

**He's so Dreamy, She's so Beautiful: Celebrities, the Representation of
(Pre-)Adolescent Femininity in *M*, and Self-perception**

by

Jennifer Ann Elizabeth Campbell
Bachelor of Applied Journalism, Honours, Kwantlen University College, 2004

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

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Abstract

In this thesis, I critique the representation of pre-adolescent and teen femininity in *M* and the influence of the teen fan genre on identity development. This discussion revolves around a social semiotic analysis of four texts and two sub-texts, and a social semiotic auto-ethnographic exploration of my experience as a reader of teen fan publications. Among the texts, a feminine identity is represented through eight interlocking semiotic themes: fashion and beauty, celebrity idolization, entertainment, consumerism, heterosexuality/romance, friendship, celebrity as occupation, and affluent lifestyle. My research findings show that the portrayal of femininity in *M* is a narrow and unrealistic ideal. Conveyed through celebrity worship, femininity is a highly (hetero)sexualized, racialized, thin, able-bodied, affluent, mass-mediated, and (self-)commodified ideal that perpetuates age ambiguity. As the discussion of my adolescence shows, the representation of femininity in the teen fan genre can thwart creativity and contribute to a negative self-concept. Finally, teen fan magazines were important in assisting in the creation of a (pre-)adolescent feminine self, but it was only one institution in which my identity formed. My self-concept emerged from social regulation via the interconnected relationship among teen fan magazines, mall and school cultures, and family.

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Dedication

For Olivia and Rebecca, the two most amazing girls. You are intelligent, kind, loving, funny, adventurous, curious, creative, compassionate, and confident. May you two never lose sight of your wonderful qualities as you grow.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Over the past three decades, feminists and identity scholars have argued that mass media aimed at pre-teen and teen girls¹, especially magazines, contain a narrow representation of femininity (see Abu-Laban and McDaniel 2001; Currie 1999; Evans, Rutberg, Sather and Turner 1991; Ferguson 1983; Ferguson, Kreshel and Tinkham 1990; Friedan 1983; Goffman 1979; Lindner 2004; McCracken 1993; McRobbie 2000 [1977]). Recently, scholars, including Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards (2004), Shelley Budgeon (1998), Dafna Lemish (2003), and Melanie Lowe (2003), have noted the increased presence of female pop stars² serving as models of sexualized femininity in an expanded youth market, which contributes to an age-ambiguous feminine ideal (see Cook and Kaiser 2004; Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2005a; Quart 2003). The representation of femininity in mass media is a concern because pre-teen and adolescent girls may compare themselves to the feminine ideal, and if they feel they do not measure up, experience body hatred and low self-esteem (Byely, Archibald, Graber and Brooks-Gunn 2000; Clay, Vignoles and Dittmar 2005; Currie 1999; Thompson and Stice 2001; Wertheim, Koerner and Paxton 2001). Moreover, while magazines for girls have a target audience, such as *Twist's* 14-16-year-old targeted demographic (Bauer Publishing 2007c), media can attract younger and older teens (McRobbie 1999). Following the observations of feminist and gender scholars (mostly Abu-Laban and McDaniel 2001; Baumgardner and

¹ For stylistic variation, I will refer to pre-teen and teen girls, as well as pre-adolescents and adolescents. Other times, I will refer to them collectively as girls.

² Pop stars, also known as celebrities, are famous individuals with occupations in the entertainment industry. For the purposes of this thesis, they are celebrities who appeal to pre-teen and adolescent girls (Bradford 2003; Budgeon 1998; Garratt 1984; Greene and Adams-Price 1990; McCracken 1999; Lemish 1998; Lowe 2003; McRobbie and Frith 2000 [1978]; Raviv et al. 1996).

Richards 2004; Budgeon 1998; Currie 1999; Evans et al. 1991; Ferguson 1983; Ferguson et al. 1990; Friedan 1983; Goffman 1979; Lemish 2003; Lindner 2004; Lowe 2003; McCracken 1993; McRobbie 2000 [1977]), this thesis focuses on the representation of femininity in the teen fan publication *M*. Drawing upon my own experiences as a reference point, I discuss the influence of teen fan magazines on identity development for pre-adolescent and teen girls.

Youth, the Teen Fan Genre, the Youth Market and Identity Development

The representation of femininity in mass media and impact on pre-teen and adolescent girls' self-image is of particular concern given the increased inclusion of pre-teen girls in the teen media market. As Alissa Quart (2003) points out, marketers now target 9-13-year-olds, which some scholars argue symbolizes the increased commodification of childhood (see also Langer 2002). However, it would be inaccurate to say that the pre-teen demographic is new. After all, mass media, including music and clothes, have been available to pre-teens since the 1950s (see Bennett 2000). In fact, the pre-adolescent demographic was identified in the 1980s (Coulter 2005). What is different today is that while adolescence has generally been the 'teen' years (13-19) of one's life span, pre-teens are now included in the 'teen'³ demographic (for inspiration, see Quart 2003). In other words, pre-adolescents are now a sub-demographic of the adolescent market rather than a demographic in and of themselves. Pre-adolescents now have an increased presence in the youth market, with more products aimed at them than ever before. Moreover, whereas pre-teens were roughly the 10-12-year-old demographic several decades ago (McRobbie and Garber 2000 [1978]; Mitchell and Reid-Walsh

³ I also identify teens as youth throughout this thesis.

2005b), they are now, approximately, the 8-14-year-old demographic (see Cook and Kaiser 2004; Quart 2003). Thus, while I am mostly concerned with the pre-teen demographic in my analysis of *M*, I also address the teen audience in a self-reflection of my experience as a reader of teen fan magazines.

Teen fan magazines are one of a growing number of consumer and leisure opportunities for pre-teen and adolescent girls (Quart 2003). *La Senza Girl*, *Ardéne*, and *Garage* are stores that sell a variety of products for pre-teen and adolescent girls, including fashion and accessories, such as shoes, candy- and fruit-scented body sprays, lingerie, shirts, cosmetics, and merchandise, such as *High School Musical* lip gloss. Common design features on products for teens include a glitter finish, a crown, a skull and cross bones, butterflies, and lace. There is also a stronger-than-ever interconnected relationship between media and celebrity branding (see Quart 2003). A notable celebrity merchandise line is Hilary Duff's "Stuff by Hilary Duff", which features clothing, home decorating products, and beauty products.

M is one of several mainstream magazines for pre-teen and adolescent girls. The fashion and beauty genre has received the most academic attention (see Carpenter 1998; Currie 1999; Durham 1998; Evans et al. 1991). These magazines primarily contain information about fashion and beauty and are geared toward older teens. The teen tabloid, also called the teen fan genre, has expanded in the past decade, alongside the increased focus and presence of pre-adolescents in the teen market. The teen fan genre, published since the late 1960s, *Tiger Beat* being the first in 1965 (for example Jacobs 2007), includes *M* (for an overview, see Appendix A), *J-14*, *Twist*, and *Bop*. They are geared toward pre-teens and teen girls and primarily feature gossip about celebrities (see Bauer Publishing

2007a). The fourth genre is the general interest genre, which includes *American Life* and *New Moon*, which are for 8-12 years old girls (see American Girl 2007). These magazines generally do not feature many celebrities; instead they focus on ‘real’ girls and on personal information, such as interest in pets and toys.

The Teen Fan Genre and Celebrity Idolization

My interest in the study of how femininity is portrayed in the teen fan genre and sharing my experience as a reader of these magazines largely arose from the few studies conducted of teen fan magazines, mainly Angela McRobbie’s (2000 [1977]) study of the British magazine for pre-teen girls, *Jackie*. The lack of studies of the teen fan genre is particularly surprising considering that McRobbie’s (2000 [1978]; 2000 [1977]) studies of pre-adolescent girls’ subcultures and the representation of femininity in teenage magazines for pre-adolescent and teen girls inspired a branch of youth pop culture studies called ‘girl culture’ studies or Catherine Driscoll’s (2002) ‘feminine adolescence’. This scholarship acknowledged girls’ and female teens’ interest in, and identity development via, mass media, including magazines. It includes works devoted to feminine adolescence, including *Seven Going on Seventeen: Tween Studies in the Culture of Girlhood* (2005), *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (2002), and *All About The Girl: Culture, Power, and Identity* (2004), a newspaper article by Cesaer G. Soriano (2001), some studies in which the teen fan genre is identified (Currie 1999; Evans et al. 1991), and studies about celebrity idolization (see Budgeon 1998; Engle and Kasser 2005; Greene and Adams-Price 1990; Lemish 2003; Lowe 2003; Raviv, Bar-Tal, Raviv, and Ben-Horin 1996).

The Portrayal of Femininity in *M*, Self Image, Social Semiotics and Theory

Because I was interested in the symbolic nature of the portrayal of femininity in *M*

and my relationship with teen fan magazines and identity development, I selected social semiotics, a method that addresses the symbolism of material reality, as well as the contextual and fluid nature of my data and data analysis. Specifically, I drew on Theo van Leeuwen's (2005) social semiotic content analysis because it considers context and actions for understanding symbolism, in this case, the representation of femininity in *M* and my self-concept as influenced by teen fan magazines.

Theory also plays a central role in this study. For this thesis, I bring together Theodor Adorno's, Stuart Hall's, as well as feminist and gender scholarship. I used symbolic-focused approaches at various levels of the research process. Van Leeuwen (2005) notes that social semiotics is the combination of social theory and semiotics (van Leeuwen 2005). Theory allowed me to narrow my topic, and conduct a particular type of social semiotic study, appropriate for my topic and data.

Organization of Thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. In Chapter 2, I present critiques of the consumption of and depiction of femininity in mass media. In Chapter 3, I discuss my method, data collection and analysis process. Chapter 4 is devoted to my findings - an in-depth analysis of the four texts I analyzed in *M* and the themes that emerged. To ground the importance of teen fan magazines in girls' lives, and their influence on identity development, I then present my experience as a reader of the genre. In chapter 5, I identify the significance of my research findings. In my conclusion (Chapter 6), I recapitulate how femininity is portrayed in *M*, my identity formation in relation to the teen fan genre, potential influence of the portrayal of femininity in *M* on pre-adolescent and teen girls' self-concept, limitations of this study, and ideas for future studies.

Chapter 2: Literature Overview

Introduction

In the following pages, I present scholarship and concepts about the consumption of mass media and the depiction of femininity in mass media. Within the past century, popular culture and mass media has generated substantial criticism. In particular, scholars have been critical of mass media for being prescriptive and perpetuating social regulation and inequality. Of the social perspectives, Adorno, Hall and feminist and identity scholars (primarily Abu-Laban and McDaniel 2001; Arnett 1995; Arnett, Larson and Offer 1995; Baumgardner and Richards 2004; Bradford 2003; Coltrane and Messineo 2000; Cook and Kaiser 2004; Currie 1999; Durham 1998; Evans et al. 1991; Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; Garratt 1984; Greene and Adams-Price 1990; Karniol 2001; Lemish 1998; Lorber 1995; Lowe 2003; McRobbie 2000 [1978]; McRobbie and Frith 2000 [1978]; Modleski 1982; Pecora 2001; Peirce 1990; Peirce 1993; Pleasance 1991; Quart 2003; Railton and Watson 2005; Raviv et al. 1996; Record 2002; Simpson 1994; Vannini 2002; Wald 2002; Whiteley 2000; Wolf 1990) provide useful concepts for explaining the portrayal of femininity in *M*, which are separately outlined in this chapter to provide conceptual clarity and demonstrate historical conceptualization. Feminist and identity scholarship addresses the gendered nature of, and representation of gender in, mass media. Below, I outline second wave (about 1970s) and third wave (about 1990s) feminist and identity scholarship. Adorno's and Hall's ideas are important to include in this thesis because they have influenced feminist thought and identity scholarship and help provide an understanding of the representation of femininity in *M* and the influence of the portrayal of femininity in teen fan magazines on my identity development. I begin

with Adorno and Hall, and finish with feminist and identity scholarship. I later use Adorno's, Hall's and feminist and identity scholars' (those listed above) concepts to address the significance of my research findings in Chapter 5.

Early Criticism of Mass Media Consumption and Content

Some foundational critiques of mass media and media content were established with Adorno's and Hall's work, from which the feminists and identity scholars I include here have drawn upon in their discussions of media consumption and portrayal of femininity. Of his many insights, Adorno's (1991) notion of commodity fetishism emphasizes that the underlying importance of commodities is their exchange value (how much they cost). Combined with concepts from feminist and identity scholarship (see Abu-Laban and McDaniel 2001; Arnett 1995; Arnett et al. 1995; Baumgardner and Richards 2004; Bradford 2003; Coltrane and Messineo 2000; Cook and Kaiser 2004; Currie 1999; Durham 1998; Evans et al. 1991; Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; Garratt 1984; Greene and Adams-Price 1990; Karniol 2001; Lemish 1998; Lorber 1995; Lowe 2003; McRobbie 2000 [1978]; McRobbie and Frith 2000 [1978]; Modleski 1982; Pecora 2001; Peirce 1990; Peirce 1993; Pleasance 1991; Quart 2003; Railton and Watson 2005; Raviv et al. 1996; Record 2002; Simpson 1994; Vannini 2002; Wald 2002; Whiteley 2000; Wolf 1990), commodity fetishism illuminates the economic importance of *M* in the market place and pre-teen and adolescent girls' relationship to the magazines, such as my enjoyment of teen fan magazines. Furthermore, commodity fetishism directs my attention to consumption itself and the type of products marketed to pre-adolescent and teen girls today and that I consumed in my youth. Adorno's critique of pop music is also helpful for understanding media messages, especially discussing themes in *M* and the beauty ideals. According to Adorno (1991), pop songs are standardized and pseudo-individualistic.

They are comprised of a simple, standard pattern. The standardization of a song is masked by pseudo-individualization. Pseudo-individualization refers to the parts of a song that make it appear different from another. Pop songs are not original, but based on previous songs, and, thus, they are 'pre-digested'. This is a helpful way of understanding the similarities among beauty stereotypes.

Hall contributes a symbolic approach to studying identity, captured in the concepts of 'representation' and 'stereotyping', which assisted in my conceptualizing gender, my analysis of *M*, and understanding my research findings, especially beauty stereotypes. Hall (1997) defines representation as "the process by which members of a culture use language (broadly defined as any system which deploys signs, any signifying system) to produce meaning" (61). Crucial to Hall's discussion of representation is his liberal definition of communication. He argues that language is not restricted to speech and writing, but also includes the body and cultural commodities. Hall (1997) identifies representations of groups of individuals, such as women or black people, as stereotypes, providing a helpful concept for critiquing beauty ideals. Stereotyping occurs when people are defined by a few traits. Specifically referring to race/ethnicity, Hall says racial stereotyping occurs from pairing biological aspects of the body with a cultural association (Jhally 1996). Stereotypes appear to be fixed, but are in fact fluid constructs. Moreover, their meaning is political, organized hierarchically, privileging certain 'types' of people over others, e.g. white over black. Hall's discussion of racialized stereotyping is also useful for understanding how beauty is presented in mass media, such as how femininity is represented in relation to, for example, race and body shape (thin/fat).

Second Wave Feminist Critique of the Depiction of Femininity in Media

In the 1960s and 1970s, Adorno's and Hall's work, as were many other scholars', was being challenged, borrowed and improved by feminists' gendered critique of popular culture and mass media. Feminism, while comprising a diversity of perspectives, has common goals and objectives (Jaggar and Rothenberg 1984). For this thesis, I highlight the work of feminists who are critical of representations of gender in mass media and popular culture, as well as identity scholars, who are also critical of media depictions of femininity.

Feminists such as Tania Modleski (1982), Marjorie Ferguson (1983), Betty Friedan (1983), and Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber (2000 [1978]), argued that mass media and its consumption are gendered. They said that gender is a social construct; it is not inborn. Femininity is achieved with the use of commodities, such as make-up, and specific behaviours, including reading magazines (see Tuchman 1978). Gender, then, is not genetically programmed, but something we do, a performance (Goffman 1959; Butler 1990). Modleski (1982) exposed how mass media are 'feminized' and considered 'cheap' and inferior to real art. By 'feminized' mass media, feminists, including Ferguson (1983), Friedan (1983) and McRobbie (2000 [1977]), also meant that certain mass media (e.g. soap operas, magazines and romance novels) are produced for women and adolescent and pre-teen girls, and prioritize a particular form of femininity (see Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; McRobbie 2000 [1978]; Modleski 1982). Feminists noted that magazines are a particularly popular mass media among women and pre-teen and adolescent girls (see Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; McCracken 1993; Winship 1978).

The importance of magazines, specifically for pre-teen girls, became evident in McRobbie's and Garber's (2000 [1978]) study of British pre-adolescent girl culture(s). In

the late 1970s, amidst a climate of pop culture studies, McRobbie and co-researcher Garber noted the absence of pre-teen girls in youth culture studies. They identified a male bias in which cultural theorists researched delinquent, public male youth subcultures. Taking a feminist approach, they turned their attention to the home, where, they said, girls spend a lot of their time because they are generally restricted from the public sphere. Providing the first glimpse into pre-teen girls' subcultures, McRobbie and Garber observed that the UK "Teenybopper culture" was a bedroom-based pop culture primarily organized around pre-adolescent girls' active consumption of the British teen magazine *Jackie* and idolizing pop stars such as David Cassidy, Donny Osmond, and the Bay City Rollers. While Teenybopper is an overall term for girls' subculture formation, McRobbie and Garber acknowledged that not all girls participate in Teenybopper culture in the same way. Therefore, there were teenybopper subcultures.

McRobbie and Garber provided five 'negotiated' reasons for girls' participation in Teenybopper culture. By negotiated, McRobbie and Garber meant girls' participation in Teenybopper culture differs, mediated by factors that may include family life, and how much they want to be involved in the culture. First, pre-adolescent girls did not have as much freedom as their similar aged brothers to go out. Second, there were minimal obstacles to joining Teenybopper culture. Third, there were few personal risks for being a member. Fourth, young girls' fantasies about pop singers facilitated sexual expression and provide an escape from boredom or unfulfilling activities, such as school work. Fifth, identifying as a Teenybopper allows these pre-teen girls to assert a different identity than younger female children and older female adolescents. Moreover, they said that mass media, as a common interest among girls, aids in friendship building and solidarity.

In addition to the consumption of mass media being gendered, feminists argued that the representation of femininity in mass media was also contentious. Women have been portrayed as subordinate to men, which captures their secondary status in North American and European society. For example, some researchers have pointed out that in magazines and advertising, women have been disproportionately pictured (in height and social status) as lower to men, in need of men's protection, silly and/or child-like, emotional, and passive (Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; Goffman 1979; Tuchman 1978; Winship 1978). Spanning television, magazines and newspapers, women have been trivialized, marginalized or absent, which Gaye Tuchman (1978) calls 'symbolic annihilation'.

Feminists, including Ferguson (1983), Friedan (1983) and Janice Winship (1978) have been especially critical of girls, teens and women being held to a beauty ideal. Magazines address the individual, but convey a cultural feminine identity (Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; McRobbie 2000 [1977]). Regardless of one's genetic makeup, whether it is body shape or race, for example, women and pre-teen and adolescent girls are expected to emulate the beauty ideal, making it a compulsory beauty ideal (see Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; Goffman 1979; McRobbie 2000 [1977]; Tuchman 1978; Winship 1978). Ferguson (1983) sums up the problem with beauty: "To be born beautiful is a rarity, yet female beauty is a generalized cultural ideal" (59). A main criticism of North American beauty standards are that they are (hetero)sexualized and racialized: whiteness (along with youth and slenderness) and heterosexuality equals ideal beauty (Friedan 1983; McRobbie 2000 [1978]; Winship 1978).

Pre-adolescent and teen girls' magazines have also been critiqued for upholding a similar portrayal of femininity. They are considered downward extensions of women's magazines for girls (Friedan 1983). McRobbie's (2000 [1977]) analysis of *Jackie* was the first large-scale inquiry into the representation of femininity in a teenage magazine. Her analysis revealed that teenage femininity was constructed from a focus on pop music, which is a mass marketed form of music that pre-teen girls enjoy; fashion and beauty; personal and domestic life; and romance. McRobbie described this feminine ideal as "a kind of false unity which assumes a common experience of womanhood or girlhood" (69).

Complementing second wave feminists' and identity scholars' critique of teenage femininity were Sheryl Garratt's (1984), and Angela McRobbie's and Simon Frith's (2000 [1978]) analysis of the portrayal of masculinity for pre-teen and adolescent girls. Garratt (1984), and McRobbie and Frith (2000 [1978]) said that male pop singers who were marketed to pre-adolescent and teen girls embodied a feminine masculinity, an androgynous appearance. They said it was appealing to the stars' young female fans as it was non-threatening.

Second Wave Feminist Impression: Youth Culture and Media Studies

The study of pre-teen and adolescent girl cultures, and the representation of femininity and masculinity within, gained steam in the early 1990s. Featuring many aspects of McRobbie's studies, especially a commitment to re-theorizing and researching pre-teen and teen pop cultures and mass media consumption, research shows that many North American youth cultures are mass media-based (see Brown, Dykers, Steele and White 1994; Larson 1995; Steele and Brown 1995). Media may provide youth the opportunity to engage in self-socialization, consuming what media they want, as well as

how, when, where, and why (Arnett 1995). Many media are consumed in one's bedroom (Brown et al 1994; Larson 1995; Steele and Brown 1995). Regardless of media consumption enjoyed by both male and female youth and children, its consumption is usually gendered. Some pre-adolescent and teen girls enjoy teen pop music (Schwartz and Fouts 2003), magazines (Currie 1997; Currie 1999; Duke and Kreshel 1998), Internet (Gross 2004), and idolize male pop singers (Greene and Adams-Price 1990; Raviv et al. 1996).

Kate Peirce (1993) argues that magazines for girls included feminist messages, such as women in the labour force, in the 1990s. However, she explains that the feminist messages were limited. The magazines continued to encourage female teens and girls to emulate a narrow feminine social role (Durham 1998; Evans et al. 1991; Peirce 1990; Peirce 1993). As Ellis D. Evans, Judith Rutberg, Carmela Sather and Charlie Turner (1991) conclude from their analysis of three top-selling teenage magazines, “[a]rticle and advertisements mutually reinforced an underlying value that the road to happiness is attracting males for successful heterosexual life by way of physical beautification” (110). Moreover, in her study of *YM*, Meenakshi Gigi Durham (1998) found that female teens are faced with a contradictory stereotypical message about sex. They are encouraged to look sexual, but practice abstinence.

Pop Goes Feminism: Marketing A New Wave – err Brand – of Feminism

Baumgardner and Richards (2004) argue that pop feminism, a mass marketed branch of post-modern feminism that emerged in the 1990s, is a response to second wave feminism. Pop feminism is often represented as a social movement that celebrates a (mass media represented) feminine identity. Pop feminism was promoted by the Spice Girls, a commercial, all-female group of pop stars, who were the initial models of pop

feminism (see Budgeon 1998; Lemish 2003; Whiteley 2000). The Spice Girls referred to pop feminism as Girl Power - a combination of feminist and feminine qualities (Budgeon 1998; Lemish 2003; Whiteley 2000). It is a self-identified label acknowledging women's and pre-teen and adolescent girls' active role in creating their sense of self (Budgeon 1998; Lemish 2003). Baumgardner and Richards (2004) explain that Girl Power is argued to celebrate women's and pre-teen and adolescent girls' choice to emulate mass media depictions of femininity. Girl Power, further, symbolizes the rejection of the 'oppressive' (as feminists argued) connotation of wearing make-up, sexually provocative clothing, and idolizing pop stars. In other words, rather than reject 'oppressive' feminine qualities, such as wearing make-up and sexually provocative clothing, as their mothers, aunts, and feminist scholars urged, some female teens and girls embrace it; they claim they are asserting their choice to emulate media representations of beauty. Pop feminism also encapsulates self-awareness, self-assertiveness, confidence, and empowerment (Budgeon 1998; Lemish 2003; McRobbie 1999; Whiteley 2000).

Pop feminism is argued to represent a shift in popular culture for pre-adolescent and teen girls (Budgeon 1998; Lemish 1998; Lemish 2003; Whiteley 2000). As Sheila Whiteley (2000) notes, "The impact of the Spice Girls [as the initial models of Girl Power], then, was to provide a new twist to the feminist discourse of power and subjectivity. By telling their fans that feminism is necessary and fun, that it is part of everydayness, and that girls should challenge rather than accept traditional constraints – 'What you looking at boy? Can you handle a Spice Girl?' – they sold the 1990s as 'a girl's world' and presented the 'future of feminism'" (216-217). Some feminists believe pop feminism is a step forward in the gender battle, as pre-teen and adolescent girls were

empowered to represent themselves on their terms. Baumgardner and Richards (2004), McRobbie (1999), and Whiteley (2000) argue that feminism and femininity are not incompatible, but complementary. Whiteley (2000) argues that pop feminism is a practical approach to feminism as it diffuses the tension between feminism and media messages about femininity (Baumgardner and Richards 2004; McRobbie 1999; Whiteley 2000).

Some feminists argue that the representation of multiple beauty ideals also helps alleviate the tension between femininity and feminism (see Baumgardner and Richards 2004; Budgeon 1998; Lemish 2003). Basil G. Englis, Michael R. Solomon and Richard D. Ashmore (1994) identify a beauty ideal as “an overall ‘look’ incorporating both physical features (e.g., “pouty” lips vs. thin lips, large breasts vs. small), and a variety of products, services, and activities” (50). Opposed to one beauty ideal, as was commonly portrayed in previous decades, they identify six dominant beauty ideals in magazine ads and music videos: Trendy, Classic Beauty/Feminine, Exotic/Sensual, Sex Kitten, Girl-Next-Door, and Cute. In an analysis of various mass media, Lemish (2003) posits that the Spice Girls depict five feminine ideals: Melanie C. (Sporty Spice), Geri (Sexy or Ginger Spice), Melanie B. (Scary Spice), Emma (Baby Spice), and Victoria (Posh Spice). Tung (2004) identifies the sporty feminine identity as the ‘kickass’ feminine identity: a physically strong woman who is not afraid to, and gets into, fights. These beauty ideals, particularly those of the Spice Girls, are said to provide pre-teen and adolescent girls with different possible selves, which are less restrictive than the previous singular (predominantly white) ideal in mass media (see Baumgardner and Richards 2004; Budgeon 1998; Lemish 2003; Whiteley 2000).

Self-mockery has also been used to facilitate cohesion between feminism and femininity. Gayle Wald (1998) notes that some female rock musicians subvert the oppressive association of femininity as youthful, silly, and innocent by mocking and mimicking this identity in their concert performances, song lyrics, and clothing style. McRobbie (1999) calls this ‘ironic femininity’. Pre-teen and adolescent girls use humour as a way of making fun of themselves in order to diffuse gender inequality so they can feel empowered and enjoy feminine things, such as reading fashion and beauty magazines and idolizing pop stars.

Not so Different: The Perpetuation of Beauty, Sexuality, and Consumption

Other feminists argue that pop feminism is contradictory and reinforces a narrow ideal. Whiteley (2000) says the Spice Girls and Girl Power are bothersome for feminists and academics alike. The Spice Girls, in particular, are said to promote a watered-down feminism because Girl Power promotes traditional aspects of femininity, such as the wearing of make-up and revealing clothing, as liberating for young girls when, in fact, they are confining. The depiction of femininity in mass media is still a concern because contemporary mass media are more visually than textually oriented than several decades ago (Lazarus and Wunderlich 2000). While the beauty ideals are supposed to be less restrictive than one ideal, some argue that the ideals are still narrow and unrealistic (see Wald 1998), especially because femininity has become an even more sexualized ideal, particularly for adolescent and pre-teen girls (see Cook and Kaiser 2004; Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2005a; Quart 2003). Clare Bradford’s (2003) critique of Britney Spears’ music video “Stronger” reveals sexualization occurring from cinematic techniques where “her body is the object of specular attention, always central to the scenes, dance sequences, and narrative fragments of the video, and, in the final moments of the video,

subjected to the dismembering effect by which the camera focuses on components of her body: Face, breasts, midriff, legs” (38-39). Diane Railton and Paul Watson (2005) note that female singers in music videos are sexualized through extremely revealing clothing that expose and draw attention to sexually symbolic areas of the body, such as the breasts, abdomen, and hips. The lower back is now also a sexually symbolic area of the female body (MacCormack 2006; Whiteley 2000).

Contrary to the multiple beauty ideals alleviating racial tension, sexualized beauty is often subtly racist (see Coltrane and Messineo 2000). Beauty is still primarily a white, thin, young, light hair and eyed ideal (Abu-Laban and McDaniel 2001; Currie 1999). Several leading actresses, including Hilary Duff in *A Cinderella Story* (2004), and Lindsay Lohan in *Mean Girls* (2004) and *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* (2004), and Reese Witherspoon in *Legally Blonde* (2001) and *Legally Blonde 2: Red, White & Blonde* (2003) represent ideal beauty as white. Moreover, in a study of TV ads, Scott Coltrane and Melinda Messineo (2000) found that non-white women were underrepresented. They typically played non-leading roles. Railton’s and Watson’s (2005) comparative study of female pop singers’ images in music videos is unique as they focus on textual and visual representations of femininity and racialized sexual beauty ideals. For instance, following traditional representations of African-American women through flesh, singer Beyoncé Knowles’ raced and sexualized feminine identity is created from skirts worn on her hips that are slit on both sides displaying her buttocks and thighs, and shirts exposing her abdomen and breasts. As Knowles’ body moves, so do her fleshy body parts, such as breasts and thighs. This reproduces a stereotype of African American women’s sexuality as “primitive, feral, uncontrolled and uncontrollable” (59).

Spice Girl Scary Spice is portrayed similarly. “Scary”, with her often animal-print clothing, connotes her stereotypically as animal-like – a wild - black woman (Lemish 2003). Railton and Watson (2005) note the opposite representation of white singers in their study. For white pop singers, such as singer Kylie Minogue, their raced and sexualized portrayal arises from a cinematic focus on non-fleshy body parts, such as arms and shoulders, and, thus, thinness. For instance, in “Can’t Get You Out of My Head”, Minogue wears a white, ankle-length dress, which covers the majority of the singer’s body. The dress, though, is slit from the waist to ankle, and from the neck to navel area. When Minogue moves, her flesh remains taut. White female beauty is thus constructed as “controlled, restrained, and unavailable” (61). For others, such as Christina Aguilera, there is blended racial representation. Aguilera, who is Latin American, has a ‘black’ hairstyle, but looks white. Aguilera’s image highlights beauty as performance, opposed to, for example, her co-singer, Lil’ Kim’s actual blackness. While the media market these racialized images of celebrities by featuring them, in particular sexualized ways through cinematic techniques, for instance, (for inspiration, see Bradford 2003; Goffman 1979; Railton and Watson 2005), the stars also perpetuate the stereotypes, by performing the racialized roles (see Vannini 2002).

Robin W. Simon, Donna Eder and Cathy Evans (1992) argue that the norm of, and socialization into, heterosexual romantic love, is a main aspect of female youth culture. They identify five feeling norms that guide girls into sexual development. They say that “[f]eeling norms are social norms that prescribe the appropriate intensity, duration, and target of emotions in social situations and relationships” (29). The first norm is that romantic relationships are important, yet girls should also participate in other

activities, such as media consumption. The second norm is that all romantic relationships are supposed to be heterosexual. Three, girls should not like a boy who has a girlfriend. Fourth, girls are supposed to like one male at a time. Finally, pre-teens are always supposed to be in love.

Sex is now explicitly discussed in teen magazines, which McRobbie (1999) identifies as 'new sexualities'. New sexualities refers to articles about sex replacing those about romance and those that discuss female adolescents not only as sexual objects, but also sexual beings. She explains that this is a more favourable representation of female teens as it acknowledges their sexuality. However, heterosexuality remains the dominant sexual orientation (Hyde and Jaffee 2000) in pop songs (Bradford 2003; Railton and Watson 2005; Vannini and Myers 2002; Whiteley 2000) and teen magazines (Carpenter 1998; Currie 1999; Durham 1998; Firminger 2006; McRobbie 1999). Thus, Railton's and Watson's (2005) study shows that mass media promote a racialized, heterosexualized, beauty ideal.

Pre-adolescent and teen girls are actively encouraged to adore males. In the first study of North American magazines for female adolescents, Kirstin B. Firminger (2006) finds that young men are presented as romantic interests, who young women should be knowledgeable about. Male pop stars continue to be romantic love interests for some pre-teen and adolescent girls (Greene and Adams-Price 1991; Karniol 2001; Raviv et al. 1996). Teen magazines feature male pop stars whom girls and female adolescents can idolize (Pleasance 1991; Soriano 2001). Idolizing male pop stars has been found to facilitate pre-teen girls' transition into (hetero)sexuality (Karniol 2001).

Rachel Karniol's (2001) study also found that some teens and pre-teen girls prefer androgynous-looking male stars. Wald (2002) argues that today's male teen stars are more 'girly' than those of the 1970s or 1980s. Mark Simpson's (1994) concept of metrosexual captures not only a modified masculine ideal, but also a concept that nearly mirrors Karniol's and Wald's description of male pop stars. Simpson refers to this new male as a metrosexual. He says that men are now held to a feminized male aesthetic: a clean-shaven and well-dressed ideal, which is inspired by a gay male aesthetic (see also Wald 2002).

Slaves to Capitalism?: Girl Culture and the Youth Market

According to Baumgardner and Richards (2004), some feminists trace the oppression of girls and female adolescents to consumer capitalism. Some pre-adolescent and teen girls' cultures remain primarily constructed around consumption (McRobbie 1999), and as the North American youth consumer market has expanded, it has become more inclusive of pre-teen in the teen demographic with more products geared toward them (Cook and Kaiser 2004; Quart 2003). There is also an increased focus on branding and excessive consumption (Quart 2003). Mass media are not only social texts, but also economic enterprises (see Currie 1999) and they form part of the expanding consumer goods marketed to pre-teen and teen girls (Currie 1999; Pecora 2001; Record 2002).

Others (see Quart 2003; Vannini 2002; Whiteley 2000) argue that contemporary femininity is re-sexualizing and re-commodifying pre-adolescent and teen girls. Rather than being a feminine ideal imposed on young girls, pre-adolescent and teen girls embrace the representation of beauty in mass media, rather than reject media depictions of femininity as oppressive (such as Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; Wolf 1990), and, thus, are re-sexualized and re-commodified. Products featured in magazines, and others in the

wider consumer culture, expose girls to the products they can use, such as socks and hair bands, to imitate their favourite celebrities and express fandom (see Quart 2003; Whiteley 2000). Fashion and beauty magazines are well named as how-to guides that can teach girls how to achieve the compulsory beauty ideal (see Evans et al. 1991; McCracken 1993; Wolf 1990). Messages about fashion and beauty are mainly conveyed in advertisements, including direct advertising, such as entire page ads (McCracken 1993), although other forms of advertising, such as product placements (indirect advertising), are widely used (Quart 2003). Ads uphold femininity as the outcome of behaviours and practices, promoting products necessary to replicate the beauty ideal (Currie 1999; Evans et al. 1991; Record 2002). In an analysis of advertisements in the top-selling teen magazine, *Seventeen*, Dawn H. Currie (1999) found that the construction of femininity is a bodily issue. She explains that “[t]he primary message of ads is beautification of the female body, which is presented as an object of intervention and improvement” (120). Using the recommended products, which falls under scientific and professional advice, promises one to overcome bodily imperfections. Magazines are economically successful because, mostly via advertising, they prey off women’s and pre-teen and teen girls’ (bodily) insecurities (Abu-Laban and McDaniel 2001; Wolf 1990). Moreover, the female physique is digitally altered, creating an even more unrealistic beauty ideal (Abu-Laban and McDaniel 2001). Therefore, because the beauty ideal is artificial, one can never emulate it.

Scholars are especially critical of products that contribute to the sexualization of girls. Daniel Thomas Cook and Susan B. Kaiser (2004) and Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh (2005) observe the sexualization of girls arising from pre-

adolescent girls being encouraged to purchase and use products that are similar to those for teens and women, contributing to age ambiguity. Thus, there is little difference between the feminine identity portrayed by females of all ages.

Reproducing Patriarchy

Although some emphasize how girls are now oppressed by capitalism, other feminists and identity scholars argue that mass media representations of femininity also reproduces patriarchy (see Currie 1999; Durham 1998; Vannini 2002). The beauty ideals are re-representations of male-desired femininity because girls embrace them (see Currie 1999; Durham 1998; Vannini 2002).

Celebrity Idolization and Body Image

For some girls, the influence of pop feminism is expressed in their idolization of female pop stars. Although there are few studies of the idolization of female pop stars, Budgeon (1998), Karniol (2001), Lemish (1998; 2003) and Lowe (2003) provide insight into this phenomenon. Some pre-teen and adolescent girls report that female stars, such as the Spice Girls and Britney Spears, are their role models. Many say that by idolizing them, their Girl Power message is empowering, resulting in high self-esteem. Others, however, as Lowe (2003) found, have a contradictory relationship with the stars, which is reflected in the first half of her study's title "Colliding feminisms". Although the girls liked Spears, they were critical of, and aware of, her sexualized image, and the sexual double standard girls may face. Lowe concluded that the girls' criticism reflected the contradictory message of pop feminism, and girls' discomfort with it, in which girls are caught between being encouraged to emulate Girl Power, the highly sexual image and to be proud of this, and the lived reality that girls who look sexual and are sexual can have a bad reputation, called a 'whore' or 'slut'.

The negative impact of pop feminism may also appear in pre-teen and adolescent girls' negative body image. While none of the above mentioned studies reported body image dissatisfaction among girls and teens who idolized female stars, research shows that images of femininity in mass media can have a profoundly negative impact on self-esteem (Byely et al. 2000; Clay, et al. 2005; Thompson and Stice 2001; Wertheim et al. 2001). Currie (1999) notes pre-teen and adolescent girls' body image dissatisfaction comes from reading fashion and beauty magazines and comparing themselves to the messages of femininity therein, although she emphasizes that it is within the matrix of mass media and school culture that these messages become reality and create body image anxiety for girls.

Summary

In this chapter, I bridge three frameworks: Adorno's, Hall's, and feminist and identity scholarship. Adorno illustrates an overall view of mass media, a critical perspective about mass media content, commodities, and consumerism. Hall contributes to my discussion on identity with his concept of representation and stereotyping. Lastly, feminist and identity scholarship addresses the gendered nature of and consumption of mass media and symbolism.

Feminists and gender scholars have voiced concern about mass media for girls, whose leisure time is saturated with media consumption. Media, especially fashion and beauty magazines, are a main source of entertainment and celebrity idolization common among some pre-teen and adolescent girls. With an expanded youth market, pre-teens have become a central teen demographic with a plethora of commodities also marketed to them. Among the changes in the teen market is the development of Girl Power – pop feminism. In my discussion of pop feminism, I have highlighted current scholarship that argues that

Girl Power is a move forward in the gender battle, that takes a neutral stance, as well as scholarship that shows otherwise, a superficial commitment to difference and empowerment. As Wald (1998) explains, particularly in the context of the global economy and youth market, female singers who represent the Western feminine ideal may reproduce and reinforce conventional Western femininity by way of perpetuating, for example, racial stereotyping and gender inequality in their mocking of these stereotypes. As such, pop feminism is pseudo-feminist. Feminist qualities, such as empowerment and intelligence, have been co-opted and transformed into a marketing tool. Under the guise of pop feminism, girls are told, to be empowered, they must embrace sexualized and commodified femininity.

Chapter 3: Method

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss my chosen method and the design of my thesis research. First, I introduce social semiotics broadly, highlighting van Leeuwen's (2005) social semiotic approach. This is followed by a discussion of my sample selection process and then my data collection process. Finally, I specify the data analysis process and my role in the research process.

Re-thinking Social Semiotics: Theo Van Leeuwen's Social Semiotics

Social semiotics is a branch of semiotics, a theoretical and methodological approach widely used in media studies since the 1960s (for example Hebdige 1979; McRobbie 2000 [1977]; Radway 1984). Born from Charles Peirce's and Ferdinand de Saussure's work in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, semiotics involves identifying connotative and denotative messages about material reality (Barthes 1973 [1957]; Jensen 2002; Sless 1986; Vannini 2007; Vannini forthcoming; van Leeuwen 2005). Social semiotics is a critical response to semiotics. Social semiotics is a relatively new framework, established with Robert Hodge's and Gunther Kress' ground-breaking *Social Semiotics* in 1988.

Social semiotics differs from traditional semiotics in one fundamental way: it overcomes a structural approach (Hodge and Kress 1988; Vannini 2007; Vannini forthcoming; van Leeuwen 2005). Social semioticians argue meaning emerges from interaction among people, their different perspectives and actions. In other words, for social semioticians, meaning depends on action and context, not structures such as linguistic or cultural norms guiding the construction of identity and society (Vannini 2007; van

Leeuwen 2005). In turn, commodities have different meanings for different people, such as feminists' disdain of teen magazines, but some pre-teen and adolescent girls' love of them. Thus, meaning making is a negotiated process, a process of agency, structure and situation (see also Hall 1980; Vannini 2004).

To better illustrate the meaning-making process, social semioticians (for example Vannini 2007; van Leeuwen 2005) draw on Michel Foucault's (1980) conception of power, which stipulates that meaning-making is rooted in inequality. As Foucault explained, power is not exercised in one location and by one person, but dispersed and exercised differentially among individuals. Meaning-making is a fragile process requiring consumers' and producers' participation.

The theoretical underpinning of sociosemiotics is a fluid perspective of the 'sign'. Signs do not have a pre-given, fixed meaning (van Leeuwen 2005). To explain, I turn to van Leeuwen, who, in *Introducing Social Semiotics*, reconceptualizes Saussure's (1974 [1959]) notion of the 'sign'. Inspired by MAK Halliday's (1978) social perspective of language in which grammar is not fixed, but a resource, the 'sign', which was a product of a signifier (visual object) and signified (mental association), is dissolved in favour of 'resource'. The signifier is now re-theorized as a 'semiotic resource'. He defines "semiotic resources as the actions and artifacts we use to communicate, whether they are produced physiologically - with our vocal apparatus; with the muscles we use to create facial expressions and gestures, etc. - or by means of technologies - with pen, ink and paper; with computer hardware and software; with fabrics, scissors and sewing machines, etc." (3). Moreover, borrowing from Gunther Kress (1993), van Leeuwen says symbolism is not arbitrary, but functional. Meaning-making is dependant upon agency/power exercised by

individuals.

In this way, social semiotics advances semiotics as a theory and method about multimodality. This is unlike many methods used to study mass media, particularly discourse analysis, which focuses solely on language and identifies the themes, for example, in teen magazines. Multimodality, thus, refers to all the semiotic resources we use to communicate. Here, I draw attention to Hall, whose approach to popular culture and identity, captured in ‘representation’, is inherently social semiotic. Hall has a multimodal concept of identity, which is useful for studying femininity not only as constructed in articles, but also the semiotic resources of, for example, bodies, jewellery, fashion, and posture and vital for a discussion of social semiotics.

Data Selection Procedure

This thesis consists of two case studies, which were convenience samples. My semiotic inventory consisted of one issue of the teen fan magazine *M* (Figure 1). I initially wanted to analyze five teen fan magazines. After identifying 15 texts from the five, I quickly realized analyzing them would be too difficult a task for this project. Therefore, I selected *M* as it is a leading contemporary teen fan magazine in the youth market, and background about *M* was easily accessible compared to other teen fan publications. Given the systematic and detailed nature of social semiotics, only one issue was selected. Thus, analyzing four texts and two with a sub-text was ample given my time and resource constraints.

According to Bauer Publishing (2007b), which publishes other teen fan magazines including *Twist*, *J-14*, *AstroGirl* and *QuizFest*, and the fashion and beauty magazine *Seventeen*, *M* has an early socialization mandate. *M* “is to be the entry-book into the world of celebrity for young girls across the country,” with “the best in reporting,

photography, and overall star coverage of the movies, music and celebrities they adore”

(8). *M* stands for *More* music, *More* movies and *More* entertainment. *M*’s target audience is 8-14 year olds, with a primarily female readership (86 %) and an audience of 1.7 million (MRI Teen Mark, as cited in Bauer Publishing 2007b). Bauer Publishing credits *M*’s success to high newsstand sales, currently 91% to 9% subscription sales.

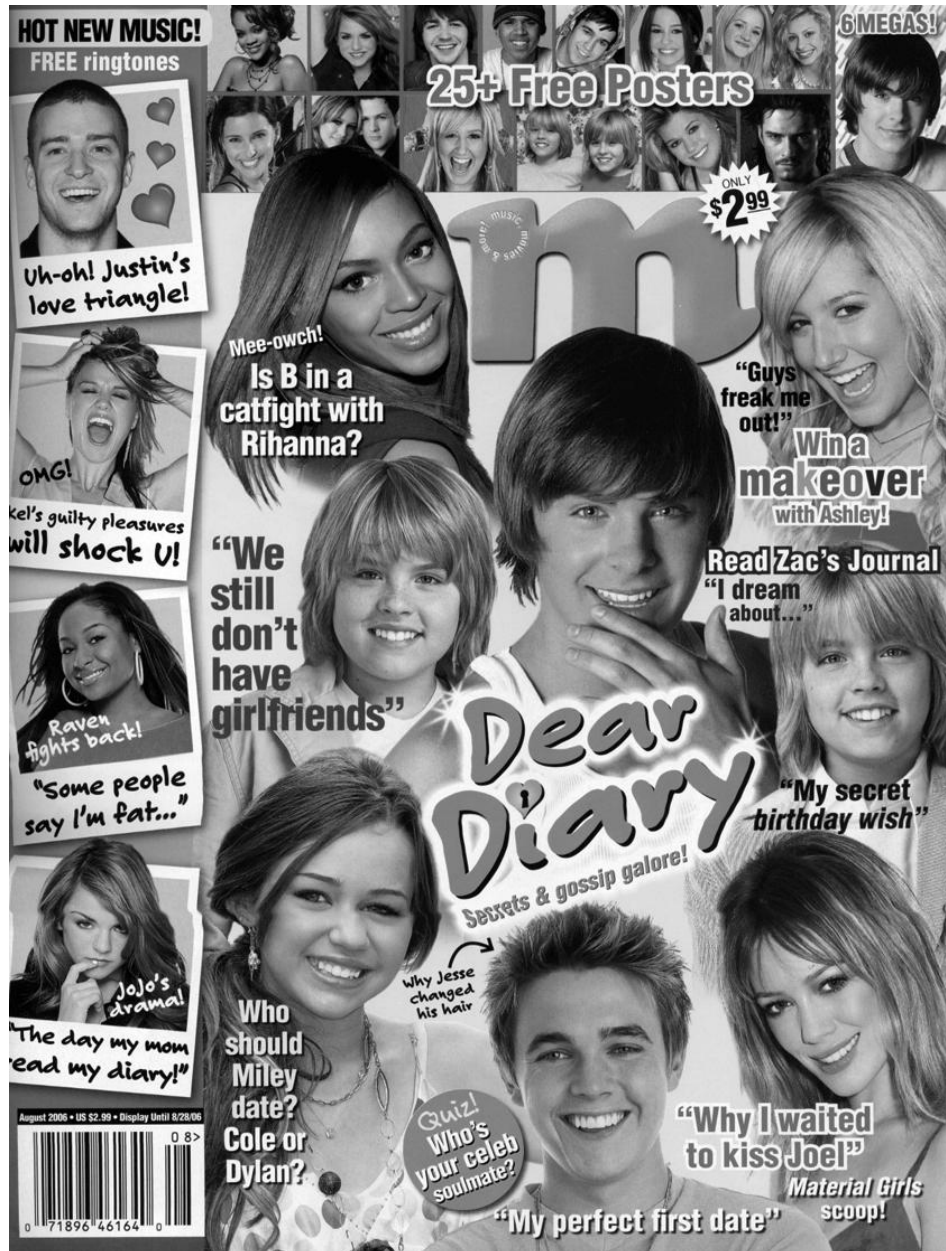


Figure 1. *M* Cover Page 2006.

Aside from their magazines, including *M*, Bauer Publishing (2007b) has a keen interest in the economic clout of their audiences. Bauer Publishing sees teens as media savvy and brand conscious, with brand loyalty solidifying in pre-adolescence; youth are heavily involved in the market place. In a study of youth consumer habits, MRI Teen Mark (Bauer Publishing 2007b) found that *M* readers consume a variety of products, including perfume, cosmetics, clothing, cameras and music players, which gross billions of dollars. In 2005, teens spent \$35 billion dollars and influenced \$670 billion in parental purchases (US News and World Report, as cited in Bauer Publishing 2007b).

For the other half of my semiotic inventory, I opted to include myself as a participant because I am experienced in the subject, providing insight on teen fan magazine consumption and celebrity idolization. Also, my experience is intended to validate my analysis of *M* and provide information about media consumption not discussed in previous girl culture studies.

Data Collection Process

Data collection spanned two and a half months, beginning with the purchase of *M* in July 2006 at a convenience store. A month later, I conducted a thorough reading of *M*, identifying general information (see Appendix A).

After generating the overview, I selected one of each type of text in *M* to analyze: an advertisement (temporary tattoos) (Cover), an article (Who's Your Celeb Soulmate?) (38), a column (*m* comics) (86), and a photo (Beyoncé pinup) (45). When selecting the texts, I considered my reading habits as a pre-teen and adolescent, the various stylistic aspects of and different types of texts, gender and racial representation, and location of texts in the magazine.

Data Analysis Framework

Data analysis entailed identifying the themes that represent pre-adolescent and teen femininity in *M*. Following Halliday (1978), I identify thematic resources, that is, the negotiable facets of a feminine identity, including heterosexual relations and celebrity idolization, which may hold different interpretations for different readers based on their experiences and background (for a detailed discussion on negotiated meaning, see Hall 1980; McRobbie 2000 [1977]). More specifically, data analysis involved following van Leeuwen's social semiotic method. Making good on his claim to provide a clear and usable strategy, and without compromising its inductive nature, van Leeuwen provides a comprehensive sociosemiotic guideline that provided me much-needed direction. Overall, I adhered to the four 'dimensions of semiotic analysis': discourse, genre, style, and modality. Borrowing from Foucault, discourse is defined as "how semiotic resources are used to construct representations of what is going on in the world" (87). By this, van Leeuwen highlights that discourse is the depiction of (a) thought(s) about the world expressed through semiotic resources (material reality). In this study, the worldview that I discuss is pre-adolescent and adolescent femininity as depicted in *M*, which is portrayed by, for example, specific commodities including clothing and make-up. Genre is defined as "how semiotic resources are used to enact communicative interactions-interactions that involve representations" (87). By genre, we are therefore talking about the type of text, such as comic or photo. Style refers to "how people use semiotic resources to 'perform' genres, and to express their identities and values in doing so" (87). This involves the pieces, such as fashion and accessories, used to construct femininity. Lastly, modality is "how people use semiotic resources to create truth or reality values of their

representations, to communicate” (87). Here, he is referring to the ways in which truth(s) are represented.

Van Leeuwen’s approach also includes understanding semiotic transformation, semiotic rules, and semiotic functions. Under semiotic transformation, one identifies the changed meanings of semiotic resources. In this study, I examine how femininity is represented in *M*, and identify how it is different from pop feminism as identified in Chapter 5. Rules vary, but van Leeuwen identifies five resources to which they operate: personal authority, impersonal authority, conformity, role modeling, and expertise. Finally, van Leeuwen identifies (2005) seven functions of texts (e.g. linguistic and visual): instrumental, regulative, interactive, personal, heuristic, imaginative, and informative.

Drawing on van Leeuwen’s sociosemiotic method and literature about the portrayal of femininity in mass media (identified in Chapter 2), style was the overarching semiotic resource explored in the analysis of *M* and my self-reflection, although the other semiotic dimensions were also analyzed in order to address style. Van Leeuwen identifies three types of style. First is individual style, which refers to individual aesthetic and identity. Second is social style, the social indicators of personal style. “The idea of ‘social style’ regards features as ‘markers’. Stylistic differences tell you where someone comes from, what their gender, age and class is, what kind of activities they are engaged in, what role they play vis-à-vis other participants’ use of these activities, and what form or medium of communication they are using” (143-144). Third is lifestyle, which includes social and individual style. Lifestyle is social as it is an indicator of social groupings, including occupations and gender. In marketing, lifestyle is prominent because regardless of gender

and race, for instance, a common way of living is promoted, including products and services.

For my self-reflection, I also primarily focused on style, although this was grounded in my experience consuming teen magazines and idolizing pop stars.

Data Analysis Process

Data analysis involved two steps. For the first step, I identified literary techniques and stylistic aspects of the texts, which I believed would most comprehensively and accurately allow me to identify the representation of femininity in *M*. Initially, I identified the genre of each piece. Second, I identified the intent of the piece, such as to inform, which included the types of speech used. Third, I identified modality, the truthfulness or reality-base of the content. Fourth, I identified the semiotic rules – the authoritative voice of the piece. Fifth, I identified the semiotic functions, such as imaginative. Sixth, I identified semiotic resources (multimodality), such as pictures of individuals, as well as multimodal techniques, such as colour scheme.

For my self analysis, I asked myself the same questions as the texts, focusing on my mass media consumption, consumer habits, idolization habits, demographics, physical characteristics, class, experiences with socializing agents, and body image.

The second stage of analysis required explicating the meaning of the texts, making sense of the semiotic resources – their symbolism. This involved identifying the stereotypes and the behaviours that construct femininity through a comparison to the literature about the representation of femininity in mass media. Drawing upon feminist and identity scholarship, as well as Hall and Adorno (outlined in Chapter 2), I addressed the symbolism of femininity and masculinity, privileging the context of *M*: it is a North America publication for female youth.

For linguistic representations, I analyzed the text of each piece to address the feminine and masculine characteristics (semiotic resources), for instance, independence and empowerment, and behaviours, such as idolizing male stars and encouragement to purchase cosmetics, that construct pre-teen and adolescent femininity (gendered representation/gendered stereotype/gendered commodity fetishism/consumption fetishism).

For pictorial representations, I concentrated on the portrayal of beauty (including masculinity) (semiotic resources) compared to western beauty ideals (identified in Chapter 2). I identified what bodies (semiotic resources) were pictured and the activities and products that constructed the ideals (gendered representation/stereotype/beauty ideals/gendered commodity fetishism/consumption fetishism).

I then categorized the themes and sub-themes. This involved generalizing, lumping 'like' things together, such as fashion aesthetic and beauty types under fashion and beauty, to identify the feminine ideal.

I used a similar approach to analyze my experiences as a reader of teen fan magazines. I referred to a feminine adolescent typology identified from the literature (discussed in Chapter 2) and compared myself to it. From there, I categorized the themes, identifying my feminine self.

To address validity and reliability, I engaged in a dialectic relationship between reading research findings and theories about the portrayal of femininity in mass media, particularly magazines for girls, teen and women, and the semiotic resources and meanings associated with them I was gleaning in my analysis. I also received feedback from my supervisory committee about my findings, all which occurred throughout the

data analysis process. Throughout the process, I also compared the concepts provided by van Leeuwen with the ones I was using, making sure I was using the most appropriate ones to analyze the texts and identifying my experiences as a reader of the magazines, that is, semiotic resources that best (comprehensive but also focused, answering my research question) allowed me to speak to the representation of femininity in *M*.

The Impact of Perspective on the Research Process

Social semiotics is an interpretative strategy. As such, I, as the researcher and only participant in this study, am a tool through which the messages in *M* are filtered; experiences with race and gender, for instance, mediate my interpretation (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Snape and Spencer 2003; Walsh 2003). Therefore, it is important for me to acknowledge my perspective in the research process, that is, experiences, such as goals, race/ethnicity, gender, and age, which impacted my interpretations, as well as reliability, validity, and legitimacy for accurate findings and conclusions.

For my reflective process, I draw on Russell Walsh's (2003) framework, which brings together four types of reflexivity. As I am the only human subject, I do not need to address the issue of ethics. Thus, I am concerned with methodological reflexivity, personal reflexivity, and contextual reflexivity.

For Walsh, methodological reflexivity requires a researcher to reflect on the methodological and/or theoretical underpinnings of one's study. I experienced three main challenges in conducting this study. My first challenge was in selecting an appropriate amount of data. While I originally wanted to analyze five teen fan publications, after analyzing 3 of 15 texts, I realized I was quickly reaching thematic saturation and doing an individual social semiotic analysis was extremely time-consuming. Once speaking with my supervisory committee, we agreed that I would analyze four texts from one magazine.

Because of the lack of readily available information about the four other teen fan magazines I wanted to analyze, I was left with no choice but to analyze *M*. Also, I found selecting which texts to analyze a challenge. Rather than having participants who have responded to an ad, for example, social semiotics is an interpretative-based method where the researcher selects the texts analyzed. To simplify the selection process, I decided to identify texts that a fan I may have liked as a youth, as well as ones that contained the most diverse racial, gender, age and ability representation in order to capture all the types of representation in *M*. Therefore, these were not just texts to include as data was difficult. Van Leeuwen (2005) provides a huge array of concepts to choose from. Ultimately, I selected concepts that would best allow me to discuss the representation of femininity, such as clothing style, opposed to, for example, a significant discussion about the overall format of the magazine.

I, however, also had two experiences that helped simplify the research process. I have a tendency to be easily overwhelmed with a large amount of information and often have trouble organizing it. Therefore, to save time, and for organizational purposes, I chose to conduct an individual social semiotic analysis, analyzing one text at a time. In order to have access to resources, such as journal articles, and no distractions, I conducted the analyses in my home. I analyzed the texts separately, which involved writing the corresponding section for the text, as organized in Chapter 4. In no particular order, I analyzed, and did the write up for, the column, advertisement, article, and photo.

Relaying my personal experiences was more challenging than I thought. My experiences and findings were mentally melted with my understanding of my experiences. I had to take a step back and reflect and re-write my findings section, only

reflecting on my actions and experiences, not their meaning.

In terms of theoretical commitment, by drawing on van Leeuwen, I recognize that my methodological perspective was grounded in symbolism and interpretation. In particular, the meaning(s) associated with material reality are not natural, but socially constructed, functional, and socially situated. In conjunction with feminist and gender scholarship, it was thus assumed that *M* is meaningful for its female audience, and presents a message of pre-teen and adolescent femininity that is socially constructed. When analyzing *M* and exploring my identity development, it was assumed that meaning-making is situated within contexts of agency/structure.

By personal reflexivity, Walsh draws on Sue Wilkinson's scholarship (1988), which says personal reflexivity is about the researcher's beliefs and expectations about the study. First, this study was extremely meaningful for me because I was a reader of teen fan magazines and I had wanted to conduct a study of teen fan publications since earning my undergraduate degree. I had a very well-formed opinion about teen fan publications upon commencing this study. I knew they conveyed a negative and narrow feminine ideal, but I was unaware of how oppressive this image was until I conducted this study.

My opinion of the portrayal of femininity in *M*, and the products available for girls, has changed. I knew the media had the power to influence low self-esteem in pre-teen and adolescent girls. However, I did not realize how oppressive the portrayal of femininity in *M* may be. After analyzing two texts, I was disgusted with the portrayal of femininity and was convinced it was my responsibility to show how these magazines are potentially harmful for pre-teen and adolescent girls' self-development. My feelings of

disgust surfaced around the highly sexualized and commodified message in *M*. To fully engage with feminism and identity scholarship, and to see the magazines (and other mass media promoted in *M* and in the youth market) as oppressive and its potential to create feelings of inadequacy in pre-adolescents and teen girls, I sided with critical scholars, such as Currie (1999) and Naomi Wolf (1990). I relinquished my pop feminist perspective (seeing the portrayal of femininity in *M* as empowering), which meant detaching myself from the message of femininity in the magazines.

I was also surprised to see direct messages about fashion and beauty. I do not remember direct advertisements or product placements for fashion. I am not surprised males are love interests and females are portrayed as role models of femininity, and not, for example, as love interests as well. I was also not surprised that the male stars had a ‘girly’ appearance, such as slender, whisker-free, and stylish. I was, though, taken aback that many of the stars are adults, some closer to 30 than 20, not teens. The discussion about dating, and the direct connection between having a crush on a star and real life crushes was alarming. Discussions of heterosexuality were not limited to having a crush on a celebrity. I am also concerned and surprised that there were products that encouraged girls to reveal sexualized areas of the body, such as their abdomen.

Writing about masculinity and femininity was also challenging. It was difficult using established terminology because it may reproduce inequality and dichotomies, such as referring to masculinity as ‘feminized’ masculinity.

Including me as a participant made sense for a number of reasons. I knew I needed to address the validity of my analysis of the texts, as well as provide further insight into teen celebrity idolization, teen fan magazine consumption, and identity

development. However, I was quite uncomfortable with divulging my experiences, particularly the negative incidences at school. I also did not want to come across as egotistical or all-knowing. I thought I would get over this, but I have not.

Finally, under contextual reflexivity, the researcher acknowledges the context, both cultural and historical, in which the study occurred. Because *M* is an American publication, the representation of femininity was analyzed within the context of North American values. Moreover, I acknowledge that *M* is a current teen fan publication, which was analyzed within the context of my understanding of current cultural and historical North American values, particularly female beauty.

In particular, historically, I was highly aware of how pop feminism, a feminine ideal that was paired with a feminist message of self-empowerment, had been popular for the past several years (Baumgardner and Richards 2004; Budgeon 1998; Lemish 2003; McRobbie 1999; Whiteley 2000). I was, therefore, analyzing the representation of femininity in *M* in the wake of a popularized feminine ideal that had been considered by some to alleviate girls from an oppressive feminine ideal, but to others oppressive (see Quart 2003; Vannini 2002; Wald 1998; Whiteley 2000).

This historical backdrop was imperative for me to acknowledge, especially in relation to my research findings. With the help of my supervisory committee, I realized it was important for me not to impose the pop feminist ideal onto my research findings, identifying the depiction of femininity in *M* as pop feminist just because it was a feminine ideal I grew admiring and a feminine ideal many feminist and gender scholars have identified in girls' mass media.

More-or-less resembling the contemporary North American beauty ideal and

having admired it as a teen may have impacted my interpretation of the portrayal of pre-adolescent and teen femininity in *M*. Where I could miss, for example, the nuances of racialized stereotypes, I conducted a critical and constant comparison of the data to the body of literature about the depiction of femininity in mass media (mainly drawing on Currie 1999; Evans et al. 1991; Durham 1998; McRobbie 2000 [1977]; Peirce 1990; Railton and Watson 2005; Wald 1998).

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the process of conducting this study. I identified social semiotics as a theoretical and methodological framework useful for studying symbolism. Because of its context-based and fluid nature, I drew on van Leeuwen's social semiotic method to analyze the representation of pre-adolescent and teen femininity in the teen fan publication *M*, and to address the influence of the portrayal of femininity in teen fan magazines in my identity development. I then outlined the process of selecting *M* and my experience as a reader of teen magazines for analysis, and the analysis process. Following this, I described my role in the research process. In the next chapter, I discuss my research findings.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter contains my analysis of *M*, as well as a description of my experiences as a reader of teen fan magazines. In the first section, I present the analysis of the four texts and two sub-texts in *M*: an advertisement with sidebar, an article, a column with sidebar, and a photo. For each text, I present a self-contained analysis in which I identify the interlocking themes and sub-themes therein. In the second section, I identify my experiences as a reader of teen fan magazines and celebrity idolization, and the influence of the portrayal of femininity in them on my identity development.

Magazine Analysis

Ad with Sidebar: Temporary Tattoos and Sexualized Femininity

Currie (1999) argues that teen magazines are commercial enterprises, as well as social texts that offer messages about femininity. Nearly half of the tattoos are located on the front cover, the rest on the back cover. Their visibility is intended to attract buyers. While the tattoos are labeled a ‘free gift’, one must pay \$2.99 CDN to purchase *M* in order to have them. As such, the sheet of tattoos is an advertisement, specifically a “gift” advertisement (Figure 2). As an ad, the sheet of tattoos serves an economic function: to sell *M*.

The tattoos are a product of the teen market and symbolize femininity. The economic message behind the tattoos symbolizes a female consuming subject. The tattoos may be effective advertising because they are interactive and girly images. In other words, they may appeal to girls because they are pictures that may interest them and

something they can use. As body decoration, the tattoos are beauty products, which could contribute to the construction of sexualized femininity.



Figure 2. "47 free tattoos!" *M* Front/Back Cover Advertisement 2006.

In North America, tattooing is an acceptable and widespread practice. At times, tattoos have been a form of deviance and marker of masculinity, characterized by masculine designs, such as pictures of women, which were permanent (see Atkinson and

Young 2001; Kosut 2000). The tattoo images from *M*, as products for its young female audience, suggest that the negative and masculine connotation of tattoos has changed. Today, tattoos come in a range of fashionable designs, sizes, and colours. There are single colour tattoos, in black and blue, but colour tattoos are also popular. Common areas for tattoos include the biceps, back, shoulders, the back of neck, although some are worn on the face, the hands, and the forearms. Females tend to have butterflies, stars, hearts, roses, and portrait tattoos (Robbins and Morgan 2006). While temporary tattoos have been available for children and teens for several decades, these tattoos convey possible female participation in the tattoo phenomenon, and tattoos as aiding in the construction of femininity through body decoration of the girly images (for inspiration, see Atkinson 2002).

The purpose of these temporary tattoos may be to emulate permanent tattoos, allowing girls to participate in the tattooing trend. Instructions (the sidebar) guide readers about the application, body placement, removal and care of the tattoos (Figure 3). Application is relatively easy and the pictures are likely to receive parental approval. As temporary tattoos, pre-teen and adolescent girls can avoid the barriers of age of consent for a permanent tattoo, the pain and the health risks associated with permanent tattoos, and actually having permanent tattoos. Pre-adolescent and teen girls can pretend to have tattoos, and, possibly find decorating their bodies with the tattoos and the attention that they may receive, such as that from boys, enjoyable.

The feminine and girly nature of the tattoos is conveyed by their relatively small size and the types of images. Several of the tattoos, such as the stars, hearts, watermelon, and smiley face, are extremely small. The tattoos are overlaid with a sparkle finish, a

current decorative feature on and in commercial goods, such as T-shirts and lip glosses, in, for example, *La Senza Girl* and *Ardéne*. The anklet, armlet and belly tattoos emulate the Indian form of henna body decoration. Although the anklet, armlet and belly tattoos

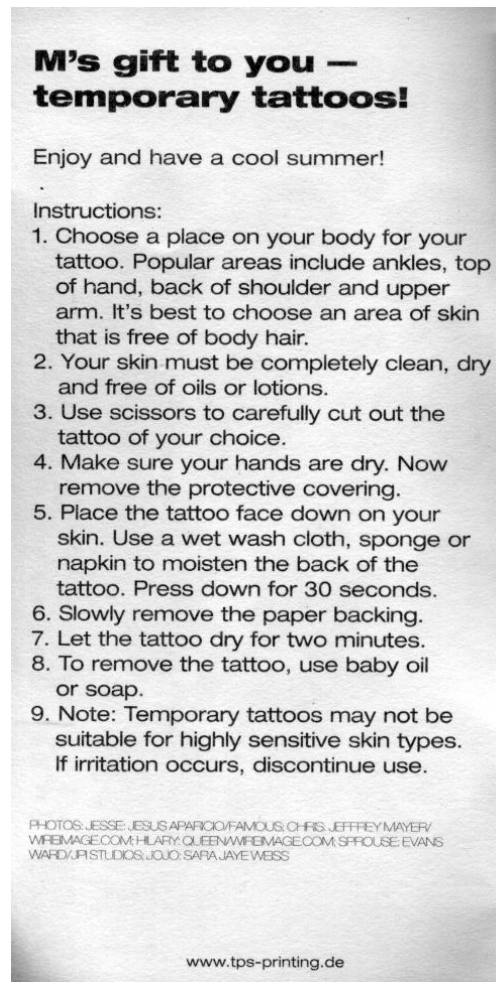


Figure 3. “47 free tattoos!” Instructions for Front/Back Cover Advertisement 2006.

resemble henna designs, the flowers on the armlet and the stars on the anklet signify girly henna-like tattoos. The anklet, armlets and belly tattoos emulate jewellery, although decal-style. The dolphin, unicorn, puppy dog and the happy faces are cute and friendly, as are the butterflies, flamingos, and ladybugs. The flowers are delicate and aesthetically pleasing. The fruits and sweets are summer foods. Three of the tattoos are of Chinese

origin, symbolizing the popularity of Asian culture, and, thus, inclusion of Asian culture in North America. The tattoos are of feminized, or girly, philosophical meanings, “harmony”, “love”, and “good luck”, opposed to ‘masculine’ meanings, such as strength and courage.

Some of the tattoos are current teen idols, who are identified by first name, suggesting approachability and familiarity between them and their fans, which symbolizes the friendly and informal nature of girl culture in *M*. Three of the portrait tattoos are of male stars (Appendix B), who, by being pictured here, are conveyed as possible models of romantic love. Specifically, the Jesse tattoo is surrounded by red hearts. The hearts and pink background indicate he is a possible love interest. These male stars are supposed to represent different masculine ideals, although they are all whisker-free. Their hair-free faces symbolize them as ‘teens’, although Dylan’s and Cole’s slightly heavier build, with child-like chubby cheeks, connotes them as pre-teens. While there are both black and white stars depicted, which shows sensitivity to racial and ethnic diversity, three of the four stars are Caucasian. Chris represents R&B/hip-hop culture. His diamond earrings and the diamond on his portrait border emulate bling. Bling (big, shiny jewellery) connotes affluence. Dylan, Cole, and Jesse, however, represent ‘white’ masculinity with their light coloured hair and skin.

The other two celebrity portraits feature female pop stars Hilary and JoJo (see Appendix B). The flowers, butterfly, and rainbow framing Hilary and JoJo symbolize them as potential models of femininity. With their styled hair, make-up, and jewellery, they represent femininity as a bodily issue constructed from commodities, such as cosmetics and fashion attire. Hilary and JoJo are models of North American beauty as

thinness and whiteness. Their light-looking application of make-up and pink hues convey these stars as teens.

The parrot, lightening bolts, and angry faces tattoos are ‘rough and tough’ looking compared to the other tattoos, such as the fruits, animals and celebrity portraits. These tattoos are, thus, likely intended to be symbols of punk culture, suggesting punk is now a fashion trend for the masses, and, here, for girls. With punk-style tattoos for sale, punk, in *M*, lacks its anti-consumer and rebel message. By connoting popularized deviance, these tattoos can present girls with the opportunity to signify a ‘punk’ feminine self.

As beauty products, these tattoos do not only symbolize femininity, but also the potential for young girls to express sexualized femininity. The placement of the tattoos can contribute to a sexualized self. While the instructions say that “[p]opular areas [to wear tattoos] include ankles, top of hand, back of shoulder and upper arm,” instructions beneath two of the tattoos indicate they can be placed on one’s lower back and belly button, perhaps suggesting sexualized femininity (for inspiration, see Admin 2008).

Although *M* suggests that girls wear these tattoos, symbolizing social regulation, wearing the tattoos, the placement, and visibility is, ultimately, girls’ choice. The instructions are guidelines. They can select which tattoo to wear, where they wear it and how they wear it. The lower back and belly button tattoos can be worn in discrete places and can be covered up or revealed at the wearer’s discretion. Finally, while the majority of these tattoos are feminized, cute objects, such as dogs, dolphins, ice cream cones and butterflies, they can acquire sexualized symbolism based on body placement. For instance, the cupcake is not only a sweet treat, but when placed on the shoulder, the left

back hip, or the lower back it is also a symbol of sexuality, i.e., a young woman as ‘yummy’ - good looking and tasting, suggesting kissing or other sexual acts.

Article: Male Pop Stars as Idols of Romantic Love

Like the sheet of temporary tattoos, the article “Who’s your celeb soulmate?” (Figure 4) includes the reader in a number of ways. Here, however, the reader is included mainly through the presumed interests of *M*’s readers, including a “cute puppy”, a “low-key kitty”, journal writing, friendship, and lifetime aspirations. The article also highlights mass media’s potential importance for *M*’s audience, particularly television programming (e.g. *Hannah Montana*), music (e.g. Pete Wentz), and movies (e.g. Will Ferrell flicks). Alluding to specific mass media, such as the movie *Napoleon Dynamite*, celebrities, including Chad Michael Murray, and acronyms, such as FOB (the band Fall Out Boy), speaks to their presumed familiarity among *M* readers and the opportunity for girls to discover them.

Since the purpose of the quiz is for the reader to discover her “celeb soulmate”, sexuality is again a central theme. The topic of romantic relationships is discussed in the quiz questions, for example “You love it when guys aren’t afraid to” and “Who cares about crazy dating rules?” The quiz also addresses the reader as interested, or possibly interested, in males and dating. Experiencing sexuality, though, is primarily conveyed through fantasizing about male stars as potential romantic partners, which can be an emotional sexual experience. Male stars as soulmates symbolize them as romantic interests. More specifically, girls having crushes on male stars symbolize heterosexuality. After completing the quiz, the reader learns who is her “celeb soulmate”. He will not be

Who's your celeb soulmate?

So when you get face-to-face with your star crush, who's he gonna be?

START

You're always writing stuff down. In fact, your journal is chock-full of:

Funny jokes. → It's party time! You're drawn to the guy who's: *Chillin' by himself.*

Deep thoughts. → Your 'rents say you can get a pet! You get: *A playful puppy.*

Forget about it. → Your dream dude would be way into: *Imitating Napoleon Dynamite.*

Say you're hurt. → One of your (many) lifetime goals is to: *A low-key kitty.*

Dramatic movies. → He'd easily win your heart if he: *Will Ferrell flicks.*

Be on reality TV. → You love it when guys aren't afraid to: *Write a book.*

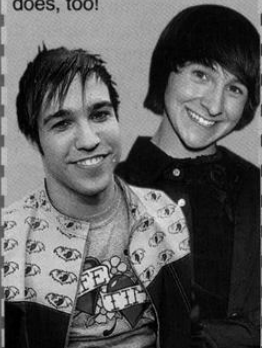
Burping loud. → Who cares about crazy dating rules? The "rule" you'd gladly break for your crush is: *Sent you anonymous love notes.*

Crying at a movie. → *Show their emotions.*

Be passionate about a cause. → *Serenaded you in public.*

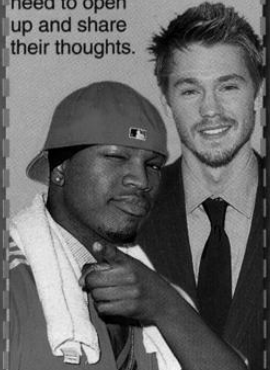
goofy guy

Cuties like FOB's **Pete Wentz** or *Hannah Montana's Mitchell Musso* are bound to make your heart melt with their hilarious one-liners. You know the value of a good laugh, and you need a goofy guy who does, too!



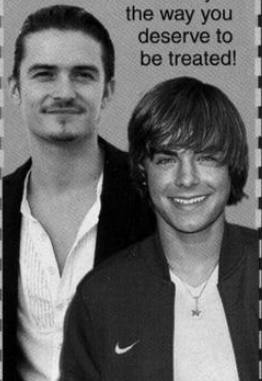
mysterious man

Mysterious, almost serious guys like **Chad** and **Ne-Yo** need a gal like you who won't judge them for sharing their feelings. You'd love to be the girl who can give them the nudge they need to open up and share their thoughts.




sensitive sweetie

You go for guys who wear their heart on their sleeve, kinda like **Orlando** and **Zac**. No more tough types for you. You mesh well with sweet, thoughtful guys who'll treat you the way you deserve to be treated!



super-smart stud

Super-smart types like **Drake Bell** and **Daniel Radcliffe** are the dudes you always fall for. They have opinions on everything and they love to talk a lot — just like you!



M 53

Figure 4. "Who's your celeb soulmate?" Article in *M* 2006:53.

any celebrity, but only one of the eight stars pictured. The inclusion of these stars suggests they are, or should be, romantic interests for *M*'s audience. The concept of soulmate also symbolizes the notion of true love, a monogamous relationship with one's soulmate.

The potential celebrity soulmates are intended to represent different personality and masculine types. The "goofy guy", "mysterious man", "sensitive sweetie", and "smart" personality types encapsulate emotional and intellectual qualities, which males are often taught to hide, but may appeal to the young girls who read *M*. Here, feminized masculinity is symbolized with little or no facial hair.

Masculinity is also represented as four variations. With his black hair, tattoo print shirt, and pattern jacket, Pete's style is that of 'pop' punk, a type of punk aesthetic featured in mass media and purchasable in stores at the mall, for example. Ne-Yo's hip-hop fashion style is symbolized through his sporty attire, diamond earring and necklace, and dark hair and skin. Orlando's, Mitchell's, Zac's, Chad's, Drake's, and Daniel's styles are two variations of 'white' masculinity. Orlando, Mitchell, and Zac, who are Caucasian, have a casual fashion style, exemplified with their casual shirts, including Bloom's button-up shirt, and jackets, and jewellery, including Zac's necklace, for example. They have various hair styles, shaggy like Mitchell's and Zac's, and greased back like Orlando's. Chad, Drake, and Daniel exemplify the formal 'white' masculine aesthetic. These stars have short, blonde, and dark brown hair. Some, such as Chad, often have gelled and slightly spiky styled hair or, like Zac, tussled. They wear formal attire, such as Daniel's suit. Finally, masculinity is symbolized through branding in two instances.

Branding is seen with the identification of the *Nike* brand swoosh on Zac's jacket and the *Major League Baseball* symbol on Ne-Yo's hat.

Although the article promises the reader that she will find her 'celeb soulmate', this may not be the case. The reader is directed to a personality type, two male stars of the same personality type are possible love interests, but only one of them will be a 'soulmate'. There being two stars with the same personality type, but different aesthetics, has the potential to ensure that only one male star is identified as a reader's 'celeb soulmate'. However, if a girl prefers the same masculine aesthetic, not personality type, it is possible she may like more than one of the male stars.

A fan may really like a male star, but meeting her celebrity crush is unlikely. Thus, a fan prospectively having a "celeb soulmate" is an exaggeration. Because of the leading nature of the questions and visible answers, readers may likely guess their responses to the questions. The answers are dichotomies and may not capture the reader's desired response. Overall, the exaggeration of perhaps having a "celeb soulmate" could be part of the fantasy of celebrity crushes, the fun of being a fan, and enjoyment of consuming *M*.

Column with sidebar: Pop Culture and Pop Stars at the Beach

At face value, this *M* comic is about teen celebrity dolls acting out the moral lesson not to flirt with friends. At a closer look, it also offers a rich script about pre-teen and adolescent femininity (Figure 5). The comic is loosely based on the adolescent television show, *Laguna Beach*, which connects readers with music and TV programming, which is also reflected in use of song titles as script lines, such as "Bootylicious" and "Hips Don't Lie". By the comic narrative being inspired by a teen television show, it symbolizes the potential importance of mass media and celebrities in

the lives of *M*'s readers. The use of the teen program and songs showcases the popularity of not only interpersonal relationships and California lifestyle-based TV show *Laguna*

m **HOW BIZARRE!**
comics!

Meet the star dolls!

Kristin Cavallari Jesse McCartney Shakira Beyoncé

Watch what happens in *M*'s version of *Laguna Beach*!

1

Kristin... master of disguise!

Shakira, where are all the cute boys today?

Well, I hear Jesse's coming to the beach, B!

2

Yo, B! You're lookin' bootylicious!

Déjà vu, Jesse. That word sounds so familiar!

I'll have Jesse for myself, soon!

3

Shakira, are you flirting with me?

My hips don't lie, Jesse!

Uh oh. This is gonna get bad.

Fffttt.

4

He's mine! Back off, Farthead!

Yikes! I'll never flirt with friends again.

Yeah, didn't you learn anything from last season's *Laguna*? Let's get outta here!

POW!

86 mmm-mag.com

PHOTOS: STILES BY H&B. SCENARIO BY MADALE MURPHY

Figure 5. "m comics!" Column in *M* 2006:86.

Beach, but also the comic stars' current hit songs, which symbolize the popularity of hip/hop, bubble gum pop (which is teen pop as represented by 'white' stars such as Jesse), and Latin pop music genres among *M* readers. The inclusion of *M*'s website also symbolizes the importance of the Internet in this girl culture. The comic characters are current celebrities, likely familiar to, and familiarizing (vis-à-vis the comic) for, *M*'s audience (see Appendix B). Kristin Cavallari is an actress on *Laguna Beach*. Jesse McCartney, Shakira, and Beyoncé Knowles are singers. The familiarity and informal nature of *M* is conveyed, for example, with Knowles simply called Beyoncé, and Jesse McCartney, Jesse in the sidebar. Finally, like the ad, article and photo, to some extent, in order for a girl to appreciate the comic, insider knowledge, such as the plot line of *Laguna Beach* or lyrics of the songs, is required.

"How Bizarre" symbolizes the comic as a crafted narrative, and something out of the ordinary. As a comic, it is meant to be funny. The comedic nature of the comic may arise from the characters as simulated representations of the celebrities as Barbie and Ken dolls, that is, as action figures not pictures of the real stars. The celebrity Barbie and Ken dolls are likely to appeal to girls because they most likely played with Barbie and Ken dolls as toys, and perhaps these celebrity dolls are toys today. Moreover, girls are knowledgeable about the unrealistic nature of Barbie and Ken dolls, such as body measurements.

Girls' knowledge of Barbie as unrealistic, and the imaginary storyline of the comic is presumably intended to contribute to the comedic nature of the comic. Barbie is not real, and so, too, is the narrative. The storyline of the comic being loosely based on a

television show is imaginary, just like many of girls' play with Barbie and Ken. Because the comic story line is imaginary, it is implying that it should be funny.

Barbie and Ken dolls, though, also represent North American ideals of femininity and masculinity. The celebrity dolls are supposed to represent different beauty ideals. Each of the female stars has a thin, hour-glass shaped body, and is wearing a bikini. Beyoncé represents 'black' femininity. She is black, with long, straight and thick black hair, and light-coloured eye shadow and pink lipstick. She is wearing a rainbow-striped bikini, and a medium application of purple eye shadow and pink lipstick. Shakira, however, has curly blondish/brown thick hair, which is pulled back into a half pony tail, with a section of ear-length bangs on either side of her face. She is wearing a turquoise sequenced bikini. She has a heavy application of sparkle blue eye shadow and purple lipstick, and a jewel belly ring. Kristin is Caucasian, with straight blond hair that is pulled into a pony tail. Her bikini is purple with white flowers. She has on a medium application of bright pink lipstick and pale eye shadow, and, at various times in the comic, is wearing sunglasses and binoculars. As the only male, Jesse represents one masculine ideal. He is Caucasian, with short, neat and styled, brown with blond dyed streaks hair. He is fit, with a modest muscular build, and is wearing a pair of orange and yellow flower print, knee-length baggy beach shorts. Finally, he has no facial or body hair. Their fashion styles symbolize the stars as in their late teens.

In the beach setting, messages about leisure, friendship and sexuality are expressed. Beyoncé asking Shakira "where are all the cute boys today?" and Shakira reading a magazine conveys they are engaging in friendship bonding, enjoying leisure time together. The beach, reading a magazine, *M*, which symbolizes interest in a celebrity

magazine, and romantic interest in boys, thus, portrays a narrative about leisure, not work. The main theme of this column, though, is heterosexuality. Jesse flirts with Beyoncé, and Shakira flirts with Jesse. Jealous, Shakira, and Beyoncé fight over Jesse. But, Kristin, who kept her distance from Jesse, and vice versa, wins him.

More than this, the script lines and the actions of the stars, in association with their fashion aesthetics, convey racialized and sexualized feminine ideals and a masculine ideal. Aside from the beach scene in which all four characters are shown, Shakira's long, curly thick hair and Beyoncé's long, straight, thick black hair, and their almost naked bodies express them as sexually forward. Their hair is loose, or, as with Shakira, partially pulled back, but free to move. Beyoncé's hair is also uncontrollable, moving in various directions. Moreover, her 'blackness' is reinforced by her having black hair, which is generally dyed blonde in real life. Flirting among Jesse, Shakira and Beyoncé, also express them as sexually forward. Referring to Beyoncé as bootylicious, Jesse presents and reinforces Beyoncé as a model of black sexualized femininity. By referring to her as 'bootylicious', he is intending to portray Beyoncé as attractive. Bootylicious is a sexual reference to women's, particularly black women's, buttocks'. Bootylicious was popularized with Destiny's Child's 2001 hit of the same name. Beyoncé, an original member of Destiny's Child, in particular, self-identified as 'bootylicious' in the song, as the lead singer, and in other mass media in which she has appeared. With her sexuality conveyed by body parts, Beyoncé is portrayed as being in touch with her body, and, thus, nature. Moreover, heterosexuality is the main theme of Beyoncé's current hit "Déjà vu", also a response to Jesse calling her attractive. "Déjà vu" is about a woman missing her male lover so much she thinks she sees him everywhere. Déjà vu, then, symbolizes

Beyoncé telling Jesse he is sexy and she is attracted to him. Shakira is also sexually forward. With reference to the song “Hips Don’t Lie”, she lets Jesse know she is romantically interested in him. “Hips Don’t Lie” symbolizes sexual attraction via her hips, which are prominently featured in her dance style. With her hips as her trademark, she emphasizes her Colombian roots and sexuality. “Don’t Lie” suggests her attraction is honest. Communicating via her hips connects her to her body, and, thus, nature. Kristin, on the other hand, is sexually passive aggressive, the “master of disguise”. Kristin’s distance from Shakira and Beyoncé as the “master of disguise” symbolizes she is not friends with them, but an overt rival. As “the master of disguise”, Kristin is literally disguised, with binoculars, sunglasses, and a magazine. She is at the beach, but in the background, not hanging out with Shakira and Beyoncé, who moderately threaten her for having Jesse for herself. Eavesdropping, she watches Beyoncé and Shakira (with her binoculars, and behind sunglasses and a magazine). Her distance (lack of friendship with Shakira and Beyoncé) and plotting to win Jesse symbolizes males as competition among females. Expecting to pair up with Jesse, though, conveys Kristin having expressed sexuality. Her sexual self-awareness is also conveyed through wearing a bikini, and long, straight hair. Her hair is pulled back into a pony tail: confined, but free to slightly move. She says very little, communicating through her body image, thoughts and brief dialogue. She literally has the last line.

In the comic, expressing sexuality by flirting creates a sexual double standard, and competition among friends. While Shakira and Beyoncé are sexually forward and accessible, it poses a contradiction. They attract Jesse’s attention. He flirts with Beyoncé, and Shakira flirts with him, but he ends up with Kristin. Jesse is permitted to flirt with a

couple of females without experiencing any negative repercussions. Flirting with sexually forward females is fun, but, in the comic, it is implied that they are not ‘quality’ girls, but ‘spoiled’. Kristin, who did not flirt with Jesse, is ‘pure’, and, thus, wins him. Jesse explains the moral of the comic: friends should not flirt with each other. The ‘fight’ between Shakira and Beyoncé over Jesse represents how common love interests can create competition among friends, turning them into rivals. Here, the love square manifests among three of the female and male characters. Kristin’s statement, “Uh oh. This is gonna get bad” points to her knowledge of the flirting among Jesse, Beyoncé, and Shakira and the consequences to follow. The fight is characteristic of a ‘catfight’ – a fight between females - involving verbal insults and physical attacks. Beyoncé insults Shakira calling her a “farthead”, dumb, and punches her. This conveys black women as violent.

Photo: Female Pop Star Modeling Black Femininity

The photo is a pinup of R&B pop singer Beyoncé Knowles (Figure 6). Being pictured in a pinup, in addition to being identified by her first name, presumably means she is an idol for *M* readers. It symbolizes her familiarity for *M* readers, although they may be introduced to her here. In either case, being identified by her first name indicates an informal relationship between *M* and its readers. Additionally, Beyoncé’s relationship with girls may be as a model of femininity.

Beyoncé may be a model of ‘black’ femininity. Beyoncé’s appearance, though, represents a combination of ‘white’ and ‘black’ qualities, drawing attention to Beyoncé’s performance of both black and white characteristics. Several physical characteristics, in the photo, portray Beyoncé as black: brown skin, brown eyes, and black hair, in addition to certain features of her fashion attire. She lacks, though, traditionally ‘black’ features, such as a wide nose, curly or Afro-style hair, and dark/black skin. Other characteristics,

as well as a lack of these features, portray ‘white’ characteristics. Beyoncé’s hair is streaked, with large sections of dark brown hair, pointing to her ‘black’ heritage. The

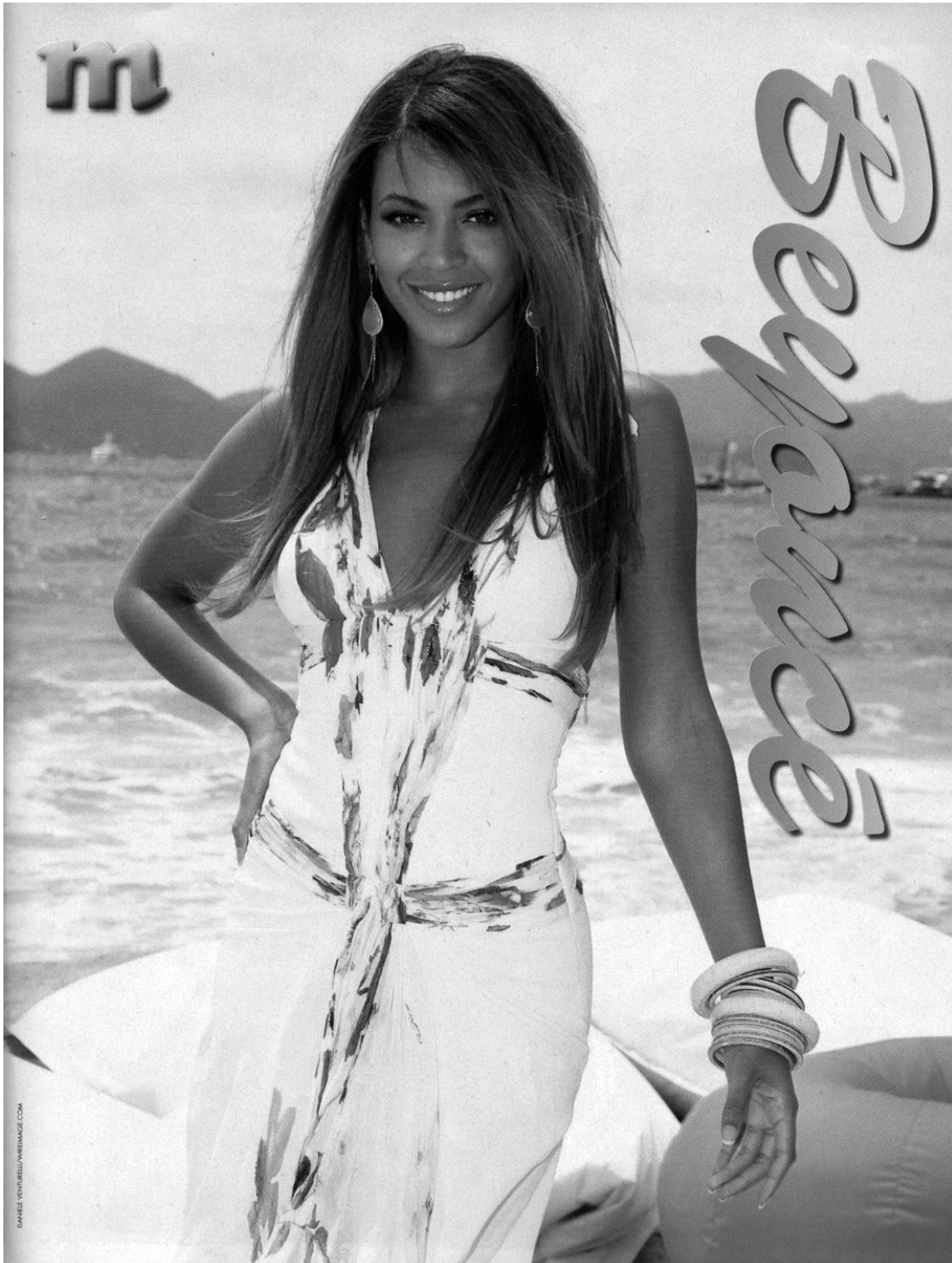


Figure 6. “Beyoncé.” Photo in *M* 2006:45.

streaks of blonde and straight hair symbolize 'whiteness'. Her body shape, in particular, is a 'white' feature. Instead of her trademark fleshy, curvy body, represented by large buttocks, she is thin - a relatively fleshless body, but curvy, an hourglass figure.

Beyoncé's fashion attire and accessories draw attention to her thin figure and give rise to her sexualized, racialized image. Her long, dangly earrings emphasize the leanness of her body. Moreover, the bodies of the earrings are pear shaped, a common female shape, which symbolize a fleshier hip and thigh area common among representations of 'black' women. The earrings suggest 'blackness', but her tight, form-fitted white dress, which exposes her arms, neck and chest, draws attention to her non-fleshy body parts (for inspiration, see Railton and Watson). It emphasizes her feminine figure. Because the bracelets around Beyoncé's wrist are much larger than her arm, they also symbolically emphasize her thinness.

The placement, width and connection of the flower fabric are also 'black' characteristics. The flowers on her dress symbolize exoticness, 'blackness', linking her with nature. The flower pattern wraps around sexually symbolic areas of the body, the breasts and hips, and it is tightly held together fabric, bunched, and attached to the white dress.

The flower-print fabric bands are relatively thin, and so attention can be (re-)directed to the 'thin' - the 'white' - aspects of her image. With her left hip bent forward, hand on right hip, and arm straight out to the side, she is on display, to be looked at. She is posing like a model. Being pictured from the knees up, provides a fragmented image of Beyoncé. Perhaps due to the age of *M* readers, the majority of her body is covered, although attention is given to her as sexually mature. Beyoncé's shapely hips

and large breasts are visible to readers. Her long hair draping along side her breasts showcases their fullness. Beyoncé's image, though, as for pre-teen and adolescent girls, is juvenilized through pinkish shiny lips, slightly ruby cheeks, slightly smoky eyes, and shapely eyebrows. It does not appear that she is wearing much make-up, probably like *M* readers, who may not be able to wear or are starting to wear make-up.

Beyoncé's image is also a symbol of ability, which also symbolizes beauty. Beyoncé is depicted as able-bodied, having the 'correct' number of body parts, all of which appear to work 'normally'. Her happy demeanour shows her in good spirits, and, thus, good mental health. My understanding of mental ability as able-bodied is inspired by Kafer (2003). She points out that mental 'problems' are 'disabilities'. Thus, able-bodied and ability are synonyms.

Being pictured at a beach in the city is a leisure activity, but it also may aid in the representation of a 'black' with combined 'black' and 'white' characteristics for *M* readers. Beyoncé is pictured in nature, which represents her being close to nature, a 'black' feature. Her head is in the sky, her body across the water, and near the sand. However, her closeness to nature is limited. She is not directly in the water, in the sky or actually pictured in the sand. Rather, Beyoncé is set against the water, sky, and it is alluded to be standing in sand. Further, the ships in the background, and the pillows on the sand, disrupt the continuity of nature, and, thus, represent her as distanced from nature, a 'white' characteristic. The pillows separate her from the shore line, and the ships symbolically distance her from a connection to the water, mountains and sky.

Self-Reflection

Consuming Mass Media, Idolizing Pop Stars and Identity Development

As a pre-teen and adolescent, consuming mass media and idolizing celebrities was my main leisure activity. As a reflection of teen celebrity idolization, at the age of 9, I liked New Kids on the Block (NKOTB), the ‘it’ 1980s teen pop act. At 17, I was mesmerized with ‘NSYNC and the Backstreet Boys, and was a fan of the Spice Girls and Britney Spears.

My admiration of pop stars was a mass media mediated experience. Being thoroughly entrenched within this culture, I read magazines, listened to songs on the radio, tapes and CDs, watched television specials and music videos, had posters, and had a NKOTB-branded T-shirt. (As a teen, media consumption also included fashion and beauty products that were not celebrity branded). Mass media had an interconnected relationship among themselves; magazines often identified groups’ album names, and provided pictures of the celebrities from their music videos. Each contributed to my idolization of the stars, offering something slightly different. Through mass media, I was able to participate in this girl culture. My media consumption went largely unmonitored; in fact, my media consumption had parental approval. My family bought me media and celebrity-branded merchandise, and allowed me to spend monetary gifts on media and merchandise. I consumed what, how, when, and where I wanted.

I was particularly fond of teen fan magazines, though. Teen fan magazines were unique in the way they represented pop culture and celebrities. I liked their interactive nature, and focus on the personal lives of the stars. Stapled together, teen fan magazines were easy to disassemble. They were designed to be disassembled. I never read them in their entirety, as I found only some of the information interesting. I would flip through

the magazine, but only read the articles and photos featuring the stars I admired. I could discard the articles and photos I did not want.

Teen fan magazines were fun and exciting to read. Buying them required a trip to the local convenience store. I bought several magazines, including *Bop*, *Tiger Beat*, *16*, *Teen Beat*, and *Superstar*. I purchased the magazines mostly for the posters, but also the articles. The pictures were glossy, but had newspaper print pages (Figure 7 and Figure 8). I liked the colour pictures, and articles about personal information of the celebrities, such as baby pictures (Figure 7) and musical inspirations (Figure 8). I then went home and began my ritual.

My media consumption occurred in my bedroom, usually on my own, although sometimes with a friend. I flipped through the magazines, identifying my favourite pictures and articles, and, subsequently, reading them. I then disassembled the magazines and put the pictures up on my bedroom walls, replacing old pictures or pictures that were no longer appealing, with more interesting ones (Figure 9). As a teen, I sometimes ‘scrapbooked’ with old pictures and articles, putting the old pictures in a binder, and assembling pages of my favourite star, such as Backstreet Boy’s Nick Carter (Figure 10).

Reading the articles was about getting to know the stars, treating them like a friend or real-life romantic interest. Articles profiled the stars, revealing biographical information, such as their full name, birth date, family, favourite colour, role models, and groups whom they admired, and information such as who their founder was and who named the group. Once the stars had been introduced to fans, articles featured specific aspects of their life, such as a personal or group tragedy. After a while, I could recite information about them by heart.

The Music That Moves 'N SYNC

The musical tastes of 'N SYNC range from a little bit country to a whole lotta R&B and soul

BB exclusive!

While frantically pushing the scan button on your radio trying to find something decent to listen to, have you ever wondered what songs would make some of your favorite music stars hit stop? Well, we have. And when we ask the boys of 'N SYNC, Lance Bass, JC Chasez, Joey Fatone, Chris Kirkpatrick and Justin Timberlake, what music captures their ears, they reveal a mix of bands that have impacted their own music—and some of their faves are now their closest friends!

You wouldn't necessarily know it by listening to their music, such as their single "I Want You Back" off of their just released self-titled CD, but everything from country music to hard rock has affected 'N SYNC. "As for influences, I like Garth Brooks," Lance, 18, says of the famed country crooner. "He's an incredible singer. I love his ballads and stuff. And then on the other end of the spectrum, I like Offspring."

As for JC, his preferences lean away from the harsh sounds of bands like Offspring and more toward mellow tunes. "People like Sting, like Seal, Stevie Wonder," 21-year-old JC lists. "I don't know, I just love a good song and those people are pretty reliable."

Apparently, soulful singer Stevie Wonder has made a major impression on 'N SYNC. "Oh, man, he's a brilliant



'N SYNC: (clockwise from bottom left) Joey, Justin, Chris, JC and Lance

musician," the baby of the bunch, 17-year-old Justin, raves of his main inspiration. "I think he's just the ambassador of soul." Aside from old-time fave Stevie, Justin adds, "I like Puff Daddy and all kinds of hip hop and R&B."

For Joey, the classic sounds of '50s and '60s doo wop and a capella music

have had the greatest impact on his musical taste. "I like all types of music. I mean, I can also listen to No Doubt," the 21-year-old clarifies. "I mean, one minute I can be listening to '50s doo wop and the next minute I can be listening to R&B or alternative."

some friendly competition

As a whole, Chris concludes, bands with vocal harmony, like Boyz II Men, have had the greatest influence on 'N SYNC. However, he adds, their list of faves keeps growing as 'N SYNC hits the road to promote their own tunes. "The musicians that we've met, we've really just hit it off with completely," Chris, 26, says. Adds Lance, "No Mercy, we're best friends with. And 98."

In fact, in the process of meeting some of these new bands while touring around the world, they realized what a small world it really is. "We actually hit it off really good with 98," Chris continues. "They're actually really cool guys. It's funny because they were on the Smash Hits tour in the U.K. with us...and in the process of talking to them, somehow or other it got to the topic of where we went to school, and I found out I attended middle school with one of the guys!" Coincidence or fate? Just another thing to ponder while listening to the radio.

BB

Figure 8. "The Music that Moves 'N SYNC." Article from *BB* unknown year:92.



Figure 9. "N SYNC." Photo in *16* unknown date and year.

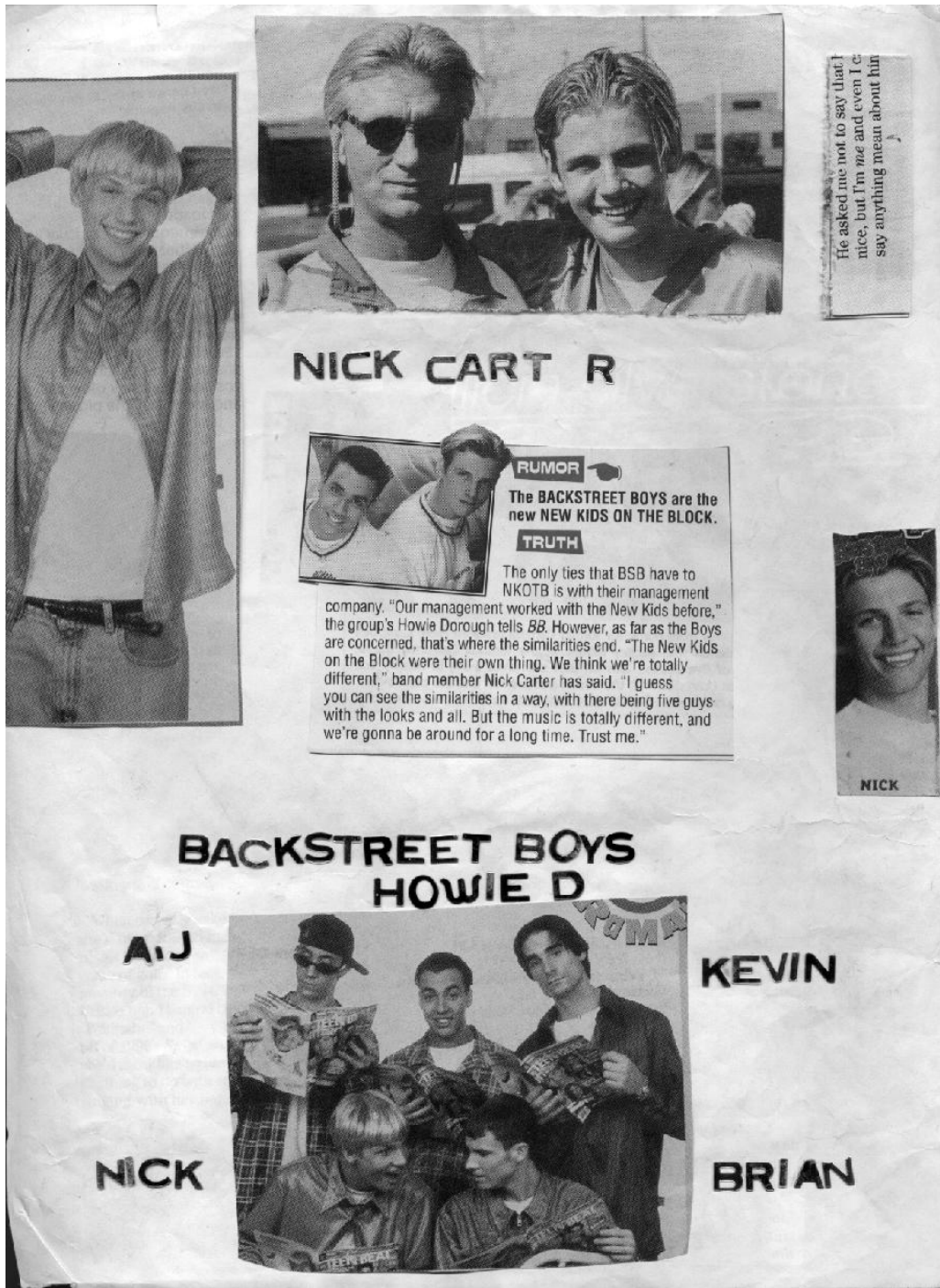


Figure 10. 'Scrapbook' page from my pop star binder of 'old' pictures and articles.

adoration from readers, including things such as drawings of, and poetry about their favourite stars. To a lesser degree, I read the advertisements, though there were few. Most of the advertisements were for magazine subscriptions and celebrity merchandise, such as magazines devoted to a particular celebrity or fan items such as key chains (Figure 11).

The role of male stars, in my consumption of mass media, were as idols of romantic love. I was often attracted to several male stars. Idolizing male pop stars not only involved having a first crush or a celebrity crush, but it provided a positive sexual experience. The ‘feminized’ appearance of these male pop stars was appealing and non-threatening, and they were available to idolize as encouraged by the magazines (also Garratt 1984; McRobbie 2000 [1977]). They were clean shaven, had short hair, slim builds, and wore nice clothes. They were classified into “types” - the tough guy, the older one, and the cute, young one. I preferred the cute, young one. They may have appealed to my emotions, but posters provided me with the chance to stare at males. Moreover, at the NKOTB concert I attended, and in TV specials, young girls would display signs and say they would like to have a sexual experience with the stars. Or, at the very least, they would kiss them. Finally, the stars embodied the appearance and personality I wanted in a partner.

Female stars, however, were models of femininity. I paid close attention to Britney’s and the Spice Girls’ image. The Spice Girls were supposed to represent several types of femininity: Sporty, Sexy, Posh, Baby, and Scary (Figure 12). They looked different; for instance, no one had the same colour hair or wore the same clothes. Britney portrayed one feminine ideal.

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★ NICK CARTER	★ FIVE NEW!	★ LANCE BASS NEW!	★ EMMA "EASY" BURTON
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★ KEVIN RICHARDSON #2	★ IMMAT. BE	★ BRAD RENFRO #2	★ JONATHAN TAYLOR THOMAS #3
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★ TOM CRUISE #2	★ '98	★ SPICE GIRLS #2	

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Figure 11. Advertisement for *Bop* subscription. Unknown source, date and page.

In many ways, I was like my idols: light skinned, light eyed, heterosexual, and able-bodied. The pictures of the Spice Girls and Spears that hung on my bedroom walls fuelled a self-comparison. It was through this comparison that I realized Girl Power was superficial. Regardless of their different hair styles, and fashion style, they were all thin. Their fashion attire emphasized thinness: tight low-cut pants and high-cut tops. Moreover, Spears' image changed while achieving commercial success. Her already thin body became even thinner and toned. She re-formulated her pre-adolescent sexual appearance (brown hair, light coloured makeup, T-shirts and baggy pants) (Figure 13), to an adolescent image (tight, revealing shiny/shimmery tops and pants, blonde hair, heavy make-up application) (Figure 14), and finally, to an overtly sexualized adult appearance (barely there clothes, blonde hair, and heavy makeup application) (Figure 15; Figure 16; Figure 17).



Figure 12. Spice Girls.. Left to Right (front): Scary (Melanie Brown), Sporty (Melanie Chisholm), Baby (Emma Bunton), Posh (Victoria Adams), and Sexy (Geri Halliwell). *Perfectpeople...and their pictures.com 2007.*

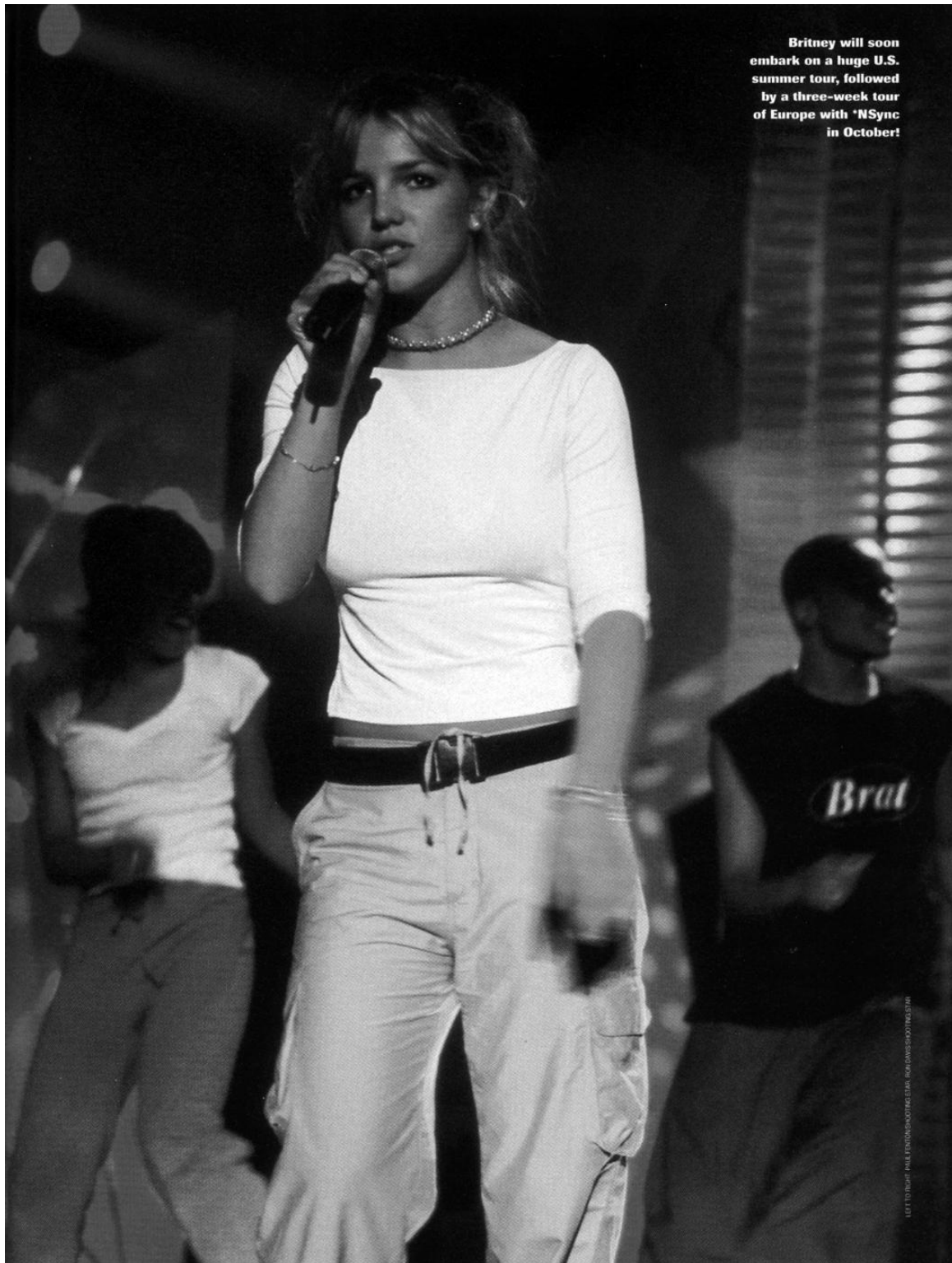


Figure 13. Britney Performing in concert. Photo in *Britney Spears: Oops...I did it Again!: The Unofficial Fan Guide 2000:55.*



Figure 14. "Tiger Beat: Britney Spears." Pinup in *Tiger Beat* 2000:12.

Back to School with Britney

Even this worldwide superstar works hard to maintain her fame! Start off your school year right with Britney Spears. Read on!

The long, hot summer days have come to a close. It seems like just yesterday you were running out of the house to the ice-cream truck or sticking to the scorching seat of the car on your way to the pool. By now, most of you are chomping on your cereal at (ouch!) 7:00 a.m. and before you know it, that first big math test will be just around the corner. That's right! The school year has finally begun. But, before you get all worked up about your new homework and projects, or who isn't in your class, there are plenty of things to get excited about! Whether you're using your new school supplies, wearing your trendy new fall clothes or chatting it up with your friends in the cafeteria, September is always a new and exciting time of year. Have you begun to set some goals for the year? What do you wish to accomplish?

One pop diva who remembers what it was like to get ready for a school year *before* she became famous is Britney Spears.

"I remember when I was in the second or third grade. I used to love to go to Wal-Mart and get all my school supplies. It was so much fun when I was younger. But then when I was older, and you're at that age when you start to worry about how you dress and how you look, it was so much fun to go shopping," explains Britney.

Although she recently graduated from high school, another huge feat to add to her impressive collection, Britney thinks people have

the tendency to overlook her hard work. Some people (obviously NOT the fans!) say that fame was handed down to her way too easily.

"There are some misconceptions about me like a lot of people think that what has happened to me, happened over night. That really kind of bothers me because I worked really hard to get where I am right now," says Britney.

So, what's a girl to do? There isn't much that Britney can change about herself—her positive attitude remains strong while she talks about fan reaction.

"I could just try to be me and hopefully they'll see that," she says. "I think that when they see me on TV and stuff like that, they see the real person that I am."

It's clear that Britney is a strong-willed person and, like most girls, she has her own hopes and goals for the future. Still, it's not easy for her to lead a perfectly normal life when every time she steps out of her house or car she's bombarded by fans.

"The first time someone recognized me on the street was when me and my friend, Felicia, were walking in New York, and we were by Times Square where there's a lot of fans because of *TRL*," Britney recalls. "A girl noticed me, and I was like, goodness, someone noticed me. I felt so cool!"

While Britney's glamorous life may appeal to most teenagers, she makes it clear that just because she's on stage with a million screaming fans, it doesn't



BREAKING RECORDS... Britney Spears drew a record crowd of 7,000 fans this summer when she performed on NBC's *Today* show.

mean she feels 100 percent content with stardom *at all times*. Britney talks about her next single, "Lucky" which deals with some personal issues.

"I'm so happy, but there are times where I'm like everyone else and I come in and have bad nights," Britney says. "And sometimes even when you are surrounded by so many people, you feel pretty lonely. I could relate to the song to a certain extent."

So, smile a little wider for the camera this year when it's time to take your school picture! Not only do you have two new hit singles coming out by Britney to look forward to, "Lucky," and "Stronger," but you also have the freedom and capability to do what makes you happy. Go grab a pen, some paper and set a few goals for yourself—it's never too late! Britney says her objective is to "make good music." For you, as Britney would say, "the sky is the limit." Remember: You can be whatever you want, and if you set your mind to it, it *will* happen.

Figure 15. "Back to School with Britney." Article in *Tiger Beat* 2000:13.



Figure 16. Britney in Concert. Photo in *Britney Spears: Oops...I did it Again!: The Unofficial Fan Guide* 2000:54.



Figure 17. Britney Spears at MTV Music Video Awards. Photo in *Britney Spears: Oops...I did it Again!: The Unofficial Fan Guide 2000:95*.

The concept of Girl Power then, was contradictory, and, ultimately, disempowering. I felt that I was supposed to believe in myself, be assertive, and be proud to be a girl. I should participate in this girl culture, which included idolizing pop stars, consuming mass media, and emulating the beauty ideal the female stars represented. I found no condolence in the different beauty ideals because, in one fundamental way, I was unlike them. I was not thin, but overweight, and lacked self-confidence. As a chubby child and pre-teen, and overweight adolescent, I was sensitive to the social expectations of thinness. I knew the thin ideal was unrealistic. Not everyone could be thin and I may never be, but I aspired to be this ideal. Being thin was socially desirable, bestowing social rewards, such as acceptance among peers and a boyfriend.

Because I spent a lot of time in school and valued my peers' opinions, the (negative) influence of the beauty ideal espoused by my idols came to fruition. In high school, I developed extreme anxiety about my body image. Classmates ignored my character and talents, emphasizing my 'imperfect' body. Several people called me fat and stared in disgust. During high school, I gained a lot of weight (the result of a medical condition) going from a size 12 in grade 8 to a size 22 in grade 11, which coincided with Britney's weight loss. At times, it was not necessarily the weight gain that was bothersome, but the instability of the condition. I felt that I could learn to like myself, but at a stable weight, and preferably chubby, not fat. Although, at other times, I viewed not being thin like Britney as the overall problem. I was very self-conscious, and sat at the back of the class as much as possible. I disliked the whispering behind my back. Sitting behind people in class eased my anxiety about being called fat. I observed them and felt slightly empowered in doing so. My male peers presented a phobia towards fatter people,

ridiculing me more than my female peers. In contrast to school culture, the Backstreet Boys and 'NSYNC soothed hurt feelings and provided positive male idols. Idolizing them was a positive sexual experience when real-life experiences were not.

Mall culture also created fuelled anxiety about my body image. The mall was a leisure destination. There, I once again faced my peers and their critical gaze. They persisted in their name calling and gazing. Mall culture reinforced the beauty ideals presented in mass media, and among my peers. It was more than just a hang out spot; the mall was a place where we purchased the 'right' clothes and accessories, the 'right' brands, at the 'right' stores. Most stores, however, did not carry the clothes that my idols wore in my size. Moreover, while magazines were inexpensive enough to purchase, plus-sized clothing cost more than averaged-sized clothing.

Summary

In the first section of this chapter, I provide an analysis of an ad with sidebar, an article, a column with sidebar, and a photo from *M*. For each I provide a self-contained analysis, in which I address the literary and stylistic aspects of each piece. The second section of this chapter addresses my experience as a reader of teen fan magazines. Teen fan magazines, in particular, were fun to read as a pre-teen and adolescent, and fueled celebrity idolization. Celebrities were idols, males of romantic love and females as models of femininity. It was within my family, school culture, youth market and mall culture that my media consumption and negative self-image, in relation to my idols, emerged.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the significance of my findings – the pre-teen and adolescent feminine ideal in *M*, and my identity development as influenced by teen fan magazines. The chapter has been divided accordingly, beginning with the meaning of the findings, which found that pre-adolescent and teen femininity is represented by eight interconnected and standardized semiotic resources: media consumption, fashion and beauty, heterosexuality/romance, idolization of pop stars, celebrity as an occupation, consumerism, friendship, and affluent lifestyle. Although the semiotic themes are interconnected, for organizational purposes, they are primarily discussed separately. My self-reflection, in the second half of the chapter, shows that the teen fan genre and celebrity idolization were influential in the development of my self-concept, but their message(s) important within the context of other social institutions.

The Representation of Pre-Adolescent and Teen Femininity in *M*

M is a mainstream, highly visual, scrapbook-style publication featuring current teen idols in which celebrity is a metaphor through which a feminine identity is conveyed to girls. Pre-adolescent and teen femininity in *M* includes traditional messages about being a girl, such as heterosexual and interpersonal relations, sexualized beauty and fashion, media consumption, consumerism and feminine masculinity (see Curie 1999; Durham 1998; Evans et al. 1991; Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; McRobbie 2000 [1977]; Wolf 1990). Thus, I argue that the portrayal of femininity in *M* is a narrow, derogatory and homogenizing stereotype, a pseudo-individualistic ideal of physical beauty, personal

attributes, and lifestyle. This feminine ideal does not drastically differ from the portrayal of femininity in mass media over the past several decades.

The feminine ideal in *M* lacks the empowering - the feminist - message behind pop feminism. As my findings show, the feminist message of pop feminism did not have any (prolonged) impact on the editorial and advertising content in *M*. My findings are similar to Peirce's (1990) feminist analysis of *Seventeen*. According to Peirce (1990), once the feminist movement of the 1960s ended, more-or-less so did the feminist content in the magazine; at the very least, where feminism was alive in the wider society, feminist messages were no longer featured in *Seventeen*. Without the feminist message, the representation of femininity in *M* is taken for granted as natural and fixed.

Mass Media Consumption

Consumption of mass media is a prominent theme in *M*. While a mass medium itself, *M* features other media, reinforcing pre-teen and adolescent girls' culture as mass mediated (Brown et al. 1994; Larson 1995; McRobbie and Garber 2000 [1978]; Steele and Brown 1995). Media consumption, moreover, is promoted as compulsory. *M* features 'feminine' mass media, those girls say they prefer, including music, television, magazines (see Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; McRobbie 2000 [1977]) and Internet (Gross 2004), all that feature and connect pre-adolescent and teen girls to celebrities. While *M* is interactive, such as the use of temporary tattoos for body decoration, pre-teen and adolescent girls can consume the magazine how, when, where, and why they want (see Arnett 1995), its creative and interactive nature is limited. *M*'s readers are presented branded interaction, such as quizzes about specific celebrities, tattoos, and mass media.

Celebrity Idolization

Featuring current pop stars renders *M* a celebrity-oriented ‘teen’ publication (for example McRobbie 2000 [1977]; Pleasance 1991; Soriano 2001), where celebrity is a special role. Male and female celebrities are supposed to be idols for the girls who read *M* (see Garratt 1984; Greene and Adams-Price 1990; Karniol 2001; McRobbie and Garber 2000 [1978]; Raviv et al. 1996).

M perpetuates the idea that celebrity idolization is compulsory and may facilitate it. Moreover, the magazine has individual appeal, but is subject to reader preference and use. There are many celebrities to idolize. The consumption of *M* and celebrity idolization may occur by reading articles or putting pinups, such as that of Beyoncé, on one’s bedroom walls, and idolizing only one or two celebrities. *M* is not only meant to be read, but can also be taken apart, and its contents woven throughout girls’ lives. Idolization, then, is not necessarily restricted to reading information or consuming photos, but the construction of idolization can take place via the selection of reading text, as well as decorating with selected articles and photos. Celebrity idolization not only takes the form of information consumption, but also serves a decorative function, visually symbolizing idolization. Being a fan is, thus, a social identity, a part of the pre-teen and adolescent feminine ideal in *M*.

Celebrity as Occupation

In *M*, the occupational message differs very little from Kelley Massoni’s (2004) findings of *Seventeen*, a girls’ fashion and beauty magazine that promotes entertainment-related jobs as prestigious occupations, which mostly stereotype women in service-oriented jobs. As celebrities, the individuals featured in *M* do not have ordinary jobs. They all work in the entertainment industry, thus representing them as models of the

entertainment world, and their jobs are presented as both viable and glamorous. There are few ‘feminized’ celebrity occupations presented in *M*. Nearly all the stars have the same occupations, such as singers and actors. These occupations are ‘service-oriented’ rather than ‘production’ jobs such as directing. Thus, stars promote a limited ideal of work. Celebrity occupations, as glamorous, symbolize socially ideal occupations. As such, the jobs real teens are more likely to have, such as working in fast food restaurants and babysitting, are ignored. Finally, with no mention of occupations for youth *M* reinforces the consumption of *M* as a form of escapism, that is, leisure activity.

Fashion and Beauty

Fashion and beauty is a core theme in *M* as depicted through the female and male pop stars (for inspiration, see Budgeon 1998; Lemish 2003; Lowe 2003; Malik 2005; Whiteley 2000). The female pop stars in *M* represent three beauty stereotypes: Cute/Baby, Exotic/Scary, and Sex kitten/Sexy (for inspiration, see Englis et al. 1994; Lemish 2003). Although some argue that different beauty types offer girls a more liberated representation of femininity (Baumgardner and Richards 2004; Budgeon 1998; Englis et al. 1994; Lemish 2003), I disagree. Although the female stars have different coloured hair and eyes, and wear different clothes, they are not actually individual. For example, none of the stars are overweight or make-up free. Their lack of authenticity, and similarity to other depictions of beauty in mass media, render the beauty ideals pseudo-individualistic (see Adorno 1991). Rather than celebrating difference, the beauty ideals are superficial, simply variations of the same beauty ideal. In *M*, the beauty ideal represents an increased focus on feminine qualities under pre-teen and adolescent femininity, and a patriarchal feminine ideal (see Currie 1999; Durham 1998; Winship 1978; Wolf 1990). The superficial differences, however, show femininity as unnatural

(see Hall 1980), but the product of cultural and social products. For example, the stars do not all have the same hair colour or wear the same clothes. Moreover, Beyoncé's hair colour, for instance, differs in the article and column.

The similarity of the beauty ideal as compared to representations of beauty in mass media in previous decades and its reproduction of patriarchal feminine qualities result from the beauty ideal as characteristic of the beauty myth – a socially prescribed, but unattainable, feminine ideal (Wolf 1990), and, thus, a compulsory beauty ideal (see Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; Goffman 1979; McCracken 1993; McRobbie 2000 [1977]; Tuchman 1978; Winship 1978). The beauty myth in *M* is constructed from decorating and servicing the body with an array of 'feminine' fashion and accessories, such as make-up, as well as grooming habits, including hair cuts and styled hair (see Currie 1999; McRobbie 2000 [1977]). The use of these products and result of these habits constructs beauty as flawless. Feminine products and services draw attention to the 'female' physique (see Bradford 2003; Currie 1999; Evans et al. 1991; Mulvey 1975; Wolf 1990). Tight fitting and revealing clothing, and commodities show off and emphasize thinness (see Abu-Laban and McDaniel 2001; Currie 1999). Able-bodiedness (ability) is also a narrow beauty characteristic. Further, beauty is largely constructed via the stars' race and ethnicity. Race is a significant mediating factor in the beauty ideal, reinforcing femininity as constructed from a social norm (categorization), commodities and body modification, not genetic makeup (Hall 1997; Jhally 1996; Lorber 1995). Racial/ethnic representation takes the form of body modification, such as the Asian tattoos, as well as physical characteristics. Although beauty is depicted by black, white and latin individuals, beauty is hierarchically organized as a white(ned) ideal (see Abu-Laban and McDaniel 2001;

Hall 1980). In fact, many stars look bi-racial. As there is no overt disdain for certain races or ethnic characteristics, such as an absence of black stars, the beauty ideal is a subtle and acceptable form of racism (see Coltrane and Messineo 2000; Railton and Watson 2005). Thus, the beauty ideal in *M* is a highly sexualized, racialized, thin, and able-bodied ideal.

Like their female counterparts, male pop stars are also stereotyped (see Hall 1997). They represent five variations of masculinity: hip-hop, punk, dressy, boy-next-door, and suave. These masculine ideals convey ‘feminized’ masculinity (for a description of feminine masculinity, see Garratt 1984; McRobbie and Frith 2000 [1978]; Simpson 1994; Wald 2002). While ‘feminized’ masculinity is often regarded as a less restrictive masculine role because males, for example, are able to be more emotionally expressive and pay more attention to their appearance (Garratt 1984; McRobbie and Frith 2000 [1978]; Simpson 1994), I argue that, despite these positive characteristics, male celebrities in *M* are stereotyped according to a narrow ‘beauty’ ideal.

The masculine ideals in *M* also convey a beauty myth, a masculine ideal, which resembles the metrosexual masculine aesthetic (for inspiration, see Simpson 1994), that is unattainable, but compulsory (see Rich 1980; Wolf 1990). As variations of the ideal, which is similar to the masculine ideal identified by Garratt (1984), Karniol (2001), and McRobbie and Frith (2000 [1978]), they are pseudo-individualistic (see Adorno 1991). They also represent a compulsory masculine ideal (see Garratt 1984; McRobbie and Frith 2000 [1978]; Wolf 1990). Achieving the masculine ideal requires servicing the body with specific ‘masculine’ commodities and services, including clothing, hair products and accessories, and grooming habits. The stars embody three ‘feminizing’ and homogenizing features in particular: a lack of/little facial hair, a well-groomed appearance, and a slender

physique (see Karniol 2001; McRobbie and Frith 2000 [1978]; Simpson 1994; Wald 2002). Some of the stars also wear 'feminine' accessories, such as earrings, and are fashion conscious, wearing name-brand clothing. These male pop stars, too, appear flawless and model-like. The male pop stars may represent a 'feminine' masculinity, but they are unmistakably masculine. Masculinity continues to be constructed from short hair, baggy and covering clothes, and no (visible) make-up. Masculinity is also depicted as ability. Further, masculinity is primarily a 'white' ideal. With one black star representing a hip hop/rap masculine ideal and the white stars representing 'white' aesthetics, the ethnic/racial differences perpetuate the racist ideals to which these masculine identities are based and that they are natural. The racial/ethnic differences convey the masculine ideal as subtly racist (see Coltrane and Messineo 2000; Railton and Watson 2005).

(Hetero)Sexuality/Romance

The theme of romantic love/heterosexuality is one of the most reoccurring themes in *M*. The sexual ideal in *M* is heterosexuality (Carpenter 1998; Carpenter 2001; Durham 1998; Evans et al. 1991; Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; Hyde and Jaffee 2000; McCracken 1993; McRobbie 2000 [1977]; Rich 1980; Vannini and Myers 2002; Winship 1978). With heterosexuality the only sexual orientation, it is compulsory (see Rich 1980).

As love interests, idolizing male celebrities may act as a buffer for the girls who are transitioning into, and expressing, sexuality. Fantasizing about male stars as a 'soulmate', for example, may reflect this transition. More than this, as love interests, the male stars could introduce girls to, and reinforce, (hetero)sexuality. As idolization is an artificial relationship between fan and idol (Horton and Wohl 1956), the male stars may

be safe love objects (Karniol 2001). They might provide the girls who idolize them with a positive sexual experience. This may be facilitated by their non-threatening appearance and personality (see Garratt 1984; McRobbie and Frith 2000 [1978]). They are portrayed as nice guys, who could offer their young female fans emotional and intellectual satisfaction expressed by pre-teen and adolescent girls' feelings and desires for the stars.

While the stars may have a non-threatening aesthetic and personality type, these characteristics contribute to the sexualized nature of femininity in *M*. The ideals may be meant to symbolize different masculine aesthetics for the sake of individuality, as well as to appeal to girls of different ages. The more masculine the aesthetic, e.g. muscular and having facial hair, the older the girl he tends to attract (Greene and Adams-Price 1990; Karniol 2001; Raviv et al. 1996). This, in turn, also contributes to the sexualized nature of femininity in *M* as some of these male stars are sexually mature (adults).

The idolization of male stars, as presented in *M*, conforms to Simon et al.'s (1992) identification of five feeling norms of girl culture. Idolizing male stars reinforces romantic relationships as an important, but an aspect of girls' lives. Romantic relationships should be heterosexual couplings. One should like an unattached male. Lastly, one should only like one male at a time. However, the feeling norms of the soulmate and celebrity crush are also represented as part of girl culture in *M*.

The sexualized feminine aesthetic and discourse, in *M*, are characteristic of McRobbie's (1999) identification of 'new sexualities'. Girls are identified as sexual beings, expressing their sexuality (see also Budgeon 1998; Lemish 2003). This can be seen in the portrayal of sexualized beauty. By drawing attention to a thin female physique, tight and revealing clothes expose sexually symbolic areas of the body (see

Goffman 1979; Railton and Watson 2005; Whiteley 2000; Wolf 1990), depicting pre-adolescent and teen femininity as a highly sexualized ideal. The portrayal of (hetero)sexuality by female celebrities reinforces the relationship between beauty and heterosexuality (see Durham 1998; Evans et al. 1991; McRobbie 2000 [1977]; Peirce 1990; Peirce 1993). Being beautiful is presented not only as necessary for one's pleasure, but is also necessary to attract males (see Currie 1999; Durham 1998; Evans et al. 1991; McRobbie 2000 [1977]). Unlike in fashion and beauty magazines where there is a direct discussion about sex (Carpenter 2001; McRobbie 1999), heterosexuality is expressed via an interest in males, flirting, and dating, symbolizing the age and assumed little or no sexual experience of *M*'s audience. Further, sexualized femininity is constructed as a racialized and gendered double-standard. Non-whites are stereotyped as extremely sexual, uncontrollable (Abraham 2002; hooks 1992; Railton and Watson 2005).

However, white girls are sexually reserved, controlled (Railton and Watson 2005), which generally symbolizes purity, 'virginity' (see Railton and Watson 2005). *M*, thus, presents and may perpetuate the stereotype of the 'virginal' girl as a worthy and preferred partner. Humour – ironic femininity (McRobbie 1999) – used for the intention of laughing at representations of female sexuality, depicts and, thus, may perpetuate the sexualized nature of pre-teen and adolescent femininity in *M*, beauty ideal/heterosexuality, racial and sexual double standards.

Friendship

The relationship between some female stars models friendship, which is mediated by interpersonal relations and mass media that may be a source of tension. Girls' friendships in *M* are defined by common interests, including mass media and crushes;

however, having the same crush may prevent a friendship from forming or result in jealousy between friends (see Garratt 1984; McRobbie and Garber 2000 [1978]). Boys, in particular, are a source of conflict. While one should respect another friend by not pursuing the same romantic interest, this is not always the case. The bond of friendship will probably be strained by friends pursuing a mutual crush, potentially warning *M*'s audience that they may be betrayed by a friend or betray a friend by acting on their feelings for the same boy (see McRobbie 2000 [1977]). If one does pursue a mutual crush, violence can be perceived to be an appropriate form of conflict resolution, or at least an inevitable outcome of being jealous, which are characteristics of femininity (for example, see Lemish 2003; Tung 2004).

Violence is represented as an appropriate reaction under the guise of ironic femininity. The humour inherent in ironic femininity may allow girls to laugh at themselves (see McRobbie 1999), at the conflict that may arise from/when two friends like the same male. However, humour can deflect the re-enactment of real-life situations and the seriousness of violence, and, thus, competition among girls vying for the same male and the ensuing violence that may result from friends angry with each other for acting on their feelings for their mutual crush.

Consumerism

Consumerism is also an aspect of pre-teen and adolescent femininity in *M* (for inspiration, see Cook and Kaiser 2004; Malik 2005; Pecora 2001; Record 2002; Quart 2003; Vannini 2002; Winship 1978; Wolf 1990). The portrayal of pre-adolescent and teen femininity, and *M* itself, is for corporate gain (Pecora 2001; Record 2002; Quart 2003; Vannini 2002; Winship 1978; Wolf 1990). Girls are defined as consumers. They are first a buyer of *M*, and, second, a (potential) buyer of the other products featured in

the magazine. As such, *M* connects the girls who read *M* to the wider consumer culture. In doing so, they may be socialized into life-long consumerism (see Friedan 1983).

M contains a multifaceted consumer message. Commodities are defined by their exchange value (cost) rather than use value (for example, girls enjoy reading articles about celebrities and buying mass media such as magazines), which promotes commodity fetishism (see Adorno 1991). As Adorno explains, “the real secret of success... is the mere reflection of what one pays in the market for the product. The consumer is really worshipping the money that he himself paid for the ticket to the Toscanini concert (34). Commodity fetishism, which places emphasis on a commodity’s economic value, though, is not as straightforward as Adorno explained (for inspiration, see Currie 1999; Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; McCracken 1993; McRobbie 2000 [1977]; Vannini 2002; Wolf 1990). Commodities are also identified by an interconnecting consumption fetishism, which is the need to consume, and a gendered commodity fetishism, the consumption of feminine and masculine commercial goods (see Currie 1999; Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; McCracken 1993; McRobbie 2000 [1977]; Vannini 2002; Wolf 1990). Commodities, then, are also defined by their use value, captured in gendered commodity fetishism and consumption fetishism. Use value includes the type of content in mass media, such as feminine characteristics, as well as the act of purchasing products, commonly called shopping (for inspiration, see Currie 1999; Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; McCracken 1993; McRobbie 2000 [1977]; Pecora 2001; Pleasance 1991; Vannini 2002; Wolf 1990). Thus, content and cost value are intersecting issues.

In *M*, commodity fetishism, gendered commodity fetishism, and consumption fetishism are symbolized through branding. Gender is associated with specific brands of

clothing and commodities that symbolize certain corporations (e.g. the Nike Swoosh) (see Vannini 2002; Whiteley 2000). Thus, gender is not only a process of bodily decoration and even alteration, but also requires participation in capitalism. Girls are encouraged to consume goods and services, which can connect them to, and encourage their participation in, the marketplace (see Pecora 2001; Quart 2003; Record 2002). Femininity is therefore a brand. The variations of the feminine ideal and masculine ideal are, thus, also brands, which are marketing tools (see Pleasance 1991). As each star represents a variation of the beauty ideal, the variations may provide more opportunity to participate in the marketplace as there are a number of different types of products, such as various types of grooming products to achieve the various hair styles, to purchase.

Celebrity, and femininity, then, is a process of (self-)commodification (see Vannini 2002). These stars are not solely known for their talent (McRobbie 2000 [1977]; Vannini 2002). In fact, their appeal, in *M*, as romantic idols and models of femininity, is primarily based on their persona (McRobbie 2000 [1977]). They are commodified. By appearing in *M*, the stars consent to their commodification. Pre-teen and adolescent girls emulating or admiring a star, as presented by and in *M*, may involve purchasing products and services, and, thus, self-commodified. Idolizing celebrities is, thus, a consumer issue.

The pro-consumer message is constructed, for the most part, through indirect product promotion. Indirect product promotion creates a blurring between content and advertising. As a result, the feminine and masculine ideals and lifestyle presented in *M* are advertisements.

Affluent Lifestyle

Affluent lifestyle is the eighth facet of pre-teen and adolescent femininity that I found in *M*. While Hall explains that the term lifestyle is preferred to class because

specific commodities and services are valued across classes (see Lorrain 1996), lifestyle is an issue of class because not everyone can afford the same or affluent lifestyle. *M*'s use of celebrity as a metaphor for pre-adolescence and adolescence is understandable, particularly juxtaposed with the theme of affluent lifestyle. Being a celebrity requires working to accumulate wealth and being wealthy, but it is also their lifestyle, not occupational duties, that is featured in *M* – a comfortable cash flow, time to spend it, purchasing the latest trends and services, and the desire to maintain this lifestyle. Pre-adolescent and teen femininity is, thus, depicted similarly. Purchasing *M* and the goods that construct the lifestyle therein symbolizes (at least some) financial freedom, leisure time, and purchasing consumer goods (see Quart 2003).

An affluent lifestyle is presented as achievable for all, although it is mediated by beauty and race/ethnicity. The stars represent beauty ideals, which suggest being beautiful is financially rewarding. The commodities and services that construct the beauty ideals here are not only a matter of beauty, consumerism, and economic standing, but also lifestyle. Moreover, any unfavourable symbolism of the stars' fashion styles, and association to musical genre, for example, is presumably deflected through their wholesome image, which is likely due to the young age of *M*'s readers. In the past decade, many black R&B/hip-hop celebrities have been said to have achieved, and even boasted about achieving, their wealth through illegitimate means, as connoted through bling (shiny, expensive jewellery) (see Blake Jr. 2003). While black celebrities could be represented to embody an affluent lifestyle that is achieved through illegitimate means in *M*, the lack of direct reference to this does not address North American economic contradictions, which leaves some individuals wealthy, while others stay poor, (and

wealth accumulated in a number of ways, including crime). Economic disparity and various modes of accumulation of wealth are ignored.

The Teen Fan Genre and Identity Development

Teen fan magazines and celebrity idolization played a central role in my youth as leisure activities, forming a part of my everyday life (see Brown et al. 1994; Currie 1999; Larson 1995; McRobbie and Garber 2000 [1978]; Steele and Brown 1995). While reading the magazines and admiring the stars was fun, media consumption and celebrity idolization facilitated identity creation (Currie 1999; Greene and Adams-Price 1990; McRobbie and Garber 2000 [1978]; Raviv et al. 1996). As Garratt (1984) said of her and her friends' interest in the pop group the Bay City Rollers: "For us in 1975, the real excitement had little to do with [them]: it was about ourselves" (409). Consuming teen fan magazines and admiring celebrities facilitated the development of a young feminine self, which was conveyed through fandom, consumerism, and heterosexualized beauty.

Fandom largely arose from the consumption of celebrities in the 'feminine' mass media teen fan magazines (see Currie 1999; Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; McRobbie and Garber 2000 [1978]). Unlike research that shows celebrity idolization is mostly confined to the pre-teen years (see Greene and Adams-Price 1990; Raviv et al. 1996), my experience shows that idolization can span the teen years, solidifying as a pre-teen. As a shy teen, my participation in this teen pop culture, as a primarily bedroom-based activity (Brown et al. 1994; Larson 1995; McRobbie and Garber 2000 [1978]; Steele and Brown 1995), suited my personality, soothed my emotional needs, and was welcoming (McRobbie and Garber 2000 [1978]). Although idolization was primarily a solitary experience, it also facilitated friendship bonding (Currie 1999; McRobbie and Garber 2000 [1978]). Teen fan magazines were effective in their appeal to me and sustained my

interest because they encouraged self-socialization in which I was able to read them how, when, with whom and where I wanted (see Arnett 1995).

My experience as a fan also attests to the idolization, in different ways, though of equal importance, of male and female stars. Because of my strong interest in them, they influenced my identity development (see Maltby, Giles, Barber and McCutcheon 2005). Idolizing males was a sexual experience. Male stars were safe love objects, who idolizing was an expression of my budding sexuality (see Karniol 2001), heterosexuality (Rich 1980). I was able to explore sexual feelings in a safe and positive capacity, compared to real-life crushes who were mean and did not return my affections. My celebrity crushes also influenced my real-life love interests. I held them to the masculine ideal in the teen fan magazines. In doing so, I internalized the portrayal of masculinity in teen magazines as a masculine ideal. It also represented me exercising power. Where I was usually powerless by being ridiculed for not living up to the portrayal of femininity in media, I had the power to judge real-life males like they judged me. My interpretation of the masculine ideal, then, represented the oppression of young men. My positive experience idolizing male stars is what Currie (1999) refers to as the 'doing' of one's self-concept.

Female stars were models of sexualized femininity (see Budgeon 1998; Lemish 1998; Lowe 2003). My relationship with them was characterized by contradiction (see Lowe 2003). I thought Girl Power fuelled my self-esteem with its message about intelligence, being goal-oriented, following my dreams, and being proud to participate in girls' things, such as wearing make-up (see Baumgardner and Richards 2004; Budgeon 2003; Lemish 2003; McRobbie 1999; Whiteley 2000). Representing a sexualized beauty norm, they assisted my socialization into sexualized femininity. Their femininity,

however, was, ultimately, disempowering. Idolizing female stars was also a relationship laced with insecurity, a process of ‘undoing’ (see Currie 1999). Not emulating their beauty aesthetic created feelings of inadequacy and poor body image.

It was at school and in the mall where my low self-esteem deepened. At school, it was expected that girls emulate the beauty ideal in media. Not being thin or not wearing similar clothes to Britney Spears, for example, resulted in being stigmatized as unattractive. Moreover, the market only allowed me limited participation as products were either too expensive or not available in my size.

Being a fan and expressing sexualized femininity not only symbolized the reproduction of sexualized femininity, but also the acquisition of a consumer identity (see Pecora 2001; Record 2002). Being a girl meant being caught up in consumerism as a hobby: to consume for the sake of consuming. It reinforced a gendered commodity fetishism (see Currie 1999; Ferguson 1983; Friedan 1983; McCracken 1993; McRobbie 2000 [1977]; Vannini 2002; Wolf 1990), and consumption fetishism (see Adorno 1991; Baumgardner and Richards 2004; Currie 1999; Ferguson 1983; Freidan 1983; McCracken 1993).

Summary

This chapter contains my discussion about the significance of the eight interconnected semiotic themes of pre-adolescent and teen femininity in *M*. Within this teen pop girl culture, as depicted in *M*, femininity is a narrow and unrealistic ideal. Pre-teen and adolescent femininity is a highly sexualized and commodified ideal that is communicated through fashion and beauty, celebrity idolization, entertainment, consumerism, heterosexuality/romance, friendship, celebrity as occupation, and affluent lifestyle.

I have also addressed how teen fan magazines were influential in my identity creation. Being a consumer of teen fan publications represented a feminine identity symbolized by fandom, consumerism, and heterosexualized femininity. I also reflected on idolizing male stars as positive expressions of sexuality. My relationship with female stars, though, was contradictory, creating low self-esteem as I did not emulate the pop feminist beauty ideal they promoted, but I wanted to imitate them nonetheless. Finally, teen fan magazines were important in assisting in the creation of a (pre-)adolescent feminine self, but it was only one institution in which my identity formed. My self-concept arose within the contexts of teen fan magazines (youth culture), school and mall culture, and family.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Introduction

I conclude this thesis by reflecting on my research process, summarizing my findings, identifying the limitations of this study, and providing ideas for future studies. Overall, this thesis contributes to the knowledge about the portrayal of femininity in the teen fan publication *M* and the influence of celebrity idolization on identity development.

Femininity in *M*: Social Semiotics and Mass Media

I utilized social semiotics and a combination of conceptual frameworks, primarily feminism, to identify the taken-for-granted and naturalized representation of what it means to be a pre-teen and adolescent girl as illustrated in *M*. As a context-based, symbolic perspective, and in conjunction with my framework, van Leeuwen's (2005) social semiotic method was useful for facilitating an analysis of *M*, and identifying the representation of femininity in *M*.

My research findings show that *M* presents teen pop culture as celebrity-oriented with messages about femininity conveyed through pop stars. *M*'s targeting of pre-teen and adolescent girls via celebrities can be effective in light of idolization and mass media consumption trends and identity formation considering that 9-14 year olds idolize celebrities the most intensely (Greene and Adams-Price 1990; Raviv et al.1996). Pre-teen and teen femininity is depicted as eight interconnected semiotic themes: heterosexuality/romance, fashion and beauty, consumerism, celebrity idolization, media consumption, celebrity as an occupation, friendship, and affluent lifestyle. *M* may have individual appeal, but pre-adolescent and teen femininity is a social ideal - an identity meant for all its readers to emulate. The feminine ideal in *M* offers a prescriptive feminine

social role rooted in sexualization and commodification, and, a negative form of social regulation for pre-adolescent and teen girls.

Although it is important to understand what messages girls are consuming when reading *M*, it was important to capture the influence of the teen fan genre on identity development, which was accomplished through a social semiotic analysis of my experience as a reader of teen fan magazines. Following van Leeuwen's approach, I revealed that the teen fan genre played a vital role in my identity development, facilitating celebrity idolization, and providing a feminine ideal that I wanted to emulate. Consuming teen fan magazines, and celebrity idolization, were fun, a form of escapism, and symbolized my youth culture identification throughout my adolescence. Idolizing stars symbolized a transition into and reinforcement of sexual expression. The representation of femininity played a central role in my identity development – having a profoundly negative impact on my body image as I did not live up to the ideal presented in the magazines. Pop feminism was, thus, a regulatory ideal that was unattainable. However, it was within the dialectic relationship among the contexts of the family, mall culture, school culture, and the teen market that teen fan publications and the representation of femininity in them influenced my identity development

Limitations

There are limitations to all studies, including my own. First, the magazine sample was restricted to North American culture. Second, only the teen fan genre was analyzed. Third, only one teen fan magazine was analyzed. Fourth, the results and conclusions drawn from the four pieces are limited to the one issue and four texts. I did not address content changes over any period of time within *M* or other teen fan publications or themes across teen fan magazines. Fifth, this was a single method study and I did not take a thematic

approach, but analyzed each text individually. I, therefore, did not identify all the themes in *M*, such as the theme of bedroom culture/domestic space, such as in the article “Score a Bedroom Just Like Aly’s” (*M* 2006:37) (Figure 18). Sixth, my self-reflection may have been limited. For example, another researcher or participant could have thought up an issue, for instance, that I did not. Seventh, I was the only participant. There were no other girls to validate or provide more experiences or issues. Eighth, my self-reflection relies significantly on memory. I do not have the magazines from my youth, or my Spice Girls and Spears pictures. Finally, I now look very much like the North American ideal: white, thin, light hair, skin and eyed. If I had still been overweight, my analysis may be different.



Figure 18. “Score A Star Bedroom Just Like Aly’s!” Article in *M* 2006:37.

Femininity and Girls

While I argue that the representation of femininity in *M* is a sexualized and commodified depiction of girls, its influence on their identity development may vary. As van Leeuwen (2005) and Hall (1980) note, mass media representations are context dependent. Their meaning is dependent on sociological factors, including gender, age and race, as well as cultural norms, such as girls' expectations about beauty (Hall 1980). Mass media producers may intend to convey a particular message, but, in the end, these are semiotic resources subject to reader interpretation (Hall 1980; van Leeuwen 2005). As such, the depiction of femininity in *M* may hold different meaning among girls. For example, Currie's (1999) study of female teens revealed their interests in various magazines were age dependent. This may be true of the girls who read teen fan publications. In fact, their enjoyment of the magazine may be mediated by religious factors, peer pressure/solidarity, and their beauty ideals. Pre-teen and adolescent girls may derive satisfaction from critiquing the portrayal of femininity in teen fan magazines. Some may wholeheartedly want to emulate the ideal. Whatever pre-adolescent and adolescent girls' consumption habits and the influence of femininity on their identity development, pre-teen and adolescent girls may be impressionable to the messages in teen fan magazines. My concern is the semiotic potential of the representation of femininity in *M* (van Leeuwen 2005), the potential for it to create feelings of body image dissatisfaction, to become sexually active (e. g. dating and kissing), to experience sexual confusion (believing heterosexuality is the only appropriate sexual orientation), and to be brand conscious.

Future Research

While this study provides knowledge about the representation of femininity in a teen fan publication, celebrity idolization, and the (potential) negative impact on pre-teen

and adolescent girls' self-concept, there are many opportunities to expand the knowledge in these areas. Regarding the teen fan genre, I first suggest a historical analysis of the teen fan genre. The analysis should include several magazines from several decades. This study would highlight the representation of adolescent femininity over the years, providing a glimpse into the changes and similarities. It would be worthwhile to learn how the representation of femininity may differ not only across time, but also across the magazines. I also suggest an analysis of different current teen fan publications in order to understand the similarities and differences among the magazines, as well as an analysis of several different genres of teen magazines. Here, I am thinking about how the representation of femininity contributes to age ambiguity and promotes consumerism, and how these issues are represented by the different genres. Finally, because I was unable to address the issue of production, I suggest a study that addresses the gender of the producers of teen fan publications to learn who and where the producers yield power.

In addition to analyzing the publications, it would be important to identify youth's media consumption. These studies are important not only to understand identity development, but also to provide a check-and-balance for learning what mass media youth consume, how they interpret it, and how mass media facilitate idolization and identity development. Studies about the consumption of the teen fan genre could illuminate the role of the depiction of femininity in the magazines in youth's identity development. For example, although generally dubbed a 'feminine' publication, it would be interesting and important to learn about young men's consumption of teen fan publications as well, to learn who are the male readers, how they interpret the magazines, and the impact on their identity development. It would be an exercise in understanding

their 'reading' habits, and identity via teen stars. We could learn, for example, if they read the magazines differently than pre-adolescent and teen girls. Another topic worth exploring is youth's sexuality development in relation to teen fan magazines. While I did not find homosexual, lesbian or bi-sexual references in the feminine ideal in *M*, or have any experiences as a youth, for young girls and boys who read *M* or consume other mass media, celebrities may be idols of homosexual, lesbian or bi-sexual attraction and assisting them into homosexual, lesbian or bi-sexual identity development. In other words, the masculine and feminine beauty ideals in *M* may be heterosexual ideals, this is not to say, they may not illicit homosexual, lesbian or bi-sexual interpretations from readers. I also recommend conducting a content analysis of reader feedback (Figure 19), obtained from reader surveys submitted to the publications to learn their opinion of magazine content. Lastly, I suggest a study about production, which could address who is producing the texts, where they are produced, and by which means and methods.

Qualitative methods, ones that are symbolic in nature and youth-friendly, those that work for and with teens, could be useful methods in future studies. If possible, I would suggest multi-method studies. Given that media consumption often takes place in youth's bedrooms, methods, such as picture taking, diary/journal keeping, and interviewing, may be helpful in identifying and analyzing the mass media in their bedrooms and eliciting information about the importance of the content and bedroom in identity development (see Brown et al. 1994). They may allow youth to identify what is important to them, give them time to mull it over, and be uncensored. The results can facilitate a discussion between researcher and participants, providing clarification about information they have provided and refinement of research design, potentially the

identification of new topic angles. When focusing on the ways identities are symbolically constructed, theories that are also symbolic in nature should be used. Moreover, critical theories should be used to identify injustices in representation of youth and their experiences.

Hi, **BOP** readers! ♥

Want to see the peeps you love? Then you've gotta tell us who's No. 1. Play like a *BOP* editor and tell us who's hot. You will be entered to WIN a *High School Musical* ringtone from mDisney Studios (mdisneystudios.com), good for Cingular, T-Mobile and Sprint phones.

***Who you are . . .**

Name _____ Age _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____
 Zip _____ E-mail _____

***What you like . . .**

1. My favorite star is: _____

2. My favorite singer/rapper is: _____

3. My favorite group is: _____

4. My favorite actor is: _____

5. My favorite actress is: _____

6. My favorite movie/DVD is: _____

7. My favorite show is: _____

***How you chat . . .**

1. My favorite way to chat with friends is:

cell phone e-mail
 text message telephone

2. My computer is a:

Mac PC I don't have one yet

***How you chat (cont.) . . .**

3. I use my cell phone:

all the time
 only for emergencies
 I don't have one yet

***Where you shop . . .**

1. My favorite stores to shop in are: _____

2. I'd rather be dead than be seen shopping at: _____

3. My favorite clothing items are: _____

4. My favorite accessories are: _____

5. My favorite beauty items are: _____

6. Where did you buy *BOP*? _____

***How you like the mag . . .**

1. My favorite parts of *BOP* are: _____

2. My least favorite parts of *BOP* are: _____

3. If I could be editor of *BOP*, I would: _____

Win a Ringtone

You can pick one of nine *High School Musical* ringtones for your cell phone! How cool is that?!

Mail to: *BOP* Survey,
 6430 Sunset Blvd. Ste. 700,
 Hollywood, CA 90028

78 BOP * ringtones good for Cingular, T-Mobile & Sprint.

Figure 19. "Bop Survey." *Bop* 2006:78

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Appendix A: Overview of *M*

M was designed like a scrapbook with all glossy pages and an array of formats and design elements, but primarily using overlapping and collage designs. Often, a piece had a decorative theme, such as a bulletin board, decorated with thumbtacks to secure pictures and information to a cork board. There was a tri-colour saturation scheme: neon, bold and pastel. There were several fonts, such as a bubble-like style, and in different widths, such as thin letter, all in a variety of sizes. Shadowing and outlining were common design treatments. Most fonts, objects, and shapes were computer generated, while some looked hand drawn, and others were images of the genuine object. Backgrounds were either solid coloured or patterned. Information was often contained in shapes, such as hearts. Arrows were a common directional element. There were numbers, percentage sign, and acronyms. A variety of layout elements including pull quotes (a quote from an article, for example, that is being emphasized, usually in a different font and colour than that of the main text), and decks (the line that is below the headline, the main heading of an article) were used.

M contained four types of text: ads, photos, articles, and columns, and one type of sub-text, the sidebar. There were several types of advertising, such as product placements and full-page ads. There were four types of photos: the head/half body picture, which were small and accompany articles; the pinup or poster, which were 8"x10" photos; the poster or jumbo/mega poster which were the equivalent of four 8"x10" pinups; and the pocket poster, which were 3"x4" sized pictures. Columns were regularly occurring articles, such as *m* comics. Articles were feature pieces about a group or solo star. Although there were unique layout formats, such as cork board with notes tacked to it as the article, there were also common formats, such as the question and answer, and single body of text, such as

features. Sidebars often accompanied articles. The majority of *M* was visuals. There was little text.

Celebrities were singers, actors/actresses, or both. There were Caucasian and African American stars and female and male stars. Celebrities were referred to on a first-name basis, although some were identified by first and last name and their work, such as a movie title.

Several themes emerged among the texts. Personal information about the stars, romance/sexuality, fashion and beauty, friendship, popular culture/consumption, which included mass media, and technology, such cell phones, were the most common topics. A variety of products and services were advertised including candy, technology, fashion and beauty, and subscriptions.

M was information-based, as well as interactive, engaging readers through quizzes, and disassembly via staples.

Appendix B: Celebrity Biographies

Drake Bell

Drake Bell's initial brush with success came as an actor, followed by a singing career. Among his acting roles, Bell, 21, found fame on the Nickelodeon children's television show *Drake & Josh* (2004) (Nickelodeon 2007). In 2005, he launched a singing career. He has two albums, *Telegraph* (2005) and *It's Only Time* (2006).

Orlando Bloom

Orlando Bloom, a 31-year-old English actor, gained international notoriety after appearing in *The Lord of the Rings* series, and *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003) (The Orlando Bloom Files 2007). *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy was one of the most successful movie series. *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001) grossed about \$314 million US (MOVIEWEB: The Best Seat in the House 2006f); *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002) earned roughly \$341 million US (MOVIEWEB: The Best Seat in the House 2006g); and *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003) made about \$377 million US (MOVIEWEB: The Best Seat in the House 2006h).

Bloom's recent role was as Will Turner in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* trilogy. The first movie, *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* was an international success making just over \$422 million US (MOVIEWEB: The Best Seat in the House 2006e), as was the second of the trilogy *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (2006) with box office sales of about \$423 million US (MOVIEWEB: The Best Seat in the House 2007c).

Chris Brown

Brown is a 18-year-old R&B/hip-hop singer, dancer, and actor who found fame with his 2005 song *Run It* (see Chris Brown 2006). It hit number one on The Billboard Hot 100, and his latest, “Poppin’”, reached 25 on The Billboard Hot 100 (Billboard 2006a). He has two Grammy nominations and three Billboard awards (Chris Brown 2006). Brown appeared on the teen show *The O.C.* (Wu 2006).

Zac Efron

Twenty-year-old Zac Efron shot to stardom with his role on the WB television show *Summerland* (2004-2005), and Disney Channel’s *High School Musical* (2006) (Zac Efron Picture 2007). *High School Musical* (2006) was one of the most commercially successful shows for youth, capturing the 9-14 demographic (Gundersen 2006). Gundersen says it premiered with 7.7 million viewers, a Disney Channel all-time record, and highest-rated non-sports cable show.

Jesse McCartney

Jesse McCartney is a 21-year-old singer and actor (Jesse McCartney 2007). According to Jesse McCartney (2007), he won three Teen Choice awards, and was nominated for a MTV music video award and an American Music Award. He has two solo albums, *Beautiful Soul*, and *Right Where You Want Me*. His first single “Beautiful Soul”, reached 16 on Billboards Hot 100; his second, “She’s No You” peaked at 91 on Billboard Hot 100; and, his latest, “Right Where You Want Me”, hit 33 on Billboard Hot 100 (Billboard 2006c). He has appeared in the TV show *Summerland* (Jesse McCartney 2006).

Chad Michael Murray

Chad Michael Murray has appeared in several teen programs and movies. The 26-year-old stars in the CW teen drama series *One Tree Hill* (The CW 2006), a series hit with roughly 3.26 million viewers (Sullivan 2006). Murray has also been in the teen 2003 movie *Freaky Friday*, starring alongside teen star Lindsay Lohan. The movie was commercially successful, grossing \$110 million US (MOVIEWEB: The Best Seat in the House 2006a). He shared the spotlight with teen star Hilary Duff in the romance *A Cinderella Story* (2005) was also a box office hit, earning \$51 million US (MOVIEWEB: The Best Seat in the House 2007a).

Mitchell Musso

Sixteen-year-old actor Mitchell Musso found fame playing Oliver Oken, a character on one of the most successful pre-teen teen shows, Disney's *Hannah Montana* (see Mitchell Musso Online 2007). The show is successful among 6-14-year-olds, and one of Disney's highest rated season openers, with 5.4 million viewers (Steinberg 2006).

Ne-Yo

Ne-Yo, whose real name is Shaffer Smith, is a 28-year-old R&B song writer and singer who found fame with his top-selling 2006 album *In My Own Words* (Ne-Yo 2006). His hit songs include "Run It", and "So Sick", which reached #1 on Billboard Hot 100 (Billboard.com 2006a).

Daniel Radcliffe

Daniel Radcliffe made his career breakthrough as Harry Potter in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001), the movie version of J. K. Rowling's popular children's book (see Daniel Radcliffe 2007). The 18-year-old's notoriety increased with his leading

role as Potter in the subsequent Potter films: *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2005), and the upcoming (2007) *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (Daniel Radcliffe 2007).

The Potter trilogy is one of the most successful movie series. The first Potter film made \$317 million US (MOVIEWEB: The Best Seat in the House 2006b); the second grossed \$261 million US (MOVIEWEB: The Best Seat in the House 2006c); the third has made \$249 million US (MOVIEWEB: The Best Seat in the House 2006d); and the fourth garnered \$290 million US (MOVIEWEB: The Best Seat in the House 2007b). The Potter movies spawned Harry Potter merchandise, including action figures (see The Official Warner Bros. Harry Potter Shop 2007).

Cole and Dylan Sprouse

Cole and Dylan Sprouse are 15-year-old twin child actors (The Official Website of Dylan & Cole Sprouse - Sprousebros.com 2006). According to The Official Website of Dylan & Cole Sprouse - Sprousebros.com (2006), they have appeared in a number of television and movie roles, including *Grace Under Fire* (1993-1998) and *Big Daddy* (1999). Their big break came in 2005, starring as identical twin brothers, Zack and Cody, in Disney's pre-teen show *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* (The Official Website of Dylan & Cole Sprouse - Sprousebros.com 2006).

The Sprouse's have a brand, "Sprouse Bros", which includes DVDs, CDs, clothing, sports wear, video games, ring tones (types of cell phone rings), deodorant, and a magazine called *Sprouse Bros. Code*, for pre-adolescents and teens (Bahney 2006).

Peter Wentz

Twenty-eight-year-old Peter Wentz, who is known by fans as Pete, is Fall Out Boys' bassist, lyricist, and "pretty face" (Hiatt 2006). He owns the clothing company Clandestine Industries (see Clandestine Industries 2007) and film company Bartskull Films, which has a DVD *Release the Bats*, showcasing Fall Out Boy and friends (see Fueled By Ramen and Decaydance 2005). Wentz also helped author "The Boy with the Thorn in His Side" (Montgomery and Norris 2006).

Fall Out Boy's big break followed their third album, *From Under the Cork Tree* (2005), which has sold 2.5 million copies in the U.S (Montgomery and Norris 2006). It has produced two major hit songs, "Sugar, We're Going Down" and "Dance, Dance" (see Montgomery and Norris 2006).

Kristin Cavallari

Twenty-one-year-old Kristin Cavallari found fame when starring on the 2004 and 2005 seasons of *Laguna Beach* (MTV.com 2007). She was named Blender's (2007) most beautiful women in film and television (Errico 2007).

Hilary Duff

One of the most successful female celebrities since the late 1990s is Hilary Duff. The 20-year-old star gained notoriety as the lead character on Disney's teen television show *Lizzie McGuire* (Hilary Duff 2007a). She went on to star in other teen movies, including *A Cinderella Story* (2004) and *Material Girls* (2006). Duff is also a singing sensation. She has a number of hit songs, including "So Yesterday", which reached 42 on The Billboard Hot 100, and "Wake Up", which peaked at 29 on The Billboard Hot 100 (Billboard.com 2006b). Her first album, *Metamorphosis* from 2003, reached #1 on

Billboard Hot 100, selling more than 2 million copies. From her latest album, *Dignity* (2007), “With Love” reached #24 on Billboard Hot 100 (Billboard.com 2007). Duff also has a merchandise line, “Stuff By Hilary Duff”, including clothing, home decorating, and fashion accessories and perfume, “With Love” (Hilary Duff 2007b).

JoJo

As credited on JoJo (2006), the pop star, Joanna Levesque, better known as JoJo, became a pop icon with her self-titled 2004 album *JoJo*. At 17, JoJo is a singer, an actress, songwriter, and record producer. Her first single, “Leave (Get Out)” peaked at #12 on The Billboard Hot 100, and “Too Little Too Late”, from her second album, *The High Road* (2006), reached #3 on The Billboard Hot 100 (Billboard 2006d). She is the youngest person nominated for a MTV Music Video Award (JoJo 2006). JoJo is also a successful actress; she starred in the teen film *Aquamarine* (Barker 2006).

Beyoncé Knowles

As stated on her website, Beyoncé (2006), Beyoncé Knowles gained notoriety in the female group, Destiny’s Child, which released four albums and had several number one hit songs, including “Bootylicious”. In 2002, the 26-year-old’s first solo album, “Dangerously in Love” was released. “Déjà vu”, a current hit single, was released from “B’Day” (2006). Over the course of her career, she has earned 46 awards. Knowles has also modeled for L’Oreal (hair dye and cosmetics) (Bittar 2001) and Tommy Hilfiger; is a fashion designer, songwriter, and record producer (Beyoncé 2007); and is an actress, starring in *Dreamgirls* (Condon 2006).

Shakira

Shakira, 31, is a successful cross-over latin singer. In 2001, she released her English crossover album, *Laundry Service*, which sold 13 million copies in North America, earning her the title “crossover queen” (Economist.com 2005). She has won 90 awards (Shakira 2006a). She has also had many number one hits, including her recent “Hips Don’t Lie”; her latest album, *Oral Fixation Vol. 1*, was a huge hit, selling over 157,000 copies in the first sales week in the U.S (Shakira 2006b).