in place of their peers (Currie et. al, 2009, 40; Lipkin, 2009, 31)^{ix}Government programs and investment in young women's school success is also seen to give them a special boost. Classroom leadership and high postsecondary enrollment levels (McRobbie, 2009, 73) are held up as examples of girls' favourable position. The girl 'student' has then become emblematic of a contemporary female success and has re-shaped the discursive understanding of the education system itself. "(Girls') highly visible bodies are now marked by the possession of grades, qualifications, and occupational identities... the young woman comes to be widely understood as a potential bearer of qualifications, she is an active and aspirational subject of the education system, and she embodies the success of... new meritocratic values..."

(McRobbie, 2009, 73). Girls become defined and judged by their achievements in school, and their abilities are thus constructed as almost inherent to their gender. Commitment and dedication to an educational program is therefore compulsory to the ideal, successful girl today.

Employment and Career

To be well educated is ultimately seen as a stepping-stone for girls to attain employment in a rewarding field. In the context of insecure pay rates in a neoliberal risk society, along with changing social norms of marriage, girls are instructed not to rely solely on their (male) partner's wages (Harris, 2004, 8). Since marriage or family can no longer assure economic security for girls, self-sufficiency and independence is essential, and this is signaled through the achievement of work and career (McRobbie, 2006, 2). Ever in the state of becoming, girls are consistently told to plan and cultivate their path to employment. Communities, charity organizations, and government initiatives capitalize on this ideology, through, for example 'Take Girls to Work Day', and other such programs (Harris, 2004, 18). Media and popular culture also plays up the glamour of working women and career lifestyles, emphasizing the allure of consumption and wealth that accompanies work (Sanders, 2009, 73) and the public display of one's purchasing power.

Consumerism and Spending Power

The stipulation of cultivating one's own career path is necessitated through the need to partake in the economy and marketplace: "For young women, making oneself is also connected to making money for oneself" (Harris, 2004, 74). The 'can-do' girl must rely on her own self to sustain an existence that has as its core ethic a consumerist lifestyle. Being a consumer and being visible in the marketplace is a key tenet of contemporary successful girlhood, and a marker of postfeminist 'girl power' (Taft, 2004, 74). Economic wealth attained by girls is constructed as the result of girls' own determination, savvy, and assertiveness. Indeed, young women are perceived as key consumers in today's society, with significant and influential spending power (Taft, 2004, 75). Girls are encouraged to exercise their empowerment, independence, and free choice through spending. The autonomy and choice connected with retail spending is blended with political and social freedom, a "linking of neoliberal ideologies about individual choice with a distorted kind of feminism" (Harris, 2004, 89). Girls' ability to make public, visible choices is seen as liberatory, solving "the problems of their moves by being empowered and decisive... through consumption" (Harris, 2004, 89). Yet they also must exercise careful restraint in order to demonstrate capability with money and therefore, an economic sensibility that will ensure their citizenship. They are told "... to buy what they like, and to spend their discretionary income on carefully selected products that make a statement about who they are" (Harris, 2004, 89). That which they consume speaks to their individuality and decision-making powers; the products symbolize the unique identity of the purchaser. Consumption habits therefore become a reflection of self.

Moreover, the ideal girl itself is a marketable product, which girls, and others, are encouraged to buy into. "... The image of successful, individualized girlhood itself is one of those most profitable products being sold to them and others... 'successful girlness' has become the revitalizing force in marketing" (Harris, 2004, 20-1). Girl power, or the concept of girls on top, has become a trend or product to be bought; being a girl is a style, a popular and recognizable brand.

Emotional Literacy and Self-Cultivation

In addition to being visible as workers, students and consumers, ideal girls must also take on certain characteristics and knowledge. As self-regulating subjects, both personal and interpersonal relationships are held to the neoliberal ideal. Girls must display an understanding and awareness of themselves and their actions as a psychosocial subject. "A new kind of psychological subject is demanded, and it is through the psychological knowledges and techniques autonomous individuals know and govern themselves and others and mediate our social and personal experiences" (Gonick, 2006, 18). Therefore girls, whose femininity is perceived to be most attuned to this "emotional literacy" (Gonick, 2006, 5), are seen as easily tapping into their inner selves and therefore more deftly governing their own actions and relationships.

The intense self-governing standard set for girls extends to control of their physical selves, as well. In fact, the rise in women's autonomy and independence has been met with a "renewed discursive emphasis on femininity as a pathological condition, this time recast as a relentless drive for physical perfectibility" (Tincknell, 2011, 83). Ideal 'top' girls are figured as adhering to normative femininity, meaning they are hyperfeminine, heterosexual, light skinned, and slim (Francombe, 2010, 353). The female body, however, has become fragmented in popular discourse, with different areas to be perfected in various modes. Girls and women are again directed to the market to achieve the "wholeness" that comes with physical perfection (Tincknell, 2011, 86). Femininity and beauty are repackaged as a right for girls, and seeking the products and practices to do so is labeled as emancipatory. Michelle M. Lazar argues that this discourse is about "repeatedly and universally reducing the political to the personal" (2011, 49). That is, broad socio-political concepts are offered to young women in consistent 'girly' formats; the successful girl is continually reifying her conventional femininity while acting as an idealized neoliberal subject.

The quest toward perfectibility for girls, however, necessitates an impossible ideal. It is a high standard to which one must measure up, and girls are often implicated in behaviours deemed to be counter-productive to future success. Therefore an opposing subjectivity, the failed or at risk girl (Duits, 2008, 19; Projansky, 2007, 42), is constructed as the young woman who cannot embody neoliberal standards of success. This failed girl is presented as one who has not lived

up to her potential, or neglected the 'boost' offered to her through the gains of feminism; she is unable to assert her 'girl power' (Duits, 2008, 19). The ideal girl's subjectivity is made constantly susceptible to the possibility of failure, and more effort is therefore put into avoiding failure, as well as regulating and punishing those who do.

Failed Girls

The concept of the 'can-do' girl doesn't account for social privilege and systemic barriers to success, wherein "apparent opportunities for self-invention and individual effort exist within circumstances that remain highly constrained for the majority of people" (Harris, 2004, 5). Any failure is attributed to individualized problems rather than systemic disadvantage, which is "recast as poor personal choices, laziness, and incompetent family practices (Harris, 2004, 25). The behaviour of girls who do badly is often tied to their communities, class, and identity. That is, 'failed' girls often have class and race based associations (Projansky, 2007, 55). Of course, the ability to acquire wealth, to be self-sufficient, to have social capital, to be adaptable and flexible in the market and beyond often requires privilege and access to power (Harris, 2004, 5; Gonick, 2006, 16), which is systematically denied to people of colour, to queer folk, to disabled communities (Currie et al, 2009, 48) and so on. Such identities are regularly associated, through stereotypical representations or punishing regulations, to deviant, undesirable

girlhood. The problems linked to these youth are then seen as almost innate or inevitable (Harris, 2004, 25), and the label of 'at-risk' can be defining and restrictive.

Failed girls can be represented as actively delinquent, utilizing a kind of girl power gone unchecked, or too far, "(enacting) the gains of feminism in problematic ways" (Harris, 2004, 29). These girls display assertiveness or confidence but in unsanctioned ways. This is seen in the recently popularized "mean girl" discourse (Projansky, 2007, 56; Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2008, 10), in which bullying, social exclusion, and manipulation are considered to be social epidemics in girl relationships. This is construed as differing from the norm of male aggression; mean girls are portrayed as using unique or hidden ways (e.g., gossip) to gain control and assert a "feminine pathology" (Mitchell and Reid Walsh, 2008, 10). Postfeminist society thus "fetishizes female power and desire while consistently placing these within firm limits" (Negra, 2009, 4); such a contradiction can also be found in how girls' consumption can be closely regulated and punished. That is, while consumerism and consumption is lauded as a key feature of can-do girlhood, a certain kind of consumption is stigmatized and associated with failed girls. This could include consuming drugs, alcohol, weapons, sex, or food, in deviant or excessive ways (Harris, 2004, 29). Such instances receive frequent and intense media representation and widespread social anxiety over girls' behaviour.

Girls can, however, be conversely represented as passive victims, which produces similar concern and discussion over young women's place in society.

Marnina Gonick labels this the “Ophelia”^x phenomenon, describing a popular academic and mainstream ‘movement’ of Ophelia-based scholarship and market presence; that is, the proliferation of the girls-as-victims trope (2006, 12). In this representation, girls’ real, genuine self is seen to be lost in the tumultuous time of girlhood. This notion is rooted in a postmodern understanding of a shifting discursive self, which must navigate an uncertain path to adulthood (Gonick, 2006, 12). Furthermore, it is girls’ embodiment especially that creates and sustains their weakness. In a discourse reminiscent of the hysteria diagnoses, girls are seen as trapped and defined by their hormones, sexuality, and body shapes (Gonick, 2006, 13). They are vulnerable to issues of self-esteem, body manipulation, and unchecked hormones, all unfortunate consequences of their inescapable female bodies.

While such discussions can create a space to examine pressures and difficulties facing girls today, it can also contribute to girls’ cultural diminishment. That is, “the representation of adolescence as chaos feeds into many of the demeaning cultural stereotypes about girls and young women” (Gonick, 2006, 13). The concern over victimized girls rarely allows room for these girls to display agency or the ability to articulate their own problems. Moreover, Gonick wonders what types of girls are seen “as worthy of celebrating? Of mourning?” (2006, 15). There is often a distinction between behaviours that provoke concern and sympathy from society, and those that are criminalized or punished.

Girls often face different consequences for their failed or at-risk behaviours, frequently depending on their access to or experience of agency and power. Society often frames girls' problems in different ways depending on how the behaviour is perceived, which might rely on a number of factors (Gonick, 2006, 15). Because of structural advantages and disadvantages, as well as deeply embedded systems of prejudice and discrimination, certain "can-do girls are rarely able to fail, while other young women have few opportunities to succeed" (Harris, 2004, 32). That is, there is no level playing field in which all girls are equally susceptible to success or failure. Indeed, can-do or successful girls also face problems, however, many of these issues are constructed as psychological, and there is targeted regulation and attention paid in order to move them back toward success (Harris, 2004, 32). Indeed, the 'saving' of these girls is normalized, and made mainstream, especially in the marketplace. Moreover, these 'temporary' problems are seen to be afflicting mainly middle class, white girls; racialized and marginalized girls who face similar problems are often criminalized, institutionalized, or pathologized, being "more likely to be incarcerated than referred for treatment, while white girls are more likely to be referred to mental health facilities than juvenile justice agencies" (Harris, 2004, 34). Across social divisions, however, girls themselves are constructed as the 'things' that need fixing when problems arise, and they must therefore maintain constant self-improvement and regulation. This is a requirement for both marginalized and privileged girls—both are closely monitored and carry an expectation of success—but their failures are treated differently by society.

The prevention of, or solution to, failure is mainly constructed as being within products or participation in the market (Gonick, 2006, 15), or within the school and education system (Harris, 2004, 28). Indeed, life planning and strategy, especially with regards to education and work, is perceived as vital to girls' success. Failed girls are often perceived as not having planned adequately, foreseen potential problems, or prioritized certain elements (Harris, 2004, 26). As a result, guides for girls to navigate their lives and create successful selves are increasingly popularized in mainstream culture. Indeed, the governing of girls' behaviour is made vital in order to uphold the contemporary model of neoliberal citizenship.

Magazines: Situating Successful Girlhood in a Social Text

The ideology of successful neoliberal girlhood is present in a variety of postfeminist cultural representations. In fact, much of the contemporary discourse surrounding girls finds itself especially resonant in popular culture (McRobbie, 2009, 1; Gonick, 2006, 1; Currie et al, 2009, 47). In particular, the publication *Seventeen* magazine, directed specifically at girls, communicates the ideology of successful girlhood, and presents it in a format that offers girls instructions toward creating an ideal self. This study of *Seventeen* will therefore bridge insight on the significance of girls' material culture with theories of how girlhood is discursively produced in popular cultural spaces. In order to analyze how *Seventeen* mediates this socio-political discourse, it is important to contextualize the role and function of magazines in girls' lives and as a broader cultural form.

Generally, magazines^{xi} are widely read periodical publications that cover a wide spectrum of issues and audiences (McLoughlin, 2000, 1). A large editorial board produces content, which is often published by a company that puts several magazines into circulation (McLoughlin, 2000, 3). Reading magazines is understood as a leisure activity, a view which can diminish the perceived significance of these publications as sites of culture (McRobbie, 1991, 83, 143); furthermore, the association of many publications such as *Seventeen* with teen girls increases their social devaluation, as many activities and materials of girlhood are often considered unimportant, transitory, and ephemeral (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2008, xxvi-xxvii). Teen girl magazines are considered part of “mass culture” (McRobbie, 1991, 83), which, in both mainstream perception and within the academic realm of cultural studies, can be considered a ‘lower’ form of culture and consequently underdeveloped as a site of analysis (McRobbie, 1991, 84; McLoughlin, 2000, 3). In *Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just Seventeen*, Angela McRobbie outlines several differing views of girls’ magazines as mass cultural forms. Firstly, they are perceived as low brow, their readers as “mindless morons” (McRobbie, 1991, 84), and are not a vehicle for significant analysis. Secondly, they are constructed as entertainment produced to distract the masses, “a mouthpiece for ruling class ideology” (McRobbie, 1991, 85). Alternatively, teen magazines could be seen simply as that which is made available to girls and are placed within their means to consume, unlike ‘higher’ forms of culture (McRobbie, 1991, 86). As agents of their own consumption, girl readers can then interact with these magazines in

subversive ways. Lastly, drawing on Stuart Hall, McRobbie offers the idea that magazines might represent a real expression and reflection of youth interests, and girls can decide what they will take from it (1991, 87). Although these ideas all have relevance, this thesis will not look at the readers' role in receiving or shaping the text. Instead, the significance and interest in *Seventeen* lies in its role as an artifact of girls' material culture (Driscoll, 2002, 74), which seeks to socialize girls and perpetuate contemporary gender norms. As a widely read social text, *Seventeen* carries with it relevant contemporary discourse on girls and allows a window into how these values are made accessible to a girl readership.

Magazines aimed at young females are social texts, which “mediate a cultural realm inhabited by hypothetical feminine subjects and a realm of embodied women as magazine readers” (Currie, 1999, 12). To validate and study social texts that are typically devalued requires us to recognize the power hierarchies of knowledge (Currie, 1999, 12), and the importance of highlighting subjugated forms of culture. Furthermore, this erases the notion of a single aim on behalf of the producer (Currie, 1999, 144). It recognizes that the text—the magazine—placed in its social context, will have significance as a medium of social power, roles, and norms. Therefore, the text itself does not exist in a vacuum (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010, 63); it is contextualized by culture. While teen magazines have a commercial, simple look, making them appear light and accessible, they are nonetheless produced with intentions, messages, and meanings. As McLoughlin states, “The easy-to-read format does not mean that (magazines) are not carefully crafted” (McLoughlin, 2000, xii).

Recognizing the social constructedness of the text allows for deconstruction and analysis of its themes.

Magazines are distinctly recognizable among other media forms in that they are easy and accessible texts. Characterized by a “lightness of tone... (a) non-urgency” (McRobbie, 1991, 90), they are meant to be read randomly, and at leisure. Placed in the context of an “information society” (McRobbie, 1991, 144), in which youth are inundated with media, magazines are often considered a ‘fallback’ activity against a multitude of other offerings. The “fragmented reading” (McRobbie, 1991, 143) style often takes place while girls use other media forms at the same time; for example, reading a magazine while watching television. The oversaturation of media texts for youth is a contemporary phenomenon. Girls are therefore navigating similar messages and rhetoric from a variety of media sources.

The visual content is often a key element of girls’ magazines; they are “intended to be looked at... this overriding concern with visuals affects every feature” (McRobbie, 1991, 91). *Seventeen’s* covers in particular are bright and full of colour, with an assortment of statements and questions meant to grab attention; Kelly Massoni describes *Seventeen’s* overwhelming “psychedelic” aesthetic as a “colorful cacophony of words, visually shouting” (2010, 105). Inside the magazine, the content follows a familiar structure from issue to issue. Teen girl magazines demonstrate a “rigid adherence to a certain style of layout and patterning of features” (McRobbie, 1991, 90). This emphasis on familiarity means that regular

readers always know where certain content is in the magazine, which results in easy reading. While changes are represented in new trends and styles, the foundational elements, such as the look of models, the poses, and the aesthetics, are frequently the same (McRobbie, 1991, 90). This static nature of the magazine presents an alternate, fixed, and ageless world for girls, unlike the “real world” of, for example, school, which is continually changing (McRobbie, 1991, 90). The magazine therefore represents an accessible escape for the readers.

Magazines aimed at young teens operate as a sort of guidebook for girls, creating an inviting community for girls to explore, in which that which are considered their ‘personal’ issues are made public. Often without naming or recognizing their gendered implications, magazines create norms, rules, and structure to which the readers must adhere. It seeks to socialize youth into gender roles, mediating how girls understand and identify their subjectivity (Currie, 1999, 54). Much of the content centers on how to navigate relationships, improve one’s appearance, and “succeed socially” (Lipkin, 2009, 137). There is a continued emphasis on cultivating and improving oneself. McRobbie writes that this search for self has, in contemporary magazines, replaced the narrative of the pursuit of romance for girls (1991, 145-146). The search for self is often explored through the purchasing of products; indeed, consumerism is a key tenet of girls’ magazines (Currie, 1999, 23; Lipkin, 2009, 137), drawing on the postfeminist ideal of young women’s purchasing power. Revenue from advertisers drive magazines (McLoughlin, 2000, 101), and the content of the text is therefore blended with a

consumerist ideology. This often results in what are called ‘advertorials’ (Currie, 1999, 77; McLoughlin, 2000, 101), in which a feature explicitly names products and brands as part of a broader discussion, situation, or problem. Prices and information of products pictured and discussed are often given in smaller print at the bottom of the page, which indicates the primary function of the editorial (Pike, 2011, 61). This covert advertising is thus disguised as a normal discourse on girls’ desires and needs.

While girls’ magazines often focus on fixed, sometimes repetitive, content and features, there have been contemporary changes made to the mainstream girls’ magazine landscape. Often, this is a result of a postfeminist ideology of girls’ need for equality discourse (Pike, 2011, 58), although it has been criticized as merely a “lip- service to empowerment” (Lipkin, 2009, 137). Many such changes are related to body image and the appearance of models in magazines; for example, *YM* magazine pledged an end to diet articles, while *Seventeen* published a “Body Peace Treaty” for girl readers to sign (Lipkin, 2009, 137). There is also a new emphasis on college and career features. However, this content is still tied into an imperative that seeks to regulate girls’ activity and mandate high consumerism and beauty norms.

Seventeen Magazine: Relevancy, History, and Current Outlook

Despite the changes in media with the rise of Internet culture and content, magazines are still widely read in print form by young females. Although the activity

has declined slightly in recent years, “according to market researchers, 77% of teenage girls read a magazine for pleasure on a weekly basis, spending an average of 2.6 hours in magazine reading per week” (Massoni, 2010, 197). *Seventeen* garners much of this market. Its distributor’s website, media conglomerate Hearst Corporation, claims through independent research that *Seventeen* “reaches 13 million readers” as the “largest selling teen beauty and fashion magazine” (Seventeen Media Kit, 2011). Their international distribution is also considerable; as of 2009 there were 13 international editions in print, while in the United States, the circulation reached two million in 2008, which was the ninth highest circulation rate among female magazines (Massoni, 2010, 195). As for competition, its closest rivals have been *YM* and *Teen*, while the American magazine market expansion toward the end of the 20th century also led to a proliferation of youth counterpart magazines, such as *Teen People*, *Elle Girl*, and *Teen Vogue* (Massoni, 2010, 195-6). However, these publications had a relatively fleeting presence in the market, and all folded between 2001-2008 (Massoni, 2010, 196), with the exception of *Seventeen* and *Teen Vogue*. As of 2009, *Teen Vogue* remains the only print competition, however, has only half its readership (Massoni, 2010, 196). Therefore, *Seventeen* has proven to be a consistent and profitable presence in the teen and magazine market.

In order to explore *Seventeen*, Kelly Massoni’s *Fashioning Teenagers: A Cultural History of Seventeen Magazine* (2010) provides an extensive look at the history and current make-up of the publication. The first publication of *Seventeen* was distributed in the United States in September 1944 (Massoni 2010, 28). There was

little direct competition for the content and demographic of *Seventeen* at the time. For example, the monthly *Calling All Girls* targeted a younger demographic, others were linked with religious organizations (Massoni 2010, 29) *Mademoiselle* was *Seventeen*'s most direct competition, which "could be regarded as *Seventeen*'s foremother" (Massoni 2010, 29), although it was likely directed more toward a young womanhood than 'girls', while *Seventeen* bridged the older and younger market. Indeed, *Seventeen* was created in a burgeoning teen magazine market, at a time in which the idea of youth or the teenager was quite new, which there was an 'in between' stage of being a young child to womanhood (Massoni 2010, 7). Young women were being regarded as a category that could be a niche demographic in the magazine market, targeting their sense of fashion, grooming, relationships, and citizenship. As Massoni writes, the early target of *Seventeen* was an idea of a girl citizen whose magazine could guide her toward fulfilling her role in community and country (Massoni 2010, 7). Notably, early issues were published during the Second World War, which shaped the magazine's content and vision considerably (Massoni 2010, 30). Massoni idealizes this early conception of *Seventeen* as addressing a girl readership who are "whole human beings" (2010, 25), with more focus on girls' thoughts and minds, and less on body and products.

Currently, *Seventeen*'s vision of itself is more varied. Hearst's website describes magazine as a report "on the latest in fashion, beauty, health and entertainment, as well as information and advice on the complex real-life issues that young women face every day" (Hearst Corporation: "Seventeen"). It therefore sees itself as being

up-to-date and contemporary on fashion and beauty news, however, it also posits itself as a publication that is well rounded enough to address “complexities” of girls’ “real life” issues as complete persons and community members. Hearst’s “Seventeen Media Kit” breaks down topics in order of the attributed space inside the magazine. In order of space used, these are: Fashion; Beauty; Self-Help and Relationships; Health; Culture; Entertainment; Miscellaneous. In presenting this data next to a graph of Teen Vogue’s editorial mix (“Seventeen Media Kit”, 2011), which shows that the majority of content is focused on fashion, Hearst seems to suggest that there is a superior ‘mix’ of content in *Seventeen*. However, as a *Seventeen* historian, Massoni seems unsatisfied with this focus on “body-related articles” (2010, 196) in the magazine as opposed to its original intention of creating a community-minded, well-rounded girl reader. Massoni criticizes the magazine’s current obsession with fashion and body, as “objectifying and trivializing” (Massoni 2010, 25), thereby rendering the girl reader’s actions trivial and insignificant. The intent of this thesis, however, is to give meaning to this supposedly depoliticized content. I wish to demonstrate that, although image and product oriented, and, ultimately, ‘girly’, it is important to recognize that such elements are currently used as a vehicle through which to communicate a neoliberal ideology to girls. Part II will examine how the discursive content of the magazine signals a contemporary vision of girls’ embodiment of neoliberal success.

PART TWO

Analysis of Seventeen

Analytic Method

The analytic section of the thesis adopts a semiotic approach to the magazine as text and offers a critical discourse analysis. The discursive construction of the neoliberal girl is analyzed through signs, both linguistic and visual, in *Seventeen*. As Lazar explains in her study of consumerist postfeminist discourse in magazine beauty advertisements, a critical discourse analysis is a “close analysis of the semiotic expression of discursive meanings via language and other meaning-making resources (e.g. visual images, colour and typeface)” (Lazar, 2011, 39). Lazar applies this analytic method to magazine advertisements of beauty and cosmetic products, and examines the symbolic cultural meanings that emerge from the linguistic and visual signs. The notion of discourse here is understood as socially constructed and infused with contemporary ideology, meant to convey specific meanings. For instance, Lazar looks at how certain phrases connote postfeminist meanings, such as product slogans that tell women to “fight for their right” (2011, 41) to improve their body, thus highlighting liberatory and emancipatory discourse through words and rhetoric. Importantly, she takes in the visual signals in the text as well; for example, analyzing the “checklist” format of an advertisement as promoting independent choice, or the leather worn by the advertisement’s model as suggesting the prototypical “tough” postfeminist woman (2011, 42). Lazar therefore understands discourse as a “systematic, socio-historically contingent signification practice”

(Lazar, 2011, 39), connecting words and visual signals to a broader context of how women are told to relate to freedom and choice in a consumer context.

A critical discourse analysis seeks to deconstruct the text's implicit biases and ideological assumptions, looking to the power structures and social myths that informed its construction. Discourse is thus understood not as a neutral system, but rather, as a meaning system that carries hegemonic ideals that have been normalized and perpetuated in society (Fairclough, 1995, 9). That is, our society relies on certain truths and myths that inform 'facts' or common sense; this maintains power structures that can work to actively oppress. For instance, texts such as *Seventeen* often uphold a mythic vision of femininity that is based on strict gender norms and heteronormativity, therefore erasing transgressive or marginalized identities, such as queerness. It is therefore important to interrogate how language and other devices are constructed and to consider the context in which the text was created.

Semiotics, as a methodological tool, helps to deconstruct various elements of a text in order to illuminate its ideological underpinnings. Semiotics is known as the study of signs, that is, visual and written cues, patterns, and themes, within a text (Durham, 2007, 11). Martin and Ringham explain that European semiotics, developed by Greimas in the Paris School, looks at how signs "produce meaning within a given text or discourse..." (2006, 2). They go on to clarify that "Semiotics...posits the existence of universal structures that underlie and give rise to

meaning” (2006, 2). In other words, semiotic analysis seeks to uncover the social meanings, ideologies, and myths that are suggested by a text by mapping the pattern and arrangement of its signs. This involves looking at the sign at multiple levels. Firstly, the sign is constructed by both the signifier and signified, the former being the actual word or picture, while the signified is the idea or concept represented by that word or picture (Martin & Ringham, 2006, 187). The signifier and signified work together to produce meaning.

Semiotic analysis also considers the denotation and the connotation of a sign. The denotation refers to the literal, dictionary definition of a word or symbol, while the connotation is the additional meanings or concepts implied by the sign (Martin & Ringham, 2006, 51, 62). These implied, connoted concepts often appear in recurring arrangements, structures, or patterns, which should point to the broader context of the research. Patterns should be explored, and sorted into codes or themes, which are connected to broader social and cultural frameworks.

Semiotic discourse analysis allows for consideration of a number of textual levels. Martin and Ringham set out three levels: discursive, narrative, and thematic/abstract (2006, 11-12). I adopt this approach in first analyzing at a discursive level, which means exploring the figurative elements of the text, that is, the external signals which we apprehend through looking. This involves noting vocabulary, dominant or common words, the genre and template of a text; the way certain words and images are placed on the page; and the assumed speaker and

audience. Next, the narrative level examines the structure and message produced, including the intent of the text and the 'quest' or story set out. This involves analyzing the text's interdiscursivity, that is, the connection and relation of the text to social ideology and systemic institutions (Martin & Ringham, 2006, 11-12). The third, and most important to my analysis, is the 'deep' or thematic level in which the analyst interprets the signs as more abstract symbols and themes that represent broader social ideologies that produce the text. As Martin and Ringham set out, the analyst should find the values and meanings signified, and then explore the "broader considerations of sociopolitical and cultural context" (2006, 271). This means looking for the myths, ideologies and assumptions reflected in and generated by the text.

An example of a more abstract semiotic sign is the development of a common 'myth' within a discourse. The 'myth' is a concept associated with Roland Barthes (Durham, 2007, 4), and understood as an "ideological trope" that carries significance and credence in public consciousness. The myth that might be present in a text "is not a falsehood or a fiction, but a rhetorical figure upholding a social belief that has become so firmly entrenched it is understood as real and therefore has real effects" (Durham, 2007, 4). Such ideologies have often become normalized in mainstream discourse; it is therefore important to interrogate the systemic beliefs that are upheld by textual myths. For instance, the myth of ideal girlhood is explicitly propagated through the imagery and texts of a magazine by relying on conventional signifiers of feminine identity (Massoni, 2010, 7; Currie, 1999, 97; Durham, 2007, 11). One of the goals of this thesis is to show how the mythic femininity constructed

in *Seventeen* magazine is connected with broader ideologies, which are signaled in varying and complex ways and presented as part of the constructed reality of the text. Specifically, the thesis will take as its main focus the analysis of the ideal, successful, neoliberal girl as an “outside” discourse that is produced, reflected and mediated in *Seventeen*.

Semiotic discourse analysis aligns well with my feminist approach to the analysis of *Seventeen* magazine; that is, I seek to deconstruct the patriarchal or hegemonic implications of its discourse and imagery. Similarly, the goal of semiotics and the analysis of signified ‘myths’ is to “interrogate the construction of social meanings” (Durham, 2007, 10). A feminist semiotic analysis seeks to make explicit the power structures behind hegemonic ideology, and how these are signaled in the text. In that semiotic analysis wants to uncover social contexts in which signs are produced, a feminist approach will help to recognize gendered myths and assumptions in the text. Furthermore, the analysis of signs is not considered to be the one, true meaning, but rather, a single interpretation (Cann, 2012, 67). The text of *Seventeen* itself could have multiple possible meanings and interpretations, making it a rich, multilayered, and complex cultural site.

The process of this research involved several stages of analysis. I first attained the ten issues of the magazine, which comprised the 2011 publication year. I relied upon both hard copies and PDF versions. Each magazine was then read from cover to cover and supplemented with detailed analysis of the page contents. This

reading led to the decision that the analysis of content should be separated based on the five thematic divisions of the magazine: Beauty; Fashion; Love Life; Health, and Your Life. The content of each of these sections was then analyzed in the context of the thematic category.

Subsequent readings with attention to textual discourse and patterns led to the emergence of consistent themes, which are present on multiple levels: in the rhetoric and language, in the formatting and image presentation, and in the ideology that grounds the discourse. For example, the code of 'efficiency' was present throughout the magazine, evident in language that promised a makeup routine in less time, or in imagery depicting girl models holding stopwatches. Additionally, I found that 'school' was a common spatial and structural concept used to frame many articles. These themes and others were selected for their potential to be interpreted in regards to neoliberal and ideal girlhood ideology.

Based on the themes I found to be most consistent and relevant to the exploration of neoliberal, postfeminist, ideal girlhood, I then chose a selection of articles from each section and magazine issue, ensuring that each section was represented by at least two articles from that particular issue. Each gathering of articles by section was then categorized by appropriate codes, for instance, within the 'Fashion' section, articles were divided based on formatting and themes such as the theme of style categorization, or body typology. The samples also represented the seasonal events during the timeline of the publication year, for instance, 'back to

school', prom, Christmas, etc. Consequently, the samples were compiled in such a way that when taken as a whole, they reflected the make-up of the magazine, and allowed me to better understand the core themes and how they were displayed throughout the year.

A number of these articles were then analyzed using a detailed semiotic method that considered the multiple levels of the text; this analysis was based on the Greimassian method described by Martin and Ringham (2006, 11-13). This approach requires, at the first level, an examination of vocabulary and linguistic structures, such as dominant words, oppositions, and lexical fields; to this end, I examined the visual emphasis of words and how they were grouped. The second level was a narrative analysis, which explored the story and how the information was presented. Lastly, I focused on the abstract ideological level, which required the identification of themes, myths, and ideologies evident in the text. The findings of these analyses will presently be mobilized in the discussion of the magazine, in order to illuminate the discourse of neoliberal, postfeminist, ideal girlhood in *Seventeen* magazine.

It is important to point out several exclusions that I have made during my analysis of the magazine. Firstly, advertisements have not been included in the analysis. As I worked with the magazine, it became clear that the advertisements, while clearly a significant part of the fabric of *Seventeen*, were separate from the tone, narrative and 'voice' of the magazine and its editorials. Advertisements also

seemed to signal and warrant a different theoretical and methodological approach that would focus on advertisement theory, which would take the thesis away from its current focus. Secondly, I excluded the 'Letters to the Editor' section, as well as the celebrity interview in each publication. To be sure, these excluded articles reinforced neoliberal ideology and images of successful girlhood; however, they did not provide a unique insight that was not repeated in the other articles examined. As my research took shape, I wished to focus solely on the unique textual 'world' created for girls in the different sections of the magazine, and I found that celebrity profiles and the 'Letters' section shifted the focus away from the structural sequence of the magazine.

Beauty and Fashion: Body Regulation, Identity, and Choice

The first two sections of each issue of *Seventeen* are Fashion, which features articles, tutorials and photo spreads on clothes, and Beauty, which focuses on makeup, hair, and skincare. The Fashion and Beauty sections are similar in that they implicate girls' bodies, specifically, how to monitor and control the presentation of their bodies through modes of fashion, makeup, and style. Contemporary discourses on neoliberalism and postfeminist girlhood come into play as body regulation—a familiar theme in popular media representations of women—becomes closely linked with ideals of individualism, identity, and autonomous choice. Before looking explicitly at the articles featured in these sections, I will explore pertinent feminist critical writings on media representations of girls' body regulation.

Women and girls have long been taught to regulate and control their bodies through “exacting and normalizing disciplines” (Bordo, 1993, 14) connected with beauty and fashion regimes. Sandra Bartky discusses this intense policing of the body in a feminist appropriation of Foucault’s concept of docile bodies. According to Bartky, the female body is disciplined, watched, and controlled by a normalized power structure that restricts and manages women’s movements, activities, and space (Bartky, 1988). Girls and women subject themselves to intense self-surveillance, ensuring that they have met certain physical standards throughout the day. Bartky links this explicitly to practices and rituals of beauty and fashion, which uphold feminine performativity. “The technologies of femininity are taken up and practiced by women against the background of a pervasive sense of bodily deficiency” (Bartky, 1988, 139). Therefore, the feeling of being consistently lacking propels women and girls to continually seek improvement.

Magazines stipulate regulatory rituals, which encourage taking time to perform certain practices and consume specific products in order for girls maintain an ideal self-presentation (McRobbie, 1991, 175); for example, using specific cosmetics on particular skin tones or dressing in a certain style to enhance a feeling or identity. These processes further reify girlhood and stipulate the necessity of its performance. “To resist these rituals is to jeopardize the security of a firm gender positioning” (McRobbie, 1991, 175). Moreover, girls’ bodies often become fragmented in these discourses; certain practices and products target different

'problem areas' that need specific attention (Sherman, 2008, 49; Gill, 2007, 75; Bartky, 1988, 134). These actions reinforce a state of objectification for girls wherein they must acknowledge being watched, their individual body parts being fetishized and judged.

This gaze, or surveillance, has in the past been considered inherently male oriented (Sherman, 2008, 52), with girls' actions performed supposedly for male attention and approval. However, the notion of a dependent woman or girl, reliant on a male watcher, is not representative of shifting social perceptions of girls and women (Sherman, 2008, 52). Current neoliberal, postfeminist ideology emphasizes girls' inherent agency and independence, which means that beauty and fashion regimes must naturally be undertaken as a result of free choice, and for girls' own pleasure. "All this contributes to the new prominence and independence of the teenage girl, backed by a recognition that she is not just boy-mad..." (McRobbie, 1991, 145). Indeed, the beneficiary of body regulation and modification is now articulated as being the girl herself. In the postfeminist, neoliberal context, changing and fixing flaws becomes primarily "... about self-image and self-satisfaction" (McRobbie, 1991, 145). This fetishizing of "autonomous choices" (Gill, 2007, 73) is linked to the ideal neoliberal girl subject who is independent, self-sufficient, and rational. Girls are therefore regulated and surveilled by an exacting socio-political ideal.

In contemporary popular discourse, clothing, makeup, and other styling regimes and products are promoted as emancipatory. As Michelle M. Lazar argues in an analysis of beauty advertisements in magazines, much of the language surrounding these practices is in fact an appropriation of postfeminist and neoliberal rhetoric (Lazar, 2011, 38). The performance of this type of femininity is therefore articulated as a right, attached to needed and desired freedoms. The value of 'choice' is also emphasized, often appropriating the feminist connotations of women's right to choose (Lazar, 2011, 43). Choice is then communicated as a way to be in control of one's body presentation; this is in turn connected to the cultivation of individual identity and self-expression.

Importantly, choice is also articulated as the right to freely choose on the market. Consumption is a place in which one is encouraged to be visible economically, yet also make one's identity and personal preferences known. "Shopping is the privileged site of self-production, as it is in buying clothes that the participant shapes herself as a neoliberal feminine subject" (Sherman, 2008, 56). The perceived reward for good, productive consumption is therefore not (only) male attention or peer approval, but is also connected to class and upward mobility. The ideal of physical glamour and perfection implies a "revisionary gaze... implicitly connected to promised or implied social class status" (Press, 2011, 118). Any constraint placed on girls' desire to consume is therefore a restriction on their freedom and ability to succeed. However, shopping choices are also highly surveilled. Girls must make the 'right' selection of clothing or products; failure to do

so is placed on the individual (Willett, 2008, 430). Consumption is, after all, articulated as a fundamentally personal practice.

Interestingly, however, the idea that certain fashion and beauty practices are presented as liberatory is rooted in privileges and prejudices of race and culture. The way girls fashion themselves can be seen as oppressive depending on the religious and cultural connotations of the clothing item; for example, the hijab is often represented as, at the very least, a choice that could not be made freely, a dictate of patriarchy (Gill, 2007, 73). Moreover, influences of racism and social conditions are often perceived as infiltrating racialized women's "sense of selves" (Gill, 2007, 74), while white women's decisions and self presentation are presented as freely chosen. Indeed, neoliberal frameworks inform choices that are presented to girls, and that which is deemed desirable and pleasurable in society is often socially constructed as such (Willett, 2008, 430). It is therefore important to make these social contexts visible when analyzing the way rituals such as fashion and makeup are presented to girls.

In summary, fashion and beauty norms uphold a regulation and surveillance that is inherently gendered, meant to maintain ideal femininity. However, contemporary discourse surrounding these rituals emphasizes the need for, and pleasure of, independent choice in taking on beauty and fashion techniques, as well as the liberatory result of self-cultivation. Girls' consumption of clothing or beauty products is therefore signified as a neoliberal, postfeminist ideal.

Fashion: Body Typology, Style, and Choosing the 'Best' Clothes

One of the main themes within the Fashion section of *Seventeen* is the categorization of the depicted fashions according to body types, identities, and styles. Specific clothes are positioned as useful for events and activities such as the “prom” school, or the beach. *Seventeen* offers a guide of specific rules and conventions for girl readers to choose the best outfits based on their individual needs.

The article “Seventeen’s Ultimate Jeans Guide!” (Figure 1.1), from the August 2011 issue, exemplifies this discourse. This feature is presented as a booklet that can be cut out of the magazine for ‘on the go’ use; indeed, small print on the side of the page reads “rip it out and take it to the mall!” This directive explicitly names the reader as a consumer; moreover, it constructs shopping as an activity that requires an instruction manual in order to buy the right products. In a sense, *Seventeen* is asking to leave the private ‘bedroom’ space of the reader and enter the public space of a shopping mall.

On the first page of this feature, the sentence “We’re unzipping **expert secrets** to finding the jeans that make *every* body look amazing” is emphasized in a red circle that resembles a sticker, centered prominently in the middle of the page. An outside, expert authority is alluded to here, in order to legitimate the fashion advice given. The term ‘unzipping’ also implies that this knowledge is being held

back from girls, but that here they are being given an efficient shortcut to find the “secrets” to looking better. The girl reader of *Seventeen* is positioned as being above her peers, on a fast track to success through the use of hidden tricks and tips.

Interestingly, the formatting of the booklet emphasizes the categorization theme clearly; the pages are layered so that ‘dividers’ labeled with body types or ‘problem areas’ stick out; these include petite, curvy butt, flat butt, curvy tummy, etc. Readers can then simply choose their label and turn only to that page. This encourages a highly individualistic and efficient style of reading; the article is not a holistic discussion of jeans and fashion, but rather, it is presented as a way for girls to fragment their own bodies, find their specific label, and read only their individual directions.

The use of categorization here is a familiar theme in *Seventeen*, and the way it is used in fashion articles such as Figs. 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3, highlights various elements of neoliberal girl ideology. To illuminate this theme, I borrow the term ‘typology’ from Diana Negra (2009, 35), which is used to refer to the multitude of ‘types’ women are often given in popular representations, from which they can choose one that suits them best. While this intense focus on typologizing might appear to celebrate difference, it also follows a technique of monitoring and disciplining difference. Nikolas Rose (1998) describes this as a categorization that focuses on “individualizing humans through classifying them, calibrating their capacities and conducts, inscribing and recording their attributes and deficiencies, managing and

utilizing their individuality and variability” (105). Thus, differences are made visible in order to manage more carefully.

In these articles, for each item of clothing that is featured (e.g., jeans, bathing suits, etc.), the body types are classified and style solutions are recommended that include distinctive labels for each style. This creates even more categories and ‘types’ for the girl reader to navigate. For example, Figure 1.2 encourages ‘small bust’ to choose ‘dramatic ruffles’ as both their body and corresponding clothing type; Figure 1.1 shows that girls choose a body type, and are again given a clothing category from which to purchase. In Figure 1.3, body shapes are given names such as ‘hourglass’, further disconnecting girls from actual bodily characteristics and instead creating a more complex labeling system. However, words such as ‘petite’ or ‘small’ are used freely (Fig. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3), yet for shapes that might connote fatness or a fuller, thicker form, the metaphorical terms are used, such as ‘curvy’, or ‘athletic’. Fragmentation of the body is also key in this categorization; types are often listed as just the ‘bust’, or, ‘tummy’, thereby increasing the visibility of ‘problem areas’ on female bodies that need surveillance (Gill, 2007, 75). Ultimately, girls are typologized into these categories in order to ‘better’ clothe themselves, to fix a pre-existing problem in which they were shopping and dressing without expert knowledge; for example, *Seventeen* writes that girls should ‘Consider themselves rescued’ from the task of finding the right swimsuit (Fig. 1.2) implying that an independent, uninformed choice would be unwise. Once again, the reader of the magazine is positioned as giving herself an advantage.

Through this, *Seventeen* reifies a vision of normative femininity, and the neoliberal girl's problem of "lack, insufficiency, never being good enough" (Bordo, 1989, 14). For instance, a bikini for a small bust should add more "oomph" to your chest, while a ruched bathing suit promises to "streamline your curves... it cinches you in and creates a sleek middle" (Fig. 1.2.) Girls with a 'curvy tummy' should buy high waistline jeans to "(prevent) any annoying rolls!", while black jeans "smooth out any bumps" (Fig. 1.1.) While some articles do advocate 'showing off' one's "feminine" curves (Fig. 1.3), it remains that the 'curves' in themselves can be improved, emphasized, and made to look better with the correct clothing purchase. It is clear that simply presenting a body as it is not good enough, but rather, girls must continually search for improvement by attaining a normative standard.

Often, choosing one's type and finding how to dress for that type is done carefully, through the revision of rules and guidelines. These rules, aimed toward making your body appear different or better, (e.g., light jeans making petite girls look taller, as Figure 1.1 advises), upholds a new sort of beauty ideal in which girls and women demonstrate not innate physical perfection, or a single ideal beauty, but rather, knowledge and capability. This is "... not a physical ideal that everyone must fit into... but a set of individual 'rules' for each participant that will help her maximize her good aspects and hide the bad ones... femininity is defined not as being a sex object, but as being a competent agent for the self" (Sherman 2008, 56-7). Therefore, girls do not necessarily need to fit into a single 'look' but instead they

must adhere to rules and regulations that will give her the best look (or bodily appearance) for her own individual self. The specific and individual rules given are therefore made personal, as the new beauty ideal becomes about wisely purchasing this ideal look. Girls' ability to fashion themselves well is therefore reflective of their aptitudes as a neoliberal subject. Clothing is perceived as a reflection of self, and a way to improve and enhance one's identity. Girls can therefore heighten their ideal neoliberal capabilities through demonstrating their individualism and self-improvement abilities in their dress.

The Fashion section also aims to present clothes to girls as representative of style and a stylish identity. *Seventeen* uses different formats and devices to present these narratives; often connecting the need for clothes to an event or place. For example, the article "17 Amazing Outfits for Back to School" (Figure 1.4), in the September 2011 issue, creates the school as a space and fashion event. Dressing for school is considered an important part of girl culture; school is typically a place in which girls feel the need to express identity and show off fashion know-how (Currie, 1999, 211). *Seventeen* uses this anxiety of putting together a proper outfit, telling girls to not "waste a minute... worrying about what to wear" (Fig 1.4). The article urges readers to "make a major style statement!" at school, the boldness of the statement, as well as the bright colours and styling, encouraging individualism and visibility. In this sense, school is positioned as a place of fashion surveillance, although the idea of being watched is made to seem fun and desirable. The audience at school, or the people directing the gaze, is then not necessarily boys or romantic

interests, but friends and other girls (Currie, 1999, 211). Indeed, the cover photo of Figure 1.4 depicts two girls, smiling and standing at equal height (through the aid of a stack of books), with one's arm around the other's shoulders. Their hair and make-up are very similar, as are their bodies and clothing styles. In this sense, clothes are a fun social ritual, a way to relate to other girls (Willett, 2008, 432; Currie, 1999, 211). Although a girl's personal style preference is highly individual, the clothes they send up wearing can be integral to their social belonging.

Ultimately, much of the style discourse presented here is based on finding, choosing, and displaying identity. For girls, dressing is a “symbolic work of appearing different in order to express and explore specific individual identities” (Currie, 1999, 362). Figure 1.4 presents a number of different style choices to the reader, all labeled separately; they are “pretty antique”; “boyish chic”; and “glam rock”. The stylistic sound and rhyming of these titles (e.g., all end in a hard ‘k’ sound) speaks not only to *Seventeen’s* tendency for fun, simple language, but also to associate and group supposedly different styles together. Therefore, the girl reader can easily move between and try on the different looks. Each of these looks is formatted in a similar way, taking up equal space, featuring a mix of accessories, clothing, and models for each. Presumably, the girl reader could adopt each of these identities at different times (for example, dressing ‘pretty antique’ one day, and ‘boyish chic’ the next (Fig. 1.4.)), thus exhibiting the fluidity and flexibility expected of the ideal neoliberal girl (Gill & Scharff, 2011, 7). Moreover, cultivating an identity is perceived as an expression of self-assurance. Willett, (2008), discusses the

popular views towards girls' clothing choices in saying that, "Girls are seen as demonstrating their confidence, expressing their opinions, having fun... through their dress" (Willett, 2008, 421). This confidence and independence is often linked to feeling comfortable in clothes. That is, wearing something that suits individual and personal style is a sign of being the person one truly is, and therefore, this authenticity is 'easy to wear' (Willett, 2008, 432). Encouraging girls to choose a style identity is therefore a step toward an assured self-confidence and ease of style; such independence and assertiveness is required of the ideal neoliberal girl.

Contemporary discourse on wearing clothes is often oriented toward dressing to please oneself and for individual pleasure or even empowerment (Griffin et. al, 2006, 14). Clothing choices that might verge toward unacceptability (for example, looking 'slutty') can meet judgment and punishment, but are tempered by the idea that the wearer might be 'doing it for herself', her individualism and choice being key to her reprieve (Griffin et. al, 2006, 14). While the result of choosing a personal style through clothes can facilitate connection to social groups, individualism and comfortable confidence in oneself is key. The ideal girl should therefore be able to freely and easily 'take on' fashion identities in order to exhibit these characteristics.

However, while *Seventeen* presents these different styles as a diversity of choice, it is important to note that they nevertheless maintain a normative femininity. In Figure 1.4, which presents a number of different 'looks', girls with long

hair, slim builds, and figure-fitting clothes model the fashions; in terms of racial diversity, there is one woman of colour; she is pictured in the 'glam rock' section. Moreover, the styles are ultimately all presented as feminine. The most 'girly' option, "pretty antique", is mainly coloured in pink tones, with bows, lace, and frills on the clothes and accessories. Words such as "romance" and "flirty" complement the looks. In contrast, the 'boyish chic' section presents perhaps the most transgressive potential, featuring clothes with a more androgynous edge, such as suspenders, ties, and oxford shirts. Yet while the fashions are described as "guy inspired finds", the reader is assured that they "are surprisingly feminine!" thereby making them acceptable, gendered choices. In contemporary girls' fashions, the boyish or 'tomboy' look is merely presented as a style choice, alongside any other style identity, and rid of its gender neutralizing or queer potential (Griffin et al., 2006, 14). Girls can therefore express risky or different styles, but within limits. Sherman (2008) describes this mainstream appropriation of transgressive dressing or identities into accessible styles; edgy or otherwise marginalized fashion is made 'funky' or 'fun' by featuring characteristic elements in smaller accessories or as moderately scaled details of more normative clothing (Sherman, 2008, 57). This is exemplified in the "glam rock" section of Figure 1.4, where the harsher leather or studs of some items are tempered by their placement on sparkly shirts or high heels; moreover, the description suggests the items be "paired with basics" so that they can "work for school!". Therefore, girls do not have to venture outside normative femininity to 'express' themselves using these style identities. As Sherman (2008) asserts, girls must recognize their identity as being within the

boundaries of ideal girlhood. “In order to become a feminine subject, one must see oneself within the norm of femininity” (Sherman, 2008, 54). These articles portray a spectrum of normative feminine identities from which to choose, and girls are encouraged to see themselves reflected in what is presented.

In conclusion, the Fashion section of *Seventeen* magazine uses clothes to effectively convey activities and behaviours expected of ideal neoliberal girls. It does so through techniques of categorization, (of clothes and style, events, and body types), an emphasis on rules that promote self-improvement through wearing the ‘correct’ clothes, and through the prominence of identity and individual style. Overall, *Seventeen* makes this process seem fun and pleasurable; their editorials moderate the regulations set out for girls with bright colours, smiling models, and an abundance of products from which to choose. Held up by an ethic of consumerism, girls are encouraged to continually buy and choose more clothes, thereby effectively choosing and cultivating a self. “Shopping is the privileged site of self-production, as it is in buying clothes that the participant shapes herself as a neoliberal feminine subject” (Sherman, 2008, 56). Through purchasing and consuming “fashion”, girls are told they will find empowerment and confidence, enabling them to better handle different spheres of their lives.

Beauty: Expert Tutorials, Identities, and Efficient Self-Cultivation

The Beauty portion of *Seventeen* maintains the ideologies of the 'Fashion' section in its concern with the physical perfection of the girl reader and her consumption of products to improve her aesthetic presentation. It also contains similar formatting and narrative devices; articles are based on categorizations of products and styles to do with makeup, skin and hair. They offer choices and individual 'beauty' identities based on different needs or desired looks, thus heightening the values of individualism and choice. Moreover, Beauty also offers tips, secrets, and expert advice that will help the girl readers take responsibility for their own self-presentation.

Much of *Seventeen's* content is presented through a 'tutorial' approach which positions the reader as a student who is learning new tips and tricks for self-cultivation; this tutorial style is even more pronounced in the Beauty section which breaks the rituals of beautification down into minute steps and zones. These instruction guides are often given an authoritative voice by using an 'expert' to give advice or tips; an article might use anyone from a professional makeup artist, to a celebrity in order to reinforce the points given. Figure 2.1 demonstrates this strategy effectively. The article "Skin Secrets Only Derms Know!" proclaims "Four celeb docs spill their best tricks just for *you*— no appointment needed". Quotations are then attributed to four different "M.D"s, all with different pieces of advice; moreover, they are posited as having a kind of double authority as they are also the

dermatologists to celebrities. Here, the girl reader is accessing a special, professional pathway to physical success and perfection. Moreover, the consultation of doctors positions her body (in this case, her skin troubles), as something confusing and needing help and control. Indeed, skin management in beauty discourse is especially medicalized and made to seem in need of professional input and meticulous application of products (Bartky, 1988, 137). Ultimately, the solution lies in the products recommended by the doctors (pictures of the products are enlarged and placed next to the text), and specific tricks, which suggest that the girls were previously doing their skin care regime incorrectly and that they may have missed important elements because they did not know the secret tricks. For example, “It’s not just what you put on your skin—it’s what you put in your body that matters!” and “Hold a warm washcloth to your face before using a salicylic acid cleanser. It will open up your pores...” (Fig. 2.1). These tips offer even more ways for girls to monitor themselves, and more possibilities for success or self-improvement. Discourses in *Seventeen* encourage girls to look to these higher sources of knowledge to achieve such success.

The appeal to experts or authority might seem contradictory to the values of individualism and self-reliance extolled by neoliberalism and encouraged for girls in postfeminist culture. On the contrary, however, it is a key feature of neoliberal times. Choices that are posited as autonomous are informed by social regulations (Sherman, 2008, 56; Gill, 2007, 72). While actions appear to be choices, they also require approval from authority. As Nikolas Rose writes, “... such lifestyle

maximization entails a relation to authority in the very moment as it pronounces itself the outcome of free choice” (Rose, 1998, 58-9). The individual often appeals to expert opinion in order understand which ‘choice’ to make. Therefore, the independence required of self-regulation is not entirely isolated; there is an authoritative standard keeping it in check and perpetuating the ‘ideal’. In fact, Rose argues that the involvement of experts in self-cultivation is not about suspension of free choice and independence, but rather, the ideal of individual choice has become a way to exact and regulate social norms and expectations. “To analyze the relations between ‘the self’ and power, then is not a matter of lamenting the ways in which our autonomy is suppressed by the state, but of investigating the ways in which subjectivity has become an essential object, target, and resource for certain strategies, tactics, and procedures of regulation” (1998, 152). Furthermore, Rose asserts that the popularization and seeking of ‘expert’ knowledge has become a method of managing what was previously private or personal (1998, 155). Girls can then make otherwise private or ‘girly’ practices a part of a more professional realm.

The expert or ‘celebrity’ oriented voice in the text also provides the girl reader access to products or practices that seem inaccessible. For example, the feature “Expert Looks (for less!)” (Figure 2.2), allows “world famous makeup artists” to suggest products at “your favorite stores”, by which is meant, products at affordable stores. The text proudly proclaims “Pat McGrath SHOPS AT WALMART!”, and “Charlotte Willer SHOPS AT CVS!”. The professionals then offer choice makeup available at their respective department store, which creates a unique ‘look’. These

tips all follow expectations of physical improvement and perfection; for example, bronzer to “avoid looking pasty”, or mascara “to make your lashes super long”. Therefore, girls are told they can still be involved in intense beauty regimens regardless of their budget. As Sandra Bartky asserts, class or socio-economic divisions do not prevent women from being implicated in the beauty ideal as cosmetics are sold at both high and low end prices and venues (1988, 139) but the expectation to self regulate is consistent.

Additionally, the knowledge given by experts and professionals suggests a possibility of upward mobility, in which girls can appear to transcend class or economic barriers. Diane Negra argues, “identification with a level of luxury consumption far out of proportion to one’s actual financial circumstances is emerging as a hallmark of contemporary experience” (2009, 126), therefore blurring the public perception of class lines in regards to consumption levels. Figure 2.2 promises the reader the ability to appear at a class level above their own, by shopping in the manner of a “world famous makeup artist”, but at a low-price store such as Wal-Mart. This finely-tuned product knowledge is expected of girls and women today; this awareness, coupled with the push for affordable items that appear to be designer brands, mean that purchases can “affirm... taste and class status” (Sherman, 2008, 56). Smart female shoppers who take on ‘expert’ knowledge and seek bargains for their money are therefore displaying the economic and social flexibility that is ideal of neoliberal, postfeminist times.

The makeup and beauty tutorials also highlight the importance of finding one's own ideal products, similar to the individualist discourses in Fashion. The guides here offer the reader efficient ways to shop for products and find a look that best suits them. These articles often deal with colouring and skin tones, often subtly alluding to race but using coded words and metaphors to describe the difference and divisions being made.

This categorization of skin tones and makeup is represented in Figure 2.3, which is entitled "Are you wearing the right colors?" The title alone creates an immediate anxiety over the possibility of having purchased or worn incorrect makeup 'colors', and offers a path to improvement and success. *Seventeen* asserts that using the system provided will be beneficial in purchasing skin appropriate makeup, saying, "Take the guesswork out of makeup shopping! Use this guide to find *your* perfect shades"; thereby promising an easier and more efficient shopping experience. A foundation, eye shadow, blush, and lip-gloss, are all offered for each skin complexion category, which is represented by a title and a corresponding close-up of a female model's made-up face. Girls are expected to find their own reflection in each category, and the products are meant to bring out the optimal features of each skin tone. There are six different skin types: fair, beige, olive, golden, bronze, and lastly, deep. While the models for 'fair' and 'beige' have light skin tones, women of colour are represented in the other categories, including an Asian model pictured for the 'Golden' labeled complexion. All the directions and suggestions given for each tone offer similar descriptions of the makeup; the blush for the fair skin "plays

up your coloring”, while the lip gloss for ‘deep’ promises to “pop against your skin”, for ‘bronze’, the lip gloss will “enhance your natural golden tones”. Ultimately, then, the makeup offers similar benefits regardless of the difference in skin tone; in order to meet the same ideal of perfection, one must simply buy a different shade of makeup.

This ambivalence or neutrality toward naming or explicitly discussing racialized experiences with beauty products or practices perhaps is an attempt at a ‘post-racial’ type of equality in representation. However, this means that the beauty discourse is based around a norm of whiteness. There is no explicit discussion, for example, of specific hair issues or techniques for different hair types, based on race. Difference in race is therefore not truly integrated into beauty discourse.

An attempt toward multicultural Beauty representation is represented in Figure 2.4, a feature entitled “Passport to Pretty”. The subheading reads, “Every culture has its secrets—so consider this your beauty boarding pass! Five international models spill their best tricks for you.” Here, different cultures are exoticized and made different; culture specific beauty regimes are ‘secrets’ being given to the girl reader. The cross-cultural sharing here is indicative of the use of multiculturalism in neoliberal girlhood discourse. According to Harris (2004), there is an increasingly anti-immigrant, xenophobic sentiment in today’s globalized, fluid, neoliberal society, which means that young minority, or racialized, women are often used to “(calm) fears about social disintegration... by personifying an unthreatening

blended citizenship... Multicultural citizenship involves 'tolerance' or 'acceptance' on the part of the dominant population... and maintenance of the attractive and nonthreatening dimensions of the culture of origin (costume, cuisine, festivals)" (Harris, 2004, 85). Therefore, girls are used to represent incoming new cultures, which is met with a careful, regulated acceptance. In Figure 2.4, the tips are coming from "international models", thus positioning them in the 'expert' category, while also implying that they represent an ideal, heightened beauty within their region. The women 'representing' the countries of Brazil, India, Ghana, and the Philippines, are all women of colour with darker features, while the 'Norway' model has light skin, hair, and eyes. The article positions the readers of *Seventeen* as outsiders to cultural difference, and while the "international models" are given a voice, the article makes them the 'Other', creating a division between the reader and the cultural outsiders. The beauty secrets given from the model also fragment their bodies into what they have to 'offer' the girl reader, thus fetishizing certain elements of beauty as part of a certain culture. For example, the Brazilian model merely represents the ideal of perfect skin, while well-defined brows are attributed to the Indian model. Therefore, the 'secrets' they are said to be providing are conveniently sampled as fragments of both the model and her culture. Yet the girl reader is told that she might learn something to her own advantage from their secrets, and apply them to her own beauty regime. Therefore, the reader is encouraged to utilize a sort of multicultural flexibility, to transcend what are positioned as cultural barriers in order to access this 'beauty' knowledge. An essentialized femininity is also invoked

here, in the ideal that a transnational female understanding exists in the sharing of beauty and makeup secrets.

The reader is also offered a number of items available in stores that mimic the advice given; for example, face polish and coconut milk that can be bought at basic drug stores. Therefore, while the recommendations given are more natural, DIY oriented, *Seventeen* reifies the need to purchase these products in stores. This extension of the “Passport to Pretty” article is titled “Global market: The best beauty tricks from all over the globe are now within your reach” (Figure 2.4.1). This feature therefore perceives itself as expanding the scope of girls’ shopping. The term ‘global market’ is indicative of a late modern, neoliberal sensibility (Harris, 2006, 3), of which ‘can-do’ girls are made aware. *Seventeen* therefore refers to the flexibility and erasure of cultural and economic borders in a light, almost satirical sense, in order to make it palatable to girl readers. Girls are exposed to a fun, positive aspect of cross-cultural sharing, hinting at the expansion of market possibilities.

The last theme in ‘Beauty’ I would like to explore is the ideal of gaining empowerment through beauty regimes. The article “Have total hair confidence!” (Figure 2.5) asserts that a hairstyle can invoke self-assurance, pride, and independence. It boasts, “Get an instant esteem boost: These hot celeb styles will make you feel *major*.” This is a common theme in postfeminist beauty discourse, in which a type of feminist empowerment is presented through the display of hyper-femininity (Lazar, 2011, 38). In this sense, girls and women are perceived as only

holding themselves back from expressing freedom and confidence; their body is something they should flaunt and make visible. Beauty projects are then made exciting, their effects long lasting (Lazar, 2011, 40). An argument in favour of slicking back hair in Figure 2.5 reads, ““Don’t hide behind your hair: it can be so freeing to slick it all out of the way!” In another photo, Beyonce, a woman of colour, is pictured with the category “wild curls”; it suggests that the reader should “Show the world how awesome your texture is!” while a ribbon in the hair will “make you stand out”. The process of freeing oneself, confidence, and independence is therefore articulated through simple and familiar beauty regimes—in this case, hair styling.

In conclusion, *Seventeen’s* Beauty section perpetuates girls’ physical self-regulation, maintaining a vision of normative, privileged girlhood, but does so through emphasis of neoliberal postfeminist ideals. This ideology is promoted first through the use of tutorials and expert beauty knowledges, thereby allowing girls to assert product knowledges, demonstrating an upward mobility meant to transcend class-based restrictions; in doing so, girls are taught to exhibit their idealized spending power. Additionally, Beauty highlights individualist categorization and typology, implicating racialized and ‘Other’-ed bodies through a consumerist discourse, but effectively reifying an ideal, white, feminized ideal. Lastly, the Beauty section follows a neoliberal postfeminist rhetoric that girls embody the ‘can-do’ vision of confidence and emancipation, simply through the self-governing beauty projects set out for them.

Health: Fit Bodies, Food Rules, and “Healthism”

Similar to Fashion and Beauty, the Health section of *Seventeen* implicates girls' bodies as sites of self-responsibility, regulation, and control. Health focuses on both diet and exercise in girls' lives as potential modes of self-improvement. Indeed, the discussions of exercise are explicitly oriented around changing and bettering girls' bodies, often in fragmented ways—for example, toning “abs.” The other main focus, diet, is rooted in better understanding and improving the use and consumption of food; girls are taught how to double food's purposes in order to get more benefits from their meals or snacks, while simultaneously being told to consume less. Throughout the magazine, *Seventeen* upholds a postfeminist, neoliberal construction of an active, 'healthy' girl. That is, it invokes discourses of individual responsibility for upholding health while leaving out discussions of social determinants of well-being; moreover, it represents an empowered active girl who is embodying the characteristics of the assertive 'can-do' girl, thereby creating a contemporary vision of girls' health success. It is important to interrogate these representations in order to see what types of girls and 'healthy' bodies are seen as ideal and desirable, and therefore gain more insight toward the privileged identities of the successful girl.

The articles and features in Health frequently depict an empowered and fun girl engaged in fitness activities. Sport and physical activity has, traditionally, been constructed as more masculine and boy-oriented, an area in which girls could not

excel (Azzarito, 2010, 262). Postfeminist emphasis on girl power and female strength, however, shifted perceptions so that girls were included in sport discourse, activity, and representation. However, the linking of girls to athletics and physical health leads to “new feminine ideals circulating through institutional sites producing physical culture” (Azzarito, 2010, 263). That is, the construction of sporty girls is linked to the highly regulated neoliberal, can-do girl. Sport and being active is perceived as an ideal avenue for a girl’s future success, in that the ‘active’ girl is often constructed as having a “self assertive independent and a ‘bring-it-on attitude” (Azzarito, 2010, 262). Moreover, in linking physical activity to broader contemporary health rhetoric, being active and improving one’s body is constructed as a responsibility that is highly individual.

The models and physicality depicted in ‘Health’ construct an immediate vision of an ideal feminine ‘healthy’ body. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 represent the typical cover of the ‘Health’ section, in which a model is shown in an active pose, smiling, laughing, or seemingly having fun; bright colours or an outdoor setting highlight the energetic aesthetic of the photo. The models are posed in ways that are standard for photos of women exercising or being physically active. As Dworkin and Wachs found in a study of magazine photographs of active women, poses often involve fun or flirtatious head tilts, touching, hip thrusts, visibility of abs, tight clothing, etc., all seemingly meant to invite the reader’s gaze (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009, 43). These photograph techniques reify the construction of women as an object of appreciation

that is explicitly gendered, and furthermore, that her fitness is something aesthetically pleasing.

The text accompanying the cover picture usually refers to a type of workout or training that is can sculpt one's body as desired. This is frequently framed around a time, place, or event; for example, Figure 3.1 refers to a "Back-To-School Bootcamp!", saying, "Only three weeks of summer left—which is *just* enough time to flatten your tummy, boost your butt, and tone your legs before your first day". School here is positioned as a place of surveillance; girls must prepare to be looked at and must perfect various areas of their body that might not be up to par. In Figure 3.2, the headline announces "The Beginner's Beach Body Workout". References to acceptable beach bodies and the need to look thin and toned in the summer months are recurrent in the spring and summer issues of *Seventeen*. This is another place and time which girls are told to be hyper-aware of their body and how they are being looked at; the beach, where people are expected to wear swimsuits, is a place of potential anxiety, which they can temper through following *Seventeen's* instructions.

The body of the 'cover' model fits into a normative feminine physical ideal, and symbolizes what the girl reader is meant to achieve through the various 'workouts' and 'boot camps' described. Words also allude to the ideal sought: "tight and toned", "lean bikini bod", "flatten your tummy". In looking at these texts, it's clear that *Seventeen* reifies a popular vision of the feminine exercise ideal, which is typically

thin, white and able-bodied (Kennedy & Markula, 2010, 2). While ‘curvy’ or perhaps non ‘ideal’ bodies appear in other parts of the magazine, such as fashion or beauty, in ‘Health’, when girls are pictured doing exercises or being active, the focus on a toned and fit body is consistent. Health is therefore inextricably linked to the appearance of a ‘good’ or acceptable body. Indeed, in Figure 3.3, the headline reads “Be Lazy, Look Hot!” next to a photo of a slim model wearing short, glittered shorts, hip thrust, hand touching her hair, and toned abs exposed beneath a short top. Here, her body is celebrated (“Look Hot!”), but notably, active fitness is not (“Be Lazy!”), as the text at the bottom of the page reads: “Work out less!: tight and toned by New Year’s Eve”. This reinforces “the appearance of the fit body, rather than the reality of fitness” (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009, 12). What is prioritized here is the visual presentation of health, and the self-policing regimens that come with the pursuit of this look. The fitness regimes are promoted as a way of achieving a perfect body, but also as a disciplining mechanism.

Each ‘Health’ section includes workout and exercise routines for readers. As Figure 3.1 and 3.2 demonstrate, their association with an expert or celebrity trainer makes them appear legitimate and accountable. For instance, one article features a popular television actress: “Blake Lively (who *swears* she never really worked out before) used these moves from trainer Bobby Strom to tone up fast for *Green Lantern*” (Figure 3.2). These expert voices guide the workout routines, which are typically formatted like the example shown in Figure 3.4, entitled “The 1 minute makeover”. These routines follow a current norm of popular female exercise

regimes, which focus on isolating areas of the body to be ‘toned’ and perfected in specific ways (Kennedy & Markula, 2010, 2). That is, girls’ bodies must balance contradictory requirements of being toned and trimmed, while also not being overly muscular or large (Azzarito, 2010, 265). Moreover, these ‘workouts’ mainly consist of simple, supposedly manageable techniques and exercises, such as stretches and poses.

Notably, this constructs the active girl as one who is not necessarily aggressive, loud, or taking up space; indeed, as evidenced in Figure 3.4, the models demonstrating the exercises are smiling through every pose. Moreover, the routine is celebrated as taking up only a minute of time. In this way, the exercise becomes smaller and less daunting, but then, so does the athletic girl; her physicality is not overwhelming. Additionally, this shortened time speaks to the neoliberal requirement for continued efficiency and good time management. Indeed, this plays on the notion of a postfeminist “time crisis”, in which women and girls “are constantly exhorted to internalize and act on a sense of temporal urgency” (Negra, 2009, 53), often in references to a ‘biological clock’ and family. Moreover, a late modern capitalist society, citizens are encouraged to partake in “institutional techniques of productivity and time management” (Negra, 2009, 47), which emphasizes, smaller, direct, personalized tasks. This need to do things quickly and economically is a consistent theme in *Seventeen* and is no less evident in ‘Health’, where the improvement of one’s well-being takes on this corporate efficiency rhetoric.

The active girl is therefore encouraged to be physical but in a way that takes up less space and time. She is consequently asserting fitness in a more 'feminine' manner, emphasizing girls' "constrained physicality" (Azzarito, 2010, 264). Girls are encouraged to pursue fitness success in *Seventeen*, yet within the sphere of acceptable physicality and femininity.

Food and diet are another main focus of *Seventeen's* 'Health' content. Articles that deal with eating tend to assert food 'rules' and tips. Food is posited as something that can actively make one healthier, as long as it contains the correct, safe ingredients. Choosing the right food, at the right time, in the correct portion size, becomes indicative of girls' capacity to take control over their own choices and life. Figure 3.5 presents 'improved' food choices in the format of a schedule, wherein certain meals can provide benefits at different periods. The title reads, "Get healthier—in one day!... Here's how to recharge your body in just 24 hours... and feel amazing for *good*", thereby emphasizing a quick, efficient path to becoming 'healthier', again. The food itself is also promoted as taking less time; wraps are "quickie roll-ups", and a stir fry is made in "less than 10 minutes", thus further capitalizing on the aforementioned 'time crisis' rhetoric implicit in postfeminist neoliberal texts. The body is also described as something that one can "recharge"; individuals are therefore able to 'start again' with their bodies, rendering them continually improvable.

As different meals are sorted into timeslots and given specific effects, girls can then easily categorize the elements and improvements they wish to get from their food choices. The food itself is given powers beyond simple nourishment or good taste; indeed, many meals are described as featuring “superfoods,” broken down into specific ingredients that can perform various tasks while being digested. For example, oatmeal in the morning can be a “detox” as its fiber “acts like a broom to sweep out the crud in your digestive system”. Similarly, the calcium in grilled cheese can ease menstrual cramps, while antioxidants in vegetable stir-fry can protect against diseases. In this health context, girls gain knowledge about food in order to control its effects for their own benefit. Girls must also be flexible and adaptable to the continually changing views of the benefits of certain foods. Health here also becomes the responsibility of the individual. A successful girl is one who can ward off disease or detox her system through eating food. Therefore, health oriented girls are placed almost above illness, or at least able to manage and control it, as long as they take the personal initiative to perform certain tricks and eat certain approved foods.

However, food and eating also presents a possibility for anxiety, which is exemplified in Figure 3.6, an article from the holiday issue of *Seventeen* (December-January). Entitled, “Eat all these treats”, it offers a “handy... guide to indulging without overdoing it”. This is especially relevant during the holidays, it argues, as the temptation of “cookies, candy, holiday yumminess—it’s everywhere you look”. Indeed, the ‘Health’ cover of the holiday issue of *Seventeen*, Figure 3.3, imagines the

holidays as a time in which girls need help and guidance to manage the food temptations that threaten to thwart their health or—as the text and images of the magazine cover imply—their appearance. Indeed, the cover labels the ‘Health’ section for that month the “Holiday Survival Guide”, implying, along with Figure 3.6, an unease with the amount of ‘bad’ foods (desserts or treats) that are available during this time. Figure 3.6 offers rules to avoid eating too much dessert; specifically, it advises using one’s hand to measure food and find the appropriate size, therefore giving girls an individualized, DIY ‘trick’ to eating desserts. For example, one should only have a slice of pie that is “the length of your pinky finger.” The article also provides “FYI” facts throughout, such as decreasing “sugar and fat” in a sugar cookie by substituting “a touch of icing or sprinkles”. Articles such these do allow for eating of treats, and promotes this activity with headlines such as “Eat all these treats” (Fig. 3.6) and “Eat what you want” (Fig. 3.3). Girls can therefore still appear flexible and fun, while also using secret tricks to ensure they are following the recommended food rules. Indeed, the article encourages girls to be especially mindful of the portions and ingredients they are consuming. Therefore, these foods can be eaten in a controlled, managed way, and girls can display their self-control and goal-focused determination simply by following these rules.

Overall, the discourses present in the ‘Health’ section of *Seventeen* speak to a broader social interest in health as a metaphor for individual neoliberal success and capability. The can-do girl is constructed as one who is fit and athletic; indeed, her capability in this realm is often seen as key to future corporate and economic

success, as fitness usually connotes assertiveness, leadership, and self-responsibility (Azzarito, 2010, 266). Girls are taught to be self-policing 'healthy' subjects, using fitness practices to create a better, improved self. Failure to meet fitness standards is consequently stigmatized and shamed, creating "hierarchies of the body by marking girls' bodies as unhealthy... or 'at risk'" (Azzarito, 2010, 262). In this context, looking good is often equated with feeling good and a personal liberation and emancipation is implied as a reward through perfecting the body.

This approach to individualism is tied in closely with the concept of healthism (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009, 12), which points to a contemporary trend of making individuals responsible for ensuring their own health. This hides social indicators of health, masking privileged access to health care or fitness activities (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009, 12). Healthism also emphasizes consumerism and the commoditization of health, diet, and fitness. Indeed, media representations of health are often based on discourses of lacking or needing to transform or improve; this feeling of lack is exploited by capitalist corporations, who make it their goal to make "signifiers of success" visible (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009, 11). The ideal body has therefore become a part of consumer culture. However, the popular representations of health, and the discourses surrounding health, are based on systematic exclusions and divisions, while relying on "the popular assumption that fitness ideals 'speak to all' while quietly and inevitably including some bodies and excluding others" (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009, 10). Indeed, as Laura Azzarito argues, representations of girls' healthy, active bodies rely on "white Western ideals" (2010, 268), and their

inherent difference from 'Other'-ed, transgressive bodies. "New representations of feminine physicality are market-driven consumer images upheld by globalizing trends, and implicitly disregard the structural inequities of social class, race, sex and disability among girls" (Azzarito, 2010, 268). Therefore, girls who cannot meet fitness ideals or are placed outside the capacity to do so are deemed lazy, unhealthy, and incapable; consequently these characterizations are placed upon those who sit outside the typical "health" representations. Health is, therefore, about matching a specific ideal, rather than finding and representing well-being within different identities.

This analysis of the Health section of *Seventeen* has identified several main themes, all of which centre around an individualized responsibility for health and fitness. Firstly, fitness and sporting regimes are taught to girls with the intention of shaping their bodies into a feminine ideal while also demonstrating neoliberal ideals of efficiency, self-cultivation, and self-discipline. Secondly, food management and better eating promotes the acquirement of specialized skills and knowledge, using and restricting food in order to better one's health with simple, individualized tricks, which ultimately promotes girls' self-regulation and capacity to continually improve.

Love Life: Emotional and Physical Self-Governance and Girls' (Hetero)Sexuality

“Love Life” comprises another major section of *Seventeen*, which focuses on relationships and sexuality; these are explicitly oriented around heterosexuality and ‘boys’. The absence of any queer representation serves not only to erase queerness from the magazine, but also to maintain a system of heteronormativity, and to construct an ideal girl whose relationship success is based on “a glamorous heterosexual imperative” (Harris, 2004, 19). In discussing boys and potential relationships, *Seventeen* focuses on guiding girls through pressures and perils of sex ‘hookups’, as well as navigating relationships with the opposite sex through learning how to understand or ‘read’ boys’ signals and actions.

A number of the articles in *Seventeen* fall on either side of a paradoxical view of relationships: they are either celebrating girls’ ‘love life’, while encouraging girls to attract boys and to understand and improve relationships, or, conversely, they display an anxiety or aversion towards potential sexual relationships. The preoccupation with sex and its various potential dangers is the focus of many articles within ‘Love Life’. In these cases, sexuality is less about girls understanding their own desires, but rather, how to manage and keep at bay their male partners’ needs. Consequently, sex advice articles become warnings about sex and its consequences, often promoting abstinence. Moreover, managing sexual activity is constructed as a facet of girls’ self-responsibility.

Indeed, while youth sexuality in itself produces anxiety and is regarded as something needing control, it is girls who are seen to have more responsibility and

investment in sexual relationships. Girls carry physical risks in sex; in addition to chance of contracting STDs, there is the possibility pregnancy, the fear of which is heightened in popular discourse. Indeed, teen motherhood invokes contemporary moral panic surrounding girls, as it represents girls' rejection of their seemingly inherent postfeminist opportunities (Projansky, 2007, 56). Pregnant teens are constructed as "wasteful, destructive, and a drain on social resources" (Harris, 2004, 30), seen to be choosing an inevitable low socioeconomic status, a considerable transgression in today's neoliberal climate. Moreover, "it is frequently and simplistically correlated with certain class and race characteristics in ways such that Blackness and poverty, for example, are seen to somehow cause young women to be willful, wanton, and stupid" (Harris, 2004, 30). Therefore, girls are guided away from the choices that could lead to such a transgressive position; sex is perceived as an activity unsuited for ideal girlhood as it represents a choice to risk a successful future.

In contrast, boys are constructed as having an inherent, biologically driven desire and need for sex, which naturally outweighs that of girls. They are, in a way, excused from responsibility and need for control (Bay-Cheng, et al., 2011, 1169). Their objects of attraction, then, are saddled with the need to manage desires. Girls are therefore taught to regulate their dress, conduct, and manners of socialization in order to do so. Failure to ward off advances or maintain abstinence is often blamed on the girl's own weaknesses or faults. It is important to reflect on how this self-regulation and individual responsibility echoes neoliberal values (Bay-Cheng, et al.,

2011, 1170). Here, the girl is placed as a capable agent of managing sexuality (not necessarily participating in it). Such discourse tends to encourage victim-blaming attitudes, as girls' choices regarding sex are highlighted and victimization is dismissed (Bay-Cheng, et al., 2011, 1170). Girls must therefore "reconcile prevailing neoliberal ideals with a dominant sexual discourse that presumes them to be perpetually at risk" (Bay-Cheng, et al., 2011, 1170). A girl who learns to control and negotiate these risks, preventing negative consequences that could jeopardize her future success, thereby demonstrates an ideal neoliberal aptitude for self-responsibility.

The article "Wait for It" (Figure 4.1) takes on a specific sex negative discourse in its promotion of abstinence. It should be noted that *Seventeen* does feature articles that discuss safe sex practices outside of an "abstinence" context. However, they all tend to follow a narrative that emphasizes safe sex in a sex-negative framework, in which good or positive experiences of physical intimacy are not discussed. Figure 4.1 exemplifies the type of abstinence discourse that is subtly promoted in many sexuality articles. This article does contain some positive advice by refuting certain elements of rape culture; for example, it dismisses ideas about girls 'owing' sex to their partners, and writes that sex is "also about you", and that girls must be "100% ready for it". While it does not explicitly refer to consent, it does place an emphasis on being comfortable. Moreover, one of the abstinent "tricks" mentions masturbation; however, this is ultimately framed as a tool to ward off desire for sex with a partner.

Overall, the article takes as its focus how the reader can learn to “stay true to yourself”, which places the focus on the individual and her own self-regulation. This article does not question abstinence or why it might be desired, nor does it explore how sexuality might have positive effects. The “Q&A” format, as well as the “tricks” given from other teen girls at the bottom of the page, gives an impression of solidarity, that there are many other girls upholding the same pledge; indeed, the text reads, “Believe it or not, lots of girls wait to have sex!” Ultimately, this positions “guys” as the ones who want and crave sex, and girls as the ones who must deny it; they are continually made the “gatekeepers” of any physical intimacy (Bay-Cheng, et al., 2011, 1169). This article also reifies popular ideals of virginity, writing that in engaging in oral and anal sex, one can “still technically be a virgin”, therefore upholding notions of virginity being technical, or scientific, rather than a fluid, subjective ideology. Virginity in this sense is situated something that can be kept or given, maintaining an unbalanced gendered relationship (Bay-Cheng, et al., 2011, 1169). Regardless of virginity, however, *Seventeen* asserts that these other forms of sex can be just as damaging as they still carry the risk of STDs; it is obvious that health is therefore key to maintaining *Seventeen*’s sexuality ideal. Additionally, the article offers ‘tricks’ from other abstinent girls, described as efficient, individual rituals that can be performed. One suggests, “I scare myself a little bit... one moment of pleasure right now is not worth the risk of pregnancy or an STD”. Therefore, girls are told to actively manage and control these risks. These discourses construct sex as a momentary pleasure, and it is ultimately frivolous and unnecessary. Therefore,

health and non-pregnancy are prioritized, while sexuality is positioned as something to be repressed.

Yet *Seventeen* also presents another look at relationships, outside of sex, in which girls are told to actively seek out 'love' and commitment from boys; this is presented as a more fun, or welcoming type of connection. It still, though, maintains a need for planning, strategizing, and management in order to optimize results and maintain success. For example, Figure 4.2, entitled "Sneaky Ways to Make Him Worship You", offers "tricks" to the reader to manipulate a boy's attention or increase his connection to her; indeed, they describe this as having the boy "wrapped around her finger". This creates a specific view of a relationship, in which a girl must continually strategize and be 'sneaky' in order to feel love from her partner. The tips given include complimenting him, bragging about him so that he overhears, and actively suggesting date activities. Notably, many of these are first positioned as ways to please her boyfriend; however, they end up being articulated as a "trick" in order to get (sometimes unwittingly) a desired effect from him. A 'real girl' suggestion, for example, offers a story of giving back-rubs to her boyfriend "with nothing in return!" She describes creating a "game" in which the loser of "fun bets" had to give the other a back rub; through this, her boyfriend grew enthusiastic about reciprocating the gesture. In this story, the girl has to find a subtle, underhanded way of articulating her desire to her boyfriend, taking it upon herself to find a successful approach. Similarly, the article suggests complimenting a boyfriend's clothes in order to have him dress better for the girl's own enjoyment;

“Now he’ll always dress to impress you... lucky girl!” Moreover, bragging about him is about “encouraging him to keep up the A+ BF behavior”. This type of narrative consistently describes affectionate gestures that ultimately have ulterior motives, in which girls seek to gain something for themselves through certain relationship behaviour. Moreover, it creates situations in which girls can’t, or won’t, voice their own true desires or feelings about the relationship; they must instead find ways to trick their partners into doing what they wish.

Overall, these representations of love and relationships exemplify a contemporary, postfeminist, neoliberal understanding of relationships and “emotional literacy” (Gonick, 2006, 5) in which girls are being taught to manage their expectations and, ultimately, develop technologies of the self through relations with others. The focus on helping girls and women navigate relationships and dating culture is central to postfeminist texts and popular media (Negra, 2009, 137). Often, this takes form in the proliferation of ‘rules’ and guides for how to improve dating strategy, or manage a relationship effectively. This rules discourse is oriented around “a studied femininity associated with secret keeping and the mysterious” (Negra, 2009, 137). That is, girls are encouraged to tap into hidden laws and tricks of gender relations that can help them better their emotional connections.

The contemporary popularization of these ideas is rooted in the current conception of a gender crisis, in which the sudden change and uncertainty of gender roles in a postfeminist era leaves men and women uncertain how to navigate their

relationships (Negra, 2009, 137). While men are constructed as unable or unwilling to adapt to these changes, there is new pressure on women to best handle new gender relations. Indeed, it is women who are perceived as having superior emotional capabilities and attunement, which are highly valued in self-realizing, individualistic neoliberal citizens (Gonick, 2006, 5). Regardless, popular representations of dating and relationships tend to depict it as a difficult and dubious scene. Consistent is an anxiety over incorrectly 'reading' or misinterpreting male behaviour, and therefore jeopardizing the potential success of a relationship. For example, *Seventeen* features an article in the August 2011 issue entitled, "LIES he tells you straight to your face" (Figure 4.3), which plays on the concern over misjudging partners and relationships. It is set up as a kind of translation manual, with several examples of "The Lie", followed by what he really meant; these 'truths' come in the form of testimonials from 'real' boys who give examples from their own lives. For example "I love you" is offered as a lie, backed up with a story from "Price, 21", who only told his girlfriend he loved her because she had said it first. The article also offers a "Spot A Liar!" text box, which provides tricks for spotting behaviour or language that might hint at a lie; for example, having a physical 'tell'. Discourses represented here tend to position boys and relationships as inherently manipulative and tricky; girls are therefore given ways to stay in control, and to recognize typical manipulation.

Girls are, nevertheless, encouraged to adapt and 'go along' with structures and situations that might seem unfavourable to them, "modifying their expectations

and behaviors in line with patriarchal ideological precepts”, which, “gives women the best chance of achieving fulfillment and intimacy” (Negra, 2009, 138). This was especially apparent in Figure 4.2, in which girls are told to repeatedly work ‘around’ their male partner’s behaviour in order to get their desired attention; for example, Figure 4.2 suggests bringing pizza and games to a boyfriend’s house in hopes of having him party less. Girls are therefore presented as individuals seeking specific relationship success, and they are not encouraged to question or change the values that underlie contemporary dating and relationship ethics. Through all this, the “emotional governance of the self” (Negra, 2009, 137) remains a consistent expectation; that is, relationship management becomes a way to develop the self through emotional growth and improvement.

The Love Life section stipulates good relationship savvy through the promotion of ‘love’ rules and guidelines. The article, “Spring Clean Your Love Life—(And get the guy you really want!)” (Figure 4.4) focuses on improving the girl reader’s relationship problems through simple, individualized steps and rules. It also emphasizes what Negra (2009) terms “the importance of self-care as we go about relationship building” (137), that is, it implies refreshing or getting rid of negativity in the reader’s (love) life and clarifying true desires. It proclaims, “Ditch the drama that’s dirtying up your life and get ready for a fresh new attitude about love!” The format of this article also highlights the ‘rules and guidelines’ aspect of postfeminist relationship narratives through the use of “to-do lists” and categorizations, (e.g., the “Spring Fling To-Do List”). This associates the girl reader’s

love life with work and organization, rendering relationships 'doable' through a pragmatic, work-oriented approach. Notably, this is also constructed through a "cleaning" metaphor, which draws upon the myth of housework as inherently feminine activity. Here, it positions 'bad' or undesirable partners as something to be thrown out; "Sometimes the trash you have to take out is *him!*" As a whole, it constructs one's "love life" and male partners as something messy, complex, or hard to manage (for example, it points out three "sneaky" love situations that "affect you more than you realize"), and attempts to give girls control and understanding over seemingly inherently difficult situations. The successful girl is therefore one who can 'clean up' the mess of 'love' efficiently, and learn to avoid negative situations, thereby improving her own work ethic while handling emotional labour simultaneously.

Seventeen also uses the Love Life section in order to bring the emotional relationship domain into the consumer realm. In that both emotional and consumer work are highly feminized, the successful girl must negotiate the blending of both spheres. Figure 4.5, "What he *really* wants for the holidays", provides a chart that is meant to help girls identify an appropriate gift for a boy. This article stresses the importance of buying the correct gift for the holidays. It suggests that the girl must understand the status of the relationship, as different gifts imply different levels of intimacy, which include "flirty friend", "kinda dating", and "serious bf". Girls must then identify the relationship level properly. They must also understand the 'guy' in question; "Give the *wrong* gift and your guy will question whether you even get

him.” Indeed, the “Not This!” column indicates the potential for failure in purchasing the right present. This column provides, again as testimonials from boys, examples of bad gifts, such as tickets to see a comedian who made too many “vulgar jokes about sex”, or a hat and scarf that “wasn’t my style at all... she was thinking more about her own taste than mine.” Here, the girl is encouraged to limit experimentation and instead adhere to rules of gift-giving, while also encouraging them to properly read their boyfriend’s desires. The appropriate gifts emphasize DIY work, which highlights a girl’s individual tenacity and work ethic, while at the same time play into rules of not trying too hard or “being over-the-top” (Fig. 4.5). Good gifts then range from baking, to planning movie nights, to buying an expensive cologne that matches the boy’s style. Overall, girls are encouraged to take care over gift giving, as their purchases will demonstrate the worth of the relationship as well as her ability to gauge her partner’s needs and identity. Girls are consistently expected to hone these knowledge and skills in order to succeed in a postfeminist relationship landscape.

In conclusion, Love Life reifies an ideal of girls’ heterosexuality and emotional life. This involves a commitment to abstinence, or a distancing from sexuality, which is promoted as not only ideal, but a way of displaying individuality and self-assertiveness. Its tutorials on navigating relationships and ‘reading’ boys positions one’s ‘love life’ as a way to display skills in the private, emotional or social realm. Girls’ ability to learn to improve their relations with boys is about being able

to navigate uncertain postfeminist gender roles, while also demonstrating an emotional awareness required of the self-governing neoliberal subject.

Your Life: Citizenship, Education, and At Risk Girlhood

The final section of *Seventeen* is entitled Your Life, and takes as its point of interest various miscellaneous issues that are grounded in girls' broader role as citizens in a community, as well as how they negotiate different events and social norms. That is, the Your Life articles centre on social activism, relationships, school and college, money, and topical 'real life' stories. It is in this section that transgressive issues are often discussed, bringing up current moral panics or social problems, as well as representations of deviant girlhood.

Activism and community service is one key component of Your Life. In these articles, girls are implicated as key figures in the local and global community; they are positioned as leaders or citizens with the potential to make real change. These discussions tend to be rooted in current events, and they often glamorize the activism through celebrity endorsements. Figure 5.1 is entitled "Support gay teens!" and is framed by a text box at the top of the page as "Daniel Radcliffe's mission", accompanied by a large picture of the (straight identifying) actor. The issue of gay teen suicide is brought up and the organization "The Trevor Project", which runs a help hotline for LGBT youth, is discussed. Complementing this is a 'real life' story

from a young queer girl, who discusses her experience with depression after coming out; she asserts that her school's Gay-Straight Alliance "saved (her) life". The GSA is described as a place of solidarity and honesty, but also as a place to experience straight acceptance. A third text box then encourages the reader to start their own high school GSA, thereby orienting the possibility for activism within the school space.

This article provides clear discussion of queer youth and relevant issues facing them today. It allows for representation and visibility of queerness and LGBT issues in mainstream media. Yet, queer girls or youth are otherwise invisible throughout *Seventeen*, except for in spaces such as these, where they are a project of activism. That is, LGBT youth's representation is limited to their construction as victims to be saved. Therefore, LGBT representation is coloured by the struggle and difficulty described, in contrast to the lightness and fun that permeates the rest of the largely heteronormative magazine. Moreover, there are subtle implications in Figure 5.1 of an inherently straight reader. For example, the title "Support gay teens" implies a divide between the reader and the gay teens to be supported. There are also no suggestions for groups or movements for LGBT youth exclusively, but rather, GSAs, which rely on the involvement of straight people. The words of the queer girl describing her experiences as an out lesbian also hints at a divide in saying, "Let's help them—so we don't lose them for good". Therefore, the implied reader in this article, and presumably throughout the magazine, is inherently separate from LGBT youth; indeed, her ability to achieve, and be upwardly mobile,

hinges on her rejection of victimization, thereby signaling she has a clear pathway to success.

The representation of community activism or charity work is also represented in the article “Donate your prom dress”, (Figure 5.2) in the March 2011 issue. This article uses the same format as Figure 5.1., with a celebrity (Ashley Greene) supporting the cause. This article appeals to a kind of girl solidarity in that it asks for girls to share their dresses in order to attend and enjoy prom, which is reified as an important and necessary event. “Every girl should have that experience!” This is therefore an inherently feminized form of activism. As its focus, this article recognizes economic stratification and how it might lead to different social and consumer experiences for girls based on their differing access to wealth. This is also rare with *Seventeen*, which promotes high levels of consumption. Yet this article identifies current economic issues, making direct reference to the recession. It therefore encourages a collective response of sharing among girls. However, the implied reader is again the one in the position to help; she is assumed to have been able to afford the dress to give. In one text box, a testimonial is given from “Kimberley”, who describes the dress drive she started at her high school, and is used as an example to the reader. Her story is titled “I did it!” highlighting her individual accomplishment. *Seventeen* encourages that the reader do the same (“Make it your mission”) and gives instructions on the various ways they can involve themselves with this issue.

Overall, the articles in the “Your Life” section position the reader in a place of privilege, able to make change in her community. Leadership and activism serve to reify girls’ ability to succeed and be assertive. Moreover, there are skills to be gained and employed through such work. As Harris states, “Becoming a good leader means establishing economic literacy, networking, and discovering one’s own power to realize ambitions” (Harris, 2004, 78). Girls are told that they have an infinite capacity for success in this field, and that any limitations are due to lack of assertiveness, or self-esteem issues, which must be fixed in order to realize potential. Within magazines, “good citizenship practices among girls” (Pike, 2011, 56) are highly promoted as signifiers of empowerment. However, they are also depoliticized. Girls’ activism is also decidedly separate from radical, gender-based social justice work or feminism.

Another issue of importance in the Your Life section is education. College is positioned as an important aspect of girls’ lives and post-secondary education is articulated as something that needs a considerable amount of guidance, tips, and advice. In Figure 5.3, “Freshman year fails!”, readers are given examples of various ways they could “fail” in their first year of college. This includes not just bad marks, but social (e.g., over-partying or homesickness) and economic failures as well. The format of this article uses stories from different “freshmen” at American colleges, who provide examples of mistakes they made, positioned as warnings to the readers to avoid doing the same (for example, “Steer clear of these college F-ups by learning the Freshman 15’s mistakes”). One girl writes that she “spent (her) whole savings

first semester!” thereby showing a lack of ability to budget and control her money properly, which is of course required of girls for their success in a neoliberal, capitalist society (Harris, 2004, 74). The solution here is a “weekly budget”, emphasizing the need for organization and close attention to personal finances. In another example, ‘Bria’ discusses her failing a class in the first semester as she abused her “freedom” by having “fun” instead of studying. She realizes that “you have to keep *yourself* on track”, as professors will not do it for you. Individualism and self-reliance is thus seen to be a key part of college success and girls’ ability to navigate this new, important place is a signal of their ability to succeed in contemporary society.

Articles centered on college, such as Figure 5.3, reinforce education as integral to girls’ success. In postfeminist society, the girl “is an active and aspirational subject of the education system” (McRobbie, 2009, 73). College in *Seventeen* at times represents the unknown, but is always figured as important to self-cultivation, and reminds the girl reader of her upcoming transition into adulthood. The fear of failure, then, is used to ensure that she prepare adequately for her educational experience. The examples of failures given all include the solution or a ‘moral of the story’ in which the girl has now realized her wrongdoing and corrected it. Therefore, these girls are represented as being able “to manage their failure in ways that do not disturb the notion that most young women can be successful” (Harris, 2004, 109). These articles therefore give a special awareness to

the girl reader, setting them above other girls and giving them an advantage in that they can now plan better for their educational success.

Money and economic savvy is another skill that is discussed in Your Life. The article “Save big for spring break!” discusses how girls might save money easily in order to get a “dream vacay” for spring break. The tips on money saving are all based around different websites that offer discounts or resources on cheaper alternatives. The reader following this advice must be actively dining out, purchasing beauty products and electronics, driving a car, and buying clothes. In this context, they save money by spending, and, ultimately, they save money in order to buy something else—a vacation. This constructs the girl as the ultimate consumer citizen; it is through spending that she reifies her neoliberal citizenship and success in contemporary society. “For young women, making oneself is also connected to making money for oneself” (Harris, 2004, 74). The entrepreneurial and money saving ideas offered in Your Life construct the reader as someone attaining wealth through her own determination, savvy, and assertiveness.

The articles in Your Life sometimes use a first-person form of storytelling to describe a sensational or topical story; sometimes, these narratives invoke of transgressive or ‘at risk’ girlhood. Figure 5.5 engages with such a representation. It is titled “I got caught smuggling drugs”, and tells the story of a 17-year-old girl, Jessica, who smuggled drugs across the U.S.-Mexican border at the urging of friends. As Jessica describes it, boredom, an \$80 payment, and pressure from older male

friends made her to decide to smuggle drugs over the border. She was caught, convicted, and served a total of six months in juvenile detention and prison. The apparent message of the story is emphasized in the conclusions Jessica herself draws from her experience in which she details her self-disgust and regret. She says that she “felt worthless” and while in prison spent her time “thinking about how dumb I’d been”. She also points out that this has jeopardized her future. “Now I have a felony on my record which will make it way harder for me to get financial aid for college or a good job someday.” In this story, Jessica’s failure is made entirely her own, and while no solution or ‘way out’ is provided, it is a clear indictment of these choices in general. Indeed, stories of girls engaged in crime or violence get considerable attention and media coverage and are the topic of contemporary moral panics, invoking “a more general moral concern about juvenile delinquency, nihilism, and antisocial attitudes” (Harris, 2004, 25). In these scenarios, girls are depicted as taking assertiveness or independence too far, transgressing outside of acceptable moral boundaries. Moreover, their problems become individualized and character defining (Harris, 2004, 25). Structural disadvantage or relevant political issues are ignored in these narratives, in favour of a focus on the bad choices made by the individual youth, and the consequent stigma to follow them. Ultimately, the representation of this failed girl is essential not only to show girls bad choices, but also to prop up the necessity of the successful, idealized girl, as the attainable and desirable subjectivity.

As a whole, Your Life seeks to broaden the world, community, and social life of the girl reader of *Seventeen*. Moving away from the more intensely physical focus of the Fashion, Beauty, and Health sections of the magazine, as well as the boy-oriented Love Life content, it looks at how girls can position themselves as self-reliant, succeeding subjects through actions related to education, relationships, and activism. It also creates a certain vision of the world and community of the girl reader, which is one with few barriers, an ultimate post-feminist landscape that is geared toward offering girls many opportunities. Moreover, Your Life helps to further construct *Seventeen's* vision of its reader as a socio-economically privileged girl who is focused on upward mobility. Through the association with education, leadership, and consumerism, Your Life broadens the scope of the neoliberal, postfeminist girl's potential for success.

Conclusions

This thesis has demonstrated the ways in which an ideal vision of successful girlhood in *Seventeen* magazine is emblematic of contemporary neoliberal and postfeminist ideology. At this centre of this analysis is the 'girl' subject, as well as the cultural spaces and activities attached to girlhood. In identifying the shifting, discursive constructedness of her subjectivity, this research has sought to illuminate current ideologies that produce the ideal girl in *Seventeen*. Furthermore, using *Seventeen* as the site of analysis affirms the socio-cultural significance of the

activities, products, and identities on which it focuses, thereby reifying “girl culture” as a concept that makes tangible the meanings and current experiences of girlhood.

The mapping of the ideologies and discourses that produce this representation of girlhood provides the complex foundation of this analysis. This research was backed up and contextualized by a gendered and feminist analysis of contemporary political norms, and the ways in which girls and their popular representations are implicated. As this thesis has demonstrated, the contemporary socio-political landscape makes meaning of girls and shapes the expectations set out for them. Specifically, the blending of neoliberalism and postfeminism has created a contemporary idealization of girlhood. As an ethic of late modernity, neoliberalism has moved beyond an economic principle to become a governing technology, which makes individualism, self-regulation, independence, as well as economic visibility and upward mobility, key values of the late modern citizen. Postfeminism, popularized as a parallel to neoliberalism’s significance, conceptualizes girls as inheriting equality from a feminism rooted in the past; therefore, they are positioned as having a barrier-free path to success. The girl power discourse arising from postfeminist rhetoric has marked girls as needing to be assertive and independent; this valuing of girls has indeed becoming representative of contemporary gender norms. Moreover, the characterization of girls in this way has blended with neoliberal ideals to create the popular identification of girls as the embodiment of successful neoliberal citizenship.

The discussion of the development of postfeminist and neoliberal frameworks provides a background for naming a specific, relevant girl discourse—the ‘can-do’, successful girl. This particular thesis provides a unique intervention into the study of this successful girlhood; that is, it demonstrates how this ideal is sustained throughout a text (*Seventeen*), thereby creating a textual reality in which this girl is situated. This research allows us to see a number of different neoliberal and postfeminist ideologies working together; it explores how they manifest in different ways but are, ultimately, connected. The naming of different spheres of interest (e.g., beauty, fashion, health, etc.,) means that discourse in *Seventeen* is producing technologies of self-governance for girls to adopt in different events, spaces, and realms of their life. Key themes and rhetoric are therefore present throughout the magazine and show the complexities of the ideal girl subjectivity.

Underlying the majority of *Seventeen*’s content is the theme of girls’ consumerism, that is, the pressure to be a consumer, to exhibit spending power, and to be visible in the market. How this consumerism is framed, however, is particularly significant. Girls are not just purchasing in order to own a product, but rather, their consumption enacts ideal attributes of the successful girl. In the Fashion and Beauty sections, for instance, buying products is connected to broader goals, so that, for example, a pair of jeans could signal the ability to improve one’s body, therefore emphasizing individuality and confidence. Similarly, choosing the right shade of makeup is articulated as an expression of capability and knowledge of the self, as well as an assertion of individual identity. Consumption in *Seventeen*

extends beyond clothing and cosmetics, however; Love Life promotes an astuteness and skill in buying gifts for boys, while Your Life teaches girls to learn to save through the act of buying. Throughout, the consumer girl is told to buy particular products to achieve a certain ideal of normative femininity; for instance, feminine clothing and makeup, or gifts for opposite sex partners. However, she is also positioned as economically autonomous in having excessive funds to spend (Massoni, 2010, 199). Therefore, consumerism in *Seventeen* consistently operates on a specific ideal of a privileged girl reader.

Seventeen also creates a reality for girls that is governed largely by tutorials and regimes. Often this is emphasized through visual and linguistic references to school, again emphasizing the public visibility of otherwise personalized actions or routines. This reliance on the tutorial, or rule giving, is often found in guides that show girls how to find the 'correct' makeup or clothes for their individual needs. This technique often uses 'experts' or 'secrets' to improve knowledge and skills; moreover, it promotes 'tricks' so that girls can, apparently, look or act better than they are, through the right clothing purchase, or cosmetic application. Outside authority is therefore utilized in order to understand and govern the self more efficiently.

Rules are also used to help girls govern mysterious or tenuous elements of girls' lives, such as relationships, or food and health. The difficulty and complexity of emotional terrain, or "love life" is therefore made more knowable, or easy to

navigate, through the dissemination of tips. Similarly, food is presented as potentially anxiety-producing; tips and regulations are therefore offered so that girls can gain controls over what might diminish their ideal status. Consequently, the promotion of tutorials or guidelines reifies that success is up to the individual girl to achieve; that is, following rules means that the tasks are 'doable'. Moreover, girls are told to adhere to rules in order to further their neoliberal capacity for self-regulation and independence.

Overall, *Seventeen* is guided by a theme of improvement, perpetuating an ideal that girls can continually better themselves and their circumstances. However, this is not an ethic of improvement meant to make girls reach an objectified ideal, but rather, a promotion of self-improvement so as to exhibit the skills of a neoliberal, postfeminist citizen. As Nikolas Rose argues, the neoliberal encouragement of autonomous self-regulation not simply used in order to repress and objectify; rather it is extolled in order to align individuals with socio-political norms. "... Self-governing capabilities can be installed in free individuals in order to bring their own ways of conducting and evaluating themselves into alignment with political objectives" (1998, 155). Therefore, the 'improvement' of one's clothing choices, relationships, makeup skills, fitness, or college experience, is not necessarily about bettering those specific experiences, but rather, is connected to achieving postfeminist, neoliberal success. Girls' achievements in these 'girly' realms then become symbolic of their potential to succeed as neoliberal citizens.

Seventeen, as a social text, has been criticized as providing a limited vision of girls' lives (Massoni, 2010, 25). Specifically, it is said to simply reproduce consumer rhetoric, placing the girl reader within a corporate scheme in which shopping and spending is a requirement, thereby "objectifying and trivializing young women as shopping bodies in search of romance" (Massoni, 2010, 25). Coupled with this disparagement is the tendency to diminish or dismiss girls' culture or representation as socially significant. However, this thesis demonstrates that while elements of girl culture, and texts such as *Seventeen*, do dictate strict standards for girls, these ideals have important social and political meaning, in which girls are now representative of model subjects. Such ideals point to a current cultural perspective on girls, and subsequently to gendered identities of race, class, and sexuality. Moreover, in contextualizing girls as being, at this moment, significant symbols of ideal citizenship, it is with their representation especially that a depiction of contemporary ideal subjectivity is made clear. The deconstruction of these norms, and the 'successful girl', facilitates a complex understanding of hegemonic ideology. It is therefore through the analysis of successful, ideal girls in *Seventeen*, that neoliberal, postfeminist technologies of girls' self-governance is better and more intricately understood.

ENDNOTES

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- ii This is based on a 'mainstream', popular conception of feminism as taking place within three main 'waves'. Contemporary criticism might deconstruct this chronological vision of feminism, which favours a white, middle class history, and instead look for gaps and overlaps of feminist activism, including Black, queer, or transnational feminisms. (Press, 2011, 117)
- ii In discussing the "generational divide" (15) between young and older women today, Genz & Brabon hit on a current tension; that is, the notion that girls today have 'dropped the ball' in terms of feminist activism, while young feminists can be dismissive and critical of the problematic elements of 'second wave' work (See also, *The Aftermath of Feminism* (2009), by Angela McRobbie
- iii This 'anti-postfeminism' is discussed by Genz & Brabon (2009, 15), and McRobbie (2009, 2), in which any rewriting or redefinition of feminism is perceived as negating feminism altogether, creating only an illusion of progression
- iv McRobbie attributes this partly to girls' perception of a male gaze. However, while girls do behave in anticipation of male recognition, a (post)feminist analysis places girls in a broader social context that sees their behaviour influenced by other norms that aren't attached to a (hetero)sexual relationship.
- v Also called "de facto feminism" by Currie et. al, 2011.
- vi This idea is present in popular notions of girl presence at the box office, market, or in media 'competing' with boys, and male representations in books, movies, and TV (Gonick, 2006, 11).
- vii Gonick, 2006, McRobbie, 2009, and Projansky, 2007, emphasize the timing of this discourse as important, as it parallels the rise of postfeminism and the integration of 'feminism' into mainstream rhetoric.
- viii See Harris, 2004; McRobbie, 2009, Projansky, 2007; Press, 2011; Budgeon, 2011; Francombe, 2010, for discussion and analysis of specific successful/failed girl representations.
- ix Lipkin, 2009, dispels this notion by explaining that while girls have improved their academic performance and lessened achievement gaps in which they were behind, boys have not 'fallen' behind girls (31).
- x Gonick uses the figure of "Ophelia" to represent the failed/victimized girl, as a reference to Mary Pipher's "Reviving Ophelia" (1995), which examines various moral panics surrounding the troubles facing girls today
- xi For this section I am referring to larger, more corporate magazines put out by media institutions; there are of course emerging alternatives in magazine media, such as 'zines, or smaller scale, special interest girl magazines (See Lipkin, 2009, 138).

Figure 1.3

fashion

the best dress for

HOURLGLASS

carolina, 20



The scoop neck flatters a full bust while a nipped-in waist shows off feminine hips.

scoop neck

Dress Sizes XS-L, \$59, scoopdresses.com
 belt BODI Max Azria, \$79, BODI Max Azria stores
 mandala Sizes S-10, Armani Exchange, \$59,
armaniexchange.com

PETITE

rachel, 10



A body-hugging dress fills out your curves—the higher hem lengthens your legs without feeling bare.

fitted mini

Dress Sizes XS-L, Aileen Tovey, \$110, call 604-907-4096 to
 order www.fashionforward21.com, select Forever 21 stores
 long Moko Rio Chic, \$16, makarochic.com, see line
 Sizes G-10, Marc Fisher, \$89, marcfisherfootwear.com

ATHLETIC

kerrie, 20

Wide straps look best on strong shoulders, and a loose, floaty fit gives your toned frame a soft shape.



floaty tank

Dress Sizes S-L, Lululemon, \$58, lululemon.com
 hat Lululemon, \$18, lululemon.com, www.gossishUrban.com
 Exposures, \$33, sacredcenter.com
 mandala Sizes G-10, Nix, \$79, nixshoes.com

052 seventeen.com | MARCH 2011

Figure 1.4



Figure 2.1

beauty

skin secrets only derms know!

Four celeb docs spill their best tricks just for you—no appointment needed.
BY MEREDITH GRAY

try: RoC Retinol Correxion Sensitive Night Cream, \$30 at Sephora

prevent zits

"An antiaging product can actually clear up your acne! Pick one that contains a little retinol—it helps skin shed dead cells faster so they don't clog your pores."
—LISA AIRAN, M.D.

blast blackheads

"Hold a warm washcloth to your face before using a salicylic acid cleanser. It will open up your pores so the medicine can penetrate deeper to dissolve the gunk inside. Rinse with cold water to close the pores again."
—PATRICIA WEXLER, M.D.

even out your skin

"It's not just what you put on your skin—it's also what goes into your body that matters! Beat blotchy, washed-out skin with a dose of antioxidants—they protect your skin from pollution and sun damage to make you look extra healthy and glowy."
—FREDRIC BRANDT, M.D.

brighten up

"You don't need to scrub your skin to exfoliate—just wipe your face with a strong two-step exfoliating peel every morning after you cleanse. It will get rid of dulling dead skin and help fade old acne scars."
—DENNIS GROSS, M.D.

try: Dr. Dennis Gross Skincare Extra Strength Alpha Beta Peel, \$90 for 30 peels, drc.com



try: Neutrogena Blackhead Eliminating Cleanser/Wash, \$6, drugstore.




PHOTO: JEREMY HARRIS / MAGNETWORKS

SEVENTEEN.COM Do you have the right skin care routine? Check it all seventeen.com/skincare



sniff for yourself, experience our freshest-ever fragrances. go fresh.

Figure 2.2

beauty

expert looks (for less!)

Three world-famous makeup artists hit the beauty aisles at your favorite stores. Check out the amazing looks they created with the stuff they scored! *by molly ritterbeck*

Pat McGrath SHOPS AT WALMART!

HER LOOK: bold berry

"For this look, I wanted it to be super-chic and cool—like a rebel mixed with serious style!"
—PAT MCGRATH, COVERGIRL GLOBAL CREATIVE DESIGN DIRECTOR

SHIMMER
Open up your eyes—and give your lids that candy-like glow—by chatting on a shimmering champagne shadow.
try NYC New York Color Sparkle Eyeshadow in Champagne, \$5. Walmart stores

LIPSTICK
Cook your lips in a rich creamy color! Trace the outline with the point of the lipstick, then fill in with the shade tangentially.
try CoverGirl Lip-Perfection Lipstick in Strikind, \$7. Walmart stores

PAT'S TIP:
"To keep your lipstick in place, oil up your inner corner, blend with a brush, and then apply a second layer."

MASCARA
Make your lashes fluttery with a few coats of black mascara. For mega-lash volume, wiggle the brush as close to the lashes as possible before sweeping it upward!
try CoverGirl LashBlast Volume Mascara in Black, \$11. Walmart stores

BRONZER
Bold lips require minimal makeup on the rest of your face. To avoid looking like you've bronzed all over for sun-kissed warmth, try Heat Cover To-Bronze Sunscreen in Heat Wave, \$9. Walmart stores

GLOSS
Finish with a coat of clear gloss for a pretty shine. Remember to wipe your teeth clean of any lipstick with a cotton swab!
try CoverGirl ShineBlast Lipgloss in Gloss, \$5. Walmart stores

beauty: expert looks (for less)

beauty: expert looks (for less)

Charlotte Willer SHOPS AT CVS!

HER LOOK: graphic goddess

"This look is fun yet still makes a strong impact!"
—CHARLOTTE WILLER, MAKEUPLINE NEW YORK'S GLOBAL MAKEUP ARTIST

LINER
For a modern cat-eye, line top and bottom lashes with a rich gel liner and a thin liquid brush and wing out the corners. Then draw the tip of the wing into your crease.
try Makeupline New York Eye Studio Liquid/Gel Eye Liner in Black, \$12. CVS stores

MASCARA
To make your lashes dramatic, use on two coats of mascara and add a bit extra to the tips of your lashes.
try Makeupline New York Great Lash Mascara in Very Black, \$7. CVS stores

SHADOW
Brush a warm, brown shadow across your entire lid and crease. Next, trace over the winged liner to soften the edges.
try Heat Cover To-Bronze Sunscreen in Heat Wave, \$9. CVS stores

CHARLOTTE'S TIP:
"To make eyes look eye-lash-essentially the same, look at the first eye in the mirror when lining the second eye—it will help you replicate the shape."

BLUSH
A bright pink blush pops to play up your cheeks. Use an angled blush brush to give your cheeks a strong, contoured look.
try Physicians Formula Heatwave Glow Touch Blush in Heat Wave, \$11. CVS stores

LIP GLOSS
Get all the shine and shine done! A gloss is not a substitute for lipstick, and the color is the perfect complement to the smoky shadow.
try Revlon Lip Luscious Lipgloss in Pink Pop, \$7. CVS stores

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Figure 2.3

beauty

are you wearing the right colors?

Take the guesswork out of makeup shopping! Use this guide to find your perfect shades. *by molly ritterbeck*

FAIR

Foundation: Your skin undertones have a base with a hint of yellow or peach? Look for light to medium coverage.

Concealer: Cool shades like blue-gray pigments against your light complexion and give your skin a natural radiance.

Blush: A creamy peach hue (rather than pink) picks up your coloring without adding any redness.

Lip gloss: A rosy glow adds just enough color to your silky skin without making you look overdone.

Try: L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Foundation, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99.

BEIGE

Foundation: Beware of a sheer foundation that's more purple than pink to add warmth to your face.

Concealer: Your skin is the perfect canvas for concealer with a little bit of gray in there to add a healthy-looking glow to your eyes.

Blush: A mix of peach, pink, and muted tones blend together to create a look that's just what you need.

Lip gloss: Go for a gloss with pink in it. Unlike a nude, which can wash you out, it will add life to your face.

Try: L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99.

OLIVE

Foundation: Pink tones aren't perfect for your skin, so look for a shade with a hint of purple.

Concealer: Your skin is the perfect canvas for concealer with a little bit of gray in there to add a healthy-looking glow to your eyes.

Blush: A mix of peach, pink, and muted tones blend together to create a look that's just what you need.

Lip gloss: Look for a gloss with a hint of pink in it. Unlike a nude, which can wash you out, it will add life to your face.

Try: L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99.

GOLDEN

Foundation: A sandy foundation makes your skin look radiant.

Concealer: Sparkling tones add a healthy-looking glow to your skin.

Blush: Cool shades like blue-gray pigments against your light complexion and give your skin a natural radiance.

Lip gloss: A rosy glow adds just enough color to your silky skin without making you look overdone.

Try: L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99.

BRONZE

Foundation: A tinted moisturizer with light coverage brightens your complexion.

Concealer: Change your skin's undertone with a shade of gold and lavender to give your skin a healthy-looking glow.

Blush: A mix of peach, pink, and muted tones blend together to create a look that's just what you need.

Lip gloss: Look for a gloss with a hint of pink in it. Unlike a nude, which can wash you out, it will add life to your face.

Try: L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99.

DEEP

Foundation: Stick with warm and deep undertones. The rich tones in your skin will complement your complexion.

Concealer: This skin-friendly shade complements the rich tones in your skin, and the subtle tint gives a wash of color that won't mask your complexion.

Blush: A mix of peach, pink, and muted tones blend together to create a look that's just what you need.

Lip gloss: Look for a gloss with a hint of pink in it. Unlike a nude, which can wash you out, it will add life to your face.

Try: L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99; L'Oréal Paris True Match Concealer, \$12.99.

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Figure 2.4.1

photographs by chris craymer

passport to pretty

Every culture has its secrets—so consider this your beauty boarding pass! Five international models spill their best tricks for you.

by yesenia almonte

defined brows

INDIA

"My mother introduced me to threading when I was in elementary school and I've been doing it ever since—it shapes and defines your brows without thinning them too much! When they start to grow, I tame them with a little brow gel."

—SANA




radiant skin

NORWAY

"The winters in Norway are brutal on my skin. I don't just get red—I get sore! To save my face from the freezing cold weather, I use a thick, rich cold cream. It keeps my skin from cracking. I apply it under and over makeup!"

—VIBEKE




sweet glow

BRAZIL

"After her secret regimen for glowing skin, she reveals her skin is her best friend (2:57). I make my own mask by mixing grape juice and honey. Then I apply it all over my face and leave it on for 20 minutes. It makes my skin brighter and the honey gives me an amazing glow!"

—ELISSA



soft lips

GHANA

"My all-in-one do-it-all is shea butter! I am constantly smoothing it on my lips (and anywhere else I need a little extra moisture!). It's the ultimate hydrator."

—MAYRA



Figure 2.4.2

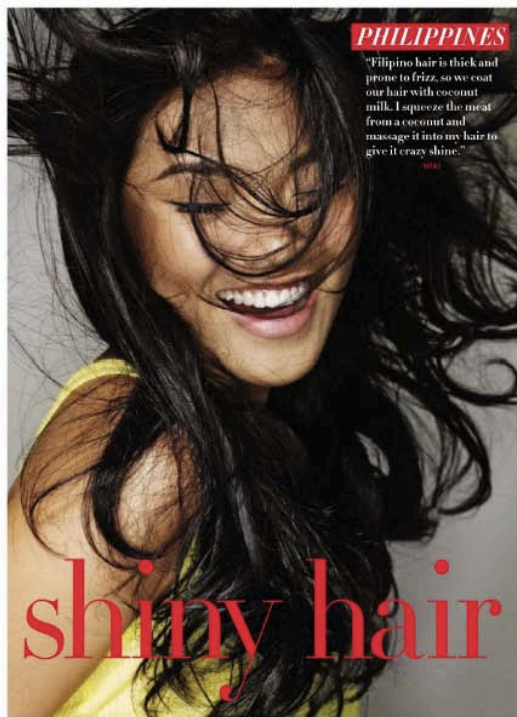


Figure 2.5

beauty

have total hair confidence!

Get an instant esteem boost: These hot celeb styles will make you feel *major*.

high side bun
 Dress up your everyday top knot! A ribbon in your school's colors will make you stand out at homecoming.

wild curls
 Show the world how massive your tresses are! Scrunch a curling mousse through damp hair, and blow-dry with a diffuser for even more volume.

blunt bob
 A blunt bob is the hair equivalent of a killer pair of heels! It immediately makes you look bolder and more polished.

slick down
 Don't hide behind your hair: It can be so freeing to slick it all out of the way! Coats it back with gel so you're not distracted by any floppy strands.

flyaway braid
 When your hair is intentionally messy, you won't stress over every loose strand! Embrace your flyaways in a sexy side braid.

17 FYI!
 You know how good it feels when someone compliments you on your look? Now you can help someone else feel confident about her beauty. Sign up for the *Seventeen* **Beauty** Weekend (October 21-25)! Go to Seventeen.com/17fyi for details!

SEVENTEEN.COM Check out the best celeb hair looks each week at Seventeen.com/beauty

TOP: MICHAEL TRACY/ARMANDO TESTA; MIDDLE: MICHAEL MALLERINO/GETTY IMAGES; BEYONCÉ: KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE.COM; LEFT: LISA FOLEY/ARMANDO TESTA; RIGHT: KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE.COM

Figure 3.1

health

**BACK-TO-SCHOOL
BOOT
CAMP!**

OPEN HERE!

Only three weeks of summer left—which is *just* enough time to flatten your tummy, boost your butt, and tone your legs before your first day. These moves from **Emma Stone's** training team (Armando Alarcon and Mari Winsor) got her fit *fast!*

Emma recently got serious about working out—and it shows!

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PHOTO: ANDREW HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES; STYLING: JESSICA WATSON; HAIR: JESSICA WATSON; MAKEUP: JESSICA WATSON; SHIRT: CALVIN KLEIN; PANTS: CALVIN KLEIN; SHOES: CALVIN KLEIN; TRAINING: ARMANDO ALARCON AND MARI WINSOR

Figure 3.2

health

THE BEGINNER'S BEACH BODY WORKOUT

Even if you're a fitness newbie, a lean bikini bod can be yours! **Blake Lively** (who swears she never really worked out before) used these moves from trainer Bobby Strom to tone up fast for *Green Lantern*.

Bobby Strom. Blake started to see results after just three weeks!

ALL PHOTOS BY STEPHEN VAUGHAN FOR ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY. HAIR AND MAKEUP BY JESSICA WARD FOR GIGI/LOREN. MAKEUP COLLECTIVE. STYLING: JESSICA WARD FOR GIGI/LOREN. HAIR: JESSICA WARD FOR GIGI/LOREN. HAIR: JESSICA WARD FOR GIGI/LOREN. HAIR: JESSICA WARD FOR GIGI/LOREN.

OPEN FOR WORKOUT MOVES!

Figure 3.4

health

1-minute makeover moves!

Lose the baggy sweaters and gain confidence! Do these quickie exercises three times a week to transform your body in time for spring break.

YOUR PERSONAL TRAINER

NAME: Sonki Hong
LOCATION: Los Angeles
CLAIM TO FAME: Celebs like Ke\$ha love his fun outdoor "boot camp" workouts!
WEB SITE: sonkifitness.com

TRAINING TIP:

THE 60-SECOND SECRET!
 How to do this workout—and why it gets the job done.

- First, warm up. Jog in place for 2 minutes, stretch your whole body for 5 minutes, then do jumping jacks for 1 minute.
- Now do each strength move for 60 seconds, as hard as you can. (Rest for 30 seconds in between.)
- Finally, repeat the strength circuit 0 that's all 5 moves two more times.

"Give it all out on a wave for 60 seconds. Forces you to work your muscles harder. You'll feel your waist every time, which makes you three x faster!"

DIPS *tones your arms and buttocks*

TRAINING TIP: "If you put your feet on the floor, you're not dipping. Keep your feet in your hands, your feet at 90° to each other."

A Sit on chair, hands beside hips. Scoot butt off seat and extend legs straight out.

B Lower your body by bending arms to 90°, then push back up to A.

Hint: It's all in your shoulders!

BICYCLES *tones your abs*

TRAINING TIP: "Keep your shoulders lifted off the floor the whole time. This works your abs, because it's like you're lifting."

A Lie on back with hands behind head, lift legs and bend them at 90°.

B Extend left leg out as you bring right knee in, reaching left elbow to touch it.

C Repeat to the other side. Keep alternating—it's a fast, fun exercise.

DUCK WALKS *tones your butt and thighs*

TRAINING TIP: "If you're up at 45 degrees, you're not duck walking. Keep your chest and butt down!"

A Squat down with back to wall and hands behind head.

B Stay low in your squat as you take a big step forward with your left leg.

C Now step with right leg. Keep "duck walking" in the squat position.

SWIMMERS *tones your back and stomach*

TRAINING TIP: "Don't let your back arch! Keep it flat and your shoulders up and tight!"

A Get on your hands and knees and look down at the floor.

B Lift left arm and right leg at the same time, so that they're parallel to the floor. Return to A slowly.

C Pause for three seconds, then repeat on the other side (right arm up, left leg up).

SIDEKICKS *tones your legs and stomach*

TRAINING TIP: "Remember to move all of your body forward, not just your legs. Push your feet against the floor to kick forward!"

A Stand with legs straight, feet together, palms in prayer position, and a wooden band around calves.

B Lift your left leg sideways as high as you can, keeping it straight and your upper body still. Return to A.

C Repeat to the other side.

WIN A SWAG BAG!

Light, comfy clothes will make any workout feel easier! Go to seventeen.com/thehub for a chance to win this cute tote and super-bright gear from Nike.

WORTH \$305 TOTAL!

TEAR OUT HERE!

Join Team Seventeen at seventeen.com/team17 for support from other readers and exclusive access to Sonki's weekly training tips!

Figure 3.5

get healthier—in one day!
 Forget silly juice cleanses: Here's how to recharge your body in just 24 hours . . . and feel amazing for *good*. by maridel reyes

7 a.m.
DETOX YOUR SYSTEM
 WITH OATMEAL AND FRESH BERRIES!



Oatmeal has **soluble fiber**, which acts like a broom to sweep out the crud in your digestive system that's left behind by junk food. Plus the meal itself (thanks again to the fiber) is insanely filling, so you won't be starving by lunch!

12:30 p.m.
UP YOUR ENERGY
 WITH ROAST BEEF ROLL-UPS!



You won't have to reach for caffeine to get a jolt of energy if you eat more **iron**, like in lean roast beef. These quickie roll-ups can actually boost your energy long-term by helping get oxygen to *all* of your cells.

2 p.m.
HAVE A BETTER PERIOD
 WITH TOASTY CHEESE STICKS!



Toasting a slice of low-fat mozzarella on whole wheat bread and dipping it in marinara satisfies after-school munchies, and the **calcium** in the cheese can make your menstrual cramps less painful. (Add low-fat milk and/or yogurt to your diet to get three servings a day for the full payoff!)
These toasted mozzarella sticks are like a healthier version of your fave app!

6 p.m.
FIGHT OFF DISEASES
 WITH A SHRIMP AND VEGGIE STIR-FRY!



Whip together this yummy super meal in less than 10 minutes during a study break! It has **omega-3s** (from the shrimp) and **antioxidants** (found in broccoli and peppers) that may help protect you against everything from colds to cancer!

9 p.m.
SLEEP BETTER
 WITH CEREAL AND SKIM MILK!



Getting enough rest *tonight* can help cut your cravings for junk food *tomorrow*—it's research proven! So to doze off more easily, have a small bedtime snack of cereal and skim milk. The **tryptophan** (in the milk's protein) and the **carbs** (from the cereal) work together to make your brain sleepy!
Add dried cherries. They have melatonin, a natural sleep aid.

Figure 3.6

eat all these *treats!*

Cookies, candy, holiday yumminess—it's everywhere you look. Here's a *handy* (ha!) guide to indulging without overdoing it!

CHOCOLATES

Pick out three from the box, as long as each is roughly the size of the top half of your thumb!

FYI: The antioxidants in dark chocolate can be good for your skin!

APPLE PIE

Cut a slice that's one-eighth of a pie. At its widest point, the crust should be about two inches across—that's the length of your pinky finger!

FYI: You can have dessert about three times a week, as long as you're also eating three meals a day that include fruits, veggies, whole grains, and lean protein.

SUGAR COOKIES

Make a tight fist with your thumb side up. If the cookies are about that size or smaller, have one as a snack—or two if it's your dessert.

FYI: A thick layer of frosting will pile on the sugar and fat—but a touch of icing or sprinkles adds *JUST* the right amount of sweetness!

CARAMEL POPCORN

Cup your hands closely together. The perfect portion (about three-quarters of a cup) will fit neatly inside!

FYI: Popcorn's fiber fills you up fast, so even a little is super-satisfying.

SEVENTEEM.COM Get recipes for snacks and other goodies that'll keep you healthy. Check it all out at www.seventeen.com. #100911

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES; FOOD STYLING: SIMONE SPINARELLI/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM


Figure 4.2

SNEAKY WAYS TO make him worship you

You know the girl who's got her guy wrapped around her finger? With these tricks, it could be you. BY ELISA BENSON

- greet him with a compliment**
When your guy knows he has your approval, he'll work to keep it. So take a second to look him over, then say, "That shirt is hot on you!" Now he'll always dress to impress you . . . lucky girl!
- suggest something**
Guys love a girl who brings fun to the table, so always have an idea ready—like grabbing McCafes or trying that new sushi place. You'll avoid the "I don't know—what do you want to do?" trap (worship sabotage!) and be more likely to get your way.
- remember the small stuff**
Want him hanging on your every word? Bringing up details that he mentioned in past conversations is a surprisingly effective way to make your guy pay more attention to you in return!
- call him out on his crap**
If he does something jerky, calmly tell him why it bummed you out. When he feels responsible for making you sad, he'll try to make it right in the future (whereas blowing up will just make him defensive).
- brag about him**
When he hears you gush to friends about the awesome date he took you on or the great B-day gift he gave you, it's a subtle way of patting him on the back—and encouraging him to keep up the A+ BF behavior.

17 EXPERTS: Donna Sobiech, the coauthor of *The Man Whisperer* (Adams Media, 2010); Louise Rice, a relationship expert and the host of *Plain Jane*.



Katrina
Hey, Kat Graham: If he tries to eat your face, he's hungry for love!

HOW I GOT HIM HOOKED!

Take your BF from average to amazing with these girls' tricks.

GET COMPETITIVE

"My boyfriend hated to give back rubs—I would always give him one with nothing in return! So I started making fun bets with him, and whoever lost had to rub. Once it turned into a game, he got into it—and now he gives me back rubs all the time, just because!"

—erin, 17, yreka, ca

PLAN A FUN SURPRISE

"My guy used to be a big partier, but that's not my thing. So one night I showed up at his house with pizza and some Wii games. We had so much fun that now he wants to spend his weekends with me—not out at parties!"

—carmen, 17, haslet, tx

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Send a BF who worships you? Email us at boyfriendgoals@seventeen.com

STYLING: LORRAINE FORD/STYLING PARTY; MAKEUP: ANDREW WOODS/STYLING PARTY; HAIR: ANDREW WOODS/STYLING PARTY

Figure 4.4

love life

spring-clean your love life
(and get the guy you really want!)

Ditch the drama that's dirtying up your life and get ready for a fresh new attitude about love!

why is your love life so messy?
 These sneaky underliners affect you more than you realize. Time to clean up your act!

perma-crushing
 If you've liked the same guy for months with no real sign of interest from him, it can start to make you wonder if something is wrong with you—when really, he's just the wrong guy! Save your energy for someone you click with right away.

a negative BFF
 When you have a friend who's always complaining about guys, her **downer attitude starts to rub off**. It's okay to make her the friend you call when you want to go out, not the one you turn to when you're stressed about guy stuff.

tech overkill
 When almost all your flirting is through text, Facebook chat, and IM, it's easy to get a little addicted—so much that you forget that **the whole point is to hang out in person**. Time to try your best bold lines face-to-face!

YOUR SPRING FLING TO-DO LIST
 These easy touch-ups are like spot-cleaning—for your heart.

- rearrange your route**
 Take a different hallway at school or hit up a hangout you've never been to. It's the easiest way to run into a bunch of new dudes!
- dump bad memories**
 Got one heartbreaking moment from your last relationship that you can't stop thinking about? **Put it in an e-mail, send it to yourself, and hit delete.** Refuse to keep obsessing.
- organize your FB news feed**
 Create a default list for just the friends you actually care about and **hide anyone who brings you down**—like the frenemy who chats up your crush. No need to see her every time you log on!

DUMPSTER DUDES
 Sometimes the trash you have to take out is him!

My ex used to get mad when I hung out with other guys, and it took me a long time to realize that he was overreacting. When I finally dumped him, I couldn't believe how relieved I felt—no more pressure!
 —MEL, 17, NEWTON, IL

My boyfriend and I were off and on for weeks until it hit me that we weren't really breaking up if we were right for each other. When I ended things for good, it was amazing to feel so drama-free!
 —ANNA, 18, PLUMFIELD, IL

PS: GUYS ♥ YOU IN THE SPRING!
 Girls look so cute when they finally lose the winter hats and bulky jackets—like the way a girl's hair falls on her bare shoulders when she wears a tank top. Plus, it's still chilly enough at night that I can put my arm around her!
 —ALICE, 23, SOUTH PORTLAND, ME

NOT GUY FRIENDLY

SEVENTEEN.COM

Figure 4.5



love

spoiler alert!
Eighty-four percent of guys wish you'd drop hints about the gift you want.

what he *really* wants for the holidays

Give the *wrong* gift and your guy will question whether you even get him. Here's how to get it *right*!

GIVE THIS!

NOT THIS!



flirty friend

HOMEMADE TREAT
"One year a girl gave me cookies in a jar she'd decorated with my favorite colors. It was thoughtful without being over-the-top."
-NICH, 28, WILLIAMSBURG, VA



GAG GIFT
"I was talking to this girl about how I think Snuggles are totally pointless and how I'd never use one. Then for Christmas she got me a Snuggle, trying to be funny. It wasn't."
-DALLAN, 28, GAINESVILLE, FL

kinda dating

COZY NIGHT IN
"The girl I was seeing showed up with a blanket, hot cocoa, and a bunch of DVDs. Planning a cute surprise is more romantic than anything from the store."
-BRANDON, 27, PORTLAND, OR



RISQUÉ NIGHT OUT
"I'd been dating this girl for a few weeks when she got us tickets to see the comedian Dane Cook. I thought it would be funny, but he made so many vulgar jokes about sex that it was just awkward!"
-BLAKE, 25, TOMBALL, TX



serious bf

LUXE COLOGNE
"Last year my girlfriend got me this awesome Burberry cologne—the kind of thing I'd never know to pick out for myself. I got compliments on it all the time! And whenever I wear it, I think about her."
-ANDREW, 26, SATY, TX



THOUGHTLESS PRESSIE
"My girlfriend got me a hat and scarf set that wasn't my style at all. She was excited to give it to me because it was from someplace nice, but I thought it was obnoxious-looking. She was thinking more about her own taste than mine."
-DAMIANO, 28, NEWPORT NEWS, VA



how much should I spend? Mystery solved! One hundred guys weighed in on the rules of gift giving.

KEEP IT PERSONAL
Sixty percent of guys say they prefer a gift from the heart, not from the store. (FYI: Most dudes secretly want a back rub!)

DON'T DISCUSS MONEY...
Sixty percent of guys say setting a price limit in advance is a don't! All that money talk just adds stress.

...BUT DON'T BREAK THE BANK!
At the same time, guys don't expect you to spend more than \$50. Anything over that will just make him feel guilty!

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SEVENTEEN.COM The Hot Guy Panel shares more perfect gifts for your guy at seventeen.com/hotguypanel

MAN PHOTO: ANDREW HARRIS/IMAGELIA/GETTY IMAGES; COLOGNE PHOTO: JEFFREY MAYER/REUTERS/GETTY IMAGES; HAT AND SCARF PHOTO: JEFFREY MAYER/REUTERS/GETTY IMAGES; SNUGGLES PHOTO: JEFFREY MAYER/REUTERS/GETTY IMAGES

Figure 5.1

your life

Daniel Radcliffe's MISSION:

support gay teens!

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual teens are more likely to attempt suicide. Make sure everyone at your school feels safe and supported.

DANIEL SAYS:

WHY IT MATTERS TO ME

The Trevor Project *HELPING YOUNG LIVES*

"Growing up, some of my friends were gay and some were straight—it didn't make a difference to me. But when I went to high school and heard slurs like 'homo,' I was shocked! It's heartbreaking that young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) people can face prejudice and hatred. It's incredibly harmful to be isolated and rejected like that. (Lesbian, gay, and bisexual teens are up to four times more likely to attempt suicide than straight teens.) So I want to be part of the solution. Teens need to know that their lives are valuable and that they are not alone. I'm humbled to be a part of The Trevor Project, which runs a 24-hour confidential lifeline (866-4-U-TREVOR) where counselors offer help and hope for LGBTQ teens in crisis. As one counselor told me: 'I hate that this lifeline needs to exist, but it's so important that it does.'"

WOULD YOU RATHER TYPE THAN TALK?

At thetrevorproject.org/chat, you or a friend can instant message a counselor on Fridays from 4 p.m. to midnight ET.

I did it!

When I came out as a lesbian in ninth grade, I got so depressed because my friends stopped hanging out with me. **I felt so alone that I tried to overdose on pills.** Luckily, I didn't die. But I knew I needed to find support, so I joined my school's gay-straight alliance (GSA). It saved my life. **I was finally surrounded by people I could talk to honestly.** Since there were straight members in the GSA, they made it okay for straight kids who weren't in the group to accept me. I became club president senior year and got The Trevor Project to give workshops at my school about how to spot depression in your friends—or yourself. **Many gay teens feel lost like I did.** Let's help them—so we don't lose them for good.

—JAMIE, 18, BLAUVELT, NY

make it YOUR mission

Join your school's gay-straight alliance!

Show support by adding your voice to the group—there is power in numbers. Many groups bring posters telling students that using the word *gay* as an insult is wrong, and they talk about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights, like same sex marriage. If your school doesn't have a GSA, start one! Then join the national GSA Network, which has info on how to promote acceptance at your school and will connect your club with others across the US. Visit gsanetwork.org.

SAFE SCHOOLS FOR ALL

speaking up High school activists meet at a GSA Network summit in San Francisco, CA.

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SEVENTEEN.COM Check out a video of Daniel talking publicly why this mission is critical to his heart at seventeen.com/mission

HEAD PHOTO: BILAL OUBAYE/GETTY IMAGES; SAFE SCHOOLS FOR ALL PHOTO: JIMARIE/GETTY IMAGES; JAMIE: JAMIE BLAUVELT/GETTY IMAGES





Figure 5.2

Ashley Greene's MISSION:

donate your prom dress!

Not everyone can afford their dream dress—or any dress at all! So start a donation drive for girls in need.



Ashley is going to give away this Leila Rose dress!

ASHLEY SAYS:

WHY IT MATTERS TO ME

“In high school, I had to work several jobs to save enough to buy a prom dress. It was so worth it: I had a blast at prom! Every girl should have the chance to have that experience! So I was thrilled when Donate My Dress asked for my help. The charity's Web site helps you find dozens of chapters all over the US where you can give preworn gowns to girls who can't afford them. I've donated dresses that I've worn on the red carpet—one of them was to a girl whose parents lost their jobs and her family was living in a friend's garage. It was such a humbling moment. It made me realize how many people have been hit by the recession and how much we can help!”

make it YOUR mission



GIVE A GOWN Find a chapter near you at donatemydress.org.

START A DRESS DRIVE Pick a day and time—and then spread the word to friends on Facebook and Twitter that you'll be collecting dresses at school.

CREATE A CHAPTER Create an official chapter of **Donate My Dress** at your school so girls have a place to drop off gowns. Go to the site to download a complete guide on how to get started.



I did it!

“I was looking for a way to give back, and I remembered that a 15-year-old friend of my family's—Rebecca Kirtman—had started a **dress drive** at her school in Davie,

Florida. After she died in a car accident in 2003, girls all over the country began creating their own chapters of 'Becca's Closet' in her honor (all of which can be found on donatemydress.org). I started one at my high school in 2008, and our chapter has collected **more than 500 dresses!** Seeing the joy in a girl's eyes as she finds the perfect dress is so rewarding!”

—KIMBERLY, 18, MARIETTA, GA

SEVENTEEN.COM Find out where you can volunteer in your town at seventeen.com/volunteer

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Figure 5.3

FRESHMAN 15

UH-OH!

party overboard
Olivia makes back on wild parties like this great night!

freshman year fails!

Steer clear of these college F-ups by learning from the Freshman 15's mistakes.

I partied too much!

“ In high school I never partied, but as soon as I got to college and no longer had a curfew or my mom around, **I went wild.** I was partying every weekend—one night I got so drunk that I tripped and broke my nose! After that embarrassing incident (and a \$100 medical bill), I realized I can't use college as an excuse to go crazy. I limit myself to going out twice a week max! ”

—OLIVIA, MT. MARY COLLEGE

I blew \$3,000!

YIKES!

“ Before college, I worked all summer to save cash—then **spent my whole savings** first semester! I was so excited to be on my own that I didn't realize I'd dropped nearly \$3,000 on clothes, textbooks, and stuff for my apartment. Now I keep a weekly budget, so I know exactly how much I can blow on the fun stuff. ”

—ESTHER, FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

I got majorly homesick!

“ I met tons of people at college, but no one matched the bond I had with my bestie from home—so I spent all my time on the phone with her instead of trying to make new friends. It took me a semester to realize that **it's okay to feel lonely**—but you can't let it stop you from making an effort. Now I'm slowly getting closer to my new crew. ”

—NOELIA, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

:(:(

I bombed a class!

“ I didn't exactly take my grades seriously first semester—with so much freedom, there was always something more fun to do than study! But when my grade in one class was so bad that I realized I'd have to retake it or change my major, it was a **huge wake up call.** Now I'm stuck signing up for summer school. Ugh! Professors don't check in on you as much as they did in high school, so you have to keep *yourself* on track. ”

—BRIA, COLUMBIA COLLEGE

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Figure 5.4

your life

“i got caught smuggling drugs”

Life felt so boring that Jessica*, 17, was willing to do anything for a thrill. But a “fun” favor for friends took her down a dangerous path. AS TOLD TO JANE BIANCHI.

17 FYI
Last year, nearly 300 people under 18 were caught smuggling drugs across the US borders.

I panicked. I thought, I can't believe I'm doing this!

A RISKY REQUEST
One night Josh, Jake, and I were sitting on the porch in front of their house when they mentioned that two friends of theirs who lived just over the border in Mexico had marijuana that “needed to be crossed” to Arizona. This didn't surprise me, because we lived only 10 minutes from the border, so a lot of people smoked and sold weed in my town. I'd heard about people “crossing”—it sounded exciting, like something out of a thriller movie. I didn't know exactly what the consequences of getting caught were, but Josh and Jake said that because I'm under 18, the penalties wouldn't be bad. So they wanted me to do it! They offered me \$80, but I didn't care about the money. I thought if I did it, they'd think I was cool. I looked up to them and wanted their respect, so I agreed. I wasn't even nervous, because

my God, I can't believe I'm doing this. But there was no turning back. They dropped me off three blocks from the border to avoid looking suspicious. I walked the rest of the way.

CROSSING THE LINE
When I got to the US border, I passed the first inspection officer without a problem. But on my way past the second officer, I don't know why, but she stopped me. I froze. She asked me to lift up my shirt. I was terrified! I

I never thought that I'd actually get caught.
The next afternoon, I put on a loose baby-doll shirt over a tank top and jeans. Then their two friends picked me up and drove me across the border to their house in Mexico near the border. When we got there, the guys took out about a pound of marijuana, duct-taped it to my tank top, put a rolled-up shirt over it so it would look soft, and pulled my shirt over the lump. I was a little freaked out once I had the marijuana attached to me, but I also felt a burst of excitement. They told me, “Say you're pregnant and you came over to visit your grandma.” When we got in the car, it all started to feel real and I panicked. I thought, Oh,

I had no idea what was going to happen to me. Not only had I disappointed my best friends, but I was also mad at myself for taking such a stupid risk. I kept thinking, “You didn't need to do this. The guard, of course, immediately saw the drugs and led me in handcuffs to a holding area. It was so humiliating, and I was totally ashamed of what I'd done.
The local cops arrived, put me in a squad car, and drove me through my neighborhood, saying, “You're not going to see this again anytime soon.” It was petrifying! Then they brought me back to the police station and called my mom, who screamed at me over the phone. I felt worthless. I was held in juvenile detention for two months (it was so disgusting—I even had to wear cased underwear!). Then after I was convicted of smuggling drugs, I was sentenced to four months in prison. I spent every day thinking about how dumb I'd been.
Now I have a felony on my record, which will make it way harder for me to get financial aid for college or a good job someday. The penalties were much worse than Josh and Jake made it sound. I feel betrayed by them—they weren't real friends! I've never spoken to them again, and they left town shortly after I got out of prison. I runned my life for a crazy thrill. Driving around with my friends and hanging out at the park doesn't seem so boring anymore! 📌

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Figure 5.5

EASY MONEY

save **big** for spring break!

Start planning your dream vacay: With these tricks, you can save \$280 in the next 28 days.

by cately hill



save up to: **\$48** this month!

your car

Driving to school and back and forth from your friends' houses can burn lots of expensive gas! So before you fill up each week, go to gasbuddy.com. The site tells you which stations near you have the cheapest gas—you can save up to 40 cents a gallon. (That means about \$7 per tank!) Plus, if you pass around a "car jar" and ask friends to contribute \$5 a week to cover their rides, you'll save even more!



The more money you save, the more you can chill!

beauty basics

Save on everyday stuff you have to buy, like body wash and makeup! Visit sasporethebrand.com or download their free iPhone app to get deals like a "Buy 3, Get 2 Free" offer at Bath & Body Works (saving you 24 bucks on fragrance mist, body cream, and more); free samples of mascara at Sephora (an \$8 value!); and a \$5-off coupon for purchases that are more than \$50 at Target.



save up to: **\$60** this month!

food with friends

Next time you plan a night out, check out restaurant.com, which provides \$25 gift cards to lots of places in your town for just \$10 each. You'll save \$15 a weekend!



save up to: **\$70** this month!

video games

Tired of doing the same old stuff with your friends every Saturday? Then amp up girls' night! Buy new or used games at half.com. You can rock out and save a whopping \$70 on DJ Hero for Xbox 360!



save up to: **\$65** this month!

cool clothes

Got a stack of gift cards to stores you're just not that into? Go to plasticjungle.com to swap them for cash. The site will send you a check for a chunk of the face value (how much depends on the store). Or got even more value if you swap it for an amazon.com gift card. For example, a \$100 Eddie Bauer gift card gets you \$62 cash or \$65 at Amazon!

Your Monthly Savings:

\$280



CUTE CELEB \$\$ TIP!

"Sign up for Facebook, Twitter, and e-mail alerts from your favorite stores! Many will send out blasts when they're having a sale—so you'll be the first to know about it. Right now, I'm following H&M (@ham) and Urban Outfitters (@UrbanOutfitters)." —MICHELLE TRACHTENBERG

PHOTO: JAMES GARDNER; STYLING: JESSICA WOOD; MAKEUP: JESSICA WOOD; HAIR: JESSICA WOOD; PROP STYLING: JESSICA WOOD; PROP STYLING: JESSICA WOOD

► **TOP EXPERT!** Cately Hill, the author of *Shoe, Army, Ghoul! The Madest Girl's Guide to Shopping Less and Saving More* (Staring, 2013).

SEVENTEEN.COM seventeen.com/getstitch

APPENDIX II: Citations of Figures

Figure 1.1.

"*Seventeen's* Ultimate Jeans Guide!" (2011). *Seventeen*. 70 (8): pp. 47 (7).

Figure 1.1.2

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Figure 1.4

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Figure 1.5

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Figure 2.4.1

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Figure 2.4.2

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Figure 3.3

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Figure 3.4

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Figure 3.5

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Figure 4.2

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Figure 4.3

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Figure 4.4

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Figure 4.5

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Figure 5.1

"Support Gay Teens!" (2011). *Seventeen*. 70 (8): pp. 126.

Figure 5.2

"Donate Your Prom Dress". (2011). *Seventeen*. 70 (8): pp. 129.

Figure 5.3

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Figure 5.4

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