

PRUDE AWAKENING: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF
RECENT PRESCRIPTIVE ABSTINENCE TEXTS

by

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ABSTRACT

In the last few years, a number of abstinence-oriented, secular, popular press prescriptive texts focusing on young women's sexual practices have been published. Using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, I analyze discourses of sexuality present in these texts and explore how these texts converge and diverge with the broader U.S. abstinence movement.

My analysis demonstrates that the prescriptive texts mirror a version of sexuality associated with both the abstinence movement and the Christian Right: one that is biologically- or spiritually-based, natural, gendered, oppositional, heterosexual, powerful, fixed, and in women only, virtually unable to overcome without negative effects. In this view, sex is dangerous and damaging to young woman as individuals and to society as a whole.

The prescriptive texts diverge from the abstinence movement in important ways, primarily through their embrace of Girl Power discourses. The ways in which Girl Power is used reveal engagements with feminism absent from the abstinence movement, and also highlight neoliberal dimensions of subjectivity and success similarly missing from the wider abstinence movement. The prescriptive texts' authors use neoliberal Girl Power discourses to link young women's sexual practices with success, which allows the authors to construct abstinence as an empowering intervention in young women's lives. This is in tension with the abstinence movement, where abstinence is a matter of avoiding harm rather than achieving good. I conclude that these divergences suggest the books constitute a distinct trend within the movement, which I call "New Victorianism."

Other scholars have used New Victorianism to refer to a post-World War II shift in social relations in which women returned to the private sphere of the home, essentialized as wives and mothers, and I argue that the New Victorian books similarly construct girls in the 21st century as

“mothers-in-waiting.” However, I also use the term to signal the New Victorian authors’ use of neoliberal Girl Power discourses that allows them to celebrate girls’ achievements and advocate for a conservative, individualist agenda at the same time.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Girls, is this what you want to give to your husband? This?” The youth minister held up a flower stem: petal-less, naked, and damaged, its head drooping a bit from the plucking he had given it. According to the youth minister, each petal on the floor represented a sexual encounter, a little piece of you given away carelessly and permanently. At the beginning of the demonstration, when the flower was intact, the youth minister had announced that it was the gift a virgin gave her husband on their wedding night.

Although I saw the above demonstration at an evangelical Christian church camp as a teenager in the U.S. in the mid-1990’s, the messages implicit in it continue to circulate today in the U.S. abstinence movement as well as in a quite different venue: recently published, secular prescriptive texts. In the academy, prescriptive advice literature has provided interesting and fruitful entry points for analyses that focus on themes of adolescent sexuality and gender (see Currie, 2001; Jackson, 2005; Peril, 2002). Although several studies center on adolescents’ interaction with and readings of advice texts, written forms of advice can be a rich site for textual analysis as well. In this thesis, I focus on a rash of books published in the last two years that have garnered media attention for promoting traditionalist ideas of sexuality typically associated with the pre-feminist, pre-sexual revolution 1950’s, or even earlier (Bussel, 2007; Kipnis, 2007). These books, all focused on young women, present unmarried sex as something for young women that is at best unfulfilling and at worst, damaging.

The four books I focus on are *Girls Gone Mild* (2007): *Young Women Reclaim Self-Respect and Find It’s Not Bad to be Good* by Wendy Shalit; *Unprotected* (2007): *A Campus Psychiatrist Reveals How Political Correctness in Her Profession Endangers Every Student*, by Miriam Grossman; *Prude* (2007): *How the Sex-Obsessed Culture Damages Girls (and America,*

Too!) by Carol Platt Liebau; and *Unhooked* (2007): *How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love, and Lose at Both* by Laura Sessions Stepp. After a selection process I will describe in more detail in Chapter Two, I chose these books because they share very similar understandings of how and why young women's current sexual practices are harmful, and they also point to the alleged hypersexualization of American culture as an important force behind these sexual practices. In addition, I chose these books because of the media attention they received, the variety of which seemed to suggest both a resonance with shifting cultural attitudes towards young women and sex and a warning against the same.

While discourses that claim unmarried sex is harmful for women are not a new phenomenon (Kipnis, 2007), the publication of this cluster of books, coupled with other indicators such as the dramatic expansion of abstinence-only sexuality education in the United States under the Bush administration (Howell & Keefe, 2007) and the continued, though reduced, funding support of this expansion under the Obama administration (Douglas, 2009), hints at a possible pendulum swing towards a more conservative climate around sexuality in general, and around young female sexuality in particular. However, the election of Obama, in combination with the growing number of states that are rejecting federal abstinence funding (Heywood, 2009) and Americans' increasing support for gay marriage (Agiesta & MacGillis, 2009), may signal a move away from sexual conservatism instead. These books, as cultural artifacts, are likely to mirror currently prominent sexuality discourses, and therefore warrant a critical examination at this time to explore the conflicting ways in which the sexual subjectivity of young women is discursively constructed and regulated.

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis provides a theoretical and methodological framework that enables empirical study of the ways in which text, discourse, and social and

cultural change relate to each other (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). More specifically, CDA lays out a method for analyzing discourse and social practice in such a way that theoretical concerns are linked to and are made practical by analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). While I use other methods to answer some of my research questions, CDA represents the main theoretical and methodological approach I employ.

The research questions I seek to answer are:

- How do the prescriptive texts discursively construct young women and their sexuality?
- How does the abstinence movement constitute youth sexuality?
- How are the prescriptive texts related to the larger US teen abstinence movement?
- How do the prescriptive texts' discursive representations of young women and their sexuality position the trend as a distinct strand within the abstinence movement?
- What ties do the discourses and representations in the prescriptive books have to larger social and political agendas?

The use of prescriptive texts as an object of analysis requires the elucidation of a few cautions. Importantly, as Parr (2003) points out, the link between the advice offered in books and the lived practices of the books' intended readers or advice recipients is tenuous at best, so prescriptive texts are likely to more accurately reflect ideologies than realities. Because my intention with this study is not to make claims about young women's lived experiences, but rather examine societal discourses around their sexuality, I believe the decision to examine these prescriptive texts is an appropriate one.

However, in offering these cautions, I do not mean to imply that prescriptive texts have no bearing on young women's lives whatsoever. For example, as Adams (2002) emphasizes, advice texts written by adults for teenagers do contribute to the creation of normative ideals to

which both individual teenagers and teenagers as a group are compared. Representations of ‘normal’ gender roles in the books in this study factor in to a societal understanding of appropriate femininity by which all young women are judged, regardless of how closely or distantly they themselves subscribe to the particular version of gender roles put forth in the books. In addition, the societal understandings to which the books contribute could potentially influence policy decisions that directly affect teenagers’ lives; school district or university guidelines, state or provincial policies, or federal laws, for instance.

Contextual Notes

In order to situate the prescriptive texts within a political context and my approach to them within an academic discipline, in this section I briefly describe the history of U.S. federal abstinence funding and the field of girls’ studies. I outline the history of federal funding because the federal funding of abstinence has had a large, though not uncontested, influence on the rise of the abstinence movement, of which the prescriptive texts are a part. Similarly, the field of girls’ studies has played an important role in challenging commonsense ‘truths’ about young women and their lives. The prescriptive texts make several such truth claims, and through my analysis of them I hope to contribute to the breaking down of discourses which position young women in oppressive ways.

U.S. federal funding of abstinence programs. Though in this thesis I look at the wave of recent secular, popular press books that detail how sexual activity harms teenage girls and university-aged women, a much larger American trend encouraging teen abstinence predates the 2007 publication dates of my focus books. The federal government’s funding of this movement has been instrumental in its growth and has helped its discourses gain prominence. However, federal funding, like federal power in general, is at times limited by state powers and local

control; states can reject abstinence funds, for instance, and the decision to teach only abstinence is left up to individual school districts. In addition, it is important to note that the time in which abstinence funding increased was not a period of unbridled conservatism; as Kelly (2000) points out, in the early- and mid-1990's ideologically different groups formed a consensus around 'family values' which coalesced around sex education and single motherhood. See Table 1 at the end of this chapter for an explanatory timeline.

Although the United States government has funded abstinence education programs since 1982, the amount of money devoted to abstinence programs grew dramatically in 1998 due to the addition of Section 510 to Title V of the Social Security Act of 1996, which was dedicated to welfare reform (Howell & Keefe, 2007). Importantly, this law also defined the criteria by which abstinence programs could become eligible for federal funds. A qualifying program

- A. Has as its exclusive purpose, teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity;
- B. Teaches abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school age children;
- C. Teaches that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems;
- D. Teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity;
- E. Teaches that sexual activity outside of the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects;

F. Teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child's parents, and society;

G. Teaches young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increases vulnerability to sexual advances; and

H. Teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity. (Administration for Children and Families, 2007)

Reinforcing the overtly moral rather than scientific focus of the requirements, it is important to note that “in abstinence education programs, information about contraception is included only as it supports the abstinence message. [...] Contraception is usually discussed in terms of its failure rates and inability to completely protect individuals from pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases” (Committee on Government Reform, 2006, p. 10). Also key is the emphasis on marriage; in light of the very few US states in which gay marriage is legal, gay and lesbian people are essentially unable by definition to meet the ‘expected standard of human sexual activity.’

Title V money is given to states, and the act requires them to match the federal contribution at a ratio of 3 state dollars for every 4 federal dollars (Howell & Keefe, 2007). Significantly, more and more states are rejecting these grants; as of January 2009, half of the 50 states had declined to apply for Title V funding, citing reasons ranging from a distrust of the abstinence-only message, to growing evidence against its efficacy, to problems with grant administration at the federal level (Heywood, 2009; Freking, 2008). The amount allotted under

this act has remained constant at \$50 million dollars, but there are two other streams that have contributed millions more to the abstinence education pool. All of the funding streams require compliance with the eight point abstinence education definition described above.

The Adolescent Family Life Act represents the original foray into abstinence education during the Reagan presidency (Howell & Keefe, 2007). Originally, two thirds of the money under this act was required to fund services for teenagers with children and pregnant teenagers while one third could be used for abstinence programs, but that requirement was waived in 1997. The funding for this program started to increase that same year and has now more than tripled from its pre-1997 levels.

Starting in 2001, a new funding stream was created by Congress, called Special Projects of Regional and National Significance Community-Based Abstinence Education Programs (Howell & Keefe, 2007). Commonly called SPRANS or CBAE, this stream distributes grants to community organizations, both public and private. It is through this stream that faith-based organizations like crisis pregnancy centers or the Silver Ring Thing, which I will discuss later, receive funding. Since its inception, the amount of funding for these community-based projects has undergone a 465% increase, from \$20 million to \$113 million in 2007. Combining all three streams together, \$1 billion in federal funding has been spent on abstinence education programs in the United States since 1996 (Robb, 2008).

Girls' studies. The books I examine focus on young women, which invites reflection on certain taken-for-granted meanings of 'girl' and 'girlhood.' To frame my understandings of 'girl' and 'girlhood,' I draw on work produced by girls' studies scholars in this area, as I do with their work on the interaction of gender with other subject identities also. In this section I give a short overview of this work and outline the development of the field.

Girls' studies, a relatively recent area of focus, grew out of the more established fields of youth studies and women's studies (Harris, 2004). Developed as a result of scholars who sought greater attention to gender within youth studies and age within women's studies, girls' studies emerged as a later product of this late 1970's and early 1980's work. From the beginning, girls' studies was interdisciplinary and international in nature, encompassing feminist work in sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and education.

The field challenged and continues to challenge the scientific-psychological concept of girlhood as an age-based developmental stage, grounded in biology, that young women everywhere experience in very similar ways (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005). Instead, girlhood is conceived as "a cultural space and identity that girls are compelled to occupy and in which they are trained through various means" (Marshall, 2007, p. 708), and along with girlhood, girls themselves are seen as "constituted as objects at the intersection of a number of competing claims to truth" (Griffin, 2004, p. 29). More specifically, particular historical, political, cultural, and social contexts contribute to the production and negotiations of what girlhood is and is not, and these understandings shift over time. Researchers in girls' studies tend to focus on "difference" and "distinctiveness" (Griffin, 2004, p. 30) rather than universality, but this is not to say that girls' experiences of, for instance, gender share nothing in common; it is rather to draw attention to how powerfully other factors like class, race, ethnicity, ability, and religion can shape girls' lives (Ward & Benjamin, 2004).

The gendered expectations present in girls' encounters with school, the workplace, media, popular culture, adulthood, friends, family, and romantic relationships, along with body image and self-esteem, comprise some important topics examined by early girls' studies scholars (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005). A connection was drawn between girls' experiences and

recurrent problems in the lives of adult women (Ward & Benjamin, 2004), and the means and manners of young women's self-expression were investigated as well (Harris, 2004). More recently, researchers in the field have explored the construction of girls' gendered, raced, and classed identities (Harris, 2004) and girlhoods (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005). The construct of girlhood itself continues to be a productive focus of inquiry, particularly in light of global economic changes, which are also implicated in the production of a new feminine worker-subject (Walkerdine, 2003). Finally, two contradictory discourses, 'girl power' and 'Reviving Ophelia', also feature prominently in more recent girls' studies work (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005).

Although comparatively recent, the field of girls' studies is established enough to invite critique of its history and reflection on its current state. For example, Mazarella (2008) argues that girls' studies scholars in the past tended to focus on western, middle-class white girls, but are now broadening their scope to include girls (and research) from varied physical and social locations. She also suggests that explorations of media and popular culture are being integrated into multifaceted investigations of girls' lives rather than dominating research emphases. Also in terms of media and popular culture, there has been a shift from looking at how young women are passively affected by them to examining how girls actively interpret, resist, and develop their own media and cultural artifacts.

Ward and Benjamin (2004), speaking about the U.S. context, argue that since the late 1990's, much research in girls' studies has shifted from advocating for systemic change in society's culture and institutions to recommending more psychologically-oriented strategies focused on improving/fixing individual girls. On a related note, they propose that the initial connection between girls' development and problems in women's lives has been weakened, the field tending to instead "address girls' concerns solely as concerns for and about girls" (Ward &

Benjamin, 2004, p. 23). While addressing girls' needs at the individual level is of course important, this approach ignores the potential of alliances between adults (especially adult women) and girls, and adult work at a social or collective level which promotes the social, economic, and political change that is needed to fully address the needs of girls.

Thesis Structure

My thesis is divided into six chapters. In this chapter, Chapter One, I have outlined my project, the rationale behind it, my research questions, and have provided a political context for the texts I analyze and a disciplinary context for my approach to them. Chapter Two focuses on my theoretical orientation and methodology. I discuss Critical Discourse Analysis as both theory and method and bring in Qualitative Document Analysis to shed light on my text and text sample analysis processes. In addition, I return to the topic of girls' studies with a brief look into two discourses important both to the field and to my analysis, Reviving Ophelia and Girl Power. In Chapter Three, I look at the history of the U.S. abstinence movement and detail views on sexuality held in common between it, the prescriptive texts, and evangelical Christianity. Chapters Four and Five include my close text analysis; in contrast to Chapter Three, these chapters highlight difference from the abstinence movement rather than similarity. Chapter Four centers on the prescriptive texts' engagements with feminism while Chapter Five highlights neoliberal influences in the texts. Finally, Chapter Six comprises my concluding thoughts.

TABLE 1

Abstinence Movement Timeline

1982	The US federal government begins funding abstinence education programs through the Adolescent Family Life Act, though the funding pool is limited (Howell & Keefe, 2007).
1992	Communitarians (those who value and wish to build up community rather than individualism), including then-President Bill Clinton, begin a ‘family values’ campaign which, in a consensus that reaches across ideological lines, blames sex education for increasing single motherhood (Kelly, 2000).
1993	True Love Waits, a religious abstinence program, begins (LifeWay, 2007b).
1996	Based on the false assumption that teen pregnancy and single motherhood cause social ills like poverty, the Personal Responsibility Act is passed (Kelly, 2000). This act, part of Clinton’s welfare reform platform, dramatically expands abstinence funding due to its \$50 million provision for abstinence education (Howell & Keefe, 2007). In addition, it sets out the eight-point criteria abstinence programs must meet. The religious abstinence program Silver Ring Thing starts (Silver Ring Thing, 2007a).
1997	The requirement dictating that two-thirds of the Adolescent Family Life Act money be spent on services for pregnant and parenting teens is waived, freeing all of the funds up for abstinence use. Funding for this program begins to increase (Howell & Keefe, 2007).
1998	The \$50 million for abstinence programs provisioned in 1996 is spent for the first time (Howell & Keefe, 2007).
2001	Congress creates a new funding stream, called SPRANS or CBAE, through which community organizations (including religious organizations, initially) receive money (Howell & Keefe, 2007; “Government to Stop,” 2006).
2004	The Waxman report criticizes several abstinence programs (Committee on Government Reform, 2004).
2006	An ACLU lawsuit prevents the Silver Ring Thing program from receiving federal abstinence funds due to its religious nature (“Government to Stop,” 2006).
2007	<i>Girls Gone Mild</i> , <i>Prude</i> , <i>Unhooked</i> , and <i>Unprotected</i> are published.
2009	Half of the 50 states do not apply for Title V abstinence funding (Heywood, 2009).

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL ORIENTATION AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I outline the theoretical ideas that guide my research and the steps I took to conduct it. First, I discuss the theoretical underpinnings of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, including its perspective on reality, social life, and discourse. Next, I give a brief overview of girls' studies and touch on two discourses important to my analysis, Reviving Ophelia and Girl Power. Lastly, I detail the study methodology, focusing on my processes for research, text selection, and analysis.

Theoretical Orientation

Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a broad term that encompasses many different ways of examining patterns of language use and their relationships to social life (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). An important stream within discourse analysis is critical discourse analysis, which seeks to interrogate and critique societal power relations through the empirical study of discourse and its connection to events or patterns in different areas of the social in order to help bring about positive social change. The specific version of critical discourse analysis I employ in my research is Norman Fairclough's approach. In broad terms, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis provides a framework for "the analysis of discourse as social practice" (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 64) through linguistic and non-linguistic methods. Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is a distinct approach within a larger set of critical discourse analyses, so for clarity I will refer to Fairclough's approach by abbreviating it to CDA, and will write out critical discourse analysis when referring to the larger umbrella grouping of approaches.

CDA is a social constructionist approach (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002) and as such embraces broad theoretical precepts about the nature of social reality and knowledge. For

example, social reality does not exist objectively somewhere ‘outside’ of our knowledge, but rather is a reflection of how we categorize it. However, Fairclough (2003) also maintains that reality cannot be reduced to what we know about it at any given moment because our knowledge of reality is “contingent, shifting, and partial” (p. 14). The ways in which we understand the social world are similarly contingent and partial, as they depend upon our particular historical and cultural milieus; there are no external, essential characteristics that the social world or the people that inhabit it possess (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Our worldviews are constructed through social interaction, and through these worldviews some beliefs and actions become normalized while others are marginalized. These actions and beliefs, along with our worldviews, are not unchangeable.

Like other approaches to critical discourse analysis, the epistemology of Fairclough’s CDA centers on an “emancipatory knowledge interest” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999), meaning the aim of CDA (and indeed, the aim of all critical social scientific projects) is generating knowledge that contributes to freedom from oppressive ideologies and power relations. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) explain that this knowledge interest stems from the synthesis of a dialectic between phenomenological knowledge, which seeks to articulate personal experiences of the world, and objectivist knowledge, which tries to pinpoint objective relations that shape personal experiences of the world. So while Fairclough’s approach does not endorse the idea of an absolute/objective ‘truth’, it does maintain that making testable or comparable truth claims through social scientific research can advance understanding of the social, which in turn can lead to more equitable social arrangements.

CDA takes from both structuralist and post-structuralist approaches in linguistics and social science, envisioning in many cases a dialectic between elements of the two: structure and

agency in social life, for example, or the linguistic structures of *langue* and the social and interpretive action of *parole* in language (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Many of the tenets of CDA reveal an affinity with a Foucauldian version of poststructuralism, though not as seamless as in some other versions of discourse analysis. The influence of Foucault's early works is clearly demonstrated, for instance, in the idea that discourse is constitutive (Fairclough, 1992). Foucault's later works contribute important theoretical bases for CDA in regard to the discursive characters of power and social change, and around the political character of discourse. However, CDA makes use of the concept of ideology to conceptualize group oppression, a point I will discuss later, whereas Foucault rejects it.

Discourse and Social Life

In Fairclough's approach, social life is made up of practices. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) define practices as "habitualized ways, tied to particular times and places, in which people apply resources (material or symbolic) to act together in the world" (p. 21). Always interactional in character, practices "are constituted throughout social life" and "constitute a point of connection [...] between 'society' and people living their lives" (p. 21). This point of connection also serves as a site of mediation between "abstract structures" and "concrete events" (p. 38), which is conceptually open enough to admit the perspectives of both structure and agency. One important set of practices in CDA is discursive practices, which, for clarity, necessitates a short elaboration of the term 'discourse'.

Discourse is a key term in CDA. Synthesized from different theoretizations in linguistics and social theory, discourse in CDA is a multifaceted concept and can be applied in several different ways. As Fairclough (1992) explains, one contributor to CDA's concept of discourse is linguistics, where the term is used to indicate a focus on processes of production,

interpretation and interaction between writer, text, and reader. In this way, language use is a social practice, and the term discourse is used as such (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). More specifically, discourse refers to semiotic or sign-carrying parts of social practices, including language, nonverbal communication, and visual images (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Discourse can also be used to describe the type of language used within specific fields; business discourse or political discourse, for instance.

Another conception of discourse important to CDA draws from social theory. In this understanding, discourse refers to “different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 3). To illustrate, Fairclough provides the example that in health care, medical science discourse currently dominates, but ‘alternative’ discourses of, for example, chiropractic medicine or acupuncture exist as well. Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) describe this as “a way of speaking that gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective” (p. 67); for instance, a feminist discourse or a consumer discourse.

As noted above, discourse can be used to refer to sign-carrying elements of social practices, which suggests that there are non-discursive elements of social practices and therefore non-discursive components of social life. For example, Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) explain that the practice of shopping contains both discursive elements (e.g., talking to a sales clerk) and non-discursive elements (e.g., paying, which is economic rather than discursive, and thus requires an economic rather than linguistic analysis). It is useful to think of discursive and non-discursive elements as different but not discrete, because sometimes non-discursive elements incorporate some discursive elements or discourses without becoming exclusively discursive (Fairclough, 2005). For example, using the act of paying from the above example, payment forms, including currency, have language writing on them, and the handing over of payment is

usually marked by ritualized linguistic exchanges. However, these discursive elements do not render the act of paying totally discursive, because there remains a material rather than discursive exchange which takes primacy over the discursive, and which requires an economic rather than linguistic analysis to comprehend. In other words, some social acts are mostly discursive, such as meetings, while in others “discourse is secondary to material action,” such as in “certain commodity production processes” (Fairclough, 2005, p. 925).

To clarify and illustrate the relationship between discourse and social practice, Fairclough (1992) presents a model with three conceptual dimensions; imagine them fitting together like concentric rings on a tree trunk. At the center lies *text*, which includes speech, writing, and visual images. Surrounding the text circle is *discursive practice*, which highlights text production and text consumption. The largest ring, *social practice*, encompasses both text and discursive practice. As the middle ring, discursive practice mediates the relationship between text and social practice (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). This positioning also emphasizes that discursive practice is the conduit through which texts influence and are influenced by social practice.

Discursive practices both constitute and are constituted by the social world, though sometimes only partially (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). To reiterate, the social world of CDA includes non-discursive elements and phenomena. Similarly, discourse shapes and is shaped by discursive practices and elements that are not entirely discursive, such as social structures. In this CDA differs from other versions of discourse analysis; some more post-structural versions, that of Laclau and Mouffe, for example, treat all of social life as discursive. Addressing this tendency, Fairclough (2003) emphasizes that his approach takes a critical realist perspective in that while the world is seen as socially and textually/discursively constructed, and people

continually “textually construe” (p. 8) the world (through, for instance, representation), these constructions form ‘real’ realities that may limit the ability of our particular discursive construals of the world to change its construction. Abstract social structures are also ‘real’.

In CDA, discourse is understood to have ideological effects (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). This means that discourse can and does act as a factor in the creation or maintenance of relations of domination, because it “reproduces and changes knowledge, identities, and social relations including power relations” (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 35). Importantly, the vector of influence between discourse and these aspects is not one way: these social elements, as well as other social practices and social structures, help to shape discourse at the same time discourse helps to shape them.

CDA focuses on detailed, qualitative textual analysis of smaller text samples, in contrast to more well-known quantitative methods of linguistic analysis such as content analysis, which tend to deal with large bodies of text. Some approaches to discourse analysis omit detailed text analysis completely, but Fairclough (2003) argues that close linguistic analysis of texts is important because “no real understanding of the social effects of discourse is possible without looking closely at what happens when people talk or write” (p. 3). On the other hand, some approaches to text analysis focus entirely on linguistics and neglect the relationship between text and society. In contrast, CDA mandates that some sort of social analysis (historical, organizational, or sociological, for example) must accompany its linguistic analysis. This non-linguistic analysis is necessary to make sense of texts’ causal and ideological effects. For my analysis I use feminist and sociological frameworks; more specifically, I rely on the insights of girls’ studies scholars, to which I will return now.

Girls' Studies

Disciplinarily, I consider my study to be part of the girls' studies tradition, which I described in Chapter One. Here I highlight two discourses that have received much attention from girls' studies scholars and that are important to my work as well, Reviving Ophelia and Girl Power.

Reviving Ophelia and Girl Power Discourses

Two discourses, Reviving Ophelia and Girl Power, have been the subject of much research in the field of girls' studies. Though for the sake of clarity and conciseness I discuss these discourses as if they are relatively fixed entities, it is important to note that discourses change over time. In addition, I should point out that these two discourses are not the only ones currently shaping girls' experiences, and like all discourses they do not function as passively accepted, deterministic forces in girls' lives, but are instead taken up unevenly, and at times actively resisted by girls and the important people and institutions in their lives.

Reviving Ophelia. The 1990s marked a rise in the ascension of girls and girls' issues into the academy and public consciousness alike. The early part of that decade saw several influential books and studies published that centered on what was described as an academic and psychological 'crisis' that befalls girls at the beginning of adolescence (Ward & Benjamin, 2004). Researchers in the educational arena examined topics like gender bias in the classroom, girls' negative experiences with schooling, and the connections between these findings and girls' declining academic performance and self-esteem during early adolescence. Some of this work reached a wide audience through publication in popular magazines; Peggy Orienstein's 1994 book *Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem and the Confidence Gap*, for example, was excerpted in *Glamour* and the *New York Times Magazine*.

Other authors examined the problems that seemed to occur during girls' early-adolescent psychological and social development. For example, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development*, the 1992 book by Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan, put forth the idea that girls entering adolescence start to censor their feelings and desires in order to avoid conflict and maintain close relationships, which compromises girls' ability to recognize and express their authentic opinions and emotions (Ward & Benjamin, 2004). Two years later, psychologist Mary Pipher's book *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* was published. According to Aapola, Gonick, and Harris (2005), Pipher's main argument is that American culture exerts pressure, particularly through the media, upon the once-unified and healthy selves of teenage girls until they split "into true and false selves" (p. 42). In their anxiety to fit into cultural ideals, girls become less assertive, resilient, and inquisitive after childhood, developing instead a personality characterized by caution, accommodating others, depression, pessimism, and self-negativity. According to the book, these problems can be solved or at least mitigated by the "saving, empowering, or reclaiming" (Marshall, 2007, p. 722) of their 'authentic selves'.

The popularity of *Reviving Ophelia* (it sold more than 1.5 million copies) (Ward & Benjamin, 2004) speaks to a "cultural fascination" (Aapola, Gonick, and Harris, 2005, p. 40) with girls as well as to long-held concerns about the vulnerability of girls as they go through adolescence. While the *Reviving Ophelia* discourse takes its name from Pipher's book, many of the elements and symbols that typify the discourse are part of a Western tradition of conceptualizing a fragile feminine adolescent/adolescence that far predates the book's publication date. Marshall (2007), for example, points out that the girl or young woman 'in crisis' and in need of rescue is a common figure in fairy tales as well as in late 19th century

narratives of hysteria. She argues that the modern Reviving Ophelia discourse echoes that era's "fascination with and definition of hysteria as a manifestation of psychological trauma written on the bodies of adolescent girls" (p. 712). The authors of works that reflect this discourse often refer to wounds and scars, both physical and psychological.

The Shakespearean character of Ophelia herself was used during the late 1800's to symbolize teenage girls wounded from their traumatic adolescences, and, as Aapola, Gonick, and Harris (2005) describe, Ophelia seems to have inspired the very conceptualization on which modern adolescence is based. The extremely influential 'father of adolescence,' G. Stanley Hall, established contemporary adolescence as a stormy and stressful life stage. This phase was to Hall "archetypically feminine" (Aapola, Gonick, and Harris, 2005, p. 40), so much so that while boys went through it and matured into adults, girls never escaped from it, destined instead to remain vulnerable and dependent. The image of adolescence as a chaotic life stage is an enduring one, and constitutes a representation that Gonick (2006) suggests "feeds into many of the demeaning cultural stereotypes about girls and young women" (p. 13) as moody, difficult, emotional, and unpredictable.

On a positive note, the Reviving Ophelia discourse has made more public some of the serious challenges girls meet growing up female in a patriarchal society (Marshall, 2007). For example, it has drawn needed attention to many girls' experiences with eating disorders, self-harming behavior, sexual exploitation, and body image.

However, several aspects of the Reviving Ophelia discourse have been criticized. For example, besides the problematic representation of girls as universally vulnerable and damaged, an image that many girls find condescending and inaccurate (Aapola, Gonick & Harris, 2005), some scholars have taken issue with the "essentialist girl-subject" (Marshall, 2007, p. 709) at the

center of the discourse. They have questioned the notion of deep psychological differences between young men and young women due to empirical studies that suggest, for instance, teenage boys struggle with self-esteem issues during adolescence roughly as much as their female peers do.

In addition, much like the liberal feminist tradition from which it draws, the *Reviving Ophelia* texts focus heavily on the experience of white girls in adolescence, which suggests that only the white experience matters, or perhaps instead that the white experience is the universal experience (Aapola, Gonick & Harris, 2005). Marshall (2007) extends this criticism to class and sexual orientation as well, pointing out that the books behind the *Reviving Ophelia* discourse “normalize adolescent girlhood as White, privileged and heterosexual” (p. 709), which obscures opportunities to explore girlhood experiences that involve something other than gender.

Finally, owing to the amount of personal girlhood experiences that appear in the *Reviving Ophelia* texts, some have questioned whether the true beneficiaries of projects associated with *Reviving Ophelia* are girls or adult women (Aapola, Gonick & Harris, 2005). The texts allow adult women to revisit their own hurtful adolescent experiences as girls and to comment on the formal and informal education girls receive (Marshall, 2007). However, since the discourse categorizes girlhood and its problems as a distinct stage, separate from adulthood and its problems, the ability of adult women and girls to form political alliances that benefit them both is compromised. In addition, the view of adolescence as a time of vulnerability and harm limits the possibilities of girls to speak and act on behalf of their own needs; as Marshall (2007) points out, “the wounded girl is often silent, in part, because the adult is always speaking for her” (p. 723).

Today, another version of the ‘girls-in-crisis’ discourse is circulating throughout popular consciousness: that of the ‘Mean Girl’ (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005). Recent movies,

magazines, television programs, and research have commented on what is positioned as a dramatic increase in bullying, violence, and aggression by girls (Ringrose, 2006). Though different from *Reviving Ophelia* in that its girl-subject is aggressive rather than vulnerable, like the vulnerable girl the aggressive girl “is still a girl in crisis who requires work and adult intervention to bring her back on to a path for successful development” (Aapola, Gonick & Harris, 2005, p. 49). Similarly, the mean girl is universalized and essentialized as white, middle-class, and heterosexual. Ringrose (2006) posits that the Mean Girl discourse “creates a new template for normal girlhood that moves along the continuum from nice to mean” (p. 407). In doing so, a connection between the feminine and the pathological is made via indirect/relational aggression, while violent aggression is seen as stemming from the feminine yet existing outside the boundaries of (white middle-class) femininity.

According to Ringrose (2006), the figure of the mean girl works to obscure “how much of the concern and controversy over ‘indirect’ and ‘relational’ aggression surrounds ‘saving the selves’ of primarily white and middle-class girls” (p. 407). Aapola, Gonick and Harris (2005) point out that in the *Reviving Ophelia* and Mean Girl discourses, the individual girl represents both the site of the problem and the key to the solution. Depending on their background, girls who ‘act out’ may be subject to interventions ranging from private self-esteem programs and psychological counseling to court hearings and jail. Middle-class white girls are subject to increased surveillance as a result of the mean girl discourse, but the consequences are far heavier for working class girls and girls of color, who find that previously ignored or minor offences now warrant arrest, and, unlike their middle-class and white peers, may not have the resources to avoid involvement in the criminal justice system (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005, p. 50).

Although 'poisonous' (or 'hypersexualized', in the case of the prescriptive texts) culture is often pointed to as a huge contributor to girls' struggles, solutions like improving girls' self-esteem or relationship skills imply that girls' responses to the culture are more important and more problematic than the culture itself. High self-esteem, while certainly beneficial to girls as individuals, does not change the complex material and discursive forces that shape their lives in ways different from boys and in ways different from each other as well. Individualized, psychological approaches are troubling because "the underlying structural causes of [girls'] emotional, attitudinal and behavioral dispositions and the material differences between girls and the interventions offered to them are unlikely to be addressed" (Aapola, Gonick & Harris, 2005, p. 50).

The Mean Girl discourse also connects to Girl Power discourses; for example, in the Mean Girl discourse, meanness is empowering (Currie, Kelly, and Pomerantz, 2009, p. 33). At the same time, however, the flip side of meanness-as-empowerment means that the Mean Girl discourse casts a shadow over girls' heralded successes at school (and, by extension, adult women's in the workplace) by raising the specter of power gains ill-gotten through relational aggression and manipulative tactics (Ringrose, 2006).

Girl Power. Compared to Reviving Ophelia, Girl Power is a more complex and varied discourse. It "re-writes the passivity, voicelessness, vulnerability and sweet naturedness linked to some forms of raced and classed girlhood" (Aapola, Gonick & Harris, 2005, p. 19), and linked to the Reviving Ophelia discourse as well. The term originated in the early 1990s, when it was associated with the Riot Grrl movement. Angry, political, and vocal, the Riot Grrls critiqued racism, sexism, classism, violence and heterosexism in the punk scene from which they came, in the media, and in society at large. They embraced and redefined youth, femininity, and

intersections between the two. In addition, the Riot Grrls promoted critical thinking about cultural and material consumption and encouraged young women to produce their own cultural messages through music, zines, and workshops. The Riot Grrls relationship with the mainstream media was often tense—popular magazines sought to capture the movement and profit from interest in it, but often wrote stories that were superficial, dismissive, and/or inaccurate, which led to a self-imposed interview blackout among some of the movement’s members.

Towards the mid 1990s, the tremendously popular Spice Girls took up the Girl Power mantle. Largely stripped of its social change agenda, the Spice Girl’s version Girl Power emphasized female solidarity and equal rights, and was celebrated in the mainstream media (Aapola, Gonick & Harris, 2005). Girl Power became a labeling phenomenon; the term was attached to almost any happening or trend involving women, and was very often used in marketing and advertising products. The version of the Girl Power discourse embraced by the Spice Girls, marketers, and mainstream media “positions young women as feisty, ambitious, motivated, and independent” (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005, p. 26). Although this discourse celebrates girls’ strength, achievements, and overall potential, it is silent on or even negative towards the liberatory political goals that marked earlier iterations of Girl Power.

Commenting on the ways in which this discourse works to render girlhood an apolitical space,

Taft (2004) puts forth four meanings of Girl Power that circulate within the discourse:

1. *Girl Power as anti-feminism.* Girl Power as antifeminism refers to elements within the discourse that portray feminism negatively and/or make a point to distinguish Girl Power from feminism. For example, Girl Power is often presented as a more palatable and less threatening alternative to feminism, committed to developing and affirming the best in each girl rather than

encouraging sustained and potentially uncomfortable societal change. Though cognizant of gender inequalities, this kind of Girl Power ignores or dismisses the progressive social vision so integral to feminism, presenting itself as a safer, sunnier, and spunkier way to overcome gender-based obstacles.

2. *Girl Power as postfeminism.* In contrast to Girl power as antifeminism, which acknowledges that girls still face challenges in today's world (albeit challenges that should be approached on a self-improvement basis rather than through collective change), Girl Power as postfeminism claims that girls and women have reached equal or near-equal status with boys and men. Therefore, the argument goes, "there is nothing left to be done" (Taft, 2004, p. 72) and feminism is irrelevant. In some cases this line of thinking goes even further to assert that girls are in fact dominant, as, for example, in the recent panic over boys' academic achievement. Claims of equality and dominance ignore the realities of gendered power relations and make invisible inequalities within members of the same gender, based on race, class, sexual orientation, and ability, for instance, that powerfully impact the lives of young women and men both.

3. *Girl Power as individual power.* Closely tied to the postfeminist messages in Girl Power, meanings of individual power portray a meritocratic world free of discrimination and limitations stemming from one's gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and ability. Girl Power as individualism promotes the idea that hard work alone brings success, and personal responsibility rather than social or institutional support is a key factor in achievement (or lack thereof). Positively, this meaning encourages girls to believe in the power of their own potential and

highlights successful female role models. However, it ignores important forces that shape girls' access to opportunities, and by implicitly condemning all failure as personal, it has the potential to negatively affect girls' self esteem and dampen chances for social analysis. In sum, through its promotion of individual power Girl Power "clouds girls' vision of current injustices, places blame for all problems on their own shoulders, and encourages their acceptance of the status quo" (Taft, 2004, p. 74).

4. *Girl Power as consumer power.* Co-opted by marketers, Girl Power is a pervasive force in the marketing of products to girls. Corporate advertisements and sales materials tie Girl Power to consumption, suggesting that girls' power is identical to and exists through their purchasing power. Girl Power as consumer power restricts girls' power to buying only, and excludes from even this limited exercise of Girl Power those who do not have extra money to spend.

In addition to these meanings, other scholars have explored Girl Power's connection to the portrayal of girls as hypersexual. Currie, Kelly, and Pomerantz (2009), for example, point out that discursively, girls' aggression is not limited to bullying or meanness but has a sexual dimension as well. Beyond simply pursuing heterosexual sex, in this discourse "girls are loud and bawdy sexual exhibitionists" (p. 35). Prominent examples of this portrayal include the 'ladette' phenomenon in the UK and the 'rainbow party' furor in North America.

In sum, Girl Power has many meanings. Some of them, along with the Reviving Ophelia discourse, are taken up in the prescriptive texts I examine; I touch on them at different points in the thesis. For example, some of the Girl Power meanings I outlined

above, following Taft (2004), appear in Chapters Four and Five, and I further explore Girl Power's link to hypersexuality in the conclusion. For now, however, I turn to my methodology.

Methodology

While CDA provides a substantive theoretical foundation and detailed methods for linguistic analysis, it offers less guidance in the areas of text and sample selection. To explain the rationale behind my selection processes I instead turn to qualitative document analysis (QDA; alternatively known as ethnographic content analysis), a method oriented towards “discovery and description,” “underlying meanings,” “patterns,” and “thematic emphasis” (Altheide, Coyle, DeVriese, & Schneider, 2008, p. 127). My inclusion of QDA is meant to supplement CDA by illuminating my text and sample selection process, which could not be adequately addressed through CDA methods alone; please note, however, that CDA remains my primary methodology. I return to CDA when discussing how I performed the analyses featured in chapters Three, Four, and Five.

Selection of Texts

Book Selection

In QDA, “the focus initially is on exploration, reading, looking, reflecting, and taking notes” as well as “process, meaning, and themes” (Altheide, Coyle, DeVriese, & Schneider, 2008, p. 135). My early research questions centered around the idea of hypersexualized culture, both how this idea was used historically and in recently published prescriptive texts directed at young women. To get a sense of the prescriptive texts I was interested in exploring, I started by reading three abstinence-oriented books I had read about on feminist or feminist-leading blogs: *Girls Gone Mild*, by Wendy Shalit, *Unhooked*, by Laura Sessions Stepp, and *The Thrill of the*

Chaste, by Dawn Eden. This first reading was general and oriented towards discovering broad concepts the books shared and familiarizing myself with the style of language used. After this reading I had a very general idea of what these books seemed to be about; for example, sex was portrayed as not only physically but also especially emotionally harmful, and young women were portrayed as victims of America's too-sexual culture, to which feminism seemed to be a major contributor. In QDA, the researcher's prior knowledge of the subject is an integral part of the analytical process, which came into play at this stage as I was struck by the similarities between the books' takes on abstinence and what I remembered hearing as a teenager in church during abstinence sermons: the characterization of sex and the (female) body as a gift, and the implicit devaluation of that gift through premarital sexual encounters, for instance.

To find more books like the ones I had read, I visited abstinence and modesty blogs, read reviews about books I thought might be pertinent, and looked at amazon.com's "readers also bought" suggestions for possible titles. To my original three I added *Prude*, by Carol Platt Liebau, *Unprotected*, by Miriam Grossman, and *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, by Ariel Levy. After reading them all, again looking for similarities and general concepts, I eliminated Eden's book because it was Christian-themed and I wanted to restrict my exploration to popular press, secular books.

At this point I undertook a more systematic and detailed analysis. The next stages of QDA emphasize "a logic of discovery, comparative analysis, and critical synthesis," which is realized through developing a protocol and through "exploratory and then articulated theoretical sampling, critical comparison, and thematic analysis" (Altheide, Coyle, DeVriesse, & Schneider, 2008, p. 136). To start, I wrote a summary and analysis of each book. Drawing on my earlier observations, I examined each book's treatment of sexuality, hypersexualized culture, and

feminism. Beyond this, as a starting point for my first few analyses, I also looked at how race, class, gender and sexual orientation appeared in the texts. This led to the observation that a similar white, middle-class, heterosexual female neoliberal subject seemed to be common among all books, which became a protocol against which I tested the remaining books. As I completed my analyses, I developed a clearer idea of the outlines of my earlier themes of sexuality, hypersexualized culture, and feminism. Hypersexualized culture, at this point, became rather limited as a theme—every book addressed it, but it seemed to function mostly as a rationale for the authors to write their books and as a screen from behind which they could introduce their criticisms of young women's sexual practices. As such, I did not think I could discover significantly more about it through close textual analysis.

Finally, after completing, reviewing, and synthesizing my analyses (taking care not to collapse or disregard the differences between the books), I eliminated Levy's book from future consideration. Her book shares important commonalities with the other books; like them, Levy's book focuses on a neoliberal subject, fixates on hypersexualized culture, and frowns at young women's sexual practices. However, while she laments young women's adoption of what she perceives as an empty, crude, commercialized, and exhibitionist sexuality, Levy is not against premarital sex or even casual sex per se and does not see sex as inherently damaging. I decided this constituted too large of a departure from the other books to be included in my sample. Similarly, Levy focuses on power rather than love, challenges essentialized views of masculinity and femininity, and critiques the view of sex-as-commodity, all of which form the basis of the other authors' arguments and thus made her book too fundamentally different to include. Therefore, the four remaining books comprised the universe from which I selected my samples for analysis.

Unlike movies and music, book sales figures are not publicly available. However, according to amazon.ca, all of the books in my universe except for *Prude* have undergone one reprinting, which suggests that they sold well enough initially to justify a second printing. Another hint at the relative popularity of the books comes from library statistics. According to WorldCat, *Unhooked* is available at 900 libraries worldwide, *Girls Gone Mild* at 552, *Prude* at 275, and *Unprotected* at 79. In addition, each book has been reviewed in at least one national media outlet, such as the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, and/or Dr. Laura Schlessinger's radio program (Howard, 2007; Dobie, 2007; Crittenden, 2006; Schlessinger, n.d.).

Text Analysis Sample Selection

QDA suggests theoretical sampling for this stage of document analysis. Theoretical sampling “utilizes conceptual comparisons that are drawn from reviewing existing data in an effort to qualify and test analytical categories” (Altheide, Coyle, DeVriese, & Schneider, 2008, p. 141). As described above, the themes of sexuality, hypersexualized culture, neoliberalism, and feminism had emerged during my earlier analyses, which I reviewed during this stage. First of all, I chose text samples that in some way reflected the discursive themes I was interested in examining: sexuality, feminism, and/or neoliberalism (as noted above, I decided not to pursue the hypersexual culture theme in this stage) in order to further formulate them and test them as analytical categories. Beyond this, I selected samples that were generally representative of their respective books and of the books as a whole, meaning that they exemplified some of the common content and genre features found across all or at least most of the books (see Table 2 at the end of this chapter). For example, all of the books feature real life examples, meaning stories or examples based on individual young women's personal experiences rather than on media reports or research studies; interviews of young women, conducted by the author; success stories,

in which abstinence is positioned as leading to academic or interpersonal success; and authorial monologue or extended argument or reflection passages, in which the author discusses abstinence-related topics at length. My samples reflect these characteristics, as I will describe shortly.

In addition, I also wanted samples that were unique enough to make them analytically interesting in some way. For example, the Stepp selections (which, because they were on consecutive pages, began as one selection I later divided), while authorial monologues that are typical in content, use the second person, which seemed ripe with analytical potential when I was making my selections. Shalit's piece features a typical subject in terms of neoliberal construction yet atypical in terms of age and race; in addition, this selection is a good example of a success story and a real-life example, and also exemplifies the type of biographical sketch/interview combination featured in most of the books. Finally, Liebau's authorial monologue offers both a good example of the type of extended argument and reflection passage that is common to all of the books as well as a sustained, direct discussion of feminist sexuality, in contrast to the more usual brief and/or indirect treatments of feminism woven throughout the prescriptive texts.

Analytical Processes

Research and Analysis Process for Chapter Three

To contextualize the prescriptive texts, I wanted to look at current social practices of the Christian Right and how these practices appear in and influence pop culture today. To find sources I relied mostly on Google Scholar and Google, using search terms like "history abstinence movement," "abstinence-only sex education," "abstinence programs," and "federal funding abstinence." To research social practices connected with the abstinence movement, I

searched for various combinations of purity/chastity/virginity/abstinence and ball/pledge/ring. Finally, to investigate mother-son purity balls, I added “male,” “boys,” and “son,” to my earlier search terms, and later “integrity,” and “event” after reading a blog post on what the post author described as “Integrity Balls” (Friedman, 2007).

As described before I had noted how similar the ideas promoted in the prescriptive texts were to those promoted in my former evangelical Christian church. During the course of my background research on the abstinence movement, I came across scholarly assessments of evangelical Christian views on sexuality and the abstinence movement (Ehrlich, 2006, for example), which made me realize how much the abstinence movement as a whole was influenced by the Christian Right's views of sexuality, and also how similar the prescriptive texts' and abstinence movement's views on sexuality were.

I wanted to investigate this further. I thought it important to fully explore not only the prescriptive texts' take on sexuality, but also the connections between these attitudes and those espoused by the Christian Right and the abstinence movement. First, to get an emic articulation of the Christian Right view, I read two Christian teen sexuality books, *Every Young Woman's Battle*, by Shannon Ethridge and Stephen Arterburn and *Every Young Man's Battle*, by Stephen Arterburn, Fred Stoeker, and Mike Yorkey. After reading these books, I revisited the sexuality theme that had emerged during my initial reading of the prescriptive texts and tried to analyze sexuality in light of the views of the Christian Right and abstinence-only education I had encountered earlier.

Though in this section I conducted a broader rather than deeper linguistic analysis due to the large amount of text under analysis, CDA guided my analytical approach. For example, Fairclough (2003) states that to identify discourses in texts, one can identify main themes or

areas that are represented and “identify the particular perspective or angle or point of view from which they are represented” (p. 129). Applying this to my process, I identified some themes within the broader area of sexuality, such as the basis of sexuality, gatekeeping, marriage, and homosexuality. Although I had begun the analysis with a point of view (i.e., the Christian Right point of view) already in mind, I sought to identify more specifically from which perspectives the themes I identified were represented: those of the Christian Right, the abstinence movement, the prescriptive texts, and/or any combinations of the above.

Text Analysis in Chapters Four and Five

CDA is both theory and method (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Earlier I outlined the theoretical aspects, and in this section I concentrate on the specific method I used for text analysis. First, I must point out that every discourse analyst approaches the text differently and notices different things in the text, so I in no way claim mine is the only, definitive, or most true analysis. At the same time, however, I do not wish to claim that all analyses are equal; they can vary dramatically in term of rigor, depth, and textual support for claims. Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) argue that discourse analyses should be solid, comprehensive, and transparent. This means that the analysis should be based on a range of textual features rather than only one; that the text-related research questions should be answered as fully as possible, with attention paid to any text features that challenge or conflict with the analysis put forth; and that the samples for analysis should be made accessible to the reader, who can then evaluate for his or herself the interpretations made and explained by the analyst. I believe my analysis meets these criteria.

To analyze my text samples, I examined them in light of Fairclough’s (2003) suggestions for linguistic analysis, looking for features in the text that represented social life or aspects thereof in especially meaningful or significant ways. Because the books I explored are

prescriptive advice texts, I was particularly interested in legitimation, or appeals to authority. To this end I relied on Van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimation categories, which Fairclough (2003) discusses but at a less in-depth level than Van Leeuwen.

The textual features that are significant to my analyses include:

- internal relations: semantic (between sentences and clauses) and grammatical (between clauses within sentences)
- intertextuality: presence of other voices or texts within the text
- orientation to difference: acceptance, accentuation, attempt to overcome, bracketing, and consensus
- equivalence and difference: enhancing or collapsing similarities or differences
- legitimation: appeals to authority in the form of tradition, custom, role model, moral evaluation (value systems), predictions, naturalization (temporal), cautionary tale (sad ending), moral tale (happy ending)
- grammatical mood: declarative, interrogative, imperative
- discourses: theme and perspective
- genre: discursal ways of acting
- representation of social events: social actors, time, and space
- modality: modal verbs, other markers

In addition to text analysis, the method for which I have outlined above, CDA's model for analysis includes analysis of discursive practice, at the level of text production and consumption. As Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) lament, "very few critical discourse analysts do this" (p. 82). Unfortunately, I did not undertake an analysis at this level, either, which I recognize as a study limitation. CDA also requires analysis of social practice, which requires a

social analytic (rather than linguistic analytic) method to illuminate the connections between text and society. To make these connections I drew on the sociological and feminist analyses present in girls' studies, which I integrate with the linguistic analysis.

To summarize, in this chapter, I described my theoretical orientation and methodology. For my theoretical framework I draw on CDA and girls studies', particularly in regard to the Reviving Ophelia and Girl Power discourses. Methodologically I depend on QDA and CDA. In the next chapter I explore the background of the abstinence movement and examine connections between the sexuality beliefs of the prescriptive texts, the abstinence movement, and evangelical Christianity.

TABLE 2

Genre Features

Feature	Girls Gone Mild	Prude	Unhooked	Unprotected
Real-life examples	x	x	x	x
Interviews	x	x	x	x
Authorial monologue (extended argument or reflection passages)	x	x	x	x
Success stories	x	x	x	x
Biographical sketch/interview combination	x		x	x
Intended audience: teen	x		Maybe	
Intended audience: university	x		x	x
Intended audience: parent/adult	x	x	x	x
Age of young women featured: teen	x	x	x	
Age of young women featured: university	x		x	x

CHAPTER THREE: ECHOES OF EVANGELICALISM

In this chapter, I explore the links between the US teen abstinence movement, evangelical Christianity, and the books I analyze. I accomplish this first through an overview of the abstinence movement, and secondly through an analysis of convergences around sexuality in which the views of the prescriptive texts, the abstinence movement, and the Christian Right come together.¹

While the texts I discuss in this thesis detail how sexual activity harms teenage girls and university-aged women, a much larger American trend encouraging teen abstinence predates their 2007 publication dates. This abstinence movement began in the 1990's, a decade that was "for sex what the late Middle Ages in Europe was for Christianity: a time when politics, economics, and epidemiology [...] created fertile ground for a few determined visionaries to transform the status quo" (Robb, 2008, para. 37). The quest for teen chastity, already taken up by conservative churches and concerned parents, coalesced into a more definite movement in the middle part of the decade due to the federal funding boost of abstinence-only education in schools and the promotion of abstinence in non-school youth programs. The books I analyze are inextricably located in this context and have much in common with school- and church-based abstinence programs, so I will discuss a few abstinence programs, both religious and secular. In part by enabling programs like these to flourish, the federal abstinence funding I discussed in Chapter One has been a key influence in spreading the abstinence movement from the church to the classroom. To conclude my overview of the abstinence movement I will briefly outline some of the movement's leaders.

¹ I focus on Christianity, but it is important to note that part of the power of the abstinence message is that its beliefs dovetail with other traditional or conservative religious movements; for instance, two of the prescriptive texts' authors, Grossman and Shalit, are Jewish.

Evangelical Christianity and the US Teen Abstinence Movement

The recent history of teen sexual abstinence in the US is inseparable from evangelical Christianity, especially in terms of political history, guiding beliefs, and social practices. Shatz (2007) argues that the abstinence-only education movement was spawned by the politicized Christian Right in response to issues of teen pregnancy and AIDS in the 1980s; more specifically, it represented a focused, religiously-based response to these issues and to the secular, scientifically based health and sexuality programs that were prevalent during that time. The Christian Right was also failing in its attempt to remove sex education entirely from public schools, so it shifted strategies and started to promote abstinence-only education instead (Rose, 2005).

The key tenets of abstinence-only education as defined by the federal government mirror an evangelical Christian world view (Shatz, 2007). For example, the belief that sex is only acceptable within a monogamous, heterosexual, legal marriage; the importance placed on the connection between sex, the traditional nuclear family, and society; and the acceptance of gender roles and stereotypes as facts are key elements of both abstinence-only education and an evangelical Christian take on sexuality.

Social practices like abstinence pledges, purity rings, and purity balls first appeared in the evangelical Christian movement. Abstinence pledges (also called virginity pledges or chastity pledges), for example, have been a mainstay of the True Love Waits program discussed below since the mid-1990s, and are now a part of some secular abstinence programs as well (Ehrlich, 2006). Depending on their secular or religious orientations, the pledge can range from a simple spoken or signed vow to abstain from sexual activity until marriage to a more elaborate promise replete with references to true love, God, one's future spouse and children, purity in thought and

mind, and freedom (Louisiana Governor's Program on Abstinence, n.d.; SIECUS, 2008; LifeWay, 2007c). Pledges are typically made in ceremonies dedicated to the pledge itself, as part of a purity ring ceremony, or in other group settings like classrooms. In the United States it is estimated that 10% of boys and 16% of girls have taken some sort of abstinence pledge (Baumgardner, 2007).

Purity rings (sometimes called chastity rings or promise rings) are similarly making their way into secular life (Serjeant, 2008). Intended to visually symbolize the wearer's commitment to abstinence, purity rings sometimes serve as the focus of a special ceremony, but they can also be a component of purity balls or abstinence pledge events. Some are informally presented by parents or bought by the wearer on his or her own. Traditionally worn on the third finger of the left hand as a wedding band placeholder, purity rings are sold in a wide variety of styles and prices. While many rings feature Christian symbols, the number of secular designs is increasing along with the number of mainstream retailers offering them (Rosenbloom, 2005).

One social practice that thus far seems restricted to evangelicals is the purity ball or chastity ball. In contrast to activities like abstinence pledges and purity rings, which boys participate in as well (albeit less frequently than girls), purity balls are explicitly and exclusively devoted to female purity. Started in 1998 in conservative Colorado Springs, Colorado, fathers across the U.S. bring their formally-attired daughters as 'dates' to an evening filled with dancing, dining, and chastity covenants. Fathers take the pledge in purity balls: they recite a promise to "cover my daughter as her authority and protection in the area of purity," (Baumgardner, 2007, p. 3). Following the pledge the fathers sometimes present daughters with purity rings and/or lock-and-key charms: the girl wears the lock, and the father keeps the key until her wedding day, when it is handed over to her husband (Baumgardner, 2007; Gibbs, 2008).

The fathers' participation is necessary because, according to the co-founder of the first purity ball, women have a deep-seated need to know if they are beautiful and worthy of men's attention (Treays, 2008). If their fathers do not reinforce that they are, girls will seek affirmation of it through premarital sex. Many of the families involved in purity balls embrace patriarchal authority and frown on modern dating (Gibbs, 2008). Instead, potential suitors must be chosen by or at least vetted by a girl's father, and kissing is discouraged until the couple is married.

Whereas father-daughter purity balls constitute a trend big enough to warrant mainstream press coverage, mother-son purity events are exceedingly rare; I came across only two examples during my research, and little information about them was available. Both events were mentioned in blog posts rather than in traditional media outlets.

Christian Abstinence Programs

Christian abstinence programs gave rise to popular practices associated with the abstinence movement like pledges and purity rings, and their outlook on teen sexuality often mirrors that of abstinence education in schools and the prescriptive text authors. These programs are typically used in or sponsored by churches and religious youth groups.

True Love Waits

In 1993, the evangelical Christian sex education program "True Love Waits" began (LifeWay, 2007b). Affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States (Lidner, 2008), the program quickly spread across the US and was soon introduced in Nigeria as well. According to the True Love Waits website, since the program's inception roughly 3 million teenagers in at least seven countries have pledged abstinence until marriage.

Highly visible actions like the placement of over 200,000 signed pledges on the White House lawn and coverage by national media outlets like Newsweek, Rolling Stone, Teen Magazine, and Nightline helped to turn the program into a movement. In the late 1990s True Love Waits outlined their message in presentations to federal and state leaders, including the US Surgeon General (LifeWay, 2007b).

That message is that today's generation is "confused about what sex is; confused about their gender; abused by their elders; diseased and dying; and parenting too early" (LifeWay, 2007d, para. 1). True Love Waits argues that a total belief in God and His power, plus a commitment to sexual purity, can revitalize this generation and make them emotionally, physically, and spiritually healthy. 'Purity' in the True Love Waits program means "saying no to sexual intercourse, oral sex, and even sexual touching" (LifeWay, 2007a, para. 2) before marriage. Being in a relationship "that causes you to be 'turned on' sexually" (para. 2) goes against purity, as does looking at pornography or other images that stimulate sexual thoughts.

Black (2007) points out that the organizational literature, including the pledge itself, avoids the term 'virginity,' which she speculates partially stems from the need to reach out to teenagers who have already had premarital sex, and partially from the desire to expand the concept of sexual sin beyond penile-vaginal intercourse. The pledge wording has changed over time as well; for example, in response to gay marriage initiatives, the 2007 version includes a new reference to "biblical marriage" (LifeWay, 2007c, para. 1), i.e., heterosexual marriage.

Silver Ring Thing

According to its website, the nondenominational, parachurch non-profit ministry Silver Ring Thing is "the fastest growing teen abstinence program in the United States" (Silver Ring Thing, 2007a). The program, which began in 1996, claims that its high-energy concert-like

shows help teenagers understand that abstinence is “the best and only way to avoid the harmful physical and emotional effects of premarital sex.” (para. 1). Beyond encouraging individual teenagers to focus on Christ-centered abstinence, the program strives to reach one out of five teens in the US in order to “create a culture shift in America where abstinence becomes the norm again rather than the exception.” (para. 5). The program includes a considerable amount of parental outreach and involvement as well.

The centerpiece of the Silver Ring Thing is the namesake silver ring, which symbolizes the wearer's commitment to abstinence. The ring can only be bought after attending a live Silver Ring Thing event or going through a 4-session program in a church youth group or other small group (Silver Ring Thing, 2007b). Reflecting the Christian principles of the program as a whole, a reference to a Bible verse about sexual immorality circles the ring.

In spite of its overtly religious orientation and message, the Silver Ring Thing program received federal abstinence funding until an ACLU lawsuit successfully challenged this practice in 2006 (“Government to Stop”, 2006). Although it is nondenominational in name, Silver Ring Thing is allied with various crisis pregnancy centers. These centers, which continue to receive federal abstinence funding, are avowedly pro-life, typically evangelical Christian or Catholic nonprofit organizations that focus on preventing pregnant women from obtaining abortions, often through questionable tactics (Cooperman, 2002).

Secular Abstinence Programs

Although no state specifically mandates abstinence-only education (CBS News, 2008), abstinence only education programs and curricula guide students' sexuality education in school districts across the United States, especially in conservative regions like the South, where over half of school districts require a strict abstinence message be taught in classrooms (Fine&

McClelland, 2006). Though religious references are forbidden in public school abstinence-only curricula, many programs are little more than secular reworkings of evangelical Christian or Catholic texts (Shatz, 2007). The program I discuss below, however, is not associated with any religious group.

Choosing the Best

Choosing the Best is one of the most widely used secular abstinence programs (Committee on Government Reform, 2004). So far, over 2.5 million students across the United States have participated in the program, and it claims to have reduced teen sex by 47% compared to another abstinence program (Choosing the Best, 2007). Choosing the Best is designed for use in schools with students from grade 6 to grade 12, and qualifies for federal abstinence funding. Five different grade-based curricula offer what the website describes as research-based, medically accurate, age appropriate information. The program offers teacher training and certification in each of the five curricula, and includes a separate book and teaching program for parents.

The main focus of Choosing the Best centers on how abstinence is the only way students can avoid the emotional and physical risks of premarital sex. To this end, every curriculum provides students with the opportunity to formally pledge abstinence. However, the program also includes lessons on decision making, goal setting, friendships and other relationships, peer pressure, alcohol avoidance, setting boundaries and saying no. The program has a traditional outlook on marriage, dating, and gender roles, as evidenced by sections on the problems of cohabitation, why dating is better than hooking up, and how boys and girls differ when it comes to sex. Shatz (2007) points out that all abstinence-only programs “either ignore or condemn

homosexuality” and that most of them “reinforce traditional gender stereotypes with descriptions of how men and women differ physically, psychologically, and emotionally” (p. 508)

In 2004, the *Choosing the Best* curricula received criticism from the Waxman report on federal abstinence programs due to these issues (Committee on Government Reform, 2004). In addition to pointing out instances of distorted or erroneous information about condom use, the report found evidence of gender stereotyping in the curricula. For example, one book in the program states that girls access both sides of the brain, which causes them to feel emotions in most situations, whereas guys are better at focusing on one thing and usually separate feelings and actions. The report also mentioned an example in the program in which girls are cautioned not to offer too many helpful suggestions to boys, because doing so might undermine boys’ confidence and lead to rejection (Ehrlich, 2006).

Leaders

The US teen abstinence movement lacks a single leader, but there are several prominent figures within the community and a few that have received mainstream recognition. Perhaps the most public faces of the abstinence movement are the teenage celebrities who speak publicly about their decision to postpone sex until marriage. Over the last few years a new crop of teen abstainers has replaced erstwhile virgins Britney Spears and Jessica Simpson, made up of young celebrities like the members of the popular teen band The Jonas Brothers, American Idol winner Jordin Sparks, and Disney stars Miley Cyrus, Selena Gomez, and Demi Lovato (Serjeant, 2008). In addition to speaking publicly about abstinence, these young celebrities are often photographed wearing purity rings.

Leaders of abstinence organizations often function as media representatives. For example, antiabortion activist Leslee Unruh, founder of the Abstinence Clearinghouse, has

provided statements on abstinence to over 100 print media sources and television networks like CNN and ABC (Robb, 2008). Since the founding of the National Abstinence Education Association in 2006, its executive director Valerie Huber has become a media contact as well. These organizations have close ties to conservative think tanks like the Family Research Council and The Heritage Foundation, drawing on and publicizing the work and research produced by the think tanks to support their positions.

Lesser known motivational speakers take the abstinence message into schools, youth groups, and conferences. There are many to choose from, ranging from former beauty pageant winners to comedians, actors, former juvenile probation officers, high school and university students, former sports stars and coaches, and young married couples (Project Reality, n.d.; Just Say Yes, 2008; A&M Partnership, 2007).

Among the authors of the books under analysis, Author Wendy Shalit is perhaps one of the most well known abstinence defenders due to the amount of coverage her two books, *A Return to Modesty* and *Girls Gone Mild*, garnered from the press. Similarly, though more moderate than many in the community, journalist Laura Sessions Stepp's pro-abstinence message has reached a national audience, first through her work in the Washington Post and later through her book *Unhooked*.

Outside of the community, interest in the abstinence movement in general and the texts under analysis specifically seems especially keen among journalists and bloggers. This is not to suggest that academic interest is invisible, however; scholars have studied legal (e.g. Shatz, 2007), political (e.g. Rose, 2005), medical (e.g. Rosenbaum, 2009), and cultural (e.g. Ehrlich, 2006) aspects of the abstinence movement.

Convergences Around Sexuality

The prescriptive texts share many characteristics with the broader U.S. teen abstinence movement, which in turn largely reflects the attitudes and beliefs of the Christian Right. In this section, I will outline some of the key attitudes towards premarital sex, gender roles, and heterosexuality promoted by the Christian Right and the abstinence movement. To demonstrate how the prescriptive texts' attitudes mirror those of the larger movement, I will bring in examples from my sample of books.

Sex

In the views of the Christian Right and the abstinence movement, sex outside of marriage is inherently dangerous and damaging (Ehrlich, 2006). For example, *True Love Waits* describes the current generation as “diseased and dying” (LifeWay, 2007d) due to sexual immorality. Mirroring the federal government mandate that abstinence education must teach that sex outside of marriage is “likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects,” (Administration for Children and Families, 2007) some abstinence-only education programs imply disease and even death are almost inevitable consequences of premarital sex, while others teach that sex outside of marriage can result in bitterness, depression and suicide (Fine & McClelland, 2006; Ehrlich, 2006).

The prescriptive text authors echo this point of view. For example, they blame premarital sex for a staggering array of negative outcomes: unwanted pregnancy, single motherhood, abortion and post-abortion trauma, STDs, infertility, regret, shame, apathy, heartache, loss of self-respect, low self-esteem, anorexia, distrust of others, insecurity, anxiety, depression, suicide, rape, divorce, adultery, male impotence, lack of assertiveness within relationships, selfishness,

bullying, and bad grades (Liebau, 2007; Grossman, 2007; Stepp, 2007; Shalit, 2007). Girls in particular suffer as a result of premarital sex; for instance, prescriptive text author Liebau (2007) claims that “teen sex often condemns young women to a life of poverty and deprivation” and that “girls can (and often do) suffer profound and even lifelong emotional damage” because of it (p. 152).

In addition to hurting the individuals engaging in it, according to the abstinence message, sex outside of marriage damages society as well. Ehrlich (2006) reports that students are taught that premarital sex has “inevitable consequences” (p. 176) for society, and Liebau (2007) echoes this by detailing the cost of teen STDs and arguing that when it comes to teen childbearing, “it’s impossible to quantify the tragic social, human, and economic price that Americans pay when the cycle of young, unmarried motherhood, with its attendant social ills, continues” (p. 171). Liebau’s argument reflects the federal abstinence definition, which says that “bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child’s parents, and society” (Administration for Children and Families, 2007).

Importantly, technologies that can help to mitigate some of the unwanted physical consequences of sex receive little endorsement from abstinence advocates. Condoms, for instance, are routinely dismissed as ineffective (Committee on Government Reform, 2004), while the HPV vaccine receives uneven support. For example, the conservative Family Research Council approves of the vaccine but opposes its addition to the mandatory school vaccination schedule (Gaul, 2008), while prescriptive text author Miriam Grossman (2007) claims the vaccine is “good news” (p. 23) but ultimately characterizes it as a “quick fix” (p. 23) that will solve little.

In abstinence education, variations on the sentiment “guys give love to get sex, but girls give sex to get love” (Ethridge & Arterbaum, 2004, p. 35) appear often, making it a dominant theme. Sex is implicitly ‘owned’ by women, and although it is sometimes referred to as a ‘gift,’ (Ehrlich, 2006) it’s a gift that clearly requires something in return. More accurately, sex is seen as a commodity. Stepp (2007), for example, articulates this sex-as-commodity viewpoint well when she states that “your body is not an introductory offer. It’s a return receipt. Your partner gives you love or at least respect and affection, and in return, you give him part of you” (p. 262). Because women are seen as controlling it, sex functions as an important source of female power; for example, Liebau (2007) argues that “by offering their bodies so quickly and so easily,” girls who have sex before marriage “have essentially surrendered their most effective means for securing the kind of male companionship that they most desire” (p. 188).

Implicit in these statements is an explanation of the prescriptive text cornerstone belief that premarital (but not marital) sex hurts young women much more than young men: once the young woman has ‘given away’ sex, her best source of coercive power, the young man who receives it has no reason to stick around providing emotional intimacy unless he is compelled through marriage to do so. His abandonment leaves the young woman powerless, emotionally hurt, and often physically damaged. Young women in this situation are blamed for “having given too much too soon” (Liebau, 2007, p. 152)—the implication being that if only they had meted out their bodies/sexual power bit by bit, ‘saving’ most of it for the wedding night, they would have lived happily ever after.

Maguire (2008) discusses another implication stemming from the sex-as-commodity viewpoint. In addition to the immediate loss of power over one man, every sexual partner a young woman has lessens her power with future men. Because it hurts young women to give sex

away, eventually they can give away so much that they become damaged and empty. As Maguire (2008) explains, the abstinence message says that after having sex, “women become all sad and used and no one wants to marry a sad, used girl” (p. 26).

Abstinence education often makes use of visual metaphors like the one described in this thesis’s opening paragraph to drive this point home in a crass, objectifying, and sexist way. For example, Knox (2008) recalls a demonstration she saw several times in which an abstinence educator called up a volunteer (always female) to ask if she wanted to brush her teeth with a very dirty used toothbrush or one fresh from the box. The educator then announced that having premarital sex meant being the dirty toothbrush. Similarly, Levy (2005) describes another such display called “Miss Tape” (p. 158) in which a piece of “‘tall,’” “‘thin,’” packing tape with “‘nice curves’” (p. 159) is wrapped around a male volunteer’s arm. After this symbolic sex act, the volunteer ‘dumps’ Miss Tape, and ‘she’ is ripped off his arm and presented to the audience in grubby, crumpled defilement.

In contrast to the danger premarital sex poses for young women, young men are vulnerable only to physical consequences since ‘giving away’ their source of power, their emotions, is not seen as damaging. With the exception of STDs, boys ‘giving away’ their bodies poses no danger, either—their bodies/selves are not dirtied, damaged, emptied, or used up by sex.

Sexuality

Abstinence advocates and the prescriptive text authors envision and present as unquestionable truth sexuality as biological or spiritual in origin, natural, gendered, oppositional, powerful, heterosexual, fixed, and in females only, unable to overcome without harmful effects. Men and women are seen as influenced by different hormones or God-given spiritual roles,

which sets them at odds in relationships: men's "ultimate goal is physical intimacy" while women's is "emotional bonding" (Ethridge & Arterburn, 2004, p. 36). Though their biology makes it much more difficult for them to live a chaste life, men are considered able to combat their sexual urges with no ill effects, whereas women's biological need for emotional intimacy cannot be ignored without serious consequences.

Male Sexuality

Ehrlich (2006) points out that in abstinence education, boys are assumed to have a strong, inborn sex drive. This sex drive is aroused by a wide variety of visual images, which create a "chemical high" (Arterburn, Stoeker & Yokey, 2002, p. 60) of epinephrine in the brain, which in turn compels them to ogle women and fantasize about sex. Testosterone is seen to contribute to boys' high sex drives as well (Shatz, 2007), and that hormone also makes them naturally aggressive (Liebau, 2007). Boys are portrayed as having little desire for emotional intimacy, being satisfied with casual sex instead. Shalit (2007), for example, claims that friends with benefits relationships "of course" end up "benefiting boys more than girls" (p. 89), while Stepp (2007), echoes this sentiment by saying that hooking up "is ideal" (p. 268) for guys because they get the casual sex they want without much effort on their part. Although young men are occasionally pictured in loving relationships, this portrayal is undermined by the stronger message that boys are only after one thing, as the old adage goes.

The 'naturally' strong and easily-aroused sex drive of young men poses a problem for those who embrace this view yet also advocate for abstinence until marriage. To resolve this contradiction, abstinence proponents argue that though it is difficult, boys can and should reign in their sexual urges. Liebau (2007), for instance, frowns on the 'boys will be boys' mentality and maintains that if a boy really likes a girl, he will be willing and able to have a sex-free

relationship with her, while Shalit (2007) disingenuously claims that the acceptance of male premarital sexual activity is a modern invention. Although male sexual activity may have been explicitly discouraged in the past, the long history of the sexual double standard (Cott, 1978) suggests it was tacitly accepted. The abstinence message today suffers from the same conflict between the stated goal of abstinence for all and the unspoken expectation that “‘good girls don’t’ but ‘real boys do’” (Rose, 2005, p. 1215) implicit in gendered discussions of sexual desire and responsibility.

Female Gatekeeping

Although young men are encouraged to refrain from premarital sex, in the eyes of abstinence advocates they cannot be entirely responsible for controlling their own sex drives; it is up to young women, with their infinitely weaker sex drives, to help manage them (Ehrlich, 2006). Young women are told to dress modestly to avoid arousing men, instructed to avoid situations that could become sexual, and charged with stopping sexual behaviors when they occur.

For example, Liebau (2007) argues that men form expectations based on what girls wear and how they act, and Arterbaum, Stoeker and Yorkey (2002) argue that “because women can’t relate” to the way men are visually stimulated, “they have little mercy on [men] and rarely choose to dress modestly. Walking the halls of any public high school in America can leave a guy gasping for breath!” (p. 57). Similarly, Ethridge and Arterbaum (2004) dismiss girls’ claim that guys pursue them sexually too often and with too much determination as a “myth” because, according to one young man, guys wouldn’t put so much pressure on girls to have sexual relationships with them “‘if girls didn’t dress like that’s what they want’” (p. 32).

Consequently, young women are positioned as having to dampen what they (and/or other women) inevitably excite; later in Arterbaum, Stoeker, and Yorkey's (2002) book, for instance, a young man praises his girlfriend because she covers his eyes when sexy images come on TV, is careful not to bend over in front of him, and publicly confronts her friends when they wear revealing clothes. Lest a young woman worry about the best way to prevent men from sexualizing her body, Ethridge and Arterbaum's (2004) book for young women includes a 17-point checklist to help girls decide if their clothing is modest enough. There is no similar list or issue for young men; in fact, men's need to dress modestly is absent, which suggests that men's bodies are not dangerous temptations to women. Also absent is any discussion of why modesty is an exclusively female concern, either in relationships or in society at large.

In addition to dressing modestly, according to the abstinence message young women can control male behavior through their actions. This control may be restricted to interpersonal relationships, or it can extend to all of society. For example, Shalit (1999) argues that female modesty (which she defines as women taking care to "shroud their sexuality in mystery" (p. 97)) clarifies the proper relationship between men and women and makes men understand that while they could overpower women, they should not. Extrapolating from this theory, Shalit posits that if women were more modest, men would no longer rape, sexually assault, sexually harass, stalk, commit adultery, or look at pornography. Theorizing that crimes like sexual assault and stalking would disappear if women would simply veil their sexuality not only blames women for crimes committed against them, but also reveals ignorance about historical forces, past and present social realities, and gendered power relations.

Implications

Ehrlich (2006) highlights one of the implications of charging young women with responsibility for controlling sex, which is that if sex and any of its attendant negative outcomes occur, it will be the young woman's fault. Ethridge and Arterbaum (2004), for instance, scold a girl when she laments giving into her boyfriend's sexual advances because she "should have known better than to be alone with [him] behind closed doors" (p. 237). They say nothing about the boyfriend's role in the encounter.

This kind of blame is especially troubling in cases of coercive and nonconsensual sex. Prescriptive text author Stepp (2007) embraces this view when she discusses what she calls "gray rape" (p. 233), a made-up term that attempts to legitimize the idea that sometimes, date rape or acquaintance rape is not actually rape, but rather an "unfortunate [instance] of poor judgment and miscommunication" (p. 234). The so-called 'gray' areas Stepp believes signify women's consent to sexual intercourse include wearing skimpy clothing, going to parties, drinking alcohol, participating in foreplay, and/or approaching men:

Oh, the gray area—that insidious 'if I hadn't gone to that party'
place, that 'if I had only stopped after one beer' place, that 'if I
hadn't worn such a revealing top and come on to that hot guy'
place. (p. 233)

Stepp's (2007) 'gray rape' gives currency to discourses that trivialize and deny rape, and make it harder for rape to be named, reported, and prosecuted. Moreover, Stepp's term contributes to the power of these discourses to continue to influence conceptualizations of rape in American society. In her comparative study on Danish and American approaches to sex education, for example, Rose (2005) found evidence that American teenagers seem to have

internalized more problematic discourses around consent than their European peers. More specifically, the Danish teenagers Rose interviewed about the idea 'no means no' tended to stand behind the concept unequivocally, whereas the American teenagers she spoke to expressed more ambivalence about it and needed to clarify aspects of female dress, intent, behavior, and forcefulness of refusal before making a judgment.

Female Sexuality

Origin

Like male sexuality, in the abstinence movement female sexuality is seen as largely hormonally-based (Ehrlich, 2006). Some point to estrogen as a force that makes women want to nurture and feel secure (Shatz, 2007), while others say that oxytocin, the 'bonding hormone,' is a major player in female sexual response. The prescriptive text authors in particular embrace or at least mention oxytocin, which allegedly causes women to bond with sex partners, no matter how casual (Grossman, 2007). Liebau (2007), for instance, says that "the female orgasm releases a burst of the hormone oxytocin, which engenders a sense of attachment towards one's sexual partner, helping women feel bonded to the men with whom they've had sex" (p. 163).

Going into more detail, Grossman (2008) claims that when a woman kisses, cuddles, or participates in sexual activities, oxytocin "floods" her brain and announces: "I'm with someone special now. Time to switch love on, and caution off" (p. 7). She compares oxytocin to alcohol in that it interferes with women's decision-making abilities, which causes them to take risks they normally wouldn't. In addition, because of oxytocin a woman might "develop feelings for a guy whose *last* intention is to bond with [her]" (p. 7)—she might spend the next day thinking about him and only him, but by the afternoon he will have blithely forgotten her name. This last

statement lies at the crux of why, according to the abstinence message, women cannot have sex without negative emotional consequences.

According to abstinence advocates, oxytocin compels women to seek out an emotional bond that their (assumed) male partner is typically uninteresting in furthering, even if the woman is not seeking a partnered relationship (though, as discussed shortly, the only time ‘healthy’ women have sex is when they are seeking a partnered relationship). Its effects, therefore, are virtually unavoidable. For example, Stepp (2007) writes that “there’s a good chance that, as one scientist put it, ‘you’re specific to one man as soon as you have sex.’ Severing that bond can be emotionally very difficult” (p. 121). Grossman (2007) suggests that oxytocin release is subject to classical conditioning, which means that after only a few encounters, the mere sight of a sex partner is enough to bring on “a rush of agonizing feelings of attachment” (p. 7).

Some suggest the power of this reaction may lie in evolutionary reasons; for example, Stepp (2007) proposes that women’s biological bonding response long ago helped to ensure the survival of the human species. In contrast, other abstinence advocates hint that young women’s desire to bond is rooted in spirituality and historical traditions. Shalit (2007), for instance, though she mentions oxytocin in passing, claims the most likely cause behind young women’s desire for emotional intimacy in sexual relationships is “just being human, and having an awareness of how precious we are.” (p. 29). Such a desire “is really quite normal” because “for most of world history, society acknowledged that men and women could become attached after having intimate *conversations*” (p. 28, italics in original). She later describes girls’ desire for pair bonding as “the foundation of civilization” (p. 89).

Neuroscience: While an in-depth look at the neurochemistry of pair bonding is outside of the scope of this project, I must point out that research concerning oxytocin’s influence on human

sexual response is far less clear than portrayed by the prescriptive text authors; while even they admit the research is “new” (Stepp, 2007, p. 121) and “complex” (Grossman, 2007, p. 155), scientists in the field offer stronger cautions about the implications of their research. For example, Young and Wang (2004) point out that oxytocin release during sex is a suspected rather than confirmed occurrence, and that if oxytocin plays a role in sexual-social attachment it may work through specific sexual activities such as nipple stimulation rather than through any and all kinds of sexual encounters as the text authors imply.

Grossman (2008), for one, cites *The Female Brain* by Dr. Louanne Brizendine (2006) in connection with oxytocin information and even recommends that young women own a copy of the book. However, a review published in *Nature* (Young & Balaban, 2006) points out that *The Female Brain* “fails to meet even the most basic standards of scientific accuracy and balance” (p. 634). Errors like citing unrelated research, misrepresenting research, misleading characterizations of development and body systems, imprecise language, and overgeneralizing from non-human animal research riddle the book (Else-Quest, 2007; Young & Balaban, 2006). In addition, like the prescriptive text authors, Brizendine downplays or ignores cultural and societal messages that influence sexual attitudes and behaviors.

Interestingly, however, as much as they depend on biology to structure their versions of male and female sexuality, the prescriptive text authors largely ignore vasopressin, a hormone that Brizendine (2006) depicts as a masculinized version of oxytocin. Instead of feminine ‘bonding,’ which implies affection and caring, Brizendine, basing her assertion on a study of prairie voles, claims that the vasopressin human men release upon orgasm stimulates “energy, attention, and aggression” and causes them to “have a laserlike focus on their beloved and actively track her in their minds’ eyes, even when she isn’t present” (p. 71). In a less gendered

and overgeneralized portrayal, neuroscientists Young, Lim, Gingrich, and Insel (2001) state that in male prairie voles, vasopressin “plays an analogous role” (p. 133) to oxytocin in female prairie voles.

While extrapolating from prairie vole studies is highly problematic owing to significant brain differences between the two species and the fact that “there are no hard data demonstrating common physiological mechanisms for pair-bond formation in voles and man” (Young and Wang, 2004, p. 1052), challenges to the idea that men do not bond with their sex partners seem to exist even within a biological model of human sexuality.

Power of Sexual ‘Nature’

Regardless of their origins, strong emotional feelings in women represent the parallel to strong sexual feelings of men: natural, definitive, powerful, and inescapable. Men are seen as able to control their sexual urges, at least up to a certain point; as discussed previously the messages surrounding male sexual control in abstinence education are somewhat contradictory (Rose, 2005). Women, on the other hand, have no such control over their emotions. No matter how hard they try to separate the physical from the emotional, feelings inevitably enter the equation in even the most casual of sexual encounters. For example, Liebau claims that “a girl may try to train herself to enjoy sex without love, but biology and her own nature set her up for heartache and failure” (p. 193). Echoing this notion, Stepp (2007) says that when a young woman predictably falls in love with a casual hookup, “no matter how much she resists, she finds herself thinking only about the person she hopes will be her partner” (p. 47).

Female biology is sacrosanct; when young women try to fight against it, disaster results. All of the prescriptive texts, for example, include characterizations of confused, depressed, vulnerable girls who are in pain because they had sex. In *Unprotected*, after the dissolution of a

short relationship, a university student sobs out a favorite sentiment of abstinence advocates: “‘Why do they tell you how to protect your body [...] but they don’t tell you what it does to your *heart?*’” (Grossman, 2007, p. 3, emphasis in original). Young women in *Unhooked* find themselves unhappily “emotionally attached” (Stepp, 2007, p. 23) to their hookup partners, and Shalit (2007) claims that even “women well into their twenties and thirties are struggling with their emotions privately, shamefully” (p. 96) when it comes to premarital sexual relationships.

Young women's inability to minimize emotional involvement in sexual encounters, and the pain that results from this tendency, make up key tenets of the abstinence message and also form the bulk of the prescriptive text authors' justifications for writing their books. It is important to emphasize that the authors see the pain and suffering young women experience after having sex as originating in an organic hormonal or instinctive moral response, not as a consequence of internalizing and responding to powerful societal discourses on sexuality and gender relations. Grossman (2007), for example, says that “nature exists; if you don’t like what biology says about your ideology, maybe it’s time to take another look at your ideology” (p. 147), while Shalit (2007) utterly fails to acknowledge that any stigmas around young women and sex exist.

The idea that young women are slaves to their hormones/natures has serious implications for adult women’s status in the workforce and in other positions of leadership. While young men as a group are also victims of disempowering essentialist discourses regarding their sexuality, elements of their sex-crazed adolescent image feed into positive adult portrayals of men (e.g., aside from sex, testosterone makes men more aggressive and competitive workers) while others are overshadowed by competing discourses (e.g., men are rational rather than emotional and

therefore make better leaders) or are tacitly accepted by society (e.g., some invoke male ‘needs’ to justify the existence of prostitution, strip clubs, and pornography).

Sexual Motivations

Abstinence education paints a picture of young women in which their desire for sex and physical pleasure is largely if not wholly absent (Fine & McClelland, 2006). For example, Arterburn, Stoeker & Yokey (2002) claim that due to the hardwired differences between men and women, “forming a satisfying sex life” even in a love-filled state- and God-sanctified marriage is “more like making a half-court shot” than a slam dunk (p. 35). On the next page a woman confesses to her husband that she and all of her friends do not like sex and would rather not have it again, ever.

Interestingly, the companion book for young women by Ethridge and Arterbaum (2004) deals the most openly with the topic of young women’s sexual desires of any abstinence book I read over the course of my research, in spite of its explicitly Christian perspective: though perhaps overshadowed by the ‘girls want love’ messages, the book addresses masturbation and even viewing pornography as not-abnormal habits for young women to have developed. Of course, from the book’s point of view both are unhealthy and should be stopped.

The prescriptive texts mostly ignore young women’s physical desires, with the exception of Stepp (2007). She acknowledges that young women experience sexual desire, but this desire most often manifests itself as ‘lust’ for a particular *object d’amour* rather than a generalized desire for sex, and these ‘lustful’ feelings typically signal a desire for emotional as well as physical intimacy. Similarly, while young women do experience sexual pleasure in Stepp’s book, it is almost exclusively within the context of a committed, emotionally intimate relationship. Sex in casual relationships, in contrast, provokes statements like “I hated sleeping

with [him]” and “I just let him do it” (p. 244) or “I think I was somewhere else” (p. 95) during the act. While she situates these reactions within a culture she sees as pressuring young women to have sex, Stepp fails to connect these statements to broader cultural discourses about women’s sexual obligations, desires, and agency.

If a young woman goes against her ‘nature’ and openly pursues sex outside of a committed relationship, the abstinence message constructs her as unhealthy and/or damaged. For example, Ethridge and Arterburn (2004) claim that “a healthy young female [...] usually gives her body only to someone she thinks of night and day and with whom her heart and spirit have already connected (unless there is dysfunctional or addictive behavior involved)” (p. 19). Shalit (2007) echoes this by stating that girls who can successfully separate sex from emotion “have typically been abused” (p. 94).

Some abstinence advocates refuse to believe that young women willingly seek out sex without love at all. Grossman, for example, claims that when a woman meets someone she likes, “she often hopes—sometimes subconsciously—that he will be the one, that it will become serious and last” (p. 17). Therefore, consciously or subconsciously, women are always looking for a serious relationship. Since ‘girls want love’ stands as such a fundamental pillar in the abstinence message, it follows that in this view every young woman pursues romantic love at all times, even if she says otherwise. Stepp (2007) and Liebau (2007), for example, offer virtually identical dismissals when faced with young women who maintain they are not looking for love: Liebau sighs that “sadly, many young women are reluctant to admit” (p. 188) they’re seeking love, while Stepp marvels that a few of the teenagers she interviewed are already so jaded they “wouldn’t even admit they had any interest in love” (p. 2).

Love, then, or at least some combination of attention and affection, represents the ‘real’ reason young women have sex. Ethridge and Arterbaum (2004) tell young women they are “likely to be tempted sexually because [their] heart is crying out for someone to satisfy [their] innermost desires to be loved, needed, valued, and cherished” (p 19). In the abstinence message girls often confuse sex for love: the authors above “know of many girls who had sex when all they really wanted was someone to hold them” (p. 19). Besides love, the prescriptive text authors theorize that sometimes, due to America's sex-saturated culture, young women have sex to gain approval and admiration from peers. It is important to note that while the target source of approval is different, girls' driving need for positive attention remains the same.

On a related note, one study suggests that sometimes young women use love as a justification to begin or continue a sexual relationship which might contradict their parents' or their own abstinence-oriented beliefs (Rose, 2005). When viewed through a cultural lens that kaleidoscopically shrinks and obscures young women's sexual desires at the same time it heightens and highlights their desire for romantic love, the love justification finds an easy niche in the abstinence landscape.

Gender Roles

The promotion of traditional gender roles is an important part of the abstinence message, which stems from the Christian Right's desire to recast American society in the mold of a religious, patriarchal, nuclear family (Shatz, 2007). The promise of gender equality threatens many advocates of abstinence education because it endangers the patriarchal family model they wish to promote (Rose, 2005). Feminism is closely linked to this threat in the prescriptive texts, a connection I will explore in a later section.

In addition to emphasizing a highly gendered view of sexuality, abstinence proponents tend to present gender role stereotypes as scientific facts about men and women (Ehrlich, 2006). Grossman (2007), for instance, claims the belief that “the sexes are deeply and essentially different” is actually a “truth of science and civilization” (p. xxiii). Some school-based abstinence curricula illustrate this idea; for example, girls are encouraged to gaze at guys with wonder and admiration, and to seek out their help to make them feel important because men are achievement-oriented (Committee on Government Reform, 2004). Similarly, some curricula describe women as feeling happy and successful primarily because of their relationships instead of their achievements, and imply that women do not care about their financial futures.

Reinforcing patriarchal family norms, some abstinence curricula teach that girls should be protected by their fathers until their husbands can take over that duty, and also caution students against deviating from a male-breadwinner female-homemaker family model (Ehrlich, 2006). In both *Girls Gone Mild* and *Unhooked*, young women are encouraged to bake pies and cookies to win people over (Shalit, 2007; Stepp, 2007). Stepp suggests this is a great way to impress men without having to go to bars, which she calls “a guy thing” (p. 263).

Should a girl’s baked goods land her a guy, all of the prescriptive text authors would prefer that their courtship follow traditional dating customs and eventually culminate in marriage and motherhood. For example, Liebau says that for the girl’s protection, her date should pick her up at her house so her father can see if the boy is worthy of guarding his daughter’s purity for a few hours (Liebau, 2007). Stepp, the dating crusader, argues that chivalry and curfews work because they make each gender feel special—they make relationships progress slowly and orderly, so women get the personalized attention they want from men, and men get the sexual faithfulness they want from women.

Heterosexuality

Abstinence-only Education

Aside from seeking to preserve patriarchal marriage through traditional gender roles, the abstinence message works to maintain it by privileging heterosexuality. As a reminder, federal abstinence guidelines mandate that the only acceptable context for sex is marriage (Shatz, 2007). Although the abstinence definition does not explicitly specify heterosexual marriage, the federal government defines marriage as “a legal union between one man and one woman” (Defense of Marriage Act, 1996, section 3). Gay marriage is legal in a few US states, but these marriages are not recognized at the federal level. To qualify for funding, abstinence curricula must use the one man, one woman definition of marriage throughout the curriculum materials.

Shatz (2007) states that restricting sexual activity to a legally sanctioned, lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual relationship reflects the sexuality views of the Christian Right. She also points out that while regulating sexual behavior is common to all religions traditions, Christianity has historically banned some elements of marriage allowed by other religions, such as polygamy and divorce. By promoting this version of sexuality, Shatz argues that the government is endorsing the values of the Christian Right and using its authority to regulate a specifically conservative Christian expression of sexuality in ostensibly religion-free public schools. Also speaking to abstinence education’s problematic influence in schools, Fine and McClelland (2008) note that abstinence-only curricula support a heteronormative, often homophobic environment in which GLBTQ youth are made to silence their sexual identities.

The abstinence message marginalizes non-hetero sexualities and non-heterosexual people outside of school settings as well. For example, Liebau (2007) and Grossman (2007) stigmatize homosexuality by implicating it in what they consider to be America’s cultural decline. Liebau,

for instance, points to gay and lesbian characters in teen novels and TV shows as proof that America's culture is negatively hypersexualized. Grossman questions the validity of the special training around gay, lesbian, and trans issues she took part in as a medical professional, which she dismisses as part of the same false "ideology" (p. 37) that in her view lies to young women about sex, STDs, fertility, and abortion in order to abolish gender roles. In addition, Grossman is especially critical of gay men and people who adopt the dress and appearance of a different gender, implying the former are public health threats and the latter are mentally disordered.

Response to Homosexuality in the Prescriptive Texts and the Abstinence Message

As discussed above, some of the prescriptive text authors make clear their preference for straightness over GLBTQ people and issues. In a more subtle way, however, all of the authors render young lesbian and bisexual women invisible and/or othered due to their books' exclusive focus on young straight women. Shalit (2007), for one, does not include any lesbian voices among the countless examples and stories she shares in her book.

Stepp (2007) tries to be inclusive, but falls short. Among the prescriptive text authors, she is by far the most accepting of homosexuality; she appears comfortable with the fact that some young people are gay or bisexual and calls for more research into the hookup experiences of lesbian university students. However, after engaging in "extensive discussion" with two lesbian university students, she ultimately excludes their stories from her book in part because their stories were complicated by identity issues, but also because "their power struggles were with other girls, not with guys" (p. 12). Stepp claims that the lesbians related to their partners in similar ways to the straight girls, though, so perhaps the omission of their examples suggests they challenged the gendered, oppositional approach to sex and relationships Stepp and other abstinence advocates rely on to support their arguments against premarital sex. Since Stepp does

not go into great detail about the lesbians' exclusion, it is difficult to prove that this is the case, but the fact remains that something about their “power struggles” with girls instead of guys made their experiences hooking up so different that there was no place for them in the book.

If, as Stepp suggests, the interaction between casual sex and their innate nature is responsible for women's emotional trauma, this should not be so: women who have casual sex with other women should be just as damaged as those who have male partners. The experiences of the lesbians could have been quite illuminating when compared to those of the straight young women—did the lesbians describe the same hurt, regret, disappointment, and used feelings after casual sex? Did they have sex as unwillingly as the straight girls often seemed to? Did they and their hookups bond instantly to each other? Why did they have sex at all, since according to the abstinence message, without a man involved they could have gotten the love they crave as women without having to give sex in exchange? When casual sex is in the picture but a man isn't, the gendered foundation on which Christian Right/abstinence sexuality is built starts to crumble.

To steady that foundation, some abstinence advocates try to imply that homosexuality and bisexuality have their origins in cultural corruption or family trauma. In other words, heterosexuality is natural/biological, whereas other sexualities are reactive, which implies that other sexualities can be transformed into heterosexuality once the corruption or trauma is addressed. For example, Liebau (2007) attributes all same-sex sexual behavior and even stated lesbian and bisexual identities from teens to sexual experimentation and rebellion. In this way, the existence of teenaged bisexuals and lesbians is denied, and heterosexuality is privileged as the 'real' sexuality of all young women. Christian Right authors Ethridge and Arterbaum see “homosexual desires and tendencies” (p. 219) as having origins primarily in dysfunctional or

abusive parenting, and secondarily in the culture. They claim that “hundreds of former gay and lesbian individuals have left their homosexual lifestyles and found wholeness in their newfound heterosexuality” (p. 220). Note the way the authors call homosexuality a 'lifestyle' or a set of 'desires and tendencies' instead of a 'sexual orientation': young people who claim gay, lesbian, queer, or bisexual as an identity are disregarded and told they can and should change this important part of who they are.

In this chapter I provided some background information on the abstinence movement. I also analyzed some of the common beliefs about sexuality held among the prescriptive texts, the abstinence movement, and evangelical Christianity. While in this section I concentrated on convergences, the next two sections are devoted to divergences. In Chapters 4 and 5 I will explore how the prescriptive texts seem to differ from the abstinence movement and the Christian Right by exploring the texts' embrace of 'girl power' discourses, which reveal engagements with feminism and neoliberalism that, while perhaps not unique to the books, define them in important ways.

CHAPTER FOUR: ENGAGEMENTS WITH FEMINISM

This chapter explores the relationships the authors of the prescriptive texts have with feminism. First, I give an overview of this relationship, including the authors' use of Girl Power, their attacks on feminism today, and their failure to imagine any alternatives between celibacy and exhibitionist promiscuity. Then, I conduct a close text analysis to explore how the authors approach and construct feminism in their texts.

Overview

Authors' Relationships with Feminism

As I seek to illuminate through the text analysis below, the prescriptive text authors have ambivalent relationships with feminism, and tend to subvert its political, collective potential. It makes up an important topic in the books--with the exception of *Unprotected*, each of the books dedicates an entire chapter to exploring feminism, or more specifically, its impact on the sexual lives and practices of young women today. The subject is directly or indirectly addressed elsewhere in the books as well. While the authors recognize the increasing number of academic and professional opportunities available to (some) girls today, they remain uncomfortable with equality of opportunity in the sexual realm.

Before I go further, I must briefly discuss my use of the term 'feminism.' I acknowledge that using 'feminism' singular hegemonically imposes a consensus based on dominant views onto a broad and complex variety of perspectives, and is reductive in that distilling even 'dominant' or 'mainstream' beliefs into one monolith necessarily smooths out the tensions and omits points of contestation existent in them. That said, my understanding of feminism reflects my theoretical framework of girls' studies. For example, the category around which feminist analysis is organized, gender, is discursively constructed, as are other categories important to

girls' studies analyses such as class and race. Attention to these and other "interlocking forms of oppression" (Tong, 2007, p. 33) reflects the groundedness of girls' studies in what is often called third-wave feminism (Mazarella, 2008). Although third-wave feminism has been criticized for being too individualist and lacking a collective orientation (Tong, 2007), critiques of the limits of individual power voiced by some girls' studies scholars (e.g., Taft, 2004) reveal a progressive feminism committed to collective action and equality.

Feminist sexuality is even trickier to pin down, because sexuality has always represented a big (but not singular) topic in feminism. Certain feminist debates over rape, gatekeeping, marriage, and especially sexual freedom play out in the pages of the prescriptive texts, though they are not framed as such. Sexual freedom in particular is a continually revisited and contested issue within feminism; for example, in the 1970's some feminists "aimed to explore what they regarded as the pleasure of any kind of consensual sex" (Tong, 2007, p. 26) whereas others came to the conclusion that heterosexual sex was more danger than pleasure. Later, questions of sexual agency versus patriarchal victimhood arose during feminist debates on pornography, sex work, and cosmetic surgery.

Willis (1996), in a nuanced view that I believe fits into my framework, asserts that within feminism, "there is a sizeable sexual-libertarian wing that, rather than defining sexual freedom and sexual violence as mutually exclusive concerns, views coercion and repression as symbiotic aspects of sexism" (p. 52). Because sexual violence and pressure discourage women from pursuing sexual pleasure on their own terms, women sacrifice this freedom in favor of protection from male sexuality. In this view, "women are neither free agents nor abject victims, but active contenders for freedom and equality with and against a male-dominated system" (p. 52). 'Active

contenders' is important to note: feminist sexuality is self-determined sexuality, though of course this self-determination takes place within a system that limits it.

Returning to the prescriptive text authors' ambivalence around feminism, they express comfort with liberal feminist goals such as equal opportunity access to education and the workplace (Tong, 2007). Importantly, liberal feminism does not take power differentials into account, and assumes that existing structures are basically fair, which means that the authors see few disadvantages for young women in current economic and social arrangements. For example, Liebau (2007) says that for today's girls, "professional options are limitless" (p. 2). She characterizes girls' current place in society as one filled with "breathtaking opportunities" and "magnificent advantages" (p. 3). Grossman (2007) describes her individual female patients as taking full advantage of these opportunities: they are intelligent, accomplished, well-disciplined high achievers in academia, sports, and the arts, looking ahead to uniformly bright futures. Young women in *Unhooked* (Stepp, 2007) and *Girls Gone Mild* (Shalit, 2007) similarly have the world at their feet: they attend prestigious universities and institute successful boycotts.

The young women in the prescriptive texts are portrayed in a very Girl Power way—with few exceptions, they are all smart, savvy, confident, assertive, apolitical, and poised to accomplish whatever they set out to do without any gender-based barriers holding them back. Sex, however, seems to drain their Girl Power away. When it comes to sexual matters, the girls in the prescriptive texts suddenly become "a pitiable crowd of confused, vulnerable young women, [...] making bad choices, and paying high prices" (Grossman, 2007, p. 4). Alluding, perhaps intentionally, to the Ophelia narrative, drowning metaphors are common; for example "everyone swims" but "many are drowning" (Shalit, 2007, p. 12) in a "giant tsunami" (Liebau, 2007, p. 11) of sex.

To the prescriptive text authors, the women's liberation movement represents the seismic shift that put into motion what would eventually become the sex tsunami. While the authors acknowledge some of the advances made by feminists of this era in different areas of society, they reject categorically the idea of free love, take issue with the critiques of marriage, female purity, and women's role as sexual gatekeeper put forth during that time, and generally consider the feminism of the 1960s and 1970s too extreme and intolerant. Oddly, for Stepp (2007), feminism stops here—she describes a young self-identified feminist as a 1960s throwback rather than a third-waver or do-me feminist, as Shalit (2007) and Liebau (2007) respectively characterize the feminists of the 1990s and today. According to them, feminism is now wholly about promoting empowerment through sexual exhibitionism (Shalit) and casual sex (Liebau). Like the original coiner of the term 'do-me feminism,' a journalist writing in *Esquire* (Zeisler, 2008), Shalit and Liebau miscast the attempt by some feminists to broaden feminism's sense of sexual inclusiveness by portraying it as a prurient venture. Even taking their accusations as is, feminism is about more than sexuality, and moreover, feminist sexuality is about more than the public, performative, indiscriminately promiscuous version claimed by Shalit and Liebau.

Because they disagree so strongly with feminist sexuality and the social constructionist ideas of gender that underlie it, the prescriptive text authors distance themselves from modern political feminism. However, as evidenced by the amount of time they devote to discrediting and blaming it, the authors also see feminism as a strong and enduring influence over young women, and want to harness some of its power. To reconcile this, the authors employ a variety of strategies. Some, like Shalit (2007), and Liebau (2007), appropriate feminist language to advocate for oppressive status-quo social arrangements. For example, in *Girls Gone Mild*, Shalit claims the teenage girls she talks to are leading a burgeoning fourth wave feminist revolution;

she says that “the fourth wave [stresses] activism” and that it emphasizes a “more traditional concept of keeping sexuality significant” (p. 224), for instance. However, she fails to explain anything about the alleged movement beyond these two tenets.

Others, like Liebau (2007) and Grossman (2007), make appeals to ‘true’ feminism and ‘real’ feminists. For example, Grossman implores people who work with young women to “suggest that she wait, and find the intimacy she *really* wants, the kind that’s meaningful and long lasting. Care for her according to *her* needs, without the false notions of a modern ideology; be a *real* feminist” (p. 146, italics in original). Of all the prescriptive text authors, Grossman engages the least with feminism and is the most negative towards it; she seems to use ‘feminism’ and ‘feminist ideology’ interchangeably with ‘radical politics,’ ‘political correctness,’ ‘liberal ideology,’ ‘modern ideology,’ and even simply ‘ideology.’ These words describe the attitudes towards gender roles, sexual orientation, gender orientation, health policy, sexuality, and mental health she claims have “hijacked” (p. xviii) her psychiatric profession, so in effect, she is pleading with feminists to ‘be a real feminist’ by abandoning the political aspects of their feminism.

Finally, all of the authors rely on Girl Power as a sort of apolitical feminism-lite. Doing so enables the authors to focus on young women’s sexual practices by connecting them to the young women’s achievements, potential, and opportunities as potential barriers to success. And because Girl Power as used lacks a political focus, it also allows the authors to disregard the unequal power relations and stigmatizing discourses that affect all young women, and to ignore how those discourses intersect with others to further disadvantage some young women more than others.

Feminist Alternatives

One of the most striking things about the books under analysis is their failure to visualize any sexual routes between or outside the idealized garden path of yesteryear and the demonized dark alley of today. For example, Shalit (2007) decides that sexual norms today mandate “[losing] your virginity ASAP, to whomever [...], you don’t even have to like the person you’re hooking up with” (p. 7), and concludes that the only alternative is virginity until marriage.

Similarly, Liebau (2007) says that while today “girls have gained the ability to exercise the power of choice that traditionally was a boy’s,” this choice paradoxically consolidates boys’ power because it enables them to “sit back, look the girls over, and [...] exercise the power of choice that once belonged to their female counterparts” (p. 185). Unable to imagine heterosexual relations as anything other than a zero-sum power game, Liebau determines that the only answer is to revert back to the male-pursues-female model. Shalit (2007) reveals a similar lack of imagination when she points out that “today many young women feel oppressed by the expectation that they will engage in casual sex, just as their mothers once felt oppressed by the expectation that they would be virgins until marriage” (p. 7). Instead of exploring ways of thinking about sexuality that are free from restrictive expectations and oppression, Shalit decides that the old standard is the way to go.

In a related point, like the ones described above, many of the girls Shalit speaks to express dissatisfaction with the way sex is treated today. What I interpret as unhappiness with pervasive objectification, whether in the form of t-shirts that say “Who needs brains when you have these?” (p. 224), TV ads, or the perception of a culturally-mandated sexuality that emphasizes performance over honesty, desire, and pleasure, Shalit construes as a reaction to

feminism and premarital sex. Her and the other prescriptive text authors' solutions to the problem of objectification (chastity, modest dressing, and male-initiated dating) reveal a profoundly narrow vision of sex and society, and one that is not altogether different from the objectified hypersexed male-oriented 'feminist' one they decry: in both, young women's sexuality is extremely important and defines their value as people, but is other-defined based on appearance and behavior rather than self-defined. In addition, young women's sexuality is very important to men and in some ways belongs to them, because they play such a large part in determining its expression, either as voyeuristic consumers, protective fathers, or future husbands. Feminism's emphases on self-determined sexuality and egalitarian societal and personal relationships could be powerful alternatives to the limited options many young women find themselves faced with, but the prescriptive texts utterly fail to represent this potential.

Text Analysis

From Loving Another Well, Unhooked, p. 263 (Appendix A)

This selection must be situated in the context of the book as a whole, because its engagement with feminism is indirect rather than direct. In *Unhooked*, Stepp (2007) does not explicitly spell out the connection between feminism and hookup culture, although she mentions the women's liberation movement, the sexual revolution, Title IX, and an alleged "feminist antipathy toward love" (p. 179) as contributors to it. She does dedicate a chapter to feminism, in which she deals at length with one young self-identified feminist's "[struggle] to figure out the possibilities and limitations of her sexual power" (p. 143), but only briefly with feminism as a movement or as a set of beliefs.

In this chapter, Stepp (2007) describes how young women who say they want to be in a heterosexual romantic love relationship are sometimes laughed at for being weak and chastised

for being a tool of the patriarchy. Although heterosexual romantic love and its attendant sexual and social practices constitute productive areas of inquiry and critique for many feminists, painting feminism as incompatible with having or wanting a boyfriend puts forth an inaccurate depiction (Valenti, 2007). By failing to correct this misperception and even promoting it elsewhere in the book (see ‘feminist antipathy toward love,’ above), Stepp does exactly this.

Therefore, I believe it is possible to treat this selection as a response to feminism. Though it does not directly address Girl Power or feminism, it represents a kind of Girl Power as anti-feminism (Taft, 2004) discourse in that Stepp (2007) assures young women they can have a serious boyfriend without having to sacrifice their emotional expressiveness, personalities, or achievements, in implicit contrast to feminism, which purportedly alleges that all of these are impossible to maintain in such a relationship. This selection includes other anti-feminist discourses as well; namely, a gendered, biological sexuality discourse which is itself tied to other anti-feminist discourses. Stepp’s (2007) statement that young women’s “need to love” is “hardwired” demonstrates this biological discourse, which is interdiscursively tied to slut-shaming and vulnerability discourses (by slut-shaming, I mean the practice of devaluing or shaming women for being (or being perceived as) sexually active). For example, as I have discussed before, this line of thinking holds that because young women are biologically predisposed to seek out love rather than sex, they cannot separate the two. Those that try are vulnerable to emotional distress, and those who succeed are abnormal, damaged, and/or ‘slutty.’

Hortatory Report. In this selection, Stepp encourages women to put their fears of love aside through a modified hortatory report. A hortatory report consists of “descriptions with a covert prescriptive intent, aimed at getting people to act certain ways on the basis of representations of what is” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 96). I characterize this as a modified hortatory

report because while it does “urge action on the basis of description” (p. 100) rather than explanatory logic, it has an overt prescriptive intent. However, there is an additional covert (or perhaps merely less overt) prescriptive intent I will address as well.

The hortatory report is realized in terms of grammatical relations between clauses within a sentence (Fairclough, 2003). In parataxis, a sentence’s clauses are coordinate or equal, grammatically speaking, which is shown by the use of coordinating conjunctions such as *and*, *but*, *or*, *so*, *for*, etc (Scott, n.d.). In hypotaxis, one clause is subordinate to or less emphasized than the other clause, as indicated by subordinating conjunctions like *because*, *while*, *where*, *when*, *after*, *if*, etc. Hortatory reports are characterized by a high ratio of paratactic sentences to hypotactic sentences and a high level of additive and elaborative semantic relations (Fairclough, 2003).

The selection under analysis clearly meets those criteria. Paratactic sentences dominate, and although there is a sprinkling of other types, additive relations appear most frequently. This results in a “logic of appearances” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 95) in which description replaces argument and explanatory logic. In this text, Stepp (2007) explicitly urges young women to embrace their need to love, but makes no marked semantic reason-statements. A few statements can be read as reasons, but for the most part Stepp relies on a series of descriptive statements about relationships to encourage the behavior she wants.

Although the overt prescriptive intent of this passage is “Do not be afraid of your need to love” (Stepp, 2007, p. 263), the passage is also geared towards getting young women to choose committed, heterosexual relationships over hookups. This passage has a high proportion of statements of fact, which suggests it is more oriented towards knowledge exchange than action—with the exception of the directive mentioned above, at first glance, it seems that Stepp is merely

informing the reader about love. However, these statements of fact are highly evaluative, and were “selected for the values they convey, within the particular value system that is implicit” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 111) in the text. Besides the anti-feminist implications discussed earlier, the values some of these evaluations convey are heteronormative and classist. For example, the only gendered pronoun in this selection is ‘he,’ as in “he relishes knowing your secret love of NASCAR” (Stepp, 2007, p. 263). Presumably, this secret is so juicy because it defies gender and class stereotypes (NASCAR car racing is typically associated with working-class men, not middle-class female university students), and so charming because these gender and class boundary violations are secret.

Evaluations like this exist halfway between statements and demands—though evaluations do not command action like demands do, they “covertly invite” it (Fairclough, 2003, p. 112) in a way statements of fact do not. Therefore, as these evaluations all promote the idea of committed heterosexual relationships, they encourage young women to pursue these kinds of relationships instead of more casual ones. In addition, this selection also has a promotional element, which means that messages within the text not only represent the text’s main focus, but advocate and anticipate or move ahead of it as well. Here, committed relationships are represented in the text in a way that advocates their desirability. The text also anticipates these relationships through the fictional example, which projects ‘loving another’ onto a future relationship filled with endless emotional intimacy and support. Like evaluations, promotion constitutes a way ideological values can appear more like commonsense or neutral facts. Fairclough (2003) points out that hortatory reports and promotional elements are common under neoliberal capitalism, which perhaps connects to the prescriptive texts’ neoliberal subject, discussed in depth next chapter.

From Toward a New Sexual Feminism, Prude, pp. 193-195 (Appendix B)

Prominent discourses circulating in this sample include a capitalist market discourse, a particularly anxious discourse around sexually assertive girls, and other gender essentialist and anti-feminist discourses. As a representation, it is abstract; more at the level of social practice than social event, meaning that it does not represent a specific, concrete social event, but is rather at the level of representing habitualized ways of acting. Speaking to this, Fairclough (2003), incorporating Bourdieu and Waquant, says that “when representations are generalized or abstract, we need to look particularly closely at how things are being classified, at the ‘classification schemes’ which are drawn upon to impose a ‘di-vision’ on the social” (p. 138). This representation textures a clear division between male sexuality and female sexuality, male needs and female needs, and feminist ethics/values/concerns/desires and women’s ‘real’ ethics/values/concerns/desires. For example, Liebau (2007) says “a feminism more respectful of and true to their deepest longings would encourage women to develop a sexual ethic that meets *their* needs as well as men’s” (p. 195, italics in original).

Legitimation. In terms of legitimation, appeals to tradition and conformity (Van Leeuwen, 2007) make up an important part of this sample's authority claims. The problem Liebau (2007) presents is one of feminism causing women to turn away from the virginity norm, which creates a new conformity of non-virginity. Liebau asserts the superiority of tradition and conformity to these traditions and claims authority based on this superiority. For example, the allegation that a “determined and constant devaluation” of virginity has “deprived chaste girls of the social esteem that they once enjoyed” (p. 193) points out that traditionally, virgins were respected, and,

in implicit contrast to the lonely, desperate, disease-ridden women/world of today described in paragraphs 4-5, things were infinitely better.

Moral evaluation plays a role in the text's legitimation as well, especially as realized through certain lexicalizations. For instance, the first paragraph mentions that “traditional social pressures” have an “impact” on young women's behavior, whereas the “new social norms” feminists have promoted have a “*pernicious* impact” (Liebau, 2007, p. 193, italics mine). This texturing of anti-feminist discourses suggests that feminism is dangerous, and insidiously so. Similarly, the italicized words in phrases such as “*glorification* of female sexual aggressiveness,” “young girls *propositioning* their male classmates,” and “devaluation of sexual *innocence*” (p. 193) have evaluative connotations that produce a moral dimension around girls' 'natural' sexual passivity; sexual initiation, whether it be in the sense of initiation as pursuit or initiation as first knowledge, is bad.

Metaphor, Equivalences, and Meaning Relations. Liebau (2007) draws a connection between feminism and women's unhappiness through metaphor, equivalences, and meaning relations. I will address the latter two shortly, but begin with metaphor. In the text, Liebau claims that feminists have promoted new social norms that devalue virginity and make it difficult for girls to remain virgins. In truth, while feminism may devalue virginity as an indicator of morality, feminist ideals of self-determined sexuality completely support those who make a considered decision to choose abstinence (Valenti, 2007). Liebau uses a market metaphor to explain that “chastity is the one good that becomes less valuable with scarcity” because “when a variety of young girls are offering sexual activity to young boys, it becomes much more difficult for chaste girls to compete for male attention” (p. 193). This metaphor richly textures several ideological discourses around sexuality: boys always want sex and only sex, which is ‘natural’

and therefore unproblematic; sex is not something girls want, but is instead a gift/sacrifice they give to boys (notice the ‘offering’ phrasing) in exchange for something else (here, male attention); and finally, girls are responsible for male sexual expectations and behavior.

Even within market logic, which is in no way problem-free, this last implication is puzzling, because market logic holds that consumer demand drives sales, so it seems that in this metaphor girls (business owners) are merely responding to consumer (boys) demands (sex). Especially as male sexual desire and activity are treated as natural and normal, to intimate that it is actually girls’ control over the ratio of chaste to sexually active girls that engenders boys’ alleged disinclination for the chaste seems like a contradiction. However, I believe Liebau is trying to propose that boys’ natural sexual desires were kept in check by a market that supported girls’ natural chaste desires, until feminism stepped in and created a new market (the ‘new sexual norms’ Liebau alludes to) that caters to boys’ needs over girls’.

To explain how feminism has accomplished this, and to discredit it in the process, Liebau (2007) sets up a logic of equivalence, which “subverts existing differences and divisions” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 100), between several different things: feminism and so-called do-me feminist sexuality, for example, which sets the stage for an objectified, coerced, male-obsessed version of sexuality and a stereotypically male version of sexuality to be conflated with feminist sexuality, the distinctions between them collapsed.

This is accomplished in text partially through the creation of hyponymy and hypernymy between words. A hyponym is a word that represents a subcategory of a more general group (Webster’s Universal College Dictionary, 1997). For example, *panda* and *goat* are hyponyms of *animal*. The term hypernym describes what *animal* is to *panda* and *goat*. In paragraph three of the text, ‘sexual activity,’ ‘propositioning classmates,’ and ‘cosmetic vaginal surgery’ are all

lexicalized as hyponyms of ‘sexiness,’ meaning that while they are not the same thing, they are the same kind of thing. In addition, ‘female imperative’ and ‘obsession’ are positioned as co-hypernyms of ‘sexiness,’ meaning that sexiness is a type of both.

Based on these relations, ‘sexiness’ seems to be Liebau’s (2007) code for ‘giving men what they want,’ but to name it as such in her framework would raise uncomfortable questions about male power and sexual entitlement—questions Liebau avoids in spite of her negative and essentialist view of male sexuality. Instead, the code turns to ‘women objectifying themselves,’ such as when she claims that do-me feminism “hasn’t prevented women from being treated like sex objects—it just means that women themselves are doing the objectifying” (p. 194). In this way, Liebau sets up an equivalence between ‘women objectifying themselves’ and ‘do-me feminism.’ By implicating do-me feminism in the ‘sexiness’ web of meaning relations, Liebau manages to completely subvert feminism’s message that sexuality should be pursued on one’s own terms and for one’s own pleasure (Valenti, 2007).

In the next paragraphs, ‘promiscuous,’ ‘commitment-phobic,’ ‘failed,’ ‘pleasureless,’ and ‘male-like’ are realized in the text as co-attributes of ‘do-me feminist sexuality,’ which is then lexicalized as “liberated sexuality” (Liebau, 2007, p. 194). The word ‘liberated’ is key, because by using it, Liebau appropriates feminist language and deploys it to distort and misrepresent feminism. For example, with this wording, Liebau creates an equivalence between ‘feminism’ and ‘do-me feminism,’ which falsely characterizes feminism as centered on (and as Liebau implies later, centered on imposing on girls) a very specific and limited kind of sexuality. Furthermore, Liebau then claims a causal relationship between this sexuality and STDs, unwanted pregnancy, and permanent singlehood.

Examining the relationships between words allows the implicit link Liebau makes between feminism and the ills it is charged with causing to be made visible. She seems quite careful to keep most of her accusations against feminism at an implicit rather than explicit level, and to communicate them through a series of semantic associations with ‘do-me feminism’ rather than stating them outright. Her pattern of implicitness serves an important purpose. As I mentioned previously, the prescriptive text authors have ambivalent relationships with feminism—they welcome the academic and workplace opportunities feminism has provided, but reject feminism’s view of sexuality and gender roles. Liebau is no exception. By attacking do-me feminism as a proxy, she can come out strongly against what she sees as the problem with feminism without having to categorically reject it. Employing a proxy and other strategies of implicitness also exempts Liebau from challenging feminism on honest grounds; with the exception of essentialist differences between men and women, of which Liebau does paint feminism’s rejection fairly, her other accusations against feminism filter misrepresentations through layers of suggestion and insinuation.

In summary, this chapter focused on feminism in the prescriptive texts. I discussed the authors’ uneasy relationship with feminism, from their comfort with liberal feminist victories in the classroom and workplace to their discomfort with feminism’s arguments in the area of sexual freedom. Through my text analysis, I demonstrated how both samples’ authors misrepresented feminism and pointed out how anti-feminist discourses were constructed in the samples as well. Next, I perform a similar exploration and analysis of neoliberalism in the prescriptive texts.

CHAPTER FIVE: NEOLIBERAL DISCOURSES AND SUBJECTIVITIES

In this chapter, I analyze how neoliberal discourses are taken up in the prescriptive texts and how the way in which these discourses are used differentiates the texts from the larger abstinence movement. For example, I suggest that texts use abstinence to reconstitute transgressive girl-subjects, and that they implicate abstinence in neoliberal discourses around success, which hints at a construction of abstinence as empowerment that seems to be missing from the wider abstinence movement. I also examine the construction of the texts' typical white, middle-class, heterosexual subject.

Abstinence and Neoliberal Success

As I seek to demonstrate through the textual analyses below, neoliberal influences abound in the prescriptive texts, including in the constitution of the subject. Neoliberalism, drawing on an Enlightenment view of the individual “which conflates the autonomous, self-made person with agency and subjectivity” (Patterson, 2005, p. 374), treats all individuals “as if they were equals on a level playing field” (p. 377) in terms of success outcomes. In neoliberalism, individualism is paramount, and “the articulation of identity as a choice and self-determination” (Gonick, 2003, p. 16) constitutes a major project for the self-subject. Similarly, Ringrose (2007) describes neoliberal aims as “individualization, autonomous self-hood and self-responsibilization for either success or failure” (p. 480).

This self-responsibilization stems from neoliberalism's recasting of the state in market terms (Brown, 2006). Beyond constructing citizens as rational economic actors, neoliberalism “entails a host of policies that figure and produce citizens as individual entrepreneurs and consumers whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for ‘self-care’—their ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions” (Brown, 2006, p. 694). As a result,

social spending on public welfare items such as education and health care is redirected towards privatization efforts and security regimes (Goldberg, 2008). Social problems are refigured as “individual problems with market solutions” (Brown, 2006, p. 704), which means that citizens are charged with identifying, obtaining, and paying for individual, personal solutions to socially produced problems. In this way, the private sphere can be advocated for through the state.

Importantly, neoliberal discourse produces the girl as the subject who can best and/or most easily attain success (Ringrose, 2007). In fact, according to Ringrose (2007), the girl has become “a metaphor for neoliberal discourse of personal performance, choice, and freedom,” along with its attendant discourse of individual responsibility for success or failure. She points out that neoliberal discourse values qualities typically associated with the feminine, such as reinvention, adaptation and flexibility, but also notes that in spite of this, the feminine remains a site of anxiety and problems in contrast to its contradictory positioning as a site of positive potential. The prescriptive texts embody this last idea, as they represent girls as “both dire problem and fantastical possibility” (Ringrose, 2007, p. 483).

One way in which girls become constituted as a problem is through the transgression of the feminine by their adoption of masculine desire rather than feminine lack of desire (Ringrose, 2007). This is evidenced in the prescriptive texts with regard to sexual desire; as I have described previously, because girls are portrayed as generally lacking in sexual desire, the expression of desire and the girls expressing it are both constituted as problematic. Abstinence, therefore, rectifies this transgression, representing a way in which the once-troublesome girl can be safely reconstituted through discourses of feminine lack.

The texts construct young women’s subjectivities through abstinence discourses in another way as well. Abstinence is very much portrayed as a key avenue through which young

women can largely determine their own successful futures, reflecting neoliberal discourses around success and self-determination. For example, every book under analysis is rife with statistics and stories about the horrors that happen when young women do not choose abstinence: pregnancy, disease, depression, and more. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, young women in these books are seen as confident high achievers until sex enters the picture, at which point they are left confused and vulnerable. This Ophelia-esque characterization mirrors the larger abstinence message as a whole.

However, as demonstrated in these books, neoliberal Girl Power offers young women a chance to mold their near and distant futures through abstinence. Gonick (2006) posits that “without intervention,” fragile Ophelias are “at risk of failing to produce the required attributes of the neoliberal feminine subject” (p. 15). She also explains that “Girl Power represents the idealized form of the new neoliberal subjectivities” (p. 15). Whereas in the broader abstinence movement, sex is the intervention that transforms successful young women into failing Ophelias (Burns and Torre, 2004), in the prescriptive texts, abstinence is the intervention that transforms vulnerable young women into neoliberal girl powerhouses.

For example, as a counterpart to the negative abstinence-avoiding images, the superior lives that result when young women choose abstinence are also highlighted in the books, in contrast to the doom-only stories that seem to dominate the broader abstinence movement. In the prescriptive texts, young women wield abstinence as a tool to transform their lives for the better, or sometimes to maintain the fabulous, chaste lives they already have; sex is thus constructed as a conquerable barrier to happiness and success. Stepp (2007), for instance, focuses on the story of a young woman named Jamie to illustrate how an abstinence intervention—her decision to

leave the hookup lifestyle and its attendant insecurity and depression behind—enabled her to get a nice, rich, handsome boyfriend and the best grades of her university career.

This sense of potential and empowerment is at the essence of how these books differ from the abstinence movement at large. The larger movement is just as individualist and intent on blaming and shaming, but seems to offer little in the way of optimism and positive transformation. The prescriptive texts seem to envision girls as the locus of power (though not ownership) over their sexuality, whereas the broader abstinence movement externalizes the site of this power in sex, thus minimizing girls' power over their own sexualities and making abstinence a matter of avoiding harm rather than achieving good.

It is important to emphasize that the power and self-determination young women are ascribed in the books does not correspond to feminist understandings of power and self-determination; as I phrased it before, the books' way is like power without ownership—girls can exercise power over their sexual and extra-sexual lives by choosing abstinence, but are not vested with the kind of ownership that allows them to choose from this path among many. Metaphorically speaking, young women can paint the walls circumscribing their sexuality, but cannot knock them down. In the abstinence message at large, the issue is responsibility without power; young women are charged with the responsibility to avoid sex, often without the power to do so in the first place (Burns and Torre, 2004).

Subject Characteristics in the Prescriptive Texts

Race. The prescriptive texts' subject is white, a fact visually represented by the covers of some of the books: *Unhooked* and *Unprotected* feature young white women on the cover. The young woman on the cover of *Girls Gone Mild* could be white or Latina; the deliberate out-of-focus perspective makes her ethnically ambiguous. In the books, young women of color are

typically Othered, and their cultures are often portrayed as deficient, especially in terms of sexual norms. For example, Stepp (2007) depicts Iranian culture as sexually repressive, and both she and Shalit (2007) portray African-American culture as sexually permissive and precociously sexual. To illustrate why one African-American girl she meets avoids spending time with her peers, for instance, Shalit relates a story about ten-year olds “juking” (p. 57) (either engaging in “dry sex,” (p. 57) according to Shalit, or dancing in an extremely sexually suggestive manner, according to the only way in which I have heard it used) at a party with such vigor they put a hole in the wall.

Similarly, in Stepp’s book, an African-American teenager has sex for the first time at age 14, younger than the other young women in the book, and has sexual relationships with older men in which she receives clothing, money, or other gifts. Her school life is marked by violence and she is the only girl with a largely absent father. Stepp says that based on information from national surveys, the young woman’s sexual behavior “is not uncommon” (p. 95) in the black community. Although the statistical information, like the juking story, may be true, highlighting these accounts, especially as representative behaviors, without also pointing out African-American girls’ locations in systems of gender, racial, and class oppression suggests that African-American culture is both responsible for these behaviors and inferior to white culture, in which these behaviors occur less frequently or at different ages.

Shalit (2007) also devotes attention to ‘extraordinary’ young African-American women, and in doing so emphasize their separateness from the ‘real’ white middle-class subjects. For example, although she does speak briefly to some African-American girls at an abstinence convention, in terms of African-American presence in *Girls Gone Mild* Shalit focuses mostly on a teenage motivational speaker and two beauty pageant winners (one of whom, Lakita, is the

subject of a text analysis passage later in this chapter), who all share abstinence-based platforms. Shalit portrays most of the (presumably) white girls she speaks to as everyday teenagers or university students, but the young black women are highlighted as exceptional achievers. Though she seeks to demonstrate that society's unwarrantedly low expectations for black teens extend to sexual behavior, by contrasting the normalcy of white middle-class girls who choose abstinence with the exceptionality of low-income African-American girls who do, Shalit subtly presents a weakened challenge to the same racialized, sexualized stereotypes the young women she interviews point to as demeaning.

Class. The prescriptive texts' subject is middle- or upper-class. Stepp (2007) is upfront about her choice to talk to only middle- or upper-class young women, which she says was a deliberate strategy to ensure similar music, linguistic, clothing, and communication preferences. Others are not so forthcoming, but make their subject's class equally clear. Liebau (2007), for example, opens her book with a fictional "day-in-the-life-of" vignette to show how much sexual content an 'average' 14-year old girl named Jennifer encounters during her typical day of wearing trendy clothes, shopping at the mall, using her own computer, and managing her time to allow for TV viewing, web surfing, and homework. *Unprotected* (Grossman, 2007) takes place on the campus of "one of the nation's best-known universities" (p. xv), and many of the students Stepp interviews attend wealthy private universities such as Duke. As Currie, Kelly, and Pomerantz (2009) point out, such overachievers are "almost by definition" middle or upper class, and typically white as well.

Sexual Orientation. Finally, the prescriptive texts' subject is heterosexual. Like working-class and low-income women, non-heterosexual women are essentially invisible in the prescriptive texts. As I mentioned before, women claiming a sexual identity other than

heterosexuality are ignored, as in *Girls Gone Mild* and *Unprotected*; dismissed as going through an experimental phase, as in *Prude*; and excluded, as in *Unhooked*.

Text Analysis

From “Loving Yourself,” Unhooked, pp. 261-262 (Appendix C)

Among others, the “Loving Yourself” sample from *Unhooked* (Stepp, 2007) reflects neoliberal/Girl Power discourses that value individualism, achievement, and agency, in addition to a discourse of development that interdiscursively draws on psychological and capitalist discourses. For example, very early in the selection Stepp states “you are the subject of your own life, not someone else's life” (p. 261) which immediately foregrounds a girl-centered, take-charge, individualist version of agency. She reassures the reader that “it's okay to feel ordinary right now,” but thereafter encourages the reader to choose “choices [...] that build inner confidence,” and to avoid casual relationships, because “they'll make you feel more ordinary than you already feel” (p. 261). Within a neoliberal framework, where producing one's extraordinary self through individual choices is a major project, ordinary is clearly unacceptable.

Intertextual ‘You’. Focusing on the intertextual 'you' is a good place to begin a closer examination of how these discourses are rendered textually. Ironically, for a piece that so strongly encourages individualism, the use of the second person serves to suppress, ignore, and/or Other individual differences. Compared to the Shalit sample discussed below, there is much less orientation to difference here; instead the emphasis rests primarily on shared understandings.

Textually, ‘you’ works to build consensus through statements like “you and I know” (Stepp, 2007, p. 261). It also forces the reader to identify with the person to and about whom Stepp is speaking. Identification does not necessarily equal agreement, but it does presume at

least some assent to the author's representation of 'you'. In addition, narrowing the perspective-space that exists between writer and reader in third- or first-person texts (with the exception of first person plural 'we' texts) limits the evaluative distance the reader can immediately take to critique or dissent with the author's words. However, because of the connection between representation and identification, second person texts may actually encourage the reader to examine the author's words more closely than in texts written from other perspectives. In other words, the second person initially assumes agreement between writer and reader, though this agreement may not hold for long.

In addition, the way Stepp (2007) uses 'you' in this passage highlights some of the power dynamics attendant in reaching consensus. Fairclough (2003) points out that consensus can be "a normalization and acceptance of differences of power, which brackets or suppresses differences of meaning and norms" (p. 42). Some of the devices that texture this in the sample are rhetorical questions, because Stepp (2007) assumes the reader knows and embraces the 'right' answer, and modality, which she uses to allude to difference in some parts and shut it out in others. For example, when Stepp tells the target young female readership how they look, feel, and act (which is itself an act performed from a position of power and authority), she tends to make modalized statements of fact like "you *may* look like you could take on the world," "you feel *pretty* ordinary," and "you're *vulnerable* to doing things that whittle away at your self-confidence" (p. 261, italics mine). This constitutes a slippage in consensus, as Stepp acknowledges the possibility of difference. However, when she tells young women what they should do to feel not-ordinary, she switches to non-modalized imperative demands like "learn to scuba dive" and "explore intimacy within relationships" (p. 261). Here consensus is solidified again when Stepp prescribes rather than suggests a course of action for young women to follow.

Another way Stepp's (2007) use of the second person disregards difference lies in its universalizing character. 'You' signifies Stepp's recontextualization of and response to the complex thoughts and feelings of the young women she interviewed, collapsed into a single generalized representation. Importantly, the representation of 'you' as a social actor includes many discursive markers of heterosexual, middle-class, neoliberal subjectivity. For example, although Stepp uses the gender-neutral term 'partner' fairly often, she makes explicit references to men only. She tells 'you' to avoid hookups because they will make you "look more ordinary to the guy you set your sights on" and "he will seek to win you over only if he thinks you're a prize" (p. 261). Stepp also mentions "living with a husband" and asks if "your sexual and romantic encounters [are] teaching you the skills you'll need to find and sustain what you desire" (p. 262). There are no corresponding references to girlfriends, women, or wives.

In terms of class markers, Stepp (2007) instructs 'you' to build inner confidence through choice, "not just the choices in the college catalog" (p. 261), but also through choices like scuba diving and teaching literacy. In addition, she mentions a future full of dinner parties and work colleagues and reminds 'you' that "career counselors have told you that thinking about what kind of job you eventually want will help you decide how to prepare" (p. 262). Taken together, these indicators construct a subject who has access to university; the time and money to participate in recreational and volunteer activities now, and semi-formal home entertaining in the future; and finally, a career for which the subject has planned and received advice on, and is prestigious enough to warrant the lexicalization 'colleagues.' Needless to say, this representation does not represent the lives of many working class or low-income young women.

Besides ignoring them, this representation works to disadvantage young women of color, those from working class and low-income backgrounds, and those who identify as something

other than heterosexual because it textures a Girl Power as individual power discourse. The representation's odes to sexual empowerment through individualist ideologies of self-confidence and personal achievement work to "hide current injustices" (Taft, 2004, p. 75). More particularly, the representation portrays girls as having the power to become materially and romantically/sexually successful (as defined in traditionalist terms) through individual choice. However more or less achievable this may be for the representation's ideal subject, multiple oppressions make it decidedly less rather than more for young women whose subjectivities reside outside of this ideal.

Legitimation. This selection includes several forms of legitimation, most of which include some sort of reference to the future. For example, the passage relies on naturalization legitimation when it implies through rhetorical questions that years from now, young women will regret their earlier sexual experiences. In combination with markers like "years from now" (Stepp, 2007, p. 262), the rhetorical questions texture this sample's emphasis on the future. Interestingly, however, Stepp uses primarily present tense constructions, perhaps to reinforce the idea that present choices determine the future. Naturalization legitimation appeals to both 'natural' and moral orders, which is evident here: young women 'naturally' experience shame (a moral consequence) due to the passage of time (a natural consequence). Discursively, this legitimation textures discourses around young people's irresponsible and rebellious 'natures' in addition to the familiar sex-hurts-girls and slut-shaming discourses. Combined, these discourses position teenage girls in a particularly disempowering way.

In addition, mythopoesis, or legitimation through storytelling (Van Leeuwen, 2007), plays a role in legitimizing Stepp's (2007) words. Stepp positions the reader as the protagonist in a cautionary tale; she conjures up a fear-mongering future filled with embarrassing memories,

humiliating encounters with colleagues, mortifying realizations at dinner parties, and woefully inadequate relationship and parenting skills. This cautionary tale composes an obverse parallel to the moral tale featured in the sample below, which features a virgin marriage: abstinence brings rewards, and sex brings shame.

Finally, theoretical legitimations also make up an important part of this sample. For example, experiential rationalization supports Stepp's (2007) statement that "a guy can make you feel valuable, but it's not the guy who makes you valuable" (p. 261). Proverbs, maxims, and other commonsense sayings are other forms of experiential rationalizations. A key form of theoretical legitimation featured in this sample is prediction, which Stepp uses to support the "hookups will make you look and feel ordinary" set of sentences analyzed above. Although Van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimation schema defines predictions quite narrowly, it is possible to take a broader view of the concept and see predictive statements running through much of the text, such as in the rhetorical questions and cautionary tale I discussed above. According to Fairclough (2003), predictions are a powerful form of legitimation because "injunctions about what people must do or must not do now can be legitimated in terms of such predictions about the future, and extensively are" (p. 167). Stepp's text clearly relies on this power.

Assumptions, Semantic Relations, and Equivalences. This selection includes a host of problematic assumptions, which at times can be made visible through an exploration of how semantic relations and equivalences are used in the text. To take one example, this selection rests on the assumption that a crisis exists among young women due to their sexual practices; specifically, hookups. The text's references to feeling ordinary and building inner confidence suggest an assumption that young women hook up because they have low self-esteem, an implication that draws on Reviving Ophelia discourses around young women's self-esteem crises

in adolescence. The text also implicates hooking up as a major cause of low self-esteem, however, so in the text the two exist in a circular relationship.

Stepp (2007) constructs a set of equivalences that render these assumptions textually. Take the second paragraph, for instance, in which she lists a series of confidence-building choices: “Learn to scuba dive. Teach a child to read. Invest in good friendships. Explore intimacy within relationships. Avoid hookups” (p. 261). Semantically, these single-clause sentences are additive relations, meaning that each one provides additional but separate information; there is no explanatory or elaborative relationship between them. Because each sentence carries equal semantic weight, the differences between them are lessened, obscured, or collapsed. In this example, therefore, changing one’s sexual practice and picking up a new hobby are constructed as similarly desirable and beneficial.

A different set of assumptions is textured in the words immediately following: “Avoid hookups. They’ll make you feel more ordinary than you already feel—and look more ordinary to the guy you set your sights on. He will seek to win you over only if he thinks you’re a prize” (Stepp, 2007, p. 261). In contrast to the exclusively additive relations described above, these sentences and the clauses within them are semantically organized into reason, additive, elaboration, and conditional relations. The clause starting with “They’ll make you feel” gives a reason to “avoid hookups,” while the clause starting with “and look more ordinary” gives additional information to the “they’ll make you feel” (p. 261) clause. The subsequent sentence, which starts with “He will seek” (p. 261), elaborates the previous clause by providing additional related information. Within this sentence the clauses are in a conditional relation, signified by “if” in the second clause.

The semantic invocation of ordinariness through a reason relation brings to text another incarnation of the assumption that hooking up is bad, which is textured through a logic of equivalence based on the fact that within a neoliberal framework that prizes the production of individualized identity through choice, feeling/looking/being ordinary is bad. The next clauses' elaboration and conditional relations texture assumptions that draw on traditionalist discourses of sexuality. Although the clause beginning with "and look more ordinary to the guy" (Stepp, 2007, p. 261) is additive and therefore in isolation emphasized no more or less than the preceding clause, the elaborative and conditional clauses that follow it add semantic weight and emphasis to the words contained in it. The elaborative "he will seek to win you over" (p. 261) clause provides more related detail, and in doing so, highlights the importance of the previous clause. The elaborative clause also reflects the idea that male sexuality is active; notice that young women merely "set [their] sights" (p. 261) on guys in the additive clause.

Finally, the conditional "only if he thinks you're a prize" (Stepp, 2007, p. 261) clause speaks volumes about the discursive construction of traditionalist sexuality, especially female sexuality, and its ideological effects on young women. First, 'only if' underlines the narrow, limiting, and imperative character of sexual norms and the difficult balancing act required to stay within them because it suggests there is only one way to achieve appropriate sexuality, and continued success in this venture is highly conditional. Second, 'he thinks' stresses that in this line of thinking, female sexuality is not only subject to but dependent on male judgment for its very *raison d'être*. In the text, just as in the sexist power relations that shape young women's sexual, economic, and political lives, it's what 'he' thinks that matters, not what 'you' think or feel or do.

Last but not least, ‘you’re a prize’ re-accentuates the complex calculations young women must make to stay inside the bounds of acceptable feminine sexuality, especially in terms of female agency and passivity. Based on the earlier clauses, ‘a prize’ is code for ‘not ‘slutty,’’ which feeds into and is fed by slut-shaming discourses. The metaphor also encourages young women to evaluate themselves as prizes for young men to win and possess: pretty, shiny objects that attract and reward, and whose value is determined by the field of competitors. In other words, young women must actively and competitively police their appearance and behavior to appear attractive to young men but cannot demand the same; instead, they must passively wait for and allow young men to win them (over).

*From “It’s Midnight: Do You Know Where Your Role Models Are?” *Girls Gone Mild*, pp. 62-64 (Appendix D)*

Genre. Genre is an important feature of this sample for two reasons. First, the limited biographical sketch and interview combination featured in this selection is a mainstay of the prescriptive texts (excepting *Prude*). Second, this genre forms the vehicle through which Lakita is constructed as the neoliberal subject par excellence, a point I will explore in more depth shortly. As I noted earlier, Lakita is African-American, and her race is simultaneously highlighted and treated as unimportant in this passage. In neoliberalism, “categories of race disappear as much from keeping account of discrimination as from producing the discrimination itself,” leaving racism “freed up to circulate as robustly as individuals or non-government (or non-government-funded) institutions should choose in private” (Goldberg, 2008, p. 339). Lakita’s subjectivity is racialized, but because the passage constructs her success (and other African-Americans’ implicit failure) as produced by personal choice and responsibility, race as a

category on which racism and discrimination are predicated is neutralized by reassignment to the realm of private personal preference from a more public, political, and protected space.

Exploring the genre in more detail, the narratives embedded in this section demonstrate both a referential intention and an explanatory intention (Fairclough, 2003). The former “makes them open to questions about the relationship between story and actual events,” while the latter relates to an attempt “to make sense of events by drawing them into a relation which incorporates a particular point of view” (p. 85). For example, in terms of questions about the relationship between the narrative and actual events, Shalit says that Lakita's idea of personal dignity is strongly influenced by her ties to the civil rights movement, because “every summer while she was growing up” (Shalit, 2007, p 64) Lakita's family drove to her aunt and uncle's home Montgomery, Alabama, where “eventually they would entertain Dr. Martin Luther King in their home and strategize the Montgomery civil rights march together.”

However, since per Shalit (2007) Lakita wasn't born until 1971 or 1972, several years after the Montgomery march and King's assassination, the statements which claim or strongly infer Lakita's presence at these meetings and their direct influence on her life reflect less on actual events and more on the explanatory intention of this narrative, which is to link the power and dignity of the collectivist civil rights movement with Lakita's deeply individualist views in such a way that the former supports and strengthens the latter rather than challenges, contests, or contradicts it. This is not to say that Lakita's family did not participate in the meetings or that these events could not have had an important indirect impact on her life, but rather to point out the role referential intention and explanatory intention play in the narrative, and the ways in which one can embed the other.

These representations of time and place (Fairclough, 2003, p. 151) highlight how the past mingles with and clearly informs the present in this sample. Examining the verb tenses Shalit and Lakita use, various past tenses and present tenses dominate; even sentences that indicate the future, such as those describing Lakita's marriage, tend to employ present-tense constructions, sometimes with modal verbs. For instance, Lakita says "I look forward to next week" and "I am really excited that I can look my husband in the face" (Shalit, 2007, p. 63). Another interesting aspect of tense is how Shalit often uses a form of the past imperfect that includes "would" when describing Lakita's past instead of the form that includes "used to". For example, Shalit says "Lakita would regularly get tomatoes thrown at her," and that Lakita and her family "would all pile into a car" every summer to drive to Alabama, where they "would sit at her aunt's feet." (p. 64). Shalit likely uses "would" in part to maintain an informal, conversational style, but I also speculate that using "would" subtly creates a stronger connection between the events described and the present by highlighting the action rather than the past time in which the action occurred.. Compare, for instance, "Lakita would regularly get tomatoes thrown at her" to "Lakita used to regularly get tomatoes thrown at her." The first sentence focuses attention on the act, while the second focuses attention on the time.

Neoliberal Discourse. In this selection, neoliberal discourse is reflected and constructed in two key ways: first, through Lakita speaking directly to issues of civil rights versus individual responsibility; and secondly, through Shalit's representation of Lakita as the embodiment of neoliberal principles. This reflects the two separate but intertwined elements of the genre: interview and limited biographical sketch.

In addition to the words themselves, which clearly echo neoliberal and girl power conceptions of social equality and the individual, recontextualization, intertextuality, and

representations of social actors texture neoliberal discourses in this selection, especially when Lakita discusses civil rights. For example, she argues that although “people can stand up at a microphone and scream about their rights,” in reality “every right demands a responsibility” and instead of another collectivist rights-based movement, there should be an individualist “personal responsibility movement so we can responsibly execute the rights that we have” (Shalit, 2007, p.64). Notice that Lakita’s speech draws intertextually on the earlier words of people demanding civil rights at a meeting. Importantly, Lakita recontextualizes this act and its actors in her own speech as people “scream[ing],” (p. 64) a lexicalization that carries negative connotations.

Intertextuality also helps to shape Lakita’s heroic neoliberal subjectivity through narrative in paragraph two. In this paragraph, Lakita paraphrases and responds to talk show hosts who want her to talk about her difficult life growing up. In doing so, Lakita articulates a specific understanding of the pressure young women feel about sexual activity, and, by enacting the voice of talk show hosts (who, as such, implicitly serve both as mouthpieces for dominant societal views and architects in their creation), presents this understanding as universal. Instead of recognizing the complex and contradictory messages and pressures young women negotiate as sexual beings, this articulation fashions sexual pressure as invariably peer-oriented, intense, and focused on engaging in rather than refraining from sexual activity. Moreover, aided by Lakita’s response, this articulation depicts resistance to sexual pressure as no more than a mild challenge, at least for girls who have had 'good' upbringings and embrace the 'right' values. Again, just as with its limited understanding of sexual pressure, this articulation presents a simplistic view that ignores a host of complicated social and structural realities that may influence young women's decisions to engage in or refrain from sexual activity.

The articulation merges with neoliberal ideologies in that it frames the individual as producing its self-subject through choice rather than being produced through a combination of agency and discourse/structure. Success and failure are likewise produced through choice: individuals like Lakita's mother who choose parenting practices deemed 'proper' (meaning, practices associated with, though perhaps not actually enacted by, the racial and economic group who does the deeming) produce successful individuals like Lakita who in turn make the 'correct' (white middle-class ideal) choices themselves, regardless of the powerful racist, sexist, and classist discourses that shape the policies and institutions which render white middle-class choices difficult and/or undesirable for others occupying similar physical and social locations. As Burns and Torres (2004) point out, discourses promoting accountability, standards, excellence, and choice, whether in the context of abstinence or academics, increasingly stratify young people according to race and class, and I would add according to gender as well.

Lakita's role model_subjectivity is further textured through orientation to difference. This selection emphasizes accentuation of difference; for example, besides the promotion of individual responsibility versus civil rights discussed previously, Shalit's description of Lakita's growing-up years highlights differences between Lakita's upbringing and those of her peers. In addition, Lakita herself firmly distances herself from those peers by stating "I was different from a lot of my peers, than most of my peers. Things that I valued were different." (p. 64). Finally, in her response to the talk show hosts described above, Lakita says explicitly "I didn't want to fit in" and "I didn't feel bad! I didn't feel bad at all!" in opposition to the talk show hosts' directives to "'tell us how you really wanted to fit in'" and "tell us about how you felt really bad"" (p. 62). The use of modalized phrases like "really bad" and "didn't at all" further positions Lakita in opposition to others in similar circumstances.

Legitimation techniques centered on Lakita's status as role model feature prominently in this selection. In fact, simply being a role model vests Lakita with a certain amount of authority and legitimates her actions and perspectives, and by extension, serves to legitimize Shalit's opinions as well. Lakita's age enhances her authority as a role model, and possibly works to broaden the range of her authority. Though perhaps not an expert in the traditional sense, on the eve of her marriage Lakita does look back on her choice to remain a virgin and pronounce it good, which adds a bit of expert authority and weight to her words that the younger abstinence advocates in the book lack. Her marriage also plays an important part in the legitimation technique of mythopoesis. Although this is a real-life rather than fictional story, Lakita plays the role of protagonist in a moral tale that begins with her challenging (but not too challenging) decision to stay abstinent until marriage, highlights her ostensibly unique and individual triumph over difficult life circumstances through conviction and involved parenting, and ends happily in marriage. The ending is happy indeed, because in the traditionalist and heteronormative universe of the prescriptive texts, marriage is the ultimate goal and reward of abstinence. As a marker of success, then, Lakita's marriage represents a key discursive site in the production of her standout neoliberal subjectivity.

To conclude, in this chapter I have shown how neoliberal discourses are taken up in the prescriptive texts and discussed neoliberal subjectivities. In the texts, abstinence often works as an intervention which allows girls to become successful according to neoliberal aims, a point that distinguishes these texts from the abstinence movement at large. The texts feature neoliberal subjects who are typically white and middle or upper class; when a young woman of color appears in the text, she is either held up as an exceptional example or stigmatized.

This chapter marks the end of my text analyses. In the next chapter, I summarize and bring the major strands of my arguments together, and suggest possible directions for future research.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have tried to show how the prescriptive texts I analyzed discursively construct young women and their sexuality, and how these constructions have ties to wider social and political agendas. More specifically, I have aimed to demonstrate how these constructions converge and diverge with the abstinence movement's portrayals of the same. These commonalities situate the books within the movement at large, while the divergences suggest that the books constitute a unique trend within the movement. It is this trend I now attempt to delineate, starting with the term I have selected for it.

New Victorianism

Collectively, I call the prescriptive texts "New Victorian," a term I chose because the ideals put forth in the books seemed to recall those of the Victorian era. For example, the books' anxiety around sexually assertive girls mirrors the Victorians' praise of modesty, demureness, and chastity as female virtues (Cott, 1978). In addition, the "reification in 'nature' of the double standard" wrought through the Victorians' conception of female "passionlessness" (Cott, 1978, p. 224) echoes the books' insistence that men are 'naturally' sexually aggressive and women sexually disinterested due to biological differences. Women in the Victorian era were seen as morally as well as sexually virtuous by nature and charged with reforming men and society, as are young women in New Victorianism. Also, in Victorian times, bourgeois "'proper' femininity" (Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2009) became defined in class and racial terms by being positioned against the alleged sexual overindulgences of the poorer classes and prostitutes. In addition, the figure of the prostitute warned white middle-class women what lay beyond the boundaries of respectable femininity, much like the racialized and classed portrayals of non-white, non-middle class women in New Victorianism work to throw the boundaries of acceptable

white middle-class femininity into sharper relief. Similarly, though the girls enacting hypersexual behaviors (and the girls on whom various panics around hypersexualization are focused) may be white and middle-class, “the behavior and style associated with hypersexualized girlhood is coded as working class and racialized as nonwhite” (Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2009, p. 35). Finally, in Victorian magazine portrayals of illicit sexual encounters, men did not suffer any harm, but women were typically victimized, punished, and ostracized (Cott, 1978). In the New Victorian books young men rarely experience any negative consequences from sex, but young women almost always do.

Please note that my use of the term must be taken with the large caveat that I am in no way a Victorian scholar, which makes it quite possible that I have overlooked important differences between the books and the Victorians. Hopefully these differences would not be so significant as to completely invalidate my use of the term, but I fully recognize the limitations of my Victorian knowledge and acknowledge that possibility. Other scholars have used the term in ways I feel more confident following, as I describe below.

Historian Andrew Sinclair (1965) is often credited with coining the term “New Victorianism” in his book *The Better Half: The Emancipation of the American Woman*. Feminist historians like Gerda Lerner (1979) have subsequently used the term, referencing Sinclair, to describe a shift in social relations between men and women at the end of World War II. At this time, “a cultural command to women, which they appeared to accept with enthusiasm,” instructed them “to return to their homes, have large families, lead the cultivated suburban life of status-seeking through domestic attainment, and find self-expression through a variety of avocations” (p. 35). Though the ease with which women returned home is debatable, the emphasis on women’s place in the domestic sphere essentializes them as wives, mothers, and

homemakers. I use “New Victorian” similarly, as applied to girls in the 21st century, meaning that the New Victorian books construct girls as “mothers-in-waiting.” For example, the authors invoke a lonely, desperate future without marriage and children to warn girls what consequences befall the non-abstinent. Importantly, while New Victorianism as it has been used in the past downplays sexuality because it is subsumed in marriage, the New Victorian books I analyze foreground premarital sex as a major threat to girls’ future wife- and motherhood. The authors construct this threat in different ways: in concrete terms, for instance, by pointing out how STDs impact future fertility, and more abstractly, by blaming premarital sex for lower marriage rates, adultery, and divorce.

The “New” in “New Victorian” as I use the term refers to the prescriptive text authors’ use of neoliberal Girl Power discourses. Girls’ domestic futures are of serious concern, as I mentioned above, but the books focus even more on a present filled with academic success, extracurricular achievement, and sexual anguish. To cure this suffering, the texts prescribe abstinence, through which young women can achieve success in all areas of life. More specifically, abstinence is presented as an empowering, self-determined choice young women can make to bring their sexual lives into accordance with their already on-track extra-sexual lives. The texts valorize individual choices, individual responsibility, and individual power, deeming modern political feminism no longer necessary, and moreover, actually harmful to young women due to its misguided obsession with sex. In sum, Girl Power allows the authors to celebrate girls’ achievements while simultaneously using those achievements to promote a conservative, individualist agenda. Regardless of the nature of the achievement, be it in school or in sex/abstinence, neoliberalism pressures girls and their families to act like the entrepreneur-consumer citizen described by Brown (2006) by holding them responsible for identifying

achievement strategies and procuring the necessary resources to implement these strategies independently, with limited to nonexistent state support.

As I touched on in Chapter One, initially, I picked the texts because of their shared focus on abstinence and hypersexual culture. All of the books harp on hypersexual culture, providing examples of its existence that range from compelling (e.g., thong underwear for 10-year olds, in *Prude*) to unpersuasive (e.g., homosexual characters in young adult literature, also in *Prude*). The authors claim that as a result of this culture, girls are also hypersexual. For example, Stepp (2007) includes in her introduction a story about members of a women's water polo team who, while participating in a date auction, variously strip on stage, simulate oral sex on each other, flash the audience, and wake up confronted by evidence of a blackout-drunk sexual encounter.

Hypersexualization ties into both Reviving Ophelia and neoliberal Girl Power discourses. Like others, the New Victorian authors worry that "sexually aggressive girls are ultimately in danger of losing themselves" (Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2009, p. 38), which echoes the Reviving Ophelia discourse. On the other hand, hypersexualization is tied to aggression, which is a part of the Girl Power discourse. Over the course of analyzing the books I discovered that New Victorians believe that although America's sex-saturated culture is at times hugely influential, ultimate responsibility for social problems like teen pregnancy and STD's lies with young women who make the 'bad choice' to have sex. It is a trend that superficially concentrates on cultural factors to introduce and make urgent the topic of young women's sexual activities, but has at its heart an intensely individualist bent that plucks young women from their complex gendered, raced, and classed lives, universalizes their experiences, and judges them poor decision makers. At the same time, New Victorians ignore or at most frown on important contributors to the complicated and uneven discourses that inform young women's sexualities:

elements like corporations, media, governments, schools, and young men. For example, the books complain about sexually explicit television shows and music, but say little about the corporate interests that produce them; they portray schools as sites of sexual debauchery, but ignore the abstinence-only education that aggressively promotes sexual innocence and ignorance in many of them; and they put forth a negative portrait of young men that is almost a caricature in its exaggerated stereotypicality, but fail to address how this depiction essentially absolves young men of responsibility in sexual decision-making.

In Chapter Three, I drew connections between the sexuality views put forth by what I am now calling New Victorianism, the abstinence movement, and the Christian Right. New Victorian sexuality matches Christian Right and abstinence sexuality in many ways: all three are biologically- or spiritually-based, natural, gendered, oppositional, heterosexual, powerful, fixed, and in women only, virtually unable to overcome without negative effects. Sex is dangerous and damaging to young woman as individuals and to society. Though I have concentrated on the Christian Right it is important to note that concern with damage to society is not limited to the Christian Right only; in fact, it is a good example of what brings other ideological groups, such as communitarians like Bill Clinton (Kelly, 2000), or neoliberals who oppose welfare on the grounds it is public and therefore a waste, or should be reserved only for the ‘deserving’ (Apple, 2001), into the abstinence alliance. While ideologically different or even oppositional groups may have formed the abstinence alliance based on one issue or perhaps one aspect of an issue, their differences make this alliance an uneasy one.

Just as in the abstinence alliance, tensions exist between New Victorianism and the abstinence movement as well. As described in the above paragraph, a traditionalist version of sexuality lies at the core of the trend. However, New Victorianism embraces Girl Power

discourses, which suggest engagements with feminism and which highlight neoliberal dimensions of subjectivity and success not present in the abstinence movement at large, which I detailed in Chapters Four and Five. More specifically, Girl Power enables the New Victorian authors to critique feminism while simultaneously promoting liberal feminist ideals of academic and workplace access and success. The New Victorian authors also use neoliberal Girl Power discourses to link young women's sexual practices with success, which allows them to construct abstinence as an empowering intervention in young women's lives. This is in tension with the abstinence movement, where abstinence is a matter of avoiding harm rather than achieving good.

Future Directions

Since this project did not address text consumption or production, these are logical next steps in future research. Exploring readers' interpretations of and identification with the texts could provide insight into text consumption and into the ways the texts' discourses are taken up, transformed, or challenged in readers' everyday lives. Because the target audience varies from teen to adult (see Table 2), selecting an intergenerational sample of readers might be a consideration in this research. Text production research might begin by investigating why all of the texts happened to come out in the same year, 2007 (although a pseudonymous edition of *Unprotected* was published in 2006). The New Victorian books provide many examples of what they consider to be evidence of hypersexualized culture, which, if investigated and organized into a timing chart, could help to illuminate when and which moral panics (around oral sex, for example) were woven in to the ever-present strands of conservative discourse around teen sexuality. Looking at teen-directed moral panics not emphasized in the books, around the movie *Thirteen*, for instance, along with earlier proto-New Victorian books like Wendy Shalit's 1999 book *A Return to Modesty*, might also strengthen this line of research. In addition, if possible,

investigating the production process in terms of manuscript solicitation, submission, and acceptance might yield interesting facts about the development of the texts and their associated discourses.

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APPENDIX A

From “Loving Another Well,” Unhooked, p. 263

- *Love won’t change you; it will just make you more of who you are.*

Do not be afraid of your need to love. It is hardwired, improving our species’ chance for survival. Loving another makes you more giving, more relaxed, and more adventurous. In a good relationship, you like who you both are when you’re together—and who you are both becoming.

You delight in finding out that he hates frogs, and he relishes knowing your secret love of NASCAR. He makes your A in chemistry seem amazing, and you convince him his C in sociology is a onetime aberration. You hated bowling in high school, but he likes it, so you agree to give it another try. With him your joy is amplified and your sadness lessened. Yes, you can be sad in front of him. You can also be confused and upset. If he loves you, he will love your vulnerabilities as well as your strengths.

APPENDIX B

From "Toward a New Sexual Feminism," Prude, pp. 193-195

Many of the feminists who have been exquisitely sensitive to the impact of traditional social pressures on young girls' behavior, aspirations, and self-esteem seem curiously impervious to the pernicious impact of the new sexual norms they have championed.

Certainly, the glorification of female sexual aggressiveness has made remaining a virgin more difficult than ever. Determined and constant devaluation of sexual innocence, so evident in almost every part of American culture, has deprived chaste girls of the social esteem that they once enjoyed. In an ironic inversion of the laws of the market, chastity is the one good that becomes less valuable with scarcity—at least during the teen years, when the prospect of marriage isn't even part of the equation.

That's because, when a variety of young girls are offering sexual activity to young boys, it becomes much more difficult for chaste girls to compete for male attention, much less to secure it for a period substantial enough for real relationships to grow. And when male attention can't be secured without it, sexiness begins to assume exaggerated importance—becoming nothing short of a female imperative. The logical culmination of such an obsession extends far beyond young girls propositioning their male classmates to bizarre manifestations of sexual desperation by females of all ages—like the older women enduring cosmetic surgery to enhance the appearance of their private parts. Do-me feminism hasn't prevented women from being treated like sex objects—it just means that women themselves are doing the objectifying.

In fact, the do-me model of promiscuous, commitment-phobic sexuality has done nothing to make girls more truly independent of men or heedless of male opinion. Despite all its promises, do-me feminism has delivered nothing—not even the likelihood of real sexual

pleasure. After years of liberated sexuality, empowered women are left more vulnerable than ever before. They confront the twin risks of sexually transmitted disease and unwanted pregnancy—as well as the prospect of a future spent alone, because it's become increasingly unnecessary for men to promise a lifetime of fidelity in order to have the privilege of depositing his genetic inheritance with a willing woman.

[...]

In truth, although they are—and should be—considered equal in the eyes of the law and in the eyes of the culture, men and women simply aren't the same. Instead of limiting their notion of equality to the insistence that girls have the prerogative to behave like boys when it comes to sex, feminists should be encouraging women to assert their right to demand that sex occur only in the context of loving, committed relationships with men who cherish them. Women have distinct preferences and desires when it comes to their hopes for intimate relationships—and a feminism more respectful of and true to their deepest longings would encourage women to develop a sexual ethic that meets *their* needs as well as men's.

APPENDIX C

From “Loving Yourself,” Unhooked, pp. 261

- *A guy can make you feel valuable, but it’s not the guy who makes you valuable.*

You are the subject of your life, not someone else’s life: not your parents’, your friends’ or your partner’s. On the outside you may look like you could take on the world. But you and I know that on many days you feel pretty ordinary, and that’s when you’re vulnerable to doing things that whittle away at your self-confidence.

It’s okay to feel ordinary right now. You’re still figuring you out—your purpose, your principles, what and who will help you get where you want to go. Take advantage of the choices you have that build inner confidence, and not just the choices in the college catalogue. Learn to scuba dive. Teach a child to read. Invest in good friendships. Explore intimacy within relationships. Avoid hookups. They’ll make you feel more ordinary than you already feel—and look more ordinary to the guy you set your sights on. He will seek to win you over only if he thinks you’re a prize.

[...]

Consider your life to come. Years from now, do you really want to recall banging bodies with a partner in bed while your roommate was typing her political science paper nearby? Do you want to risk being invited to a dinner party and realize once you get there that you have hooked up with every guy in the room? How will you feel on your first or second job when a colleague mentions seeing a webcam photo of you and a former partner in the nude?

Career counselors have told you that thinking about what kind of job you eventually want will help you decide how to prepare. This holds true for the personal as well. In ten or fifteen years, do you want to be living with a husband or a long-term partner? Raising kids? Both? Are

your sexual and romantic encounters teaching you the skills you'll need to find and sustain what you desire?

APPENDIX D

From “It’s Midnight: Do You Know Where Your Role Models Are?” Girls Gone Mild, pp. 62-64

Other kids would make fun of Lakita and her family because they didn’t have “nice clean white Air Jordans” and they had to be in the house when the streetlights came on. Her mom limited their television viewing and actually made them crack the books. Lakita would regularly get eggs and tomatoes pelted at her at school—well into high school—because she wouldn’t sleep with the boys. Yet oddly, she insists that her decision wasn’t “hard.”

Today when she appears on television shows (such as *Politically Incorrect* or *The View*), people always want her to talk about her hard life. “‘Well, tell us how you really wanted to fit in.’ I didn’t want to fit in—I’m not trying to get your vote. ‘Well, you know, tell us about how you felt really bad,’ and—I didn’t feel bad! I didn’t feel bad at all.

[...]

Seriously, she adds, “Keeping my virginity was not hard—you know why? Because I had conviction.” Although Lakita has been challenged in the past, “there’s not one brother who approached me and I looked back and thought, ‘Man, I should have given up the panties for him.’ I never look and say, ‘Man, I should have, I would have, I could have,’ and I look forward to next week and I am really excited that I can look my husband in the face and say, You know what, I loved you before I even knew you. I’ve saved myself just for you.”

[...]

Lakita’s perspective on responsibility is interesting, because her concept of personal dignity is very much tied to the civil rights movement. Every summer while she was growing up, in fact, the Garth family would all pile into a car and drive to Montgomery, Alabama. They would sit at her aunt’s and uncle’s feet, and they would talk about growing up in the segregated

South. Eventually, they would entertain Dr. Martin Luther King in their home and strategize the Montgomery civil rights march together, but in the beginning King was just “this really cute pastor” people came to hear.

[...]

There was an adulthood that our parents put into us...And as I grew up I began to understand that people can stand up at a microphone and scream about their rights and I have a right to this and a right to that, but every right demands a responsibility and you know, there's no need for another civil rights movement. We need a personal responsibility movement so we can responsibly execute the rights that we have. Why is that important? I began to realize that what was going on in the roller coaster as a teenager, was that I was different than a lot of my peers, than most of my peers. Things that I valued were different.