

Where the Girl Ends and the Woman Begins: The Editorial Content Shift in *Seventeen* Magazine  
Between 1978 and 1988

Ashley Stevens

December 10, 2009

First published in 1944<sup>1</sup> *Seventeen* magazine has been informing adolescent and teenage girls about what is important to their age group from 1944 to the present time. *Seventeen* magazine currently has almost twice the readership of its nearest competitor, *Teen Vogue*. *Seventeen* magazine not only attracts the largest audience among teen magazines, but also caters to an affluent readership—an appealing market for advertisers. The purpose and focus of the magazine have changed throughout the years from a magazine editorializing about marriage and crafts to the adoption of the tag line: “Where the Girl Ends and the Woman Begins” in the 1980s, to today’s magazine, which includes articles on beauty, fitness, colleges, careers, and sex.<sup>2</sup>

The magazine places emphasis on various themes through the content highlighted on the magazine cover. These themes have undergone alteration throughout *Seventeen*’s history to reflect the values of American society and in some cases, to catch up to what has happened in American culture. Such cultural circumstances will begin the plot of the narrative which will follow.

For example, previous research indicates magazine issues of the late 1970s were similar in content to issues of the 1950s in terms of how topics of personal relationships were discussed and the messages articles sent about the roles of women in society. The late 1970s was a period emerging from the effects of a controversial war as well as another wave of the feminist movement. However, it took time for publications to catch up to what was happening in society. An analysis of *Ladies’ Home Journal* revealed the “happy housewife” image was “even more prevalent in 1967 during the peak of the women’s movement than it was during 1957.”<sup>3</sup>

## Method

A catalog of *Seventeen* magazines housed at Brigham Young University provides the opportunity to study shifting emerging themes in *Seventeen* from 1978 to 1988. Magazines available for study range from 1966 to 1989. The current study focuses on the years between 1978 and 1988 as preliminary research indicated a significant shift in the focus of the magazine during this period of time. The largest theme, which will serve as the main topic for the following narrative is the theme of sexuality among teens and the types of messages the magazine promoted within this theme.

The researcher focuses on the articles and topics previewed on the front cover of the magazine as these themes are considered by *Seventeen* to be of most importance in the issue's pages. These cover stories are used to attract teen readers to read *Seventeen*. As previously mentioned, a shift in themes *Seventeen* chose to emphasize was discovered during preliminary research; therefore, it is justifiable to compare time periods and describe how emerging themes shifted over the decade under review.

Another justification for the analysis of *Seventeen* magazine from the late 1970s to the late 1980s is because it is the longest running teen magazine and has therefore survived various periods in history. Previous research suggests editors of *Seventeen* magazine rarely chose content relating to current events or social problems in the late 1970s. Cover themes included on *Seventeen* magazines of the late 1970s coincide with the aforementioned finding that magazines did not exactly reflect changing societal values of the late 1970s.<sup>4</sup>

In August of 1982 a new column was released entitled: "Sex and Your Body." The release of this column made sexual topics a regular monthly installment of the magazine in addition to

articles relating to teenage sexuality such as “What You Must Know About Herpes” released in October 1982 and “What is Real Intimacy?” released in December 1983. It is significant to note that changing societal values can impact magazine content in future years, as media content typically seeks to keep pace with what is occurring in society. Schlenker, Caron, and Halteman describe how teen magazines have shifted from the message of sexual morality to a discussion of sexual quality.<sup>5</sup> The following narrative supports the research done by Schlenker, et al.

Historical research on teen magazines is limited and no study, according to the knowledge of the researcher, has sought to unveil changing emerging themes within *Seventeen* during the time period in question. A lack of research on how emerging themes changed from the late 1970s to the late 1980s also lends justification for the current study.

### Review of Literature

Evans, Rutberg, Sather, and Turner describe how media research relating to teenage girls is particularly provoking in light of how media content can impact these teens during their formative years. During the teenage years, girls are developing values and habits which will remain with them throughout the majority of their lives. Evans, et al., found from a sample of teen magazine issues from 1988 to 1989 that *Seventeen* magazine included more recurring columns and feature articles and was second in terms of articles relating to health. The other magazines under review (*Young Miss* and *Sassy*) included mainly articles relating to fashion. Over 40% of the issues of *Young Miss* under review contained articles relating to fashion, while only approximately 25% of *Seventeen* issues were associated with fashion.<sup>6</sup>

Although articles relating to the topic at hand are in existence, previous research on teen magazines is partial to content analysis or application to feminist theory. Other studies on teen

magazines describe and explain the relationship between teen magazine readership and body image or beliefs about sex and a woman's role in the society in which she participates. For example, Carpenter performed a content analysis and discovered the expansion of certain sexual themes from 1974 to 1994 in *Seventeen*.<sup>7</sup> Schlenker, et al., studied the impact the multiple waves of the feminist movement had upon *Seventeen* and whether these feminist influences had any impact upon emerging themes.<sup>8</sup>

### The Late 1970s

One who is mildly familiar with the history of the time period under review might assume the feminist movement beginning in the 1960s and lasting into the mid-1970s would influence the content in *Seventeen* magazine, particularly the themes the magazine promoted on the cover. One also might suppose the magazine would portray women as more independent and powerful, an image the feminist movement promoted and pushed as representative of women during that time. However, images promoted during the late 1970s resembled the roles and representations of women of an earlier period and were not reflective of the type of woman who was independent from men both physically, financially and emotionally. For instance, cover articles during this time included: "Rejected? How to Stop the Hurt,"<sup>9</sup> "SPECIAL: Everything for the Bride,"<sup>10</sup> and "You Can Change Your Image."<sup>11</sup>

Liberal feminism is an academic theory which best describes the impact feminist ideology has had upon media as the second wave of feminism began in the 1960s and the third wave in the 1980s with the push toward adopting the Equal Rights Amendment by state constituencies. Liberal feminism highlights the relationship between men and women as the starting point from which gender equality can be achieved. As a theory, liberal feminism is inclined toward a

neutral vision to men and women: women should be able to be employed in the same jobs as men and be expected to perform at the same capacity as men perform. Women should also earn synonymous pay as men receive and be exposed to the same opportunities for education. This ideology was presented before and during the time period in which the current study reviews *Seventeen* and is anticipated as an influence for the magazine's content.<sup>12</sup>

The year 1978 is a continuation of the economic tumult and uncertainty characteristic of the decade of the 1970s as inflation rates continued to rise while employment rates decreased.<sup>13</sup> The oil crisis continued to take its toll as half of the U.S. import market is accounted for in Japanese car imports. According to the Energy Information Association, the peak of the effect of the oil crisis on the price at the pump peaked around 1978, at close to \$100 a barrel, or roughly \$4.32 a gallon (2008 dollars).<sup>14</sup> The role of women is also in the midst of uncertainty with the seminal abortion rights case *Roe vs. Wade* having been decided in favor of legalizing abortion five years previous and approximately 60% of the country in favor of the Supreme Court's decision. The late 1970s would mark one of the few times 60% or more of Americans are in support of abortion rights.<sup>15</sup>

Although terror and tumult are occurring around the world in 1978, advancements in technology and entertainment are well defined. The first ever cellular mobile phone device was released during the year by Illinois Bell company. The movie *Grease* was released in 1978 as well as *Saturday Night Fever* catapulting John Travolta as the heartthrob of the late 1970s. *Saturday Night Fever* would develop to become the iconic symbol of the time period, which would come to be known as the "Disco Age."<sup>16</sup>

However, *Seventeen* magazine may have been slow to respond through its content to the shifting values of the late 1970s. Cover articles are more of a reflection of the jubilant 1950s than the tumultuous 1970s. One article featured on the cover of the February 1978 issue provides advice for teenage brides on how they can prepare for their wedding. The article is a beauty article providing advice on how to keep wedding jitters and stress from affecting one's complexion, figure, and mood toward family and fiancée alike. The articles approach advances a conservative tone:

When you give him your hand, you don't want it to be rough and lobster-red...And don't work toward Dragon Lady-style nails for the ultimate in wedding glamour. A neat, well-groomed look is much more in order for a bride.<sup>17</sup>

Although not an article featured on the cover, a flip of the page will reveal an editorial article written by Mike Frederickson, a 19-year-old from Washington who laments the traditional roles of men and women in the context of how girls "want to have their cake and eat it too!" Frederickson argues the trouble and lengths to which men go through to get women to go out on a date with them is too much when the return women reciprocate is too little. Frederickson reveals his belief that dating is too involved, too expensive, and too traditional. Slight evidence of change in *Seventeen* is beginning to emerge.<sup>18</sup>

Specific articles in *Seventeen* magazine in 1978 sought to emphasize the female role as virginal and innocent, and the male role as chauvinistic and encroaching. Strasburger noted a similar finding in women's magazines of the 1950s and 1960s, which focused on naïve and innocent romantic love.<sup>19</sup> Franzwa found in an analysis of *Ladies' Home Journal*, *McCall's*, and *Good Housekeeping* that two major messages were being promoted: marriage is inevitable for

every female and to catch a man a woman must be less competent than a man, passive, and virtuous.<sup>20</sup>

As a magazine for teenage girls, with a target age of 12-19, topics of marriage could be perceived as premature, even for the time period in question. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average age of marriage for women in 1979 was 22.1.<sup>21</sup> However, between the years of 1978 and 1981, five cover stories were devoted to marriage-related articles. Most of these articles were multi-page sections devoted to various aspects of marriage such as preparing for the wedding, planning the wedding, and spousal relations.<sup>22</sup> The *Seventeen* magazine of the late 1970s through approximately 1983 promoted back-to-school fashions and the best honeymoon spots.

Articles which read of the relationship between girls and boys were conservative and virginal in nature, portraying girls as victims who should learn how to stand up for themselves to men narrow-mindedly fixated on sex. In the cover article: “How to handle the lines boys use on you,” Dan Carlinsky describes how male “smooth talk” can lead to trouble for teenage girls and the comebacks girls can counter such talk with. The article begins as such: “Boys have always had a collection of lines to try to entice girls...the idea... (is) an indirect approach to sex.”<sup>23</sup>

Other articles discussing relationships with boys during the late 1970s were focused on dating relationships, what characteristics girls should look for in boys, and what characteristics boys should look for in girls. With one exception, cover articles during the year 1978 which related to the topic of dating and personal relationships did not discuss sexual matters. The one exception was an article entitled “Teen Pregnancy: Whose Fault? Boy or Girl?”<sup>24</sup>



Content such as this demonstrate the influence the nebulous beginnings of the feminist wave of the 1960s and 1970s were beginning to have, as well as the seeds being planted in magazines for teenage girls. Other articles included in *Seventeen* during the late 1970s emphasized a woman's right to choose if and when she will participate in sexual relations and the consequences of such actions. Such examples include the aforementioned "Teen pregnancy: Whose fault? Boy or girl?"<sup>25</sup> "Feminine Intuition: Fact or Fiction?"<sup>26</sup> and "How to Fall Out of Love—Practically Painlessly."<sup>27</sup> All of these articles are written from a female perspective, which is to be expected given *Seventeen*'s audience. The articles also favor positive consequences for women or admonitions against possible negative consequences as a result of men intruding upon their right to make sexually moral choices.<sup>28</sup>

It could be argued that in the late 1970s, the presence of feminist ideology in *Seventeen* was positioned from an angle to protect the image of women promoted in magazine content up to the current point in history. As mentioned previously, Strasburger defines that image as "Naïve and focused on innocent love."<sup>29</sup> Brake describes how teen magazine readers consumed articles focused on romantic attachment, dependency on men, and physical beauty. Girls were portrayed as virtuous; the future primary nurturers for their families.<sup>30</sup>

"You may get old, you may get bored, and your life may lurch along the way that most lives do, but you will never forget the sweet singing sledgehammer of your first love," begins one article featured on the cover of the February 1980 issue. The article goes on to describe Dianna, a girl from the south who found love at first sight in her hometown's basement library. Dianna describes how she could no longer focus on school, her friends, or even proper sleep as she constantly thought about the man who, according to Dianna, "was one of the few people who thought I was neat."<sup>31</sup>

Dianna's narrative is one of many within *Seventeen* during the late 1970s and into the early 1980s which places women in a position of power to choose how they will express their sexuality, but in a position of deferment to men in terms of their emotional decisions. Other articles playing a similar note include the October 1980 "He Drops You: How to Cope," which discusses the heartbreak left behind after a teenage break-up and how young women can spot the telltale signs of a forthcoming dumping.<sup>32</sup> April's 1980 "How to Make Him Notice You" teaches teenage girls how to act upon their emotions or the love at first sight Dianna describes in an appropriate way that does not put off the perception of being forward or promiscuous.<sup>33</sup>

The image portrayed by *Seventeen* during this time period may not have been the aim of the feminist wave occurring during the 1970s, as is evidenced in the goals of the Equal Rights Amendment. The Equal Rights Amendment passed in 1972 and was subsequently submitted to the states for ratification. The Equal Rights Amendment states that "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and in every place subject to its jurisdiction." The Equal Rights Amendment's focus was to provide equality among the sexes, with some arguing neutrality for the sexes. The stance of *Seventeen* magazine garnered from its editorial content seeks to uphold the stance of women of the 1950s and early 1960s—not neutrality of the sexes. The Equal Rights Amendment will continue to play a role in American politics and will bring awareness to women's issues throughout the 1980s, even continuing to current times. The attention the Equal Rights Amendment garners seems to coincide with shifting values evidenced in editorial content in *Seventeen* magazine.<sup>34</sup>

Although feminism was not taking a strong hold on *Seventeen* magazine, glimpses of an inevitable change in focus in the articles featured on the cover began to peek through the bridal, cooking, and fashion pages prevalent in the magazine of the late 1970s. In March of 1978, an

article is featured entitled: “Getting Together for Women’s Rights.” The article tells of the experience of Brenda, a freckle-faced high school senior serving as national president of the then-450,000 member strong Future Homemakers of America, at the 1977 National Women’s Conference. Although a leader of a traditionally conservative organization, Brenda openly insists there is no conflict between being a homemaker and supporting feminist issues.<sup>35</sup>

...teen-age women know that they no longer have to stay home if they don’t want to.

We have to get rid of the stereotyped idea that women workers aren’t as good as men workers...women can achieve as much as men—if we’re given equal opportunities.<sup>36</sup>

### The Early 1980s

As America emerged from the violence, inflation, and oil crisis of the 1970s, the turn of the decade heralded in unwelcome old challenges for the nation. The Federal Reserve System’s answer to high inflation rates of the 1970s resulted in further dismal financial consequences for the 1980s, with inflation soaring to 13.5% in 1980. For 23 months, from December 1980 to November 1982, America was gripped in the palm of a severe recession. The dismal economic situation seemed to be taking a toll in other facets of society, including political and social realms.<sup>37</sup>

Released in 1985, Madonna’s single *Material Girl* could be the song that sums up the 1980s.<sup>38</sup> Despite drab economic conditions consumers became more sophisticated in their tastes. A media focus on materialism catapulted successful business entrepreneurs like Donald Trump into the spotlight. Women became more active in pursuing not just work outside the home, but full-fledged careers. One such example of this transition of women out of the home is evidenced in the fashions of the 1980s. The power suit with shoulder-pads was one popular fashion among

career-oriented women. Ironically, the fashion closely resembles the woman's male counterpart in the workforce.

Openness to minority groups and alternative lifestyles was beginning to emerge as acceptable facets of society in the 1980s. Political correctness began to materialize as the trend of preventing, opposing and condemning racism, discrimination, and prejudice against minority groups including women and gays. Evidence of the acceptance of gay rights in the Western world is seen with the prominence of figures such as pop star Boy George. Other evidence for tolerance of gay rights was seen in protests against AIDS in favor of government support for those infected with the disease.<sup>39</sup>

Unlike the response in the late 1970s, *Seventeen* magazine had a faster turnover in recognizing the changing values of society during the early- to mid-1980s. Once such pivotal shift was supported in the March 1980 article: "Exclusive survey: real teens reveal their feelings about marriage, abortion, ERA, careers and living together." The article in discussion polled more than 1,000 girls ages 13-19 and found that "if there is any single generalization...about today's teen-agers, it is that no one of them is totally predictable."<sup>40</sup>

The following reads from the aforementioned article under the subheading: "College and Careers:"

The surveyed girls are not Susy-Stay-at-Homes: 87 percent say they will probably work after marriage, and well over half plan to work after having children. Times are clearly changing, whether because of inflation or the women's movement or both.<sup>41</sup>

According to *Seventeen's* poll...nearly three quarters of (girls surveyed) plan to attend (college). Their main reasons: to prepare for a rewarding career or a high-paying job.<sup>42</sup>

This poll was published in 1980, a time when many had experienced, were currently experiencing, or were anticipating a dismal economic situation. Perhaps these bleak conditions drove women to anticipate a career in place of or in addition to a family. Materialistic attitudes would become more prevalent as the 1980s wore on. This would be reflected in teen literature and perhaps led teenage girls to plan more for providing financial security for themselves rather than depend upon another to provide it for them.

Changes in beliefs about morality were reflected in the 1980 poll. Nearly all girls surveyed said they planned to marry, however, 43% stated they intended to or had participated in premarital sex and 36% intended to or had lived with a man before marriage. Fifty-seven percent of young women polled believed divorce was a viable option if the couple did not get along. Subsequent articles in *Seventeen* magazine began to reflect the beliefs of teens polled for this 1980 article. Prevalence toward the topics of marriage, fashion, and crafts began to diminish, while articles about college, celebrities, sexuality began to increase.<sup>43</sup> It is almost as if *Seventeen* editors used the poll to determine the editorial direction of the magazine.

### A Gradual Shift

Although many articles provided proof the early 1980s was a time of change in the editorial content of the most popular teen magazine, the change was not sudden, but a gradual shift toward reflecting the trends and values of society. February 1981 saw one of the last bridal sections featured on the cover. This bridal section was not as long as bridal sections in previous issues (two-page spread) and included limited text, particularly in comparison to previous bridal sections. The content of the article focused on how to look radiant on one's big day (wedding

day) as well as on the honeymoon and what to look for when shopping for an engagement ring and what colors will look best on the beach.<sup>44</sup>

The following October an article entitled “Birth Control: The Whole Truth,” was featured on the cover. The article provided a question and answer format for teens to learn about the various types of birth control available. The types of questions included and the responses given were written from the perspective that assumed teens were considering various types of birth control, but needed help in understanding the different methods so as to make the best choice. None of the responses provided abstinence as an option as one of the various types of birth control discussed. One response describes how the Pill offers “maximum protection at minimal risk” for teens who do not smoke, are healthy, and who engage in sex on a regular basis.<sup>45</sup>

Although it is impossible to pinpoint an exact issue in which the magazine shifted from a teen magazine which chose to approach the topic of teenage sexuality from a conservative standpoint to a teen magazine which chose to include information on the sexual behavior of teens from a more liberal perspective, it can be targeted rather close. The August 1982 issue was like many previous August issues, with most of the atypically thick magazine devoted to back-to-school fashions; however, this issue was unique from previous back-to-school issues. This issue’s cover highlighted the beginning of a new column entitled “Sex and Your Body,” a regular which continues to be included in *Seventeen* today. It is poignant that this new column was released in an August issue as readership is higher during the back-to-school period than any other months of the year. It is also significant this topic was chosen as a regular column as it meant the topic of sexuality would be indefinitely included in subsequent issues, which as aforementioned, continues to this day.

Perhaps what brought women's rights and the subsequent thought about what women's roles are in American society was the Equal Rights Amendment. Although 35 years has passed since the Equal Rights Amendment was adopted in to the Constitution, it continues to bring women's issues, rights, and the way they are perceived in society to the forefront of American thought as it did back in the early 1980s. It is significant to note that the deadline for the minimum of 38 states required to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment was in 1982, approximately the same time changes in the content of *Seventeen* began to surface.<sup>46</sup>

The aforementioned March 1980 poll of teenage girls' opinion on a variety of changing societal values of the time period indicates that the ERA and women's issues were also on the forefront of teenage girls' thought. Over two thirds of the girls surveyed responded that they were somewhat or very interested in seeing the ERA passed, and about the same number of respondents indicated they would like to see women given fair representation of women in the political process. The ERA seemed to have an effect upon how teenage girls polled perceived themselves and their role in society, with 69% wanting to see a woman elected to the presidency and 83% concerned with the establishment of day-care centers for children.<sup>47</sup>

### The Late 1980s

It is interesting to note that in the early 1980s, the articles features on the cover were more sexually suggestive, however, the content of the article advertised did not always reflect the racy tone indicative on the cover. Sexually suggestive articles previewed on the cover of *Seventeen* during the latter half of the 1980s were juxtaposed from their early 1980s counterparts as both the headline on the cover and the content reflected the tone intended on the cover.

For example, the cover of the February's 1983 issue read as follows: "BOYS, BOYS, BOYS, BOYS, BOYS, BOYS, BOYS, BOYS," with the majority of the content of the magazine devoted to the topic of the opposite gender. The content of the magazine included articles about fashions borrowed from the fashions of men, an introduction to Clay Tucker, the 1983 cover boy, and an article titled: "Why Do Boys Have a Hard Time Expressing Their Feelings?"<sup>48</sup> It might be safely assumed that given the greater part of magazine articles for February 1983 were devoted to the topic of boys, sexuality may be an emerging theme. However, none of the articles relating to the opposite sex was sexually suggestive in nature; the only article directly relating to the topic was the regular feature "Sex and Your Body," which discussed what made a kiss "good" or "bad."<sup>49</sup>

The opposite was the case in the May 1987 cover article. This article was a twist on the regular feature: "Sex and Your Body," entitled: "Sex and *His* Body." This piece spanned a little more than the typical one page feature and was written to a male audience, which is not the audience of *Seventeen* magazine. Perhaps the content was written so as to educate *Seventeen's* true audience (girls ages 12-19) on the sexuality of men as if they were talking to men. Perhaps editors felt this manner of writing to a male audience would be more effective in proving the veracity of the content to readers. Topics covered in the article reflected the tone of the article portrayed on the cover and included topics specific to males, with little references to females. One of the questions asked in this Q & A formatted article was "I'm sixteen and still a virgin, am I normal?" In which Kathy McCoy, the writer responded with the following:

Some boys find the right person and circumstances while still teenagers. Some wait to have sex until they are adults or married. What matters is how you feel deep down...Staying a



virgin until...you can take responsibility for birth control and protecting your partner's feelings—may be one of the wisest and most rewarding choices you'll make.<sup>50</sup>

In February 1987, a similar poll to the March 1980 poll of teenage opinion was taken, exhibiting the beliefs teenage girls had about dating, sex, marriage, and children. If the poll published in March 1980 was a justification for why the magazine was seeking a new direction in content, February 1987's poll was indicative of justifying why *Seventeen* editors, writers, and contributors were correct in making that shift. The most suggestive question the March 1980 article posed was whether or not teens approved of premarital sex. In addition, the article covered a variety of topics, not just dating and personal relationships. However, the February 1987 poll went into greater detail about personal relationships, providing little room for opinions on other societal issues. Another key difference between the two articles is the 1987 poll surveyed boys in addition to girls and structured the article in such a way as to compare what boys and girls thought on the issues included. Most of the questions dealt with sex and what teens defined and thought about true love.<sup>51</sup>

For example, questions in the February 1987 poll included: "Birth control: What methods have you used?," "How would you handle an unplanned pregnancy?," "Why have sex with a date?," and "How should child care and household tasks be distributed among partners?"<sup>52</sup>

Results were significantly different compared to results of the March 1980 poll on questions relating to sexuality, but were not as juxtaposed on questions relating to other issues. Close to 60% of girls believed "If I loved him" was an appropriate reason to have sex with a date, with slightly more males (65%) indicating love was an acceptable reason to have sex with a date. About three-fourths of boys surveyed indicated it does not matter to them who takes the lead in

making out, whether it be them or the girl. However, 40% of the girls surveyed believe it is the boys' responsibility to make the first move.

Is the guy's message "Help us out"? It would seem so. Why are girls wary? Possibly because the majority of teenagers say that it's still easier for a girl to be labeled promiscuous than it is for a boy.<sup>53</sup>

It is significant that *Seventeen* chose to include male responses to mostly sexual questions, rather than only female responses. Perhaps male responses were added to not only show the differences in male and female opinion in regards to sexual activity, but also to show the advancement men have over women in terms of sexuality. The wording of the aforementioned excerpt from the February 1987 poll shows how the sexual mindset of women is perhaps reflective of a past, more conservative time period, stating it is *still* easier for a girl to be labeled promiscuous than it is for a boy to be labeled as such.<sup>54</sup>

The late 1980s seems to mark an end to an adjustment period in *Seventeen's* history toward a greater focus on the sexuality of teenagers. In essence the March 1980 poll said to subscribers: "This is where the magazine is going," and the February 1987 poll justified that adjustment. The magazine of the late 1980s would not see a bridal-themed article featured on the cover, indeed much of the advertising relating to marriage (such as jewelry ads, which were plentiful in the issues of the 1970s) decreased. This is in juxtaposition to the type of magazine for teenage girls that existed just 10 years previous.

In the February 1987 poll the questions were asked: "When do you plan to marry?" and "How important is it to you to marry a virgin?" Only about 5% of respondents indicated they planned to marry before the age of 20, and 30% of respondents indicated that marrying a virgin

was either “very” or “somewhat” important to them.<sup>55</sup> These responses justify the direction *Seventeen* had been taking toward the exclusion of marriage-related topics and the inclusion of sex-related topics.

### Conclusion

To further justify its shift toward more mature topics, in January of 1988, *Seventeen* released a new tagline: “It’s Where the Girl Ends and the Woman Begins.”<sup>56</sup> In essence, the message *Seventeen* sent as a magazine is that it had ended its phase of shifting from topics girls can relate to and will now be focusing more on topics girls need to know in order to become successful women in the society in which they live. Articles relating to beauty and fashion are still a regular feature of the magazine of the late 1980s, but more mature sexually-oriented topics will become a mainstay. These topics will take the place of fiction stories, articles relating to cooking and crafts, and as aforementioned, articles relating to marriage.

For example, articles in 1988 relating to sex included: “Sexual Dreams: What do they Really Mean?,”<sup>57</sup> “AIDS Update: What You Really Need to Know,”<sup>58</sup> and “Sexual Pressure, When He Wants Too Much Too Soon.”<sup>59</sup> The latter article describes a letter written in the regular feature “Sex and Your Body,” confused about the sexual relationship between her and her boyfriend. *Seventeen* provides the following advice:

There are many factors that can lead to a sexual relationship. There are many sound reasons for holding back, too. Love grows from knowing each other and accepting each other... and the best sexual decisions grow out of love.<sup>60</sup>

The shift in editorial direction appeared complete as the magazine advised readers. The above example exemplifies this as many reasons were given as to why she should not let her

boyfriend pressure her and to make her own decisions regarding her sexuality, a premise liberal feminists could stand by.

## NOTES

1. Schlenker, Jennifer A., Sandra L. Caron and William A. Halteman, "A Feminist Analysis of *Seventeen* Magazine: Content Analysis from 1945 to 1995," *Sex Roles* 38, January 1998, 139.
2. Mediamark Research & Intelligence, "Seventeen Actionista." *Teenmark 2008*, 2008, 3.
3. Schlenker, et al., "A Feminist Analysis of *Seventeen* Magazine," 137.
4. Schlenker, et al., "A Feminist Analysis of *Seventeen* Magazine," 137.
5. Schlenker, et al., "A Feminist Analysis of *Seventeen* Magazine," 136.
6. Evans, Ellis D., Judith Rutberg, Carmela Sather and Charli Turner, "Content Analysis of Contemporary Teen Magazines for Adolescent Females," *Youth and Society* 23, September 1991, 105.
7. Carpenter, Laura M., "From Girls Into Women: Scripts for Sexuality and Romance in *Seventeen* Magazine, 1974-1994," *Journal of Sex Research* 35, May 1998, 158-168.
8. Schlenker, et al., "A Feminist Analysis of *Seventeen* Magazine," 135-49.
9. "Rejected? How to Stop the Hurt," *Seventeen*, April 1978, 188.
10. "SPECIAL: Everything for the Bride," *Seventeen*, February 1978, 46.
11. Cynthia Gorney, "You Can Change Your Image," *Seventeen*, April 1979, 186.
12. Stacks, Don, and Michael Salwen. *An Integrated Approach To Communication Theory and Research*. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 505.
13. Supel, Thomas, M., "The U.S. Economy in 1977 and 1978," *Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Quarterly Review*, Winter 1978, 1.
14. Energy Information Administration, "Oil Prices 1861 to 2007." [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Oil\\_Prices\\_1861\\_2007.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Oil_Prices_1861_2007.svg)
15. *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973). Findlaw.com.
16. Collector's Weekly, "Time Machine: 1970s," <http://www.collectorsweekly.com/1970s>
17. "SPECIAL: Everything for the Bride," *Seventeen*, February 1978, 46.
18. Mike Frederickson, "Frankly Speaking," *Seventeen*, February 1978, 48.
19. Victor Strasburger, *Adolescents and the Media: Medical and Psychological Impact*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1980).

20. Schlenker, Jennifer A., Sandra L. Caron and William A. Halteman, "A Feminist Analysis of *Seventeen* Magazine: Content Analysis from 1945 to 1995," *Sex Roles* 38, January 1998, 137.
21. "Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to Present," *US Census Bureau*, September 15, 2004.
22. *Seventeen*, 1978-1981.
23. Dan Carlinsky, "How to Handle the Lines Boys Use on You," *Seventeen*, February 1978, 116. In the following paragraph, Dan Carlinsky writes: "A lot has changed in the past generation or two. But one thing is very much as it was: the view that, mostly, sex is something a guy tries to con a girl into."
24. Judith Wax, "Teen Pregnancy: Whose Fault? Boy or Girl?" *Seventeen*, October 1978, 132.
25. Judith Wax, "Teen Pregnancy: Whose Fault? Boy or Girl?" *Seventeen*, October 1978, 132.
26. Linda Konner, "Feminine Intuition: Fact or Fiction?" *Seventeen*, March 1979, 59.
27. Linda Konner, "How to Fall Out of Love—Practically Painlessly," *Seventeen*, September 1979, 49.
28. Dan Carlinsky, "How to Handle the Lines Boys Use on You," *Seventeen*, February 1978, 116.
29. Victor Strasburger, *Adolescents and the Media: Medical and Psychological Impact*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1980).
30. Mike Brake, *The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures: Sex and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll?*, (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).
31. Cynthia Gorney, "First Love: Why He's Unforgettable," *Seventeen*, February 1980, 114.
32. Anita Shreve, "He Drops You: How to Cope," *Seventeen*, October 1980, 142. Shreve describes the feelings teenage girls may experience during a breakup: "Someone you love has been torn from you, and you naturally feel grief. The very moment that you are told it is all over—and for several days afterward, whenever you remember the moment—your body may react by grieving. Your heart rate may increase, your knees may shake, you may grow pale and begin to sweat. This sudden 'blow' may indeed feel to your body like a kick in the chest or a hollowness inside."
33. Linda Konner, "How to Make Him Notice You," *Seventeen*, April 1980, 59.
34. Carolyn Maloney, "The Equal Rights Amendment: 111<sup>th</sup> Congress," July 13, 2009.
35. Linda Konner, "Getting Together for Women's Rights," *Seventeen*, March 1978, 88.
36. Linda Konner, "Getting Together for Women's Rights," *Seventeen*, March 1978, 88.

37. Paul Krugman, "Did the Federal Reserve Cause the Recession?," *New York Times* (April 1991).
38. Sal Cinquemani, "Madonna: Confessions on a Dance Floor," *Slant*, November 2005.
39. U.S. Department of State, "Cultural Change: 1950-1980," *USA History in Brief*, <http://www.america.gov/st/educ-english/2008/June/20080610231344eaifas0.6864108.html> (accessed November 23, 2009).
40. Jody Gaylin, "Exclusive survey: Real Teens Reveal Their Feelings about Marriage, Abortion, ERA, Careers and Living Together," *Seventeen*, March 1980, 113-114.
41. Jody Gaylin, "Exclusive survey: Real Teens Reveal Their Feelings about Marriage, Abortion, ERA, Careers and Living Together," *Seventeen*, March 1980, 115. Gaylin describes how girls are beginning to look out for their own financial futures, perhaps because of the uncertain economy. "Perhaps acknowledging the hard realities of the job market today, over one quarter of the girls say they will opt for a business and management major...Regarding a job after college, the most important consideration—but not the only one—is salary."
42. Jody Gaylin, "Exclusive survey: Real Teens Reveal Their Feelings about Marriage, Abortion, ERA, Careers and Living Together," *Seventeen*, March 1980, 115.
43. Jody Gaylin, "Exclusive survey: Real Teens Reveal Their Feelings about Marriage, Abortion, ERA, Careers and Living Together," *Seventeen*, March 1980, 115-117.
44. *Seventeen*, February 1981, 126-130.
45. Elizabeth Rodgers Dobell, "Birth Control: The Whole Truth," *Seventeen*, October 1981, 142 & 174.
46. Carolyn Maloney, "The Equal Rights Amendment: 111<sup>th</sup> Congress," July 13, 2009.
47. Jody Gaylin, "Exclusive survey: Real Teens Reveal Their Feelings about Marriage, Abortion, ERA, Careers and Living Together," *Seventeen*, March 1980, 118-119.
48. Harry Stein, "Why Do Boys Have a Hard Time Expressing Their Feelings?" *Seventeen*, February 1983, 100.
49. Elizabeth Rodgers, "Sex and Your Body," *Seventeen*, February 1983, 30.
50. "Sex and *His* Body," *Seventeen*, May 1987, 38.
51. "Love in the 80s, What Teens Think of Dating, Sex, Marriage, and Children," *Seventeen*, February 1987, 101.
52. "Love in the 80s," 101.
53. "Love in the 80s," 103.

54. "Love in the 80s," 103.
55. "Love in the 80s," 105.
56. *Seventeen*, January 1988, cover.
57. "Sexual Dreams: What do they Really Mean?" *Seventeen*, February 1988.
58. "AIDS Update: What You Really Need to Know," *Seventeen*, March 1988.
59. "Sex and Your Body," *Seventeen*, December 1988, 22.
60. Sex and Your Body," 22.