

Representation of Teenage Girls in *Seventeen*

Bachelor's thesis

Roosa Kaipainen

University of Jyväskylä

Department of Language and Communication Studies

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Vaikka sosiaalisen median usein ajatellaan hallitsevan nuorten elämää, myös niin sanottua perinteistä mediaa edustavat nuortenlehdet ovat edelleen suosittuja etenkin nuorten naisten keskuudessa. Aikakauslehti ei ole teinityöille vain kevyttä lukemista ja mukavaa ajanvietettä, vaan isosiskomainen tiedonlähde ja neuvonantaja. Siksi nuortenlehtien tekijöillä onkin suuri vastuu siitä, millaista kuvaa lehden kohdeyleisöstä se lukijoilleen välittää.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää, millä tavoin teini-ikäisiä tyttöjä representoidaan ja millaisia diskursseja heihin liitetään amerikkalaisessa <i>Seventeen</i>-lehdessä. Tutkimusaineisto koostui yhteensä kolmesta numerosta kyseistä lehteä. Tutkimuksessani pyrin tunnistamaan keskeiset teinityttöjen elämästä kertovat diskurssit, jotka artikkeleissa toistuivat ja analysoin niitä kriittistä diskurssianalyysiä hyödyntäen.</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa löydetty keskeisimmät diskurssit ovat seurustelusuhde-, kehonkuva-, roolimalli- ja yhteiskunnallinen diskurssi. Nämä diskurssit ovat siis <i>Seventeen</i>-lehden luoman teinityttörepresentaation perusta. Tämän representaation mukaan tytöt ovat kiinnostuneita seurustelun aloittamisesta, painivat itsetunto-ongelmien kanssa, ihailevat mediassa esillä olevia vahvoja naishahmoja ja ovat huolissaan yhteiskunnallisista asioista.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

The media plays a significant role in shaping our perspective of the world. They have the power to decide which stories to publish and from which point of view to write it. This will essentially affect the audience's attitudes towards a particular topic in one way or another. Thus, it could be argued that the media has a great responsibility when it comes to portraying not only events but people as well. As language use is always based on choices, it can never be completely unbiased. A journalist making choices between different words or clause structures to use is constructing a certain type of image of the topic.

Teen magazines have been accused of putting pressure on girls to look a certain way and grow up too quickly, but despite their problematic sides, they have also been proven to be an important platform for young girls to discuss topics such as sexuality in a safe and reliable environment (Frechette 2012). Even with the popularity of social media among adolescents, teen magazines have not lost their audiences. *Seventeen*, for instance, has millions of monthly readers (Hearst Communications 2019). As the target audience of teen magazines is a rather limited group of people, Strange (2006: 10) argues that their contents can be considered "a portrayal, if not an accurate and balanced reflection of teen interests". Indeed, the reoccurring topics in teen magazines include fashion, beauty, celebrities and romantic relationships, which tend to be considered common topics of interest of teenage girls.

The focus of the present study will be on the representation of teenage girls in *Seventeen*. The aim is to recognize the manners in which the magazine portrays girls and analyse the language used in relation to them. There have been various studies conducted previously on similar topics, which this study intends to build on. As the extent of the present study is rather limited, the results of the analysis cannot be generalised, but they might perhaps give ideas to future researchers interested in studying female representations in magazines.

2 BACKGROUND

This chapter presents background theories and other researchers' findings in the field of female representations in the media. First, I will define some of the key terms about the topic. I will start by defining the concept of discourse before introducing critical discourse analysis as the methodological framework for the present study. This will be followed by discussion about media representations and women's roles portrayed in the media.

2.1 Defining discourse

Discourse analysis, naturally, is the study of discourse. How to define the concept of discourse, on the other hand, is a more complicated question. First, it is essential to make the distinction between discourse as an abstract noun (discourse) and as a countable noun (a discourse). Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 27) define discourse as an abstract noun as "language use as a social activity", whereas as a countable noun they see it as widely recognized manners of discussing and describing the world in a certain way. Locke (2004: 13) has similar but slightly more specific views on the two terms. The first one he describes as language used as a social practice, with the focus on larger units of language such as utterances, paragraphs or whole texts. Countable discourses, on the other hand, he defines as a practice of signifying and constructing the world through meaning (Fairclough 1992: 64 as cited in Locke 2004: 14).

In the present study, the focus will be on countable discourses and their ability to construct the world through meaning. In other words, discourses are different manners of discussing the same issue. Immigration, for instance, can be viewed from a different perspective in media discourse in comparison to political discourse. Even seemingly small linguistic choices, such as clause structures or word choices, have the ability to shape the audience's view of the topic. Whether immigrants are portrayed as active or passive participants and whether they are referred to as "immigrants" or "refugees" can send a very different message to the audience. For this reason, it is important to study discourses, as they can have a significant effect on how a certain issue is perceived in society.

2.1.1 Critical discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method which is used to describe and explain different events and behavioural models, rather than generalizing or making statistics (Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2009: 139). Whatever the precise definition of discourse, it can be said that the focus of discourse analysis lies in the manners in which language use constructs social meanings. What makes the

analysis critical is another fundamental question in this study. As with all concepts in this field, there is no one definition for what is meant by the notion of 'critique'. According to Fairclough (2001: 123), critical discourse analysis (CDA) is based on the relationship between language and other aspects of social practices. This relationship seems to be the starting point for many researchers in the field. Pietikäinen (2008) too mentions the social effects that language use has on society as the central interest of CDA. She explains that language use has a significant effect on constructing and shaping 1) knowledge and beliefs, 2) relationships between different groups, and 3) social identities (Fairclough 1992: 64 as cited in Pietikäinen 2008: 197).

2.2 Representations in the media

The manners in which a certain phenomenon or a group of people are portrayed and discussed in the media are called representations. As explained in the previous section, discourses are established ways of discussing events, and they have the ability to construct the world through meaning. Representations, consequently, are based on discourses. The discourses used to talk about a certain issue shape the attitudes of the receivers, which contributes to the representation of the topic.

When dealing with representations, it is essential to recognize that they are always built on previous discourse, which means that no representation is completely unique or unaffected by previous discourses (Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2009: 57). Therefore, in order to create a new one, a series of decisions needs to be made. Decisions on which aspects to include and omit are what creates the effect of the representation. Media outlets can try to affect their audience's attitudes about a topic by focusing on only the positive or the negative sides of it, but this would also affect their own credibility as unbiased news outlets. In the case of immigration, for instance, the media can create a very negative representation of the issue by only discussing the problems caused by it. Although media outlets tend to aim to be unbiased, it has been argued that complete neutrality is virtually impossible to achieve (Wodak 2001).

2.3 Women in the media

The media can be studied from several perspectives, but in the present study, I will look at the phenomenon from a feminist point of view. Within feminist media studies, representations are a widely researched topic. Although both genders have been studied, the focus remains on women, as female representations tend to be seen as more problematic. In this field of research, it is a common argument that the media presents a distorted view of reality and creates a one-sided perspective of

women's roles in the society (Mäkelä, Puustinen & Ruoho 2006: 28). This can be especially harmful for young girls, who are starting to build their own identities as women in society. Seeing how female characters are portrayed and how they are talked about in the media can affect these girls' views of themselves. Growing up surrounded by a certain type of "ideal woman" shown by the media, girls might start to think that this is what they should also aspire to be. For this reason, the media has a great responsibility when it comes to gender representations. Not only is it important to use different looking models to emphasize that there is more than one type which can be considered beautiful, but also to write about women and their roles in society in a varied manner instead of following the stereotypical norms.

Litosseliti (2006: 93) argues that although social expectations and gender roles have changed throughout time, women tend to still be portrayed in the media as sexual objects, mothers and wives. In media representations, men are typically seen as the active participants, whereas for women, the focus tends to always be on physical appearance. As Peirce (2007: 364) puts it, "women are encouraged to believe that how they look is more important than who they are or what they do". Since female representations tend to be based on physical appearance and social relationships, typical topics discussed in women's magazines include beauty tips, fashion trends and relationship advice.

Another stereotypical norm enforced by the media is heterosexuality (Litosseliti 2006: 100). Women have often been portrayed as actively seeking a heterosexual relationship, and women's magazines have offered their readers series of instructions to follow in order to first obtain a relationship and later to keep their partners satisfied (Litosseliti 2006: 100). Although sexual minorities are in a better position in Western societies now than ever before, they are still under-represented in the media. An example of such under-representation is the fact that women's magazines tend to still focus on giving relationship advice aimed at the opposite sex, instead of making such articles inclusive to all sexual orientations.

3 PRESENT STUDY

3.1 Research aim and questions

The focus of the present study will be on the representation of teenage girls in *Seventeen*. The aim is to identify the prevalent discourses used to discuss the different aspects of an average teenager's life. The discourses found in the articles will be analysed thoroughly in order to answer the following questions:

- 1) What discourses concerning the life of teenage girls can be found in the articles?
- 2) How are teenage girls represented in *Seventeen*?

3.2 Data and methods

The data for the study consists of three issues of an American teen magazine called *Seventeen*. With more than 15 million monthly readers it is one of the largest teen magazines in the world (Hearst Communications 2019). According to its publisher, *Seventeen* also has the largest teen magazine website, *Seventeen.com* (ibid.), and it interacts with its audience on several social media platforms, so the real reach of the brand goes beyond the monthly readers of the magazine. In addition to the American *Seventeen*, there are seven international editions published around the world (ibid.), so the popularity of the brand is undeniable.

The topics discussed in *Seventeen* are based on the interests assumed to be typical for 13-to-19-year-old girls. Each issue of the magazine is divided into four parts titled "fashion", "beauty", "health", and "life". Apart from the health section, which only features one or two articles per issue, the number of pages dedicated to each part is approximately equal between the other three parts. In my analysis, I will focus on the articles under the title "life", as my research aim is to find the discourses related to teenagers' everyday lives, and these articles also tend to be longer than in the other sections, so there will be more text to analyse. The data chosen for the present study includes issues 1, 4 and 5 of 2018. These are some of the most recently published issues and thus will represent the current situation most accurately.

The method which will be used to analyse the data is critical discourse analysis. I will use Halliday's (1994 as cited in Benwell & Stokoe 2006) three metafunctions as the starting point for the analysis. These metafunctions are the ideational, interpersonal and textual, each of which corresponds to different grammatical features. Transitivity corresponds to the ideational metafunction, and it involves the participants, processes and circumstances. Participants can be either active or passive

and realize material, mental, relational, verbal or existential processes, whereas circumstances relate to time, manner and place. The interpersonal aspect is connected to mood and modality, which are concerned with clause structure types. Mood relates to the choice between declarative, interrogative and imperative clauses. Modality, on the other hand, refers to the level of certainty of a clause, which can be realized by adverbs, modal verbs, verbs of cognition and copular verbs, for instance. Finally, the textual metafunction corresponds to theme, which involves patterns of information. Theme refers to given or familiar information, which is often the first grammatical element of a clause. The rest of the clause, containing new information is called rheme. (Benwell & Stokoe 2006.)

I will use these tools to analyse the data from the point of view of female representation. I will study the linguistic choices made in the articles in order to understand the manners in which *Seventeen* represents its readers. The focus of the analysis will be on clause structures and word choices. The participants and processes of the clauses will be analysed along with the mood and modality. In addition, I will study the nouns and pronouns used to refer to girls, and the adjectives used to describe them. By analysing the language used in the articles, I will intend to gain a comprehensive view of the central discourses and the overall representation built by them.

4 ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I will present my data analysis in order to answer the research questions. The analysis is divided into two parts. First, I will introduce the four central discourses I found in the articles, which are the romantic relationship discourse, the body confidence discourse, the role model discourse, and the societal discourse. These particular discourses were chosen based on the reoccurrence of these themes in various articles in all three issues of the magazine. Although other discourses were present as well, I found these four to be the most predominant and thus the most relevant for the study. Finally, after presenting all four discourses, there will be discussion about the representation of teenage girls created by these discourses.

4.1 The romantic relationship discourse

Adolescents are often at a stage of discovering their sexuality and becoming romantically interested in their peers, so this also tends to be a reoccurring topic in teen magazines. Therefore, the first discourse I will analyse is that of the romantic relationship. Previous research has shown that teen magazines tend to encourage girls to “be themselves” and to build a confidence of their own, but the implicit reason behind it seems to be to appear more attractive to boys (Kim 2007: 483). Consequently, the pursuit of heterosexual relationships is often seen as one of the core themes of teen magazines (Kim 2007). In *Seventeen*, romantic relationships are also discussed in various articles, but contrary to Kim’s findings, there seems to be no heteronormativity. “Seventeen’s Guide to Kissing” (Seventeen 2018 March: 90-95), for instance, begins with listing “outdated beliefs” about kissing, one of which is “same-sex smooching is a taboo (eye roll)”. Thus, already in the beginning of the article, it is made clear that *Seventeen* does not support heteronormativity. Instead, they seem to reinforce equality and inclusivity. This can be seen, for instance, in the lack of gender specific pronouns when discussing romantic relationships. In the “Guide to Kissing”, the writer refers to the potential partner of the reader as “they” or “the other person”, not making any assumption about their gender. In a section called “Ask a Kissing Coach”, Joanna Shakti answers some common questions about kissing. One of these questions is whether there is a way to know if someone is interested or not, and in her answer, Shakti mentions different hints to look for if one’s romantic interest is a boy and if it is a girl. This is another example of inclusivity, as the gender of the possible kissing partner is not assumed.

The language in “Seventeen’s Guide to Kissing” (Seventeen 2018 March: 90-95) is rather informal, which suggests a close relationship between the text and its readers. The text mostly consists of

declarative clauses discussing the topic of kissing in general, such as “Kissing is supposed to be fun” or “There’s no such thing as a bad kisser”. In addition, there is a variety of imperative clauses giving direct instructions to the reader on how to prepare for her first kiss. Apart from a set of short “rules”, such as “Drop your expectations – they’re so extra” and “Watch your mouth”, there are also longer imperative clauses where the reader is addressed directly, “Think of it this way: You’re just two people who like each other, and you’re going to see if you like kissing each other”.

The language used in the article has several features of spoken language, as can be seen in the following extract, “No sticky lip stuff. I mean, I love sticky lip stuff – but the other person will hate it because they’ll feel as if Spider-Man has trapped them against a wall.” Referring to lip products as “sticky lip stuff” and repeating the same noun phrase after using the filler “I mean” are characteristics of spoken language, which make the text appear more relaxed and less official. In addition, the writer uses teen slang, such as the word “extra” as an adjective, meaning that something is over the top, and the expression “Bye, Felicia!” which can be used to dismiss an unwanted person. Another linguistic feature which makes it clear who the target audience of the article are is a metaphor where a French kiss is compared to a song. “The tongue is like the guest rap feature on a song. Think of it like the Kendrick Lamar of the kiss.” As the majority of the readers of *Seventeen* are teenagers, it is assumed that they understand these slang words and references to pop culture. By using the informal language, which is also used by teenagers themselves, the magazine seems to intend to appear more relatable for its readers.

4.2 The body confidence discourse

A central message in *Seventeen* seems to be that there are many types of beauty and that everyone should learn to accept and feel good in their own bodies. In an article called “Perfectly Me!” (*Seventeen* 2018 October: 78-83), six girls share their stories about learning to embrace their insecurities and feeling confident in their own bodies despite their “flaws”. The language used in the article is filled with empowering words and utterances. The girls describe themselves as “independent”, “strong”, “rebel” and “body-positive”, and encourage the readers to realize that “you are beautiful no matter how you look”. What all these girls have in common is self-love and the desire to inspire other girls to feel it too. Although they are in the same age group as the readers of the magazine, in this article, these girls are portrayed in a big sister-type of manner. They are sharing the struggles they have had with their self-esteems, and encouraging the “little sister”, i.e. the reader, to find confidence of her own. This type of intimate relationship created between the magazine and its readers is one of the key elements in teen magazines (Kim 2007).

The language in “Perfectly Me!” is informal but does not feature any speech-like features as some of the other articles. Each narrative is told from a first-person perspective using mainly rather short, declarative sentences, such as “I love how independent and strong I am.” Three of the girls also address the reader directly at the end of their narratives. One of them concludes her story by saying, “There is stuff you can’t really change about yourself, and you should appreciate it all. Be yourself and be happy.” Giving this type of inspiring messages addressed directly to the reader is what creates the intimate relationship between the text and its audience.

Another article concerning the body confidence discourse is “Nude Awakening” (Seventeen 2018 October: 54-55), in which a young woman shares her story of sending nude pictures of herself to a classmate. The story is told from a first-person perspective making it seem more personal. The narrator explains that she thought sending these photos of herself would make the boy like her, but in the end, it only made her like herself less. The message behind this article seems to be for teenage girls to find confidence in themselves instead of seeking validation from others, especially boys. Furthermore, the article encourages girls to support each other. The author of *Sexting Panic*, Amy Hasinoff says, “It’s not just about how you handle being in that situation but how you handle it when others are. If someone’s photo goes viral, don’t slut-shame.” The intention behind these types of messages seems to be to enforce solidarity among girls. In a study about *Cosmopolitan*, which is a women’s magazine aimed at young adults, Machin and Van Leeuwen (2010: 627) concluded that women were portrayed as being part of a “global sisterhood of ‘fun, fearless women’”. This idea of a sisterhood within the readers of a magazine can also be found in *Seventeen*.

4.3 The role model discourse

The cover story of each issue of *Seventeen* tends to feature a young, successful woman. These women are often known for their work in the entertainment industry as singers and actors for instance, but in the articles, the readers get to know more about their personal lives. The topics discussed in these interviews include activism, body confidence, love, self-expression and societal issues, for instance. By not focusing on the celebrities’ achievements in the entertainment industry, they are made to seem more relatable to the readers. Many of these cover girls are in the same age group as the target audience of the magazine, and they are portrayed as relatively normal teenagers who are dealing with many of the same issues as the readers. This, again, contributes to the “big sister-effect”.

The cover girl of the October/November issue is Amandla Stenberg, who in the article is described as “intersectional feminist superstar”, “the voice of a generation”, and “whom Beyoncé wants Blue Ivy to be like when she grows up” (Seventeen 2018 October: 56-61). She is a successful actor, but in the interview, she talks more about the struggles she has faced growing up than her upcoming film. She shares her experiences of going to a “white” private school as an African American teen, coming out as gay and finding confidence in her own body. “I hated my hair growing up – I thought it was ugly” is a statement made by Stenberg, which many other teenagers can probably relate to. Whether it’s hair, skin, stomach or legs, most people in their teens tend to have some feature about their appearance which they are not satisfied with.

After a third-person introduction about her achievements in the entertainment industry on the first page, the rest of the article is written from the point of view of a first-person narrator. The mood of the article is declarative, as the reader is not addressed by interrogative or imperative clauses. This creates a certain social distance between the text and the reader. What decreases this distance, however, is the informality of the language. It features expressions such as, “she was like” as a way of introducing what someone has said, and swearing, “I don’t give a s*** if someone on the Internet says, “You’re ugly, and I hate you.””, which are both common aspects of spoken language. In relation to transitivity, the most common process types found in the article are material, mental and relational, as the narrator is describing her own thoughts, feelings and experiences. For instance, in the clause, “I also think making art is important” *think* is a mental process realized by the experiencer, *I*.

4.4 The societal discourse

Traditionally, the most common topics in teen magazines include fashion, beauty and relationships. Kim (2007: 482) even goes as far as to argue that topics such as education, careers, travel, sports, public service, or politics tend not to be mentioned in them at all. However, that is not the case for *Seventeen*. In the data chosen for the present study, an interest in many of the previously mentioned topics could be found.

In the March/April issue, there is an article dedicated to college called “We started your college list for you (you’re welcome)” (Seventeen 2018 March: 64-65). The article presents five different subjects to major in and two different universities to study each of them in. What makes the article interesting is that each possible major is discussed from a feminist point of view. For instance, the introduction to studying politics at Rutgers University is, “We *all* want to see more women in government, and this school is making it happen.” The other schools are also marketed through their

feminist student groups and successful female alumni, which makes it clear that the article is specifically aimed at young women. The language used in this article is rather formal, as the purpose of it is to provide information about these different schools. The mood is a combination of declarative clauses stating facts about the schools, such as “So the college offers courses on how to create short films for brands (like Volkswagen)”, and imperative clauses addressing the reader directly, such as “Imagine running your own store – before you graduate!”

A more serious social issue is raised in the article “It’s time to talk to guys about sexual harassment” (*Seventeen* 2018 March: 66-67). It begins with a teenage girl sharing an experience from her childhood and discussing the problematic side of pop culture, where sexual harassment is sometimes even romanticized. The writer of this narrative uses informal language and rather short, declarative clauses. A series of short main clauses can be used as a way to add emphasis on the words, as can be seen here, “Suddenly, we weren’t thinking about four square and handball anymore. It was, What do boys think of how I look? We were 11. We gave those boys the power.” As the reader is not directly addressed, there is a social distance between the text and the audience. Although the style of writing is rather informal, and the writer uses humorous-sounding expressions, such as the term “mouth breathers” when referring to sexual harassers, the tone of the article is very serious. The writer makes powerful statements, such as “The reason my friends and I didn’t call out the boys in sixth grade is because if a girl speaks up, the impression isn’t that she’s strong or charismatic or a leader – it’s that she’s a bitch” emphasizing the seriousness of the issue.

This narrative is followed by five teenage boys giving their views about the sexual harassment cases discussed in the media, and a list of “5 things to do” addressed at boys and men. Since boys are not the target audience of *Seventeen*, the readers are encouraged to share the list with the boys in their lives. These five pieces of advice given to boys consist almost exclusively of imperative verbs. The pronoun “you” is used repeatedly to address the audience directly, which makes some of the statements sound almost accusatory. Declarative sentences, such as “If a person is not capable of providing consent, you have not received it”, and “When you’re invited into someone’s living room, that doesn’t mean you’re allowed in their bedroom” seem to suggest that all boys are potential sexual harassers. One of the boys interviewed in the article also acknowledges this assumption by saying, “It’s almost implied that all men are like that, but we’re not.” The other boys use the collective pronoun “we” as well, emphasizing the fact that this issue concerns everyone. “We must challenge the problematic behavior that we exhibit as a result of our male privilege. It is not a slight against our

‘masculinity’ to follow the lead of women as we dismantle the patriarchy – it is our responsibility”, says one of them. As can be seen in this extract, the mode is declarative and the style rather formal.

In the article “Voices of the year” (Seventeen 2018 December: 45-51), six women discuss serious societal issues through their own experiences. These stories include an Asian actress discussing race issues, a high school student involved in the March for Our Lives -movement following a school shooting at her own school, a gymnast who was a victim of sexual abuse, a Muslim woman running for office, an actress who founded a platform to encourage young people to vote, and another actress who recently came out as transgender. Although three of these women are famous actresses and one is an Olympic gold medallist, the focus of the article is on the societal issues they are discussing rather than their personal achievements in their careers. These six women are again presented as role models for the audience of the magazine. Since many of them are in the public eye, they have the opportunity to raise awareness of these issues in a manner that an average teenager cannot. However, by discussing such important social problems in a teen magazine, they are encouraging the readers to educate themselves on societal issues and get involved in the discussion.

4.5 The representation of girls in *Seventeen*

In Machin and van Leeuwen’s (2010: 627) study on *Cosmopolitan*, the researchers listed romantic adventure and sexual pleasure, health and beauty, consumer goods and pleasurable activities, and career success as the main objectives pursued by the readers. Apart from sexual pleasure, all these themes were also present in *Seventeen*. Based on the four discourses presented in this chapter, the life of an average teenage girl seems to be portrayed as revolving around romantic relationships, body confidence issues, looking up to inspiring celebrities and seeking information and getting involved in the discussion about serious problems in society.

Teen magazines are often perceived as superficial, focusing only on appearance and not addressing issues which truly matter. Based on this study, however, it seems that *Seventeen* does discuss more serious topics as well as sharing the latest fashion trends and makeup looks. Despite featuring a variety of beauty and fashion tips, the message behind many articles seems to be to encourage girls to find inner confidence and realize that they do not need the trendiest jeans, a new hairstyle or a bold lipstick to feel beautiful. In addition, *Seventeen* raises awareness of issues such as racism and sexual harassment, and encourages its readers to educate themselves and get involved in activism to fight for the things they believe in. Girls are portrayed as strong and active individuals who are interested

in societal matters and willing to do their part to make the world a better place. Furthermore, the idea of a sisterhood among the readers is another key aspect of the representation created by the magazine. Encouraging girls to love and support each other instead of creating a competitive environment among them, is a significant characteristic of this magazine.

5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the four discourses presented in the previous chapter create the foundation of the representation of teenage girls in *Seventeen*. The magazine portrays girls as individuals with different aspirations in life. As women are becoming more and more equal with men in society, girls too are encouraged to fight for their rights and support other women instead of competing with them. Since growing up is not always easy, it is important for teens to have people to look up to and to be able to get information about topics which they find important, which is exactly what teen magazines offer their readers.

As previous studies have concluded, the central topics featured in teen magazines are fashion, beauty and lifestyle. This was also found to be the case in *Seventeen*. Contrary to some researchers' findings, however, *Seventeen* did not seem to enforce heteronormativity when discussing romantic relationships. Although there were various articles dedicated to this topic, the writers used gender-neutral language in order not to make assumptions about the gender of the readers' possible romantic interests. Another difference found in this study in comparison to previous research was the interest in topics such as education, activism and social issues, which other researchers have argued not to be mentioned in teen magazines at all.

Gender representations are a widely researched topic, so the contribution of the results found in this study is rather small in its field. However, since the data for this study consisted of issues published in 2018, the results reflect a contemporary representation of girls in *Seventeen*. Thus, the findings of this study can possibly be useful for future researchers interested in the topic. Since this study only focused on *Seventeen*, the results cannot be generalised to other teen magazines. Furthermore, due to the small sample of data and the limitations of the analysis, this study does not give an exhaustive picture of the representation of girls in *Seventeen*. The analysis focused only on the four most predominant discourses found in the chosen issues although other discourses were also present. In order to do a more exhaustive analysis about the topic, the data should be larger and the analysis more thorough than in this study.

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