Star Testing: The Emerging Politics of Celebrity Gossip

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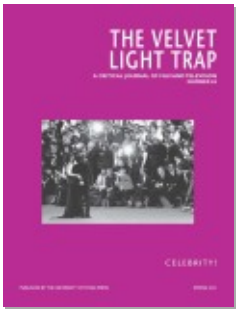

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I first started reading the weekly celebrity magazines in 2004. After leaving my partner of eight years I moved in with my best friend and her seven-year-old son; she too had recently been through a divorce. That summer on weekends we would trek down to the local drugstore to get our fix of celebrity gossip. We'd sit on the patio in our long chairs and flip through the pages of *US Weekly*, *Life and Style*, *In Touch*, and *Star*, analyzing with great efficiency and precision the melodrama of the rich, hip, and (presently) famous. Later on that same winter Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston split up, apparently over Pitt's developing feelings for his *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* costar, Angelina Jolie. Quite literally pitted against each other, one of us on "Team Aniston" and the other on "Team Jolie," we took great pleasure in speculating about and judging the motivations and personalities involved in what was the ultimate Hollywood love triangle.

Our picking up celebrity magazines that year corresponds to broader consumer trends in the United States. *US Weekly*, a weekly celebrity magazine owned by Wenner Media, publisher of *Rolling Stone* and *Men's Journal*, saw a 24 percent increase in sales between June 2003 and 2004. In August 2005 the Audit Bureau of Circulations reported that Bauer Publishing's *In Touch Weekly*'s newsstand sales had increased nearly 50 percent, while subscriptions rose nearly 60 percent over 2004 levels (Dougherty). The biggest gain for industry standard-bearer *US Weekly* during this time, however, was the outstanding increase in the median household income of its readers: 40 percent, to $83,365. For the same time period, the tabloid celebrity rag *Star* reported a 10.7 percent increase in the medium income of its readership, to $46,910 (Granatstein). Pam McNeely of Dailey & Associates offered this explanation: "The whole celebrity fascination used to be restricted to the dirty little indulgences of the *Star* and *The National Enquirer*, and it used to be considered downscale. But now it's such a pervasive topic of conversation that it's improved the demos." Kent Brownridge at Wenner adds: "We are getting readers that are younger and hipper, with a considerably high income" (qtd. in Granatstein). What's intimated here by industry folk is that celebrity gossip has been liberated from the confines of the tabloid market and, crucially, the image of the stereotypical reader (uneducated, working poor, overweight, predominantly female) enlivening earlier industry lore (see Bird 107–09). Cashing in on the higher revenues that accompany the exploitation "younger and hipper" mainstream female audiences, celebrity gossip peddlers are pleased to dissociate themselves from the connotations of tabloid "trash" and to push a new image of the gossip reader (educated, upwardly mobile, young, fashionable, female) to advertisers.

It's these magazines' near exclusive focus on the lifestyles and happenings of media celebrities and Hollywood VIPs—especially female stars—that characterizes these more recent gossip discourses and separates them from popular conceptions of a tabloid-reading culture with a penchant for the preposterous and paranormal. For example, the tabloid newspaper *Star* was able to bring in higher ad revenues and up its circulation when it shifted to a celebrity-focused magazine format in 1985 (Bird 34). More recently, in 2000 struggling British rag *Heat* was able to ignite its bottom line by concentrating on star styles and fashions, celebrity-oriented news, and more snarky, unofficial gossip (Feasey 178). Undoubtedly an outgrowth of eighties entertainment news discourses (most notably, popular formats like *People* magazine and *Entertainment Tonight*), contemporary celebrity magazines owe their livelihood to broader developments in media industries. The proliferation of celebrity gossip is enabled by a deregulated media economy, where scandal narratives and human-interest stories about celebrities comprise

an impressive share of mainstream media content, and an interactive, converged media culture that fuels ongoing cross-platform discussions of these star-related sagas.

However, today's celebrity magazines are also heavily indebted to much older discourses of stardom, especially film fan magazines, which, since the early years of Hollywood, have invited audiences to actively seek out information about the private lives of big-screen idols. A peculiar hybrid of both fan magazines and tabloid newspapers, today's ever-expanding array of celebrity gossip outlets invites their "younger and hipper" audiences to relish the glamorous Hollywood lifestyle while engaging in evaluation of those who live it—from the biggest stars to the celetoids of the season.[1] Melding the tabloid's fondness for moralizing and bringing the stars down to earth with the fan magazine's spectacularization of the personal lives and consumer habits of Hollywood inhabitants, the celebrity magazines that populate and dominate the checkout aisles at drug and grocery stores today interpellate readers in complex ways. I explore how these processes of interpellation constitute structures of subjectivity that are germane to broader historical shifts in both capitalism and government—shifts that impinge on gendered subjects in particular ways and make the feminized discourse of celebrity gossip an effective instrument of what Foucault called "governmentality." Celebrity magazines invite readers to engage in processes that I call "star testing" and, in doing so, double as a dispersed and distinctly postfeminist technology of governing women in the context of neoliberalism.

Reading the Stars: From Identification to Evaluation

Promising insight into the personal lives and private thoughts of Hollywood stars, film fan magazines thrived from the early decades of cinema through Hollywood's "Golden Age" in the forties, surviving the economic woes of the sixties and early seventies, until competition from the likes of *People* and the rise of entertainment news on television in the early eighties proved too steep. These texts featured star portraits and personal writings, offering readers intimate glimpses into "real" lives and "true" feelings of Hollywood luminaries. In many ways, popular fan magazines such as *Photoplay* and *Modern Screen* are remarkably similar to contemporary celebrity rags. Stories offering beauty advice and fashion tips were and still are mainstays. Star romances, marriages, and divorces; reflections on the price of fame and the potential perils of the Hollywood lifestyle, especially for young women; spreads of celebrities in their homes with their favorite commodities (and their price tags): the continuities between film fan and contemporary celebrity gossip magazines are striking.

Magazines reporting on the private lives of stars have long been a key component in the broader apparatus of stardom. Richard deCordova linked the historical emergence of stars to a shift in the discourses surrounding screen actors that occurred during the 1910s: "The star emerged out of a marked expansion of the type of knowledge that could be produced about the player . . . With the emergence of the star, the question of the player's existence outside his or her work in film became the primary focus of discourse" (98). According to deCordova, the invention of the star worked to engage consumers in ongoing hermeneutic activity regarding the "true" identity of the person behind and apart from the representations of characters and thus constituted audiences as fans interested and invested in the "real" lives of screen actors.

> The star system worked to construct a particular kind of consumer around the star as commodity, what is perhaps most commonly referred to as the fan. Since the player's identity could not be fully garnered from the individual film, the spectator had to enter into a regular habit of moviegoing to fully experience that identity. The spectator's activity—decoding meaning—became contingent on a pattern of repetitive consumer behavior that followed the actor's appearance from film to film. (deCordova 113)

Fan magazines' reporting on star tastes and love lives buttressed this hermeneutic mode of reception and expanded the reach of the cinematic institution into the everyday lives of consumers. Crucially, the movie-going audience of fans was conceived of during this period as predominantly female, and female stars came to be viewed as particularly valuable assets for their ability to marshal and mobilize women to the economic benefit of the burgeoning film industries.[2] Hollywood developed in conjunction with the lifestyle and cosmetic industries so crucial to the emerging consumer-based economy, making female stars and their fans a key linchpin in the broader processes of commodification surrounding the cinema.[3]

Critical cultural work pursued under the rubric of star studies has shed considerable light on the cultural politics of the star phenomenon, particularly regarding the affectively charged relationships between stars and their audiences, on which contemporary celebrity magazines

continue to capitalize. Richard Dyer's influential claim was that "stardom is an image of the way stars live. For the most part, this generalized lifestyle is the assumed backdrop for the specific personality of the star and details and events of her/his life. As it combines the spectacular with the everyday, the special with the ordinary, it is seen as an articulation of basic American/western values" (35). By mediating between the private and public lives of stars, the highly individualized structure of star discourse reflected liberal conceptions of subjectivity. In turn, stars were best understood as historical social constructions whose cultural work and power could be analyzed by unpacking the various and often competing discourses—including those found in films, promotional materials, and fan texts—that together constituted and congealed particular star images. The "turn to the audience" associated with major developments within cultural studies inspired new lines of investigation into the star phenomenon; Jackie Stacey's *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* is perhaps the most significant example. Critical of the textual determination inherent in Dyer's method as well as the psychological determination inherent in dominant strains of feminist film theory overly invested in Freud and Lacan, Stacey attended to a "historical subject" (47) through audience research on female fans. Unlike Dyer's approach of unpacking the ideological work of star images, Stacey was more interested in the historical, context-bound relationships between stars and audiences—in the actual fraught and contingent activities involved in star gazing.

Despite their differences, both Dyer and Stacey understood that the affective relationships between stars and their audiences hinged on a hermeneutic rooted in some form of identification with the star image. As performers of as well as experimenters with social roles and types, stars were cultural sites for audiences to negotiate and reflect upon their own identities. That identification was central to relationships between stars and audiences is born out in the popular fan magazine *Modern Screen*, which was established in 1930 and quickly became a heavyweight in the fan magazine industry. "If You Want to Be like Kay Francis" offered consumers insight into the physical, mental, and spiritual world of Francis while simultaneously instructing readers how to be like her. "If you want to be like Kay Francis you must figure out where you are going and why, and when you have decided, you must go there serenely, as befitting a gentlewoman. With a little laughter in the back of your eyes, and with confidence in yourself and your star" (qtd. in Bego 26). Francis was presented as a unique and coherent self whom consumers could know and thereby emulate. More contentious stars—such as the prefeminist Katharine Hepburn—were presented as enigmas that could be solved by digging into personal history. In "The Real Reason for Hepburn's Amazing Behavior" Nina Wilcox Putnam reported: "But the girl no longer was a puzzle to me—knowing these intimate details of her hitherto secret youth, I understood—her fierce rebellions—her impatience—her superior attitude—for it is a fact that, whatever else may be said of her, Katharine Hepburn is not as other women. And you know the reasons" (qtd. in Bego 132). These stories offered readers insights into the intimate secrets of particular stars' souls, engaging readers in hermeneutic activity pointed toward the "real" life of the star. In doing so, these texts presented stars as potential points of identification for audiences.

In her analysis of the fan magazines that proliferated rapidly in the 1920s and helped to set the template for *Modern Screen* Gaylyn Studlar found that the specific processes of identification offered by these texts were more vexed than many cultural critics and scholars had previously suggested. Militating against the wholesale denigration of fan magazines as either an "inaccurate history and shameless publicity sham" or an easy shoring up of traditional femininity with their "smorgasbord of gossip, glamour, and romantic fodder" (270), Studlar situated the star discourses at work in fan magazines within the context of growing sexual and economic freedom for women and showed how the magazines carefully negotiated brewing tensions over gender roles. Studlar pointed out that publishers assumed their female readers to possess sophisticated knowledge regarding the workings of Hollywood and its publicity machine and, at times, facilitated critical discussions among readers, engendering a reading position constituted by a "double perspective" in which the female reader "could indulge in the fantasy of possessing intimate, 'true' knowledge about the stars while at the same time continue to control and overrule that emotional investment" (273–74).

> The fan magazine's "double perspective" of reading suggests that women's emotional investment in stars should not automatically be equated with a collapse of identity into object. Instead, what is evoked by both the tone and content of the fan magazines is more on the order of an identification with stardom as a kind of "masquerade," a play with identity. This is not a defensive masquerade of lack . . . but a playful one bringing elements of make believe and pretense into play—on both sides of the screen. (Studlar 274–75)

Intermingling promises of intimacy with the stars and the spectacle of Hollywood glamour with a demystification of the star-making apparatus itself, these magazines encouraged a complex form of reading that promoted emotional investments in and identification with individual stars while simultaneously providing space for skepticism toward, reflection on, and evaluation of the "masquerade" of stardom.

However, the hermeneutic between stars and audiences in contemporary celebrity magazines is not marked primarily by identification with star images. Rather, the foremost hermeneutic mode of reception encouraged by these more recent star discourses—both in their weekly segments and news reports—invites an evaluative process in which readers are positioned to sit in judgment on the personal and private lives of stars. The question of the "real" or "true" identity of the star is not the primary organizing principle; instead, review and appraisal of the celebrity lifestyle drive and animate representation. As Studlar's work suggests, evaluation has perhaps long been an important facet of star gazing; however, in contemporary celebrity magazines the "double perspective"—balancing intimacy with stars and critical distance on Hollywood and the star-making apparatus—is collapsed in favor of a more eager emphasis on evaluation. Made possible by the "poststudio" star system in which the stars themselves—and their entourages of agents, publicists, and personal assistants—and not Hollywood studios are responsible for managing the star image (MacDonald 178), celebrity magazines today are engaged in more horizontal negotiations over star representations. While fan magazines like *Modern Screen* and *Photoplay* depended on a more cozy relationship with Hollywood film studios for their content, celebrity gossip peddlers are freed up to bring the stars ever more forcibly down to earth, much like the tabloid press has long done, and to bend the process of constructing star images toward their own differentiated market aims.[4]

Take Angelina Jolie, a consistent and prominent presence in celebrity magazines since the scandalous start of her relationship with Brad Pitt. Arguably the biggest and most bankable female star of her generation, Jolie remains amazingly rich fodder for celebrity magazines thanks to her potential role in the highly publicized break-up of Pitt and "American sweetheart" Jennifer Aniston, her humanitarian activism, her rocky relationship with Hollywood dad, Jon Voight, her "deviant" past, which includes drug use, bisexuality, and various forms of knife play, and her ever-expanding globe-trotting brood, which includes a mix of Pitt-Jolie progeny and international orphans. However, despite the seemingly endless and titillating discourses about Jolie's life offscreen, her representation in celebrity magazines is less concerned with uncovering Jolie's "real" self and more interested in raising questions about her life choices and personal motivations.

"Happy homemaker or controlling workaholic?" an article in *US Weekly* asked in a cover story entitled "Saint or Sinner: Angelina's Double Life." The next week *Star*'s cover also featured Jolie with the headline "Is It Over? Angie Walks out on Brad—& Dumps the Kids!" Both articles used Jolie's solo trip to Chicago to begin preproduction work on a new movie—after her public promise to be a "stay-at-home mom" for her new son—as an opportunity to raise questions about her choices with regard to the negotiation of her work life with her home life. *US Weekly*'s story suggested that Jolie might be using her family to further her political agendas and that she has substituted her youthful obsessions with knives and drugs with new obsessions like ending world poverty and adopting Third World orphans. (This new addiction is referred to as a kind of "domestic addiction.") Furthermore, the article suggested that she controls Pitt while neglecting the needs of both her new son and his older brother. The story went on to interrogate Jolie's choices regarding the recent adoption of a three-year-old Vietnamese orphan. "Are the couple expanding their brood too fast?" "Was it in poor taste to sell pictures of Pax so soon after his adoption?" readers were asked. *Star*'s story, on the other hand, focused less on pathologizing Jolie and more on scolding her for recent decisions and their effects on her family as well as her community. Despite their differences, both stories promoted an evaluative hermeneutic through their respective constructions of Jolie.

The representations of Jolie over time are anything but coherent. Model humanitarian, neglectful mother, generous celebrity, happy homemaker, manipulative self-promoter, suffering daughter, jealous girlfriend—Jolie's representation in celebrity magazines cannot be thought of in terms of providing a consistent source of identification. Rather, the hermeneutic that characterizes the relationship between Jolie and her audiences in these stories and others like them hinges more strongly on evaluation. Readers of celebrity magazines are not so much invited to seek out and know the "real" secrets of Angelina's soul but instead are discursively positioned to judge her. Fascination with

Jolie is assumed to emerge less from the perpetuation of a coherent star image and more from the pleasures in negotiating the discourses around her through evaluation. In other words, readers are incited to take pleasure not from a playful identification with star images and the "masquerade" of stardom but rather from a vigorous, ongoing process of moral adjudication.

This evaluative hermeneutic that marks contemporary celebrity magazines is owed not only to the poststudio star system but also to the gossip and tabloid character of today's popular celebrity culture. As mentioned previously, what's widely characterized as celebrity gossip—ranging in tone from sincere to snarky—has proliferated rapidly across multiple media platforms, including the blogosphere, cable airwaves, and newsstands, in recent years. In his empirical work on celebrity audiences Joshua Gamson found that what characterizes celebrity gossip consumers is a demonstrated lack of concern with the authenticity and reality of the celebrity or her constructed star image. Like readers of fan magazines, celebrity gossipers assumed and tolerated a relatively high degree of fictionality, but they engaged celebrity texts *as if* stars are "real." As a result, "it does not matter for gossip how celebrities got there, or even how they manage to stay there, but how they behave once they're there . . . In gossip, pleasure comes from the activity of circulating information and forming evaluations" (175). Gamson discovered that gossip about celebrities often worked more like a game—a playful process without an endpoint—that "refuses, in essence, the prestige and admiration system . . . opting instead for a system of collective evaluation and horizontal relationships between gossipers" (177). Celebrity gossipers were less interested in the construction of star personas or intimate knowledge of stars' souls and more focused on judging celebrity behaviors.

While Gamson was most concerned with how gossip surrounding stars nonetheless contributed productively to the maintenance of the celebrity industrial complex, Joke Hermes attended more carefully to the social uses of gossip discourses and argued that reading gossip magazines often amounts to what Patricia Meyer Spacks called "serious gossip": gossip in which "participants use talk about others to reflect about themselves, to express wonder and uncertainty and to locate certainties, to enlarge their knowledge of one another. Such gossip may use the stuff of scandal, but its purposes bear little on the world beyond the talkers except inasmuch as that world impinges on them" (qtd. in Hermes 293). In contradistinction to both academic and popular dismissals of gossip as either malicious or just a silly women's pastime, Hermes explored how different readers of gossip magazines use the texts to reap the social and personal rewards associated with serious gossip by adopting a diverse array of repertoires, ranging from melodrama to camp. She suggested that "printed gossip is a resource for the subordinated: it can be a means of self-expression and solidarity . . . [and] it can be a means of sharing judgment of an unequal society as well as a source of sentimental judgment" (309). Following Hermes, gossip may prove compelling to readers because it enables processes of self-vindication and moral community building in profoundly unjust social worlds. For example, in her cultural study of supermarket tabloids, Elizabeth Bird found that celebrity stories, like all gossip, were a means of building moral consensus among readers; however, celebrity stories in particular resonated more strongly with their female readers: "Readers would say they enjoyed the idea of the liberated, autonomous life-styles of female stars, but their own values were superior and made for a happier life" (159).

Contemporary celebrity magazines draw on the discursive structures of gossip often associated with the tabloids and wed these to the basic format of fan magazines. The result is a peculiar mix of fetishization and assessment, of fanlike fascination with self-righteous evaluation. Like fan magazines, today's celebrity gossip peddlers glamorize the Hollywood lifestyle while probing the personal lives of stars, but, like tabloid gossip, they interpellate readers as jurists less interested in the actual identities of stars and their constructed star personas and more concerned with forming judgments and issuing verdicts. As a result, the potential social uses of contemporary celebrity gossip might be quite different from those elaborated by Hermes. Contemporary celebrity gossip may indeed encourage readers to use "the stuff of scandal" to reflect upon themselves; however, rather than providing often marginalized readers sites for moral community building, the celebrity-centered gossip format—aimed at exploiting mainstream "younger and hipper" female audiences—offers up the Hollywood scene and its inhabitants as a vehicle for the new sorts of star gazing based on highly gendered processes of self-evaluation and testing.

Star Testing

The 12 February 2007 cover of *Newsweek* featured a photo of Paris Hilton and Britney Spears from one of

their now infamous nights of partying at the close of 2006. The headline read in bold white print: "The Girls Gone Wild Effect" (though "The" and "Effect" were in smaller print than "Girls Gone Wild"). In smaller print, above the headline and situated in between the faces of Hilton and Spears, a subheadline explained: "Out-of-Control Celebs and Online Sleaze Fuel a New Debate over Kids and Values." The article interpellated its readers by playing on popular discourses expressive of the moral panic over celebrity culture and the young screaming girls who are commonly perceived to be its most vulnerable victims. Inside, another headline asked: "Paris, Britney, Lindsay & Nicole. They seem to be everywhere and they may not be wearing underwear. Tweens adore them and teens envy them. But are we raising a generation of 'prosti-tots'?" Yet despite the sensationalizing processes of interpellation performed by the article, the content actually advanced a quite different argument about the impact of celebrity culture on young women. The article drew a distinction between fascination with and admiration of celebrities; it suggested that while young female audiences may indeed be fascinated with celebrities, one should not assume this fascination is about idolization or admiration of stars. Rather than suggesting that young women are the susceptible and irrational victims of celebrities—an argument rooted in a simplistic (and misogynistic) theory of identification with the star image—the authors argued:

> While girls may admire Britney's clothes and dance moves, [they] "can't understand why Britney would wear no underwear" . . . Their verdict: Britney is a "hootch," which is a polite way of saying "slut." . . .
>
> As they get arrested for driving drunk and feuding with their former BFFs, the Brit Pack makes it easy for young women . . . to feel superior to them. "My friends and I look at them to laugh at them . . . Our lives seem pretty good by comparison. We're not going to rehab like Lindsay." (Deveny and Kelley 43, 46)

While many of *Newsweek*'s readers responded with disdain to the news magazine's reporting on celebrity culture (echoing the lament of those media critics concerned with the tabloidization of news), the medium household income of *Newsweek* readers is $92,015, not too distant from the household incomes of those who purchase *Us Weekly*. Around the same time, the *New York Times* printed a similar story that argued young women "tend to be highly judgmental of the much-publicized antics, turning them into age-appropriate morality tales that would make their parents proud and bring comfort to those who fear the next generation will be made up of pantyless party girls known more for their D.W.I.s than their G.P.A.s" (Rosenbloom). These articles imagine a new type of cultural work being performed by star discourses—particularly by the proliferation of celebrity gossip focused on the behaviors of female stars.

The evaluative hermeneutic of contemporary celebrity magazines invites a new form of star gazing that might be more accurately described as star testing. No longer simply a key component of the star-making apparatus or a valuable cultural resource for subordinated groups, contemporary celebrity gossip targeted at "younger and hipper" female audiences functions more as a mainstream cultural testing center for the development of appropriate gendered selves. Drawing on Foucault's approach to subjectivity as a historical and governmental technology of the self, I suggest that the processes of interpellation performed by celebrity gossip texts constitute distinctly postfeminist structures of subjectivity germane to the broader context of neoliberalism. The concept of star testing is meant to capture, on the one hand, the complex, highly gendered processes of subjectivity facilitated by contemporary celebrity gossip discourses and, on the other hand, the extent to which these processes are imbricated in dominant paradigms of governing women in the present conjuncture.

It is tempting to read images of female stars and celebrities that proliferate in gossip magazines through a framework of gender regulation concerned to explicate the cultural production of "docile bodies" exemplified by Susan Bordo's work on female bodies and eating disorders. Working off Foucault's theories of power and knowledge, Bordo showed that "through the pursuit of an ever-changing, homogenizing, elusive ideal of femininity—a pursuit without a terminus, requiring that women constantly attend to minute and often whimsical changes in fashion—female bodies become docile bodies—bodies whose forces and energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, 'improvement'" (166). With their endless stream of photos of stunning celebrities on red carpets, fashion dos and don'ts, and diet and exercise tips, the case could easily be made that the visual economy of celebrity magazines works to promote impossible and ever-fluctuating standards of femininity, thereby producing "docile" female bodies. However, as Hilary Radner has suggested, "the discipline of the body is a given within any social formation. The questions then become: how do we articulate the stakes of historically specific forms of

discipline; in the service of what larger discursive structures does it operate; and finally, what are the profits and losses of this discipline as opposed to some other procedure or technology?" (145). With these questions, Radner intimates a more nuanced approach to cultural power and gender regulation that does not conclude with the production of docile bodies but rather analyzes how specific and historically contingent practices of subjectivity such as consuming celebrity gossip hook up with larger discourses at work in a particular historical context.

Radner's questions are in line with Foucault's later work on governmentality and technologies of the self. In his final lecture series at the College de France, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault attempted an ambitious mapping of the practices of subjectivity that have been deployed in the West since Plato in order to construct a genealogy of what he called processes of subjectivation: the technologies of the self that have been deployed by subjects to know, manage, and care for themselves. Distinct from technologies of domination (which were the primary subject of Foucault's previous work), technologies of the self are those that "permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves" ("Technologies" 146). Critical of a Western philosophical tradition that has tended to universalize processes of subject formation through structural theories of ideology or psychoanalytic theories of ego formation, thereby obscuring the ethical forms of self-governance and self-care that subjects have deployed throughout history, Foucault aimed "to put the subject back into the historical domain of practices and processes in which he [*sic*] has been constantly transformed" (*Hermeneutics* 525).

This reconceptualization of subjectivity in terms of a history of technologies of the self is grounded in an offshoot of Foucault's later work on government, which, in the broadest sense, refers to variegated ways of acting on "the conduct of conduct."[5] As a form of power that takes the subject's disposition toward things as its object, government permeates a multitude of both microcontexts (family and home life, interpersonal relations, self-care, and work) and macrocontexts (official governing programs targeting society at large). Foucault's theory of governmentality was developed to signal the extent to which liberal democratic states have come to rely on the reflexive and dynamic powers associated with government (as opposed to sovereignty) in their attempts to manage societies "at a distance" through the social realm, including through practices of subjectivation. Graham Burchell explains:

> Liberalism, particularly its modern versions, constructs a relationship between government and the governed that increasingly depends upon ways in which individuals are required to assume the status of being subjects of their lives, upon the ways in which they fashion themselves as certain kinds of subjects, upon the ways in which they practice their freedom. Government increasingly impinges upon individuals in their very individuality, in their practical relationships to themselves in the conduct of their lives. (30–31)

Crucially, as Radner suggests with her questions, governmentality implies a dynamic, heterogeneous social field—in which the subject finds herself embroiled within a dispersed and mobile matrix of power and knowledge—and begs interrogation into the ways in which historically situated practices of subjectivation interact with broader paradigms of rule and "mentalities" of governing.

The Hermeneutics of the Subject represents Foucault's most systematic attempt to historicize and theorize the historical repertoires of the self that have pervaded Western cultures, and the lectures reflect a distinct interest in what Foucault described as the test structure of subjectivity and the meditation mode of reflexivity developed during the Hellenistic period. What was crucial for Foucault is that the gaze and its work in relation to processes of identity are decidedly historical and speak to modes of reflexivity that may indeed change over time in relation to larger structures and be reflected in popular technologies of the self. Specifically, the test structure sought to constitute an adequate relation to self via an ongoing series of tests; this mode of reflexivity required subjects to continuously test that they are the subjects they are. Foucault explained:

> We must meditate, we must exercise our thought on these different things: attitudes towards events; what things affect us; how might we remedy them; how might we eradicate them . . .
>
> It won't be a gaze directed towards the reality of essences, but one directed towards the truth of what we think. It is a matter of testing the truth of representations and of the opinions that accompany them. (*Hermeneutics* 459)

Foucault found that the subject who emerged in the period that culminated in the Roman Empire was an ethical subject, constantly tested by events and representations to prove and substantiate her own identity to herself. This ethical subject adopted a testing disposition toward life,

engaging in technologies of the self that involved exercising and evaluating attitudes and responses and whose endgame was an immanent form of self-knowledge and discipline. Within this structure of subjectivity, the happenings of life became little more than an occasion to test and affirm one's own subjectivity.

With their evaluative hermeneutic and mix of Hollywood spectacle with tabloid tone, celebrity gossip magazines facilitate testing technologies of the self akin to those Foucault found operative in the Hellenistic period. More often than not, readers of contemporary celebrity magazines are positioned by these texts to actively test themselves through evaluation of the private lives of celebrities. Interpellated first and foremost as judges by recurring headlines such as *Star*'s "Stars: Are They Normal or Not?" readers are encouraged to assess and appraise an incessant parade of fleeting and unstable celebrity images and invited to take pleasure in the playful process of adjudicating a vast array of celebrity choices and behaviors for themselves. Even sections like *Us Weekly*'s "Stars: They're Just Like Us" do not so much foster intimacy with celebrities; they are visually structured in a way that promotes quick evaluation of celebrity lifestyle and the day-to-day activity captured by the paparazzi. Peppered with quizzes, reader surveys, and poll questions regarding the choices and behaviors of stars, the evaluative hermeneutic at work in celebrity gossip texts begs a form of attention in which the gaze is bounced back and forth between star images and the self's own attitude toward these representations; star testing requires a constant shifting of levels of evaluation between celebrity and self that enacts a self-administered test of one's subjectivity.

For example, *Us Weekly*'s Who Wore It Best? and *Star*'s analogous Double Takes ask readers to evaluate multiple sets of images of two celebrities caught wearing the same outfit by the paparazzi, usually on the red carpet. Faced with a barrage of representations that pit star against star in an alleged ongoing fashion war, readers are interpellated to make their own determination and then to check their assessment against reader polls and the commentary from fashion experts. (Magazine staffers regularly point out how subtle choices with regard to accessories and hair style make the difference between those who "rocked it" and those who missed the mark.) These segments promote testing one's own attitudes and responses about fashion, style sense, and self-presentation through the highly structured templates of estimation. It's important to see that these weekly segments are homologous to the stories about Angelina Jolie discussed earlier in that both construct for readers sites where they are asked to test themselves—constituting their own subjectivity through continuously choosing a response to an ever-fluctuating set of representations.

Technologies of star testing are buttressed and enlivened by a bipolar representational landscape that features not only red carpet spreads showcasing stars looking their "best" but also plenty of pages devoted to celebrities looking their "worst": no makeup, cellulite exposed, gray hairs visible, newly formed love handles on display. In the world of celebrity gossip, stars are presented at once as "idols of consumption"—donned in the latest fashions, living in the most luxurious homes, patronizing the newest Hollywood hotspots—and as ongoing targets of speculation, derision, and contempt. It is this last feature of celebrity gossip that has captured the imagination of cultural critics and commentators. *New York Times* columnist Virginia Heffernan writes: "Like so many other 20th century American institutions, Hollywood beauty is now regularly treated as a fairy tale only for dreamers and chumps . . . Celebrity magazines that in earlier incarnations used to peddle a fantasy of loveliness now traffic in dismantling that same fantasy." Rebecca Feasey has suggested that in this way celebrity gossip is potentially empowering, that it "validates feminine meanings and competences for the female reader" (178). More specifically, Feasey argues that the British rag *Heat* encourages women to have fun with fashion and to take pleasure from health and body regimes (188) and that *Heat*'s rhetoric and evaluative representations of celebrities may even liberate women from feelings of inadequacy regarding their own bodies (187). However, simply because readers of celebrity gossip are engaging in the more self-guided processes of subjectivation that I've elaborated as star testing—allegedly free from the thralls of identification with star images and the normative, impossible, or dangerous standards they are often assumed to embody—does not imply that contemporary celebrity gossip is empowering or democratic. Rather, in inviting female readers into a continual, open-ended process of self-administered star testing, I suggest that celebrity gossip doubles as a gendered instrument of governmentality.

Standardized Tests

While celebrity magazines may indeed "validate feminine meanings and competencies," processes of star testing are

in no way at odds with neoliberal "mentalities" of governing and the new structures of gender inequality and social division they usher in. I propose that the evaluative hermeneutic of contemporary celebrity magazines and the testing technologies of the self they enable do not so much dismantle the fantasy of Hollywood glamour but rather rearticulate the star image—as well as the female pleasures and social uses associated with gossip—as a highly diffused and distinctly postfeminist technique of neoliberal governmentality.

Broadly speaking, postfeminism is an ideological formation that recasts women's empowerment in a rhetoric of choice disarticulated from structural questions regarding the unequal material conditions that continue to circumscribe women's lives: "Patriarchy is gone and has been replaced by choice . . . The problems that women face today are a direct result of the choices that they made (and not the results of the lack of support for those choices from government, employers, partners, etc.)" (Dow 96). Postfeminist ideologies dovetail easily and conveniently with neoliberal approaches to governing, where official government is imagined to happen more and more at the level of technologies of the self, through activating the freedoms and capacities of individuals. Nikolas Rose has suggested that "modern individuals are not merely 'free to choose,' but obliged to be free, to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice. They must interpret their past and dream their future as outcomes of choices made or choices still to make" (*Powers* 87). Mitchell Dean puts it this way:

> Our present is one in which we are enjoined to take care and responsibility for our own lives, health, happiness, sexuality and financial security, in which we are provided with choices that we are expected to exercise, and in which we might feel that there is a possibility of some greater freedom in the forms of life we can live, and be safe and prosper within. It is also one in which a multiplicity of authorities, movements and agencies comes into play, seeking to link up our freedom, choices, forms of life and conduct with an often uncertain mix of political goals, social aspirations and governmental ends. (211)

The neoliberal state relies on citizens who do not need or desire state intervention but instead take responsibility for themselves through appropriate choice making in many different realms of social life. The promises of empowerment and autonomy promised by neoliberal discourses of personal responsibility and individual choice are, however, sharply double-edged, with the obligation to be free and the compulsion to choose wisely and appropriately engendering subjects who must subject themselves to rigorous and continuous self-scrutiny and examination. Within this context, celebrity gossip discourses—with their evaluative hermeneutic and the processes of star testing they solicit—are primed to step in as an unofficial cultural site of governmentality, wherein postfeminist "freedom, choices, forms of life and conduct" get stitched to broader neoliberal governing agendas. In this way, celebrity magazines offer not greater freedom to their "younger and hipper" female audiences but rather a series of standardized tests. As Angela McRobbie reminds us, "choice is surely . . . a modality of constraint. The individual is compelled to be the kind of subject who can make the right choices. By these means new lines of demarcations are drawn between those subjects who are judged responsive to the regime of personal responsibility, and those who fail miserably" ("Post-feminism" 261).

More specifically, McRobbie understands the articulation of younger women in particular to neoliberal discourses of individual choice and obligated freedom as a postfeminist sexual contract, which works to restabilize and resharpen gender differences amidst the growing economic power accruing to certain classes of young women in postindustrialized societies. According to the terms of this contract, women are welcomed into the high-powered echelons of society—from educational institutions to corporate worksites—with the provision that they participate in a contradictory new gender regime that, on the one hand, appears to embrace feminism as common sense while, on the other hand, it repudiates the goals and aims of the feminist movement.[6] By evacuating a collective feminist politics from discourses on female agency, the postfeminist sexual contract shores up more subtle and congenial forms of patriarchal and governmental authority by enticing women to perform traditional femininity in the name of individual choice, personal responsibility, empowerment, and self-actualization. Young women are constituted as subjects of capacity, worthy of investment and attention, and are invited to achieve at high levels in realms of social life historically constituted as masculine so long as they make carefully calibrated, highly circumscribed, and decidedly individualized choices about career, motherhood, and sexual relationships. Adherence to the stipulations of this contract is garnered at the level of technologies of the self through practices of subjectivation that solicit active participation in the construction of one's own life through

"self-monitoring, the setting up of personal plans, and the search for individual solutions" (McRobbie, "Top Girls?" 723).

For the price of posting feminism, young women are enjoined to enter what Elspeth Probyn has described as the "choiceoisie": more than a "re-fashioned bourgeoisie," the choiceoisie is "a structure of feeling that can be said to be rearticulating the way in which our material choices (or lack of them) feel" (292). In this view postfeminism is more than an ideological formation; it is also deeply ensconced in the fabric of everyday life as a "structure of feeling" specific to the neoliberal approaches to governing and the processes of subjectivation they entail of gendered subjects. With their relentless focus on judging the lifestyles, personal choices, and individual behaviors of female stars and celebrities—including those regarding personal style, work-home balance, parenting, friendships, romance, and marriage—contemporary celebrity magazines materialize powerfully the choiceoisie structure of feeling, offering women a distinctly postfeminist habitus in which the rhetoric of choice figures as a highly individualized disposition toward social life constituted by continuous evaluation and self-administered testing. By providing an ongoing series of potential dos and don'ts to be arbitrated by readers through processes of star testing, celebrity gossip discourses convert the glamorous and not-so-glamorous images of stars and celebrities into internalized, privatized courtrooms in which readers are invited to adjudicate for themselves the terms of the postfeminist sexual contract. In turn, celebrity gossip becomes less a "resource for the subordinated" and more a mobile, dispersed arm of governmentality working to bring the dispositions of postfeminist female subjects in alignment with governmental regimes of personal responsibility.

Celebrity magazines and their continued concentration on star fashion and beauty dos and don'ts invite standardized forms of star testing that are relevant to the post-Fordist work life. The deregulated economies of postindustrialized nations like the United States and Britain are often characterized as flexible economies, defined largely by the replacement of stable, lifelong employment with more short-term work opportunities. In turn, workers are called upon to embrace technologies of self-fashioning, personal branding, and self-work in order to cope with the volatile job market; they must be malleable and adaptable, allegedly able to retool their skill sets and reinvent themselves on short order so as to keep afloat amidst the turbulent tides of the flexible economy. Accompanying these new demands is a heightened emphasis on "dressing for success" and "looking the part." For example, the capacity of workers to signify youthfulness through appearance becomes an essential job requirement for men and women alike, as employers have come to view older workers and their alleged inflexible dispositions as company liabilities.[7] Ernest Sternberg has theorized that this flexible workplace requires employees to adopt what he calls a "phantasmagoric" style of self-presentation, where "workers and managers raise their value through calculated self-presentation, using techniques originally meant for the making of celebrities" (418). In a service-oriented labor market characterized by a lack of both long-term employment and clearly defined, constantly shifting job requirements, workers are compelled to cultivate and rely on skills akin to those usually associated with the crafting star personas, from looking young to strategic self-promotion. While Sternberg envisioned a general celebrification of the workplace, wherein one's ability to thrive hinges first and foremost on effective image management, I suggest that the logic of celebrity and the discourse of stardom become relevant to contemporary work life in more subtle and specific ways as well. For women in particular, the requisite self-presentation strategies associated with the flexible workplace entail careful negotiation and navigation that celebrity gossip and processes of star testing may help to facilitate.

In the postfeminist, neoliberal milieu women must perform as self-entrepreneurial, self-promotional workers on equal footing with their male colleagues yet still be invested in and appear willing to perform traditional gender roles. McRobbie argues that a key component of the postfeminist sexual contract is the adoption of a postfeminist masquerade in which fashion acts as a substitute patriarchal authority adequate to postfeminism's rhetoric of choice: through freely selected, highly feminized presentations of self, women can participate and compete in the phantasmagoric workplace described by Sternberg while still presenting themselves as potential wives and mothers. "The post-feminist masquerade is a knowing strategy which emphasizes its non-coercive status, it is a highly-styled disguise of womanliness now adopted as a matter of personal choice. But the theatricality of the masquerade, the silly hat, the too short skirt, are once again a means of emphasizing . . . female vulnerability, fragility, uncertainty and the little girl's 'desire to be desired'" ("Top Girls?" 725). Resolving the tension between the growing

economic capacity of young women and new modes of patriarchal encroachment, the postfeminist masquerade emerges as a strategy for particular women balancing the highly contradictory demands to appear both as empowered workers and as objects of sexual desire to their male counterparts.

Through ongoing evaluation of the style sense of female stars and celebrities—which is explicitly promoted by segments such as Who Wore It Best? yet implicitly encouraged by the evaluative hermeneutic that enlivens the discourse more generally—readers of celebrity gossip magazines are positioned to hone their skills for cultivating the new kind of freely chosen performance of hyperfemininity associated with the postfeminist masquerade. *Us Weekly* and *Star* are frontloaded with Hot Pics and Star Shots—medleys of stars walking red carpets, working on production sets, strolling big city streets with babies and/or shopping bags, and participating in other happenings such as sporting events, charity balls, award shows, and music festivals—inviting star testers to survey and appraise a disheveled gamut of celebrity lifestyles and behaviors. At the back end of the magazines sections like Star Beauty and Star Style follow well-established templates set forth in women's magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* and offer readers a lucid and compact assortment of designer dos and don'ts, updates on the latest fashion trends, makeup tips, and hair-styling guides. Taken together, these predominant and consistent features of celebrity gossip formats, which bookend feature stories (such as the ones on Jolie discussed previously), enlist fashion as the new, more congenial patriarchal authority. Celebrity gossip magazines tap into the material contradictions circumscribing particular groups of women's lives by offering a bountiful harvest of up-to-date and highly feminized self-presentation strategies and sites on which to actively self-test them, while the evaluative hermeneutic and the choiceoisie structure of feeling militate against the sense of a male gaze structuring these reading practices. Unlike the masquerade theorized by Studlar, in which readers identified with the performances of femininity enacted by big-screen idols, the postfeminist masquerade that undergirds star testing collapses the "double perspective" engendering a more immanent process of self-evaluation, in which readers are invited to use images of stars and celebrities as provisional tools for developing one's own masquerade. The spectacle of Hollywood glamour peddled—even while at times being dismantled—by contemporary celebrity magazines becomes less a playful fantasy and more a functional sociocultural resource for particular classes of women navigating the uneven demands placed on them in contemporary work environments by neoliberal regimes.

While stock segments like Star Shots, Who Wore It Best? and Star Style work in tandem to encourage forms of star testing that interact with the gendered structures and dynamics of contemporary work life, celebrity magazines' titillating feature/cover stories—usually about a regular cast of young female stars (e.g., Angelina Jolie, Britney Spears, Nicole Richie, Lindsay Lohan, Jennifer Aniston, Katie Holmes) and their domestic tribulations—provide women with ongoing standardized testing centers for negotiating their other social roles as homemakers, mothers, wives, girlfriends, and daughters. Part of the governmental power of these texts concerns their relationship to expectations placed on women with regard to their roles in the home and family context. As the state steps back from a supportive role in social welfare provision, neoliberal regimes rely heavily on women's willingness to take primary responsibility for caring work and traditional domestic duties while still pursuing their careers. Celebrity magazines, with their dogged focus and incessant reporting on the private lives of female stars and the choices—both bad and good—they make regarding marriage and romance, family relationships, health and diet, child rearing, and work-home balance, offer female readers an ongoing series of domestically oriented potential dos and don'ts that must be worked out at the level of the individual through careful and calculated choice making in the context of neoliberalism. As discussed previously, the cover stories about Jolie offered up the glamorous star's choices about adoption, work schedules, and parenting for review and assessment; readers were positioned to test themselves, particularly their own attitudes about domesticity, through evaluating representations of Jolie's own personal decisions and behaviors. Feature stories such as these articulate the choiceoisie structure of feeling to the minutiae of home and family life, thereby channeling the reading pleasures of tabloid gossip into individualized tribunals constituted by playful yet meticulous evaluation of the domestic situations of female stars.

The tabloid, scandal-centric character of contemporary celebrity gossip helps to ensure, however, that domestic don'ts drive and animate most of the discourse swirling around female stars. In this last regard, the case of Britney Spears is especially worthy of consideration. As was widely

reported in the mainstream press, what *Portfolio*'s Duff McDonald termed "the Britney economy" generated celebrity magazines in particular $360 million between January 2006 and July 2007. A troubled Spears graced the covers of *People*, *Us Weekly*, *In Touch*, *Life & Style*, *OK!* and *Star* 175 times during these 78 weeks, increasing newsstand sales an average of 33 percent with each appearance (McDonald). While it's commonplace to acknowledge that "scandal sells," I want to suggest that Spears's particular purchase with female audiences might be better explained in terms of the processes of star testing afforded by her slow yet spectacular "breakdown."

Spears's representation in celebrity magazines these last few years powerfully illustrates how the evaluative hermeneutic and testing technologies of the self enabled by celebrity gossip around young female stars work to police the terms of the postfeminist sexual contract, bringing processes of star testing into unequivocal proximity with neoliberal regimes of personal responsibility and their double-edged promises of individual autonomy and empowerment. Since the turbulent start of her relationship with Kevin Federline and her subsequent rush to procreation (which marks a violation of the postfeminist sexual contract by failing to carefully plan and prepare for motherhood), Spears has been the subject of wide speculation and public concern. From the notorious head shaving of February 2007, to her disastrous performance at the Video Music Awards several months later, to the infamous night in January of the following year when she allegedly held her son hostage and was carried out of her home in restraints and on a stretcher, every aspect of Spears's life—including her physical appearance, her pop star persona, and nearly every nook and cranny of her domestic domain—has been put under the microscope by gossip magazines. Of particular interest have been her scandalous failures at motherhood, a theme that took root in 2006 when paparazzi captured images of Spears driving with her young son bobbling on her lap. Spears eventually lost primary custody of her two young sons to now ex-husband Federline (who in the same period of time went from being portrayed primarily as a manipulative, irresponsible, money-hungry hanger-on to the only hope for his neglected and mismothered boys), and her constant surveillance by the paparazzi and scrutiny by celebrity magazines was carried out in conjunction with a highly publicized, court-appointed parenting coach.

Us Weekly's 13 August 2007 cover crystallized these discourses with large images of Spears's sons—Sean and Jayden—accompanied by the headline "HELP!" In the corner of the page appeared an image of Spears straddling a stripper pole next to a subheadline that read: "Soda in baby bottles, Mommy's many men, nighttime cries for Daddy's love. Kevin battles for Sean & Jayden as Britney grows more dangerous." Inside, readers were treated to a full-page image of Spears playing stripper on the set of her new music video and were asked by a large headline that blanketed half the page: "What If This Were Your Mom?" The story went on to explain how Spears's "erratic" lifestyle—including "estrangement from family," "late-night partying," a "revolving door of men," and her "country" disposition—were making life hard for her boys. Additionally, the story chronicled Federline's struggles to provide stability for his boys amidst the ongoing custody battle. While gossip magazines like *Us Weekly* and *Star* often suggested Britney's domestic failures and more general array of bad behaviors might be explained by mental illness, the pressures of fame, or her own dysfunctional family and upbringing, these discourses remained enlivened by an evaluative hermeneutic as readers were consistently interpellated to sit in judgment on Spears, especially in terms of her decisions as a young wife and mother. *Us Weekly*'s exposé "Britney's Twisted Childhood" concluded with an "expert" medical opinion: "So where does the blame end and her own responsibility begin? Pinksy, who has treated many celebrities, takes a tough stance: 'You don't want to say that an adult should be putting blame anywhere other than on themselves,' he says. 'They can get better. They just don't want to.'" In stark opposition to the construction of Hepburn mentioned earlier, whose "strange" behaviors were *uncovered* to be the result of a feminist sensibility and upbringing, Spears's "erratic" behavior was interpreted within an evaluative hermeneutic more interested in testing and judging her choices according to the rules of the postfeminist sexual contract.

As she is written in celebrity gossip discourses and tested by her audiences, Spears indeed serves as a salient "morality tale" for young women in the context of neoliberalism. However, the processes of star testing encouraged by representations of Spears do not so much offer cultural sites for moral community building or self-vindication to marginalized readers as much as they materialize the highly gendered and individualized dispositions toward social life demanded by neoliberal approaches to governing. As young women are positioned to take pleasure in deeming Britney a "hootch" and a bad mother, celebrity gossip becomes

first and foremost a postfeminist instrument of neoliberal governmentality.

The standardized processes of star testing invited by contemporary celebrity magazines are not merely germane to neoliberal "mentalities" of governing women; they also function as a cultural medium of social inequality. Capitalizing on "younger and hipper" female audiences and the material contradictions that circumscribe their lives, celebrity gossip helps to draw and cement new lines of division between female subjects. Recently, while waiting in line at the grocery store with my partner, I spotted the latest *Us Weekly*; I grabbed the magazine and added it to our pile of goods. My partner, who is patiently annoyed by the ever-growing stack of celebrity gossip magazines in our bathroom, immediately and playfully declared that he would not pay for the groceries as long as the magazine was included. I laughed, for this conversation is repeated upon nearly every joint trip to the grocery store. At that moment a woman came up to us from another line. She had two magazines or, more accurately, two tabloid newspapers in her hands: the *National Enquirer* and the *Sun Times*. "You must buy it for her," she pleaded gently to my partner. "We like to read them, you see. We know that the stories are not true, but we have fun reading them. You should buy it for her. It's just something we do." I felt grateful, and while I much appreciated the gesture of solidarity, I could not shake the feeling that the "we" in her statement was not a completely unified we. We were both women who took great pleasure in reading gossip, and we both clearly understood that our shared reading pleasures had been unfairly invalidated by official culture. However, while her *National Enquirer* and my *Us Weekly* inhabited the same shelves in the checkout lines at the grocery store, our respective "guilty pleasures" did not necessarily signal the same solidarity that animated the encounter. For my picking up *Us Weekly* to engage in highly individualized processes of star testing worked against that very solidarity.

The rapid proliferation of celebrity gossip directed toward "younger and hipper" female audiences is no more a sign of growing female solidarity than it is a progressive validation of "feminine meanings and competencies." Rather, as they mobilize a postfeminist disposition towards the self through processes of star testing, contemporary celebrity magazines become an interactive training ground for an emerging class of young women whose success and advancement in a neoliberal world are alleged to depend on the continuous honing of their personal choice-making capacities within the narrow confines of the postfeminist sexual contract. The continuous cycling of evaluation between the female celebrity and female self engendered by star testing lodges regimes of personal responsibility within the feminized pleasures of star gazing and gossip, while the choiceoisie structure of feeling forecloses reflection on the broader structures of social inequality shaping these processes. In turn, new lines of demarcation are drawn between those who won't turn out like Britney and those who should have chosen better.

Notes

1. Chris Rojek coined the term *celetoid* for "any compressed, concentrated, attributed celebrity . . . social types who command media attention one day, and are forgotten the next" (20–21).

2. See Shelley Stamp's work for an analysis of female audiences and their significance to the early film industry.

3. See Charles Eckert's work on Carole Lombard and the relationships between female film stars and the development of new lifestyle industries.

4. While I treat contemporary celebrity magazines as a unified discursive formation marked by an evaluative hermeneutic, it's important to keep in mind that these magazines do compete with one another, developing and managing their own brands of celebrity gossip. For example, *Us Weekly* promotes itself as the legitimate and trustworthy source for celebrity news, regularly updating its readers on the "lies" reported by competitors and offering correctives to the rumor mill. Rather than relying on anonymous sources and tabloid-type speculation, *Us Weekly* employs fact-checkers and maintains close relationships with publicists. Alternatively, outfits like *Star*, *In Touch*, and *Life & Style* attempt to capitalize off sensationalized, melodramatic storylines developed over time.

5. For a concise discussion of Foucault's theories of government and the methodological implications for critical scholarship, see Rose, "Governing."

6. McRobbie calls this a "double movement" and explains: "The various political issues associated with feminism, are understood to be now widely recognized and responded to (they have become feminist common-sense) with the effect that there is no longer any place for feminism in contemporary political culture. But this disavowal permits the subtle renewal of gender injustices, while vengeful patriarchal norms are also re-instated" ("Top Girls?" 719–20).

7. See Sennett 94–99; see also Ouellette and Hay for further discussion of the significance of the makeover and self-fashioning to the flexible, neoliberal economy (99–108).

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