THE MEANING OF MAKEUP: EMOTIONAL LABOR AND PERFORMANCE IN THE BEAUTY INFLUENCER INDUSTRY

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Submitted to

Central European University Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Vienna, Austria 2021

Abstract

Beauty and cosmetic narratives have undergone significant rhetorical shifts in recent years that have attempted to reconceptualize makeup as a tool of art, expression, and agency. These narrative shifts have occurred simultaneously with the rise of influencers and online cultures for narratives to be created and circulated. This research explores the work of online beauty influencers in relation to contemporary makeup narratives as a deeply emotional and complex experience where the social rules which bound influencers' content stand at odds with their personal opinions. Using a lens of emotional labor from Arlie Hochschild and commodification from Eva Illouz, I argue that the work of beauty influencers requires intentional management of emotionality and that this calculated emotionality is substantial for viewers engaging in influencer's online content. This research employs online semi-structured ethnographic interviews with thirteen online beauty influencers which were later transcribed and coded for recurring or notable themes. In order to highlight individuals who have historically been excluded from the beauty community, this research intentionally included participants from a variety of national, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, influencers who identify as cisgender, non-binary, and trans*, as well as influencers with disabilities. This research found that there were many instances in which beauty influencers were required to perform emotional labor in their content as a result of conflicting standards within the beauty industry and their personal feelings and opinions. Beauty influencers' emotions were commodified in their content as they included calculated emotional displays per the desires of viewers and followers which also were not congruent with their personal emotions. Additionally, the requirements of emotional labor and commodification were more harshly enforced on influencers who are traditionally excluded from the beauty community. The findings of this research contribute to current literature on social media and influencers as well as pop culture, beauty, and media more broadly. This research also expands the scope of traditional understandings of emotional labor and commodification by employing them in an entirely digital space where self, labor, and capital have been reconfigured.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all of the women in my life who have constantly encouraged and supported my journey in academia despite the numerous barriers I have faced throughout the years. Completing this work and degree would not have been possible without the endless inspiration from my mother, sister, aunts, god-mothers, and friends.

This research would not have been possible without the flexibility, patience, and support of my supervisors. I am so grateful to have had an opportunity to work under their guidance.

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Introduction

On May 10, 2015, Dutch YouTuber Nikkie de Jager, better known as NikkieTutorials, posted a video on YouTube titled "The Power of Makeup" in order to showcase the transformative potential of makeup. In the opening lines of the video, de Jager explains,

> Hey guys! I'm here today to show you the power of makeup. I've been noticing a lot lately that girls have been almost ashamed to say that they love makeup. Cause nowadays when you say you love makeup you either do it because you wanna look good for boys, you do it because you're insecure, or you do it because you don't love yourself. I feel like in a way lately it's almost a crime to love doing your makeup. (de Jager 2015)

With over 13 million YouTube subscribers, 14.5 million Instagram followers, and 40 million views on "The Power Makeup", de Jager's video created a massive response from online viewers in support of her makeup skills and message which drastically shaped how the "beauty community" imagined and related to cosmetics. Though de Jager already had a substantial following before posting the video, "The Power of Makeup" catapulted her to stardom eventually leading to her being named International Makeup Influencer of the Year in 2019 and 2020 and facilitating a huge platform for her to further engage in Trans-activism after she came out as a transwoman in January 2020.

Though de Jager's particular case is unique, it exemplifies three crucial characteristics of the current online beauty community, where the "beauty community" broadly refers to the network of online content creators, and sometimes their viewers, who create a wide range of cosmetic-centered content such as daily makeup or special effects makeup generally including application tips, product reviews, and tutorials. First, the current beauty community produces and reproduces a narrative of cosmetics that conceptualizes makeup as a form of art that is a medium for expression, agency, and self-empowerment. Second, her massive following exemplifies the current phenomenon of "influencers" in which regular individuals are able to facilitate immense shifts and trends within a respective sub-culture, in this instance beauty influencers facilitate a reconceptualization of makeup. Third, makeup is incredibly political and personal where the

identity of content creators or influencers is inseparably linked to how they are perceived by viewers and substantially affects their influence within the community.

This research then considers the intersections and implications of these characteristics within the current beauty community as a uniquely developed sphere of media and pop culture. Using a lens of emotional labor, I explore the ways in which newly constructed narratives surrounding beauty have impacted how influencers engage in their work from a unique positionality in relation to makeup. I argue the job of influencers requires a level of emotional management as a direct result of the current development of new narratives that champion agency and expression which conflict with the personal feelings of influencers. Broadly, this work aims to communicate the deep emotionality tied into beauty influencer's work where influencers must engage in emotional management and commodify their emotions. In order to do this, Chapter 1 explores the rise of influencers as an occupation and public figures and outlines the historical context of contemporary beauty narratives. Chapter 2 discusses the concept of emotion management and labor in relation to the work of influencers. Chapter 3 details the methodology employed in this study. Lastly, Chapter 4 offers an analysis of influencer's work and personal narratives as a form of emotional labor and commodification in a newly developed digital occupation and considers the function of the "beauty community" as a self-proclaimed, bounded group that regulates emotionality.

Chapter 1. Makeup, Money, and Media

1.1 Cosmetic Culture and the Beauty Community

Though cosmetics have been utilized globally and historically in innumerable contexts, makeup and cosmetics in Western contexts over the last two hundred years have taken on a highly gendered and specified purpose articulated in how it is advertised publicly. Particularly beginning in the 1920s and continuing into the 2000s, cosmetic use was conceptualized and marketed as a highly feminized practice in which women are the target audience and consumers of cosmetics and beauty products. (Jones 2010). In accounts of the historical shifts of beauty advertising, cultural narratives about cosmetics have been known to most often utilize heteronormative and often racist (or colorist) rhetoric aimed specifically at women that position makeup and cosmetics as tools for attracting and pleasing men (Chapkis 1986, Jones 2010, Peiss 2011, Wolf 2002). These marketing narratives have capitalized on the social insecurities of women so that they do not only "want" makeup but rather that they "need" makeup to appropriately perform femininity and are desirable through the male gaze.

In recent years, specifically starting at the beginning of the 21st century and with growing prominence in the early 2010s, beauty and cosmetic narratives have undergone significant rhetorical shifts that have attempted to reconceptualize how makeup can and should be used (Banet-Weister, 2017, Favaro 2017). These more recent narratives have repositioned makeup as a tool for self-expression and art in which women should feel empowered when wearing makeup and therefore have largely been critiqued for their incorporation of feminist rhetoric that separates cosmetics from its problematic past (Banet-Weiser 2017, Elias et. al. 2017, Favaro 2017, Jones 2010, Lazar 2011, Milkie 1999, Wood 2017). Here, the supposed agency and empowerment women are believed to feel when wearing makeup is centered and makeup is reconceptualized as a tool for liberation. These makeup narratives encourage women to reclaim and recontextualize their relationships to cosmetics so that wearing makeup becomes a conscious and self-determined choice for the individual, rather than one for male consumption. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1: Contemporary makeup advertisement from Benefit Cosmetics
@benefitcosmetics. "Boss Brows." *Instagram*. February 1, 2019. Accessed April 28, 2021.

"Boss Brows" featured above exemplifies this narrative shift in its intentional imagery, language, and subject. In utilizing phrasing such as "breaking rules" and "raise your voice", the advertisement invokes a sense of empowerment from using Benefit Cosmetics so that the consumer becomes an emancipated, independent subject through makeup. Additionally, in featuring Ericka Hart as a non-binary subject, makeup's historical association with femininity is challenged so that purchasing and utilizing cosmetics is positioned as an agentive act from any consumer regardless of gender. This sentiment is of course complicated by also including the symbol for women and choosing a pink color scheme, yet still encourages a sense of reclamation wherein women and feminine subjects are positioned to be independent and empowered in their decisions.

This narrative shift over the last decade has produced a substantial body of literature that examines the intention, process, reception, and effectiveness of these narrative shifts within beauty, citing this shift as an intentional incorporation of feminist rhetoric into makeup spheres. Since this reconceptualization of makeup occurred simultaneously with the rise of social media and is a fairly recent development, much of the literature speaking to beauty narratives references print and digital advertisements as facilitators of makeup narratives but is essential for tracing the rise of feminism in makeup advertisements and narratives currently mediated digitally.

The most common are explorations are focused on the results of utilizing feminist rhetoric in new narratives, emphasizing women's consumption and attitudes towards brands (Abitbol and Sternadori 2018, Åkestam et al 2017, Kapoor and Munjal 2017). This research, often founded and funded by marketing and economics scholars, refers to feminist rhetoric in advertising towards women as "femvertising" and aims to analyze the financial and material advantages and disadvantages for companies and brands utilizing femvertising in their marketing strategies (Abitbol and Sternadori 2018, Åkestam et al 2017, Kapoor and Munjal 2017). While there is no conclusive evidence regarding whether or not femvertising is actually effective in increasing profit for companies, this research further demonstrates that cosmetic and beauty companies do in fact intentionally and strategically employ feminism in their branding and marketing and thus serves as evidence of recent beauty narrative shifts.

As beauty culture and its narratives have continued to shift, many scholars have attempted to document the historical trends and shifts in cosmetic representation, production, consumption (Chapkis 1986, Jones 2010, Peiss 2011, Wolf 2002). These studies offer a contextualized critique of the cosmetic industry as a multifaceted medium for people to construct and perform an identity that facilitates both oppression and liberation. These studies specifically highlight the historical presence of makeup as a highly femininized practice where cosmetic culture is overwhelmingly constructed and consumed by women. Many of these studies additionally critique cosmetic culture as parasitic and oppressive, specifically in recent years as cosmetic companies have been forced to respond to increased public awareness of feminist scholarship and practices (Jones 2010, Wolf 2002).

A considerable amount of research has also been done analyzing and exploring the implications of utilizing feminist rhetoric and its problematic undertones in advertising (Banet-Weiser 2017, Elias et. al. 2017, Favaro 2017, Jones 2010, Lazar 2017, Lazar 2011, Milkie 1999, Stephens et.al. 1994, Wood 2017). These critiques emphasize the actual content within the advertisements and aim to understand the implicit and explicit messages publicized through these cosmetic and beauty advertisements. For example, in "The Right to Be Beautiful: Postfeminist Identity and Consumer Beauty Advertising", Michelle M. Lazar analyzes the linguistic practices utilized in beauty advertising that emphasize an "emancipated feminine subjectivity" (Lazar 2011). Other studies aim to explore the larger cultural implications of these advertisements such as "Just Be Confident Girls!: Confidence Chic as Neoliberal Governmentality" by Laura Favaro which critiques the adoption of neoliberalism, in magazines utilizing feminist rhetoric that emphasize self-constructed and self-proclaimed confidence, where neoliberalism broadly refers to the importance of individual merit and actions over social structures and systems (Favaro 2017).

In addition, women's personal consumption and interpretations of their own cosmetic practices have been explored through interdisciplinary social science perspectives. Many of these analyses center the interpersonal and social implications of cosmetics by emphasizing and exploring these beauty and aesthetic practices within the context of feminism (Cahill 2009, Cash and Wunderle 1987, Fabricant 1983, Gentina et.al. 2012, Kelson et. al. 1990, Rudd 1997). These studies explore women's individual practices and interpretations of their own habits with the intention of highlighting different meanings of makeup practices. For example, in "The Practice of Using Makeup: A Consumption Ritual of Adolescent Girls", Gentina et.al. (2012) explore the habitual and symbolic nature of wearing makeup. This research broadly explores how those who consume narratives and participate in beauty culture self-articulate their feelings and intentions surrounding cosmetics.

1.2 The Rise of Influencers

As a result of the expansion of digital spaces, numerous new mediums have been developed through which these new narratives can be created and communicated. With the rise of social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, those interested in beauty have utilized these online spaces to build a culture and community centering cosmetics, producing and

circulating contemporary beauty narratives. The beauty community on social media platforms is unique in its ability to create a space where community members, rather than corporations and companies, work to create and publicize narratives and rhetoric circulated throughout the community. This is not to say that corporations do not have any influence over the beauty industry (which they do), but rather to highlight that makeup narratives in their current context are created from and circulated amongst individuals. While this narrative creation and reification can technically arise from any individual within the community who publicly posts content, content created by social media influencers is widely considered the most far-reaching and impactful in terms of its ability to affect the desires of a community (Delbaere et.al. 2020).

First, it important to understand the historical context of the emergence of "influencers" with the rise of social media and online platforms. Communications scholar Kelli S. Burns (2021) explains that the emergence of influencers is directly related to the popularity of "blogging" in the early 2000s in which individuals wrote stories and opinion pieces regarding current news and events. She elaborates, "The rise of digital and social media gave regular people [like bloggers] an opportunity to become known to others and also distribute their own content" where social media facilitated easy access to multiple people and more content (Burns 2021, 7). As social media continued to grow and individuals' content became widely recognizable and amassed substantial followings, content creators (particularly on YouTube) began inserting commercials and ads within their videos for profit (Burns 2021). Recognizing the potential for new advertising strategies, businesses then also reached out to these content creators to market and endorse their products and services in which more content and account interactions made specific individuals disproportionally visible, leading to more followers and an exponentially growing audience and influence (Burns 2021, Van Dijck 2013). While this "influencer boom" was an unforeseen outcome of social media whose impact was originally imagined to connect "regular" people, digital studies scholar José Van Dijck (2013) explains,

> The early expectation that Web 2.0 technology was going to usher in a platformed sociality conditioned by user equality and equal access turned out to be utopian. […] All platforms treat some users as more equal than others owing to the hierarchical system inscribed in their interface designs. Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, and Wikipedia all reward users who have proven to be successful or reliable contributors of content. Gradually, the stratified star system of old media

> was complemented by an equally stratified ecosystem of connective media, where some users got pushed to the top. (159)

The "influencer" then emerged as a response to overly "produced" celebrities where their (supposed) authenticity and connection to regular people was the main appeal for both audiences and businesses. Though this conception of influencers has changed as influencers have become more prominent, their emergence and existence are still largely directly related to the paradox of authenticity and advertising.

Given that "influencers" are a relatively recent social position and profession, literature analyzing its emergence, manifestations, and impacts is limited. Influencers, or social media celebrities and microcelebrities as they are sometimes called, were first defined as a phenomenon by global studies scholar Theresa M. Senft in her seminal piece *Camgirls: Celebrity and Community in the Age of Social Media* (2008) where the influencer, referred to as a micro-celebrity by Senft, is broadly defined as "a new style of online performance in which people employ webcams, video, audio blogs, and social networking sites to 'amp up' their popularity among readers, viewers, and those to whom they are linked online" (25). This definition was expanded upon by Alice E. Marwick in her equally foundational work, *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity and Self-Branding in Web 2.0* (2010) in which "Micro-celebrity can be understood as a mindset and set of practices in which one's online contacts are constructed as an audience or fan base, popularity is maintained through ongoing fan management, and self-presentation is carefully assembled to be consumed by others" (224). Marwick continues to argue that unlike "real life" celebrities who require a substantial following and fanbase, a micro-celebrity is not predicated on number of viewers and/or followers as online content is always presumed to have an audience (2010, 226). Influencers then are largely defined by their ability to "influence" a culture, or rather a subculture such as video games, food, traveling, and beauty, based on an intentional publication of content and interactions with followers and therefore cannot be numerically or definitively categorized but instead recognized as online actors with substantial symbolic capital within their respective platform which can be transformed into economic capital (Höhne and Sproll 2020).

Despite the absence of an established definition of "influencer", research regarding the growth and implications of the profession and phenomenon has grown exponentially as social media and online content has continued to saturate society. The overwhelming majority of this research explores the utilization of influencers as an intentional marketing strategy in which influencers "sponsor" a product or service in their content to encourage, or "influence", followers to purchase said product or service and thus centers the financial and marketing successes of influencers (Delbaere et al. 2020, Ganon and Prothero 2016, Haenlein et al. 2020, Krywalski and Moreira 2020, Schouten et al. 2020, Sokolova and Kefi 2020). In their review and account of marketing literature surrounding influencers, Hudders et al. (2020) explain that interest in studying influencers has grown exponentially over the last four years in particular, though some research has been conducted over the last decade, as the "influencer market" now produces billions of dollars annually (2). Though the theoretical framing or evidence produced in this field of research is not particularly relevant to the aims of this project, its mere existence and increase demonstrates the growing presence and impact of influencers on culture and thus further proves the necessity for continued investigation into influencers and their impact – from a reflexive perspective.

From their financial relevance and celebrity status as Senft (2008) and Marwick (2010) suggest, there is a considerable amount of both public and academic interest in the lives and processes of the seemingly extravagant and exclusive influencer lifestyle. This new form of celebrity has produced several new podcasts, articles, biographies, and even documentaries available to followers and the public where a "behind the scenes" candid exploration of how influencers start their platforms, make money, and create their content is presented. Academically, this "behind the scenes" interest often explores the social contexts of influencer content and navigation of influencer's selfhood. For example, Marina Dekavalla (2020) explores how beauty influencers strategically make use of transparency and authenticity of self in videos to perform closeness with viewers, resulting in the commodification of transparency. Similarly, Berryman and Kavka (2017) critique the gendered manifestations of intimacy in which well-known influencer "Zoella" commodifies a "big sister" relationship with followers in her displays of transparency. This field of research then generally emphasizes the implications of the content and influencers' online performativity as informed by larger social phenomena.

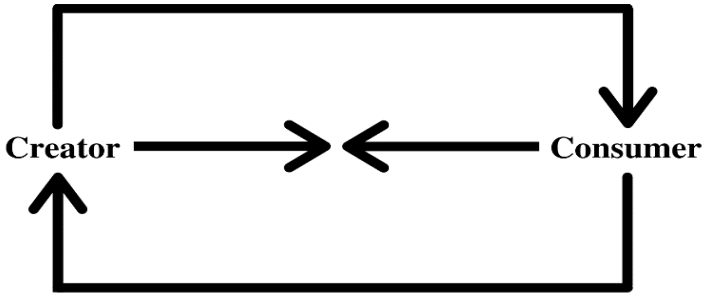
Interdisciplinary social science research on influencers has also grown in recent years and is not nearly as extensive as other bodies of research on overlapping topics such as celebrities, beauty, media, etc. but still offers socially critical frameworks on which my research will be built. Notably, anthropologist and sociologist Crystal Abidin has produced significant explorations of Singaporean influencer and selfie culture as a form of labor (2016) and one that mediates and facilities intimacy between followers and influencers (2015). Similarly, Tran et al. (2020) offer a psychological analysis of influencer's motivations in wearing makeup as ultimately a means for uplifting personal confidence deeply affected by racialized experiences. Though my research is not framed psychologically and does not exclusively highlight Singaporean influencers, the work produced by Abidin (2015, 2016) and Tran et al. (2020) are important for this research for their emphasis on the necessity to consider influencer's experiences and opinions through the intersection of racialized, gendered, and classed lenses and on the importance of considering social media as constructed through the intersecting lenses of lens of labor, gender, and navigation of selfhood that foundationally informs this project.

1.3 Influencers as Creators and Consumers

This research is situated at the intersection of the rise of social media influencers and new makeup narratives that attempt to reclaim and reposition cosmetics as a medium of art and expression. Looking specifically at beauty influencers as distinct actors online who facilitate the trajectory of the beauty community, I argue that influencers' unique positionality as both creators and consumers of beauty narratives separates them from other members and actors within the community. Influencers write and produce content to be viewed online so that the messages within their content reach massive audiences, thus influencers are able to create narratives taken up within the community. Given that influencers are also "regular people" who buy makeup and view others' content, influencers are also consumers of makeup narratives. This is not to say that other members of the community do not consume narratives or that narratives cannot be created through other mediums such as makeup companies, but rather that influencers are unique in that they occupy a consumer *and* creator role simultaneously.

This distinct relationship to cosmetics is central because it is this unique position, where influencers personhood as regular people (consumers) comes into conflict with the expectations

of their job (creators), that requires emotional labor that is not expected of, for example, corporations and businesses who are only creators or online viewers who are only consumers. Here, the expectations of influencers as simultaneous creators and consumers of narratives inform and are informed by one another as influencers produce and view content that cultivates an influencer's conceptualization of and relationship to cosmetics. These simultaneous creator and consumer identities sometimes stand in contrast with one another so that influencers must actively negotiate this conflicting intersection where influencers' individual feelings about makeup do not align with the narratives held within the community. It is at this point of opposition that influencers are required to engage in emotional labor and their emotions are commodified.



This research then explores the function of emotions in influencers' work at the unique intersection of creator and consumer. First, I focus on what role influencers see themselves as having in the creation and affirmation of beauty narratives. How do influencers define their own influence specifically in terms of what message they wish their followers and viewers to take from their content? To what extent are influencers conscious of their influence in the construction and consumption of beauty narratives? In recognition that cosmetics and beauty standards fluctuate as trends that emphasize different ideals of beauty and femininity over time, this research also aims to account for how race, gender, and ability as particularly visible identities are rejected, negotiated, and/or accepted within these narratives. This work then broadly asks influencers to reflect on and articulate their experience as narrative creators within the context of their specified social media platform.

Second, this research explores influencers' individual opinions and conceptualizations of beauty and makeup as informed by these narratives. I explore to what extent (if at all) influencers subscribe to the narratives they produce and publicize in their content and how relations of race, gender, and ability facilitate or block their personal expressions around recent narratives. Do influencers feel they can articulate a sense of agency and feel liberated in wearing cosmetics as the narratives suggest they should? What are the differences between how influencers personally relate to and conceptualize beauty and cosmetics the way they suggest in the narratives that their followers and viewers should? Here, influencers are asked to speak on their position as consumers of narratives that saturate the community as a whole and for which they are at least partly responsible. This research then explores the relationship between and potential challenges of influencer's simultaneous consumer and creator identity on their emotionality in which they must constantly negotiate external narrative pressure and personal feelings while navigating the online beauty community.

In recognition that makeup and beauty are inseparably linked to identity, this research also intentionally centers individuals who have historically been excluded from conversations of beauty, where "beauty" historically implies whiteness, ability, and hegemonic femininity among other qualities. Just as there have been efforts to reconceptualize the meaning and purpose of makeup, there have also been intentional attempts to diversify the beauty community to extend who is "allowed" to wear makeup and to refigure what "beauty" references. As such, I emphasize the importance and experiences of influencers from a variety of national, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, influencers who identify as cisgender, non-binary, and trans*, as well as influencers with (dis)abilities since these identities are explicitly visible to viewers. This is not to say that other dimensions of identity such as sexuality or religion do not also impact influencer's relationship to cosmetics and production of content, but rather that race, gender, and ability are overtly visible to viewers and thus directly impact how content is perceived.

Finally, it should be noted that I do not aim to explore the content of these contemporary beauty narratives and challenge their morality or utilization of feminism, nor do I attempt to critique or explore the actual content created by influencers. This research aims to study the influencers

themselves as the source of this content and their personal articulations of their positions and opinions in relation to their production of beauty narratives.

In asking these questions, I speak to the rapidly growing body of literature of labor, capital, and bodies in new digital spaces wherein the processes of self and work are still being charted. This growing body of research, as well as my own, considers the ways in which online spaces have reconfigured and restructured established notions of social reality. Given that influencers' work and digital displays of emotionality can be seen as a form of digital labor, this research relates to the particularly new work from Karen Gregory & Jathan Sadowski (2021) which argues that there are calculated displays of "virtues" such as flexibility, vitality, and legibility in digital spaces which determine users' success on "biopolitical platforms" as a contemporary development of capitalism. This work is also relevant to recent research on online capital where influencers' social and symbolic capital which separates them from other actors within the online beauty community is essential in an online reputation economy that enforces social rules that dictate what online users say and do for continued profit (Höhne and Sproll 2020). Lastly, this research broadly speaks to the ways in which online spaces and "hyperconnectivity" have transformed our relationships to our emotions and while facilitating new ways of exploring, emancipating, objectifying, quantifying, producing, regulating, and governing the self (Brubaker 2020).

Chapter 2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Emotional Labor and the Commodification of Authenticity

Influencers' creator and consumer identities exist simultaneously and thus continually work to inform one another. Given that each identity and role contain its own set of expectations, there always exists the possibility that the expectations of these identities contradict one another. Here, a creator identity is predicated on embodying contemporary makeup narratives which understand makeup as a form of art for empowerment and expression in order to gain popularity, attract viewers, and make profit. In contrast, influencers as consumers and ordinary actors in a social world are provided more flexibility in their relationship to makeup where makeup is not wholly separated from its previous associations. Influencers are then forced to continually negotiate and navigate simultaneous identities and roles where as creators they must define makeup as expressive and empowering, but as consumers they must reckon with makeup's oppressive history as a required performance of femininity.

Given that influencers are continuously navigating the expectations of a job as creators in contrast to their own experiences and conceptions as consumers, this process can be seen as a form of emotional management and labor. I structure this process through a lens of intentional emotional work and commercialization of emotionality which influencers must constantly produce and navigate in their work. This project centers the intentional production and performance of emotionality and opinions as influencers perform a position and understanding of videos in their content which may contradict their own experiences so that there is purposeful emotional management and labor in their work as a result of potentially conflicting internal emotional states and external image.

Termed by Arlie Hochschild (1979, 1984), emotion management in its most basic sense argues that emotions can be intentionally suppressed, evoked, or otherwise shaped. It should be noted that while emotional labor, as it is referred throughout the contents of this paper, refers specifically to the process of managing emotions in one's job, emotional management can occur in any social situation. This conceptualization draws on the works of both Goffman and Freud in recognition feelings and emotionality hold both biological and social elements so that "the

emotion-management perspective fosters attention to how people try to feel, not, as for Goffman, how people try to appear to feel. It leads us to attend to how people consciously feel and not, as for Freud, how people feel unconsciously" (Hochschild 1979, 560). Here, the emphasis on trying to express or suppress feelings is important as evidence that people intentionally attempt to manage their emotions, regardless of if these attempts are successful or not.

Emotion work, or management, then considers the ways that humans engage their emotions in meaningful ways trhough physical means based on a social script, or "feeling rules", which determines what the appropriate emotional response to a situation might be. These "feeling rules" are contextually determined and often extremely specific but are nonetheless immensely important for social actors to communicate social and emotional literacy to others. Examples of feeling rules include what is the appropriate amount and loudness of crying at a funeral or the expectation of customer service workers to be bright, joyful, patient (which is also an instance of emotional labor given that it is an expectation of a job).

Based on the feeling rules of a given context, individuals then must engage in emotional management in order to display socially acceptable feelings. This emotional work and management can be achieved by three distinct techniques of emotion work according to Hochschild.

> One is cognitive: the attempt to change images, ideas; or thoughts in the service of changing the feelings associated with them. A second is bodily: the attempt to change somatic- or other physical symptoms of emotion (e.g., trying to breathe slow- er, trying not to shake). Third, there is expressive emotion work: trying to change expressive gestures in the service of changing inner feeling (e.g., trying to smile, or to cry). This differs from simple display in that it is directed toward change in feeling. (Hochschild 1979, 562)

These techniques are broadly categorized into two forms of emotional management: (1) surface acting, in which individuals change the displays of emotion utilizing bodily or expressive techniques regardless of their internal emotional state, and (2) deep acting, in which individuals attempt to change their actual internal emotional state using cognitive techniques to facilitate congruency with the feeling rules of a situation.

Emotional labor specifically refers to the process of suppressing, managing, and performing specific emotions in order to properly perform one's job requirements which is intended to produce a tangentially appropriate response from another person such as a customer or coworker. In her original work, Hochschild explores the emotional labor required in service industries such as airline attendants to be upbeat, happy, and polite at all times despite dealing with emotionally stressful and demeaning situations. Similarly, I argue influencers must perform an empowered sense of self as creators directly related to makeup despite having contradictory or negative personal relationships to cosmetics as consumers. Though Hochschild's work originally speaks about airline attendants, I structure this project through the lens of emotional labor in order to explore how new and entirely digital occupations still require conscious and intentional emotional performance and labor just as recent works have also aimed to explore the growth of digital labor and capital (Gregory & Sadowski 2021, Höhne & Sproll 2020, Brubaker 2020).

This research also attempts to expand upon Marina Dekavalla's (2019) work on the production of authenticity and transparency as integral aspects of understanding the ways in which influencers might perform emotionality. Using Eva Illouz's (2018) *Emotions as Commodities: Capitalism, Consumption, Authenticity* as a guide in understanding the process of commodifying authenticity and emotional performance as a contemporary development of capitalist culture, I intend to highlight the blurriness of emotional performance and commodification in which influencers' "true" and "performed" understandings and feelings surrounding cosmetics are fundamentally intertwined and arguably congruent. While I do intend to include the commodification and strategic use of authenticity throughout this research, there already exists a body of literature on the complexities of authenticity in influencer content (Abidin 2015 & 2016, Banet-Weiser 2017, Berryman and Kavka 2017, Dekavalla 2020, Gannon 2016) and thus it is foundational to, but not the focal point of this work. Instead, I employ a lens of authenticity and commodification to further demonstrate the emotional labor required by influencers.

In short, my research seeks to understand how beauty influencers' unique position at the intersection of creator and consumer requires emotional labor and the commodification of emotionality as a result of contemporary narrative shifts within the beauty industry. In

recognition that these narratives impact community attitudes and conceptualizations, beauty influencers must utilize and defend these contemporary narratives in their content in order to gain followings and profit. However, given the complex and problematic history of cosmetics, makeup still largely exists as a complicated and contested experience. Influencers then must actively and intentionally perform a position and conceptualization of cosmetics in their content which is potentially contradictory to their personal feelings about makeup as a result of their simultaneous creator and consumer identifies. This research then explores influencers' unique position of conflicting and potentially contradictory conceptualizations of makeup in their professional and personal lives as a form of emotional labor and commodification of emotion at the same time.

2.2 Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality

This research is also fundamentally informed by Black Feminist Thought as a school of thought developed by Black women over the last several decades to critically engage with their unique experiences. In recognition that "beauty" is constructed and inherently linked to other structures and ideologies of domination such as anti-Blackness, racism, sexism, ableism, colorism, and anti-Semitism among others, it is absolutely necessary to consider the phenomenon of influencers through an intersectional lens which explicitly accounts for the highly variable experiences of beauty, and cosmetics by extension. First defined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), intersectionality refers to the critical framework and theory for analyzing and highlighting one's multiple, overlapping experiences of identity which facilitate oppression and/or privilege, developed specifically in response to her unique experiences of Black, lesbian womanhood. By intentionally utilizing a framework that emphasizes intersectionality, the undeniable visibility of makeup and beauty can be better understood in relation to other systems of power and structures of domination. Here, the content produced by historically disempowered influencers can be considered within the current context of racism, ableism, islamophobia, etc. which directly informs what content these influencers choose to produce and how it is interpreted by the public.

It should be noted that while Black Feminist Thought and intersectionality were developed specifically in response to Black women's unique experiences, the project does not exclusively look at Black women influencers. Instead, I employ an intersectional lens to highlight the

growing push for a more diversified beauty community and in order to emphasize the ways in which beauty exists within the matrix of domination which disproportionately celebrates and epitomizes certain identities and peoples at the expense of others. In utilizing an intersectional lens, I aim to produce a more nuanced analysis of beauty and makeup which explicitly accounts for its problematic implications in relation to identity and recognizes the very real material consequences of hegemonic definitions of beauty.

Chapter 3. Methods and Design

Though there is no universal definition of "influencer", for the purpose of this research, I employ a combination of the definitions used by communications scholar Alice Marwick and digital anthropologist Crystal Abidin in which being an influencer is something that a person *does* rather than something a person *is* (Marwick 2010, 13). Influencers are ordinary individuals who "accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media through textual and visual narration" (Abidin 2015) to intentionally gain status and popularity online by cultivating an online persona (Marwick 2010). Additionally, a content creator must have at least 1,000 subscribers on YouTube and 5,000 followers on Instagram to be considered an "influencer" since these numbers represent the threshold for which users can profit from their content.

Because of the online nature of this research, participant outreach was conducted online by intentionally utilizing business and professional emails of content creators when available and through direct messaging when not. Initial outreach messages and emails detailed the intentions of this research which aim to explore influencer's personal stories and opinions regarding their work and makeup. Once influencers expressed interest in participating in the research, a preliminary meeting was conducted to further explain the research aims and processes as well as address concerns regarding anonymity and privacy. A total of 32 influencers were messaged, resulting in 13 continuing with the interview process.

After reaching out to influencers, I conducted thirteen semi-structured ethnographic interviews. By utilizing ethnographic interviews, participants are allowed more space and control within the interview to speak to topics and experiences they deem salient and relevant. Additionally, in utilizing ethnographic interviews there is more fluidity and flexibility to redirect the conversation if an interesting and unforeseen topic arises. This flexibility also facilitated space to pause questioning and resolve potentially stressful and/or emotional moments throughout the interview in recognition that beauty is a deeply sensitive and emotional topic for many.

Participants were intentionally chosen in order to speak to a diverse set of experiences around beauty and cosmetics. While there are no concrete geographical limitations for this research, all

interviews were conducted in English and thus cannot claim to accurately speak to a global beauty narrative (which I do not wish to do, if there even exists such phenomena). In doing this, I aim to reflect the diversity of the current beauty community and intentionally center individuals who have historically been excluded from conversations of beauty.

Additionally, it should be noted that this research specifically focuses on young adults ages 18-30 because of their distinct socialization into makeup and cosmetics during the simultaneous distance from the "makeup as a correction" narrative to more feminist makeup narratives. While individuals of all ages consume these narratives, older generations have been socialized into makeup under different narratives and thus may conceptualize makeup differently. This is not to say that generational divides or age concretely and absolutely define an individual's conceptualizations of makeup, but rather that cultural trends of advertising and beauty can and do shape individuals' ideas as they are socialized and enculturated into new spheres and communities.

This research did not pose any serious ethical concerns for the safety and well-being of participants or me as the researcher. While cosmetics and beauty can be a deeply emotional and personal experience for individuals, conversations around this topic were handled with sensitivity with the option for participants to stop or withdraw their contribution at any time. This research therefore does not pose any more threat or emotional distress than one might expect in daily life. Additionally, given the highly visible and public nature of influencers there is no extensive concern regarding the anonymity of participants. However, in order to facilitate participant agency in this research, all participants were offered anonymous participation which they could opt for at any point. All participants chose to remain anonymous and will be referred to using a mutually agreed-upon set of initials.

Chapter 4. The Meaning of Makeup

Under contemporary cosmetic narratives, all individuals who wear makeup should do so out of a place of self-empowerment and artistic expression. While this relationship to makeup may be applicable to some individuals to a certain extent, the reality of relationships to cosmetics is far more variable and complex. Of the thirteen beauty influencers who participated in this research, none expressed a simple relationship to or conceptualization of makeup which wholly aligned with popular cosmetic narratives. Instead, influencers indicated a deeply emotional and nuanced relationship and conceptualization to cosmetics which reflected the individuality of their personal identities and lived experiences. These personal understandings complicated, and often directly contradicted, the messages and narratives which influencers communicated in their content, thus demonstrating a conscious and continuous display of emotional management and performance in order for influencers' personal meanings of makeup and socially acceptable relationships to makeup to coexist.

Of the thirteen (13) influencers who participated in this research, six (6) identified as women, four (4) as non-binary or gender non-conforming, and three (3) as men. Of the six (6) women that participated, four (4) identified as transwomen and two (2) as cisgender women, while all three (3) men interviewed identified as cisgender. Influencers from a variety of national backgrounds were interviewed including: Armenia, Brazil, Canada, India, Jordan, Netherlands, Nigeria (2), the Philippines, Russia, United States (2), and Vietnam. Two (2) of the participants identified as Arab, four (4) as Asian, three (3) as Black, two (2) as Native and Indigenous, and two (2) as white. Three (3) of the influencers noted having a physical disability such as using a wheelchair or prosthetic limb.

4.1 I Wear Makeup for Me

Though this research intends to highlight the intensity of emotional labor in influencers' work as an adverse characteristic of the job, to assert that all relationships and conceptualizations are defined as a form of unwanted or emotionally strenuous work is inaccurate. The reality of influencers' work and relationships to makeup are, like most things in life, full of complexities and contradictions which cannot be neatly categorized or analyzed as positive or negative. This section then briefly explores several instances in which influencers noted a generally positive

experience around makeup to better represent the entirety of influencers' roles and relationships while still emphasizing the importance of emotionality in influencer's work.

Several influencers named makeup's association with femininity as a major contributor in their personal relationship to makeup. Here, the historical association with makeup and femininity allows influencers to strategically utilize makeup as a way to assert that their womanhood and femininity are valid, particularly for those who are excluded from hegemonic understandings of femininity such as transwomen. Given that gender is deeply performative, makeup is a means of consciously and intentionally performing womanhood and femininity so that others categorize influencers as women and /or feminine. This sentiment was often explicitly expressed as some influencers explained:

> A.L.: For me I think it's different. Because I'm trans people are always questioning if I'm really a woman or whatever. So makeup for me is a way to show that yes, I'm a woman just like any other woman. But also it's sort of personal because it's a way for me to do these kind of girly things that help with the [gender] dysphoria.

> E.W.: I mean obviously anyone can wear makeup but I think makeup is still very much considered a woman's world even though there's tons of men and non-binary people wearing makeup. So because makeup is still considered "for girls" and feminine and all that, I really enjoy that part of it. You know? It feels good to do these girly feminine things and find joy in them when they're not supposed to be fun. Like a fuck you, I'm gonna take this thing that's supposed to be a chore and make it beautiful and celebrate being feminine and being a woman with it.

> M.L.: I identify as a man but that doesn't mean I have to do the "man-thing" and be all sporty and masculine or whatever. Gender is really fluid you know. Everything is made up anyway so why can't I wear makeup? I love embracing my femininity and masculinity at the same time. I never want to put myself in a box of "this is what a man is".

Here, influencers explicitly recognize that despite continued efforts to expand who is "allowed" to wear makeup, the historical and social context of makeup is still inseparably linked with femininity. In recognizing and strategically emphasizing this denotation, several influencers attempt to reclaim makeup in alignment with overarching narratives which suggest that makeup should be reclaimed and recontextualized for self-empowerment. As such, influencers simultaneous creator and consumer identities are not at odds in this instance as contemporary

narratives which claim that the makeup (and in many ways femininity by extension) is empowering and to be celebrated aligns with the personal sentiments of influencers who also note that makeup's associations with femininity and womanhood are positive and empowering.

Of the six influencers who identified as women within the study, five noted makeups association with femininity as an immensely significant factor in their experience. This is particularly notable as several influencers described a complex and fluctuating timeline in their relationship where their initial introduction to makeup as a teenager was positive and exciting as this marked a step into womanhood from girlhood. After several years of wearing makeup, several women noted that their relationship with cosmetics changed as it became a tedious, mundane, and routinized part of their lives followed by their current relationship in which fuller exploration of cosmetics facilitated a largely positive and self-proclaimed empowering relationship. While this alternation of a positive, negative, positive relationship is not notable in and of itself, for this pattern to be noted by all women interviewed but one is reflective of makeup's deep connection to more general experiences such as gender. As such, influencers' relationship to and journey with cosmetics is largely reflective of experiences with gender as makeup provides distinctly visible participation or rejection of femininity and womanhood.

Similar to associations of femininity, many influencers noted that men's perception of their makeup was an important factor in their relationship to cosmetics. While this relationship has traditionally referenced an interest in attracting men and intentionally wearing makeup in a way that men find desirable, in this instance influencers that did mention men's perception noted that they intentionally wore makeup in defiance of what men have expressed as desirable. While there is of course variability, influencers noted that men in their experiences tend to prefer natural-looking makeup styles that utilize skin-toned colors and aim to blend into the natural appearance of the individual, colloquially referred to as "no-makeup makeup". In response to this, influencers noted that they found makeup that is hyper-visible including brightly colored eyeshadow, bold colored lips, special effects makeup the most enjoyable (See Figure 2). This preference for hyper-visible makeup was noted by several influencers who stated:

> B.B.: Well, I definitely don't wear makeup for men. Fuck that. Men can't even tell when we are wearing makeup, they think natural makeup is not makeup and the

only time we are wearing makeup is red lipstick. I mean there's no confusion with my looks though. You can't mistake green eyeliner for "I just woke up like this". Which I guess is a good thing. You don't like makeup, cool, I don't like you.

X.M. I can't stand "pick-me" girls. Like girl, seriously? Men don't even know anything. I'll be damned if I put in all this time and money and effort to create a beautiful look and then some man tries to tell me to wear less makeup. Like sir its not for you.

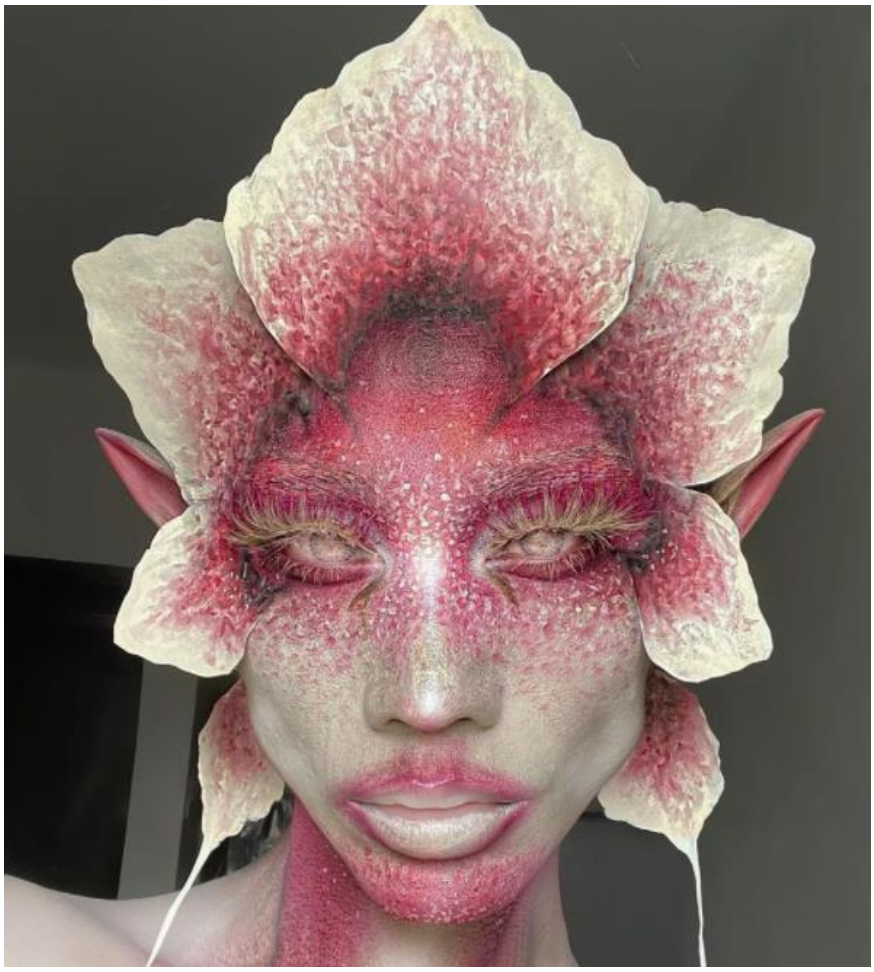


Figure 2: Special effects makeup created by beauty influencer @drian_bautista
Bautista, Drian. "WILD ORCHID." *Instagram*, April 21, 2021. Accessed April 30, 2021.

Here, "pick-me" refers to women who overzealously act and dress in ways to receive attention and compliments from men. With this in mind, influencers' preference for hyper-visible makeup in spite of men's general preference for natural or "invisible" makeup speaks to a major characteristic of influencers' relationships to cosmetics: makeup is used to intentionally decenter the male gaze. By wearing a lot of makeup or particularly extravagant and colorful makeup,

influencers intentionally protest what makeup is "supposed" to be used for, i.e. attracting men and instead center their own tastes and preferences. As in the makeup look above, there is no attempt to disguise makeup as a natural appearance from using distinctly visible props, colors, patterns that are unmistakably unnatural, and thus the "appropriate" way of utilizing makeup is disregarded by the influencer.

This sentiment also does not place influencer's simultaneous creator and consumer identity at odds as decentering the male gaze is central to contemporary makeup narratives. Influencers personal feelings as consumers that disregard attracting men align with contemporary narratives which champion an agentive, empowered makeup users so that content which influencers are expected to produce as creators is congruent with social expectations and feeling rules.

In addition to associations of femininity and decentering the male gaze, most influencers explained that their relationship to makeup was overwhelmingly positive in that they felt they looked their best when wearing makeup. Unlike femininity and the male gaze, this position was only sometimes explicitly mentioned and was most often discussed in contradictory and complex language which avoided over-emphasizing the importance of makeup. Influencers noted that they loved makeup and felt beautiful when wearing makeup, but were also insistent that they felt equally beautiful when not wearing makeup despite regularly describing instances of wearing makeup as "when I feel my best" and their "best self". This contradiction was apparent for several influencers who explained:

> E.W.: I just feel so powerful and beautiful when I'm wearing makeup. It's like I can be whoever I want to be. And don't get me wrong I also love my natural face, you know with no makeup or anything, but with makeup I'm just next level.
>
> S.M.: When I know I look good it just changes my whole energy. And to me that's what makeup is supposed to be about, making that inner beauty and energy reflect on the outside. And for some people that's just their face with no makeup and I totally get that, I also love myself with no makeup on. But with makeup it's just different.
>
> T.E.: Makuep is like that battle paint, no that's not it- war paint! That's what I meant! It's like every day I wake up a woman, and not just a woman, a Black woman. And I know the world is against me. And I put on my war paint, my art,

> and I just feel so beautiful and powerful. I don't know. And like I'm already powerful bare-faced cause I'm cute [laughter]. But with makeup on I'm beautiful.

This sentiment is then deeply reflective of the current narratives within the beauty industry in that influencers assert they do not wear makeup to make themselves beautiful, as is the historical expectation, and yet makeup is when they say they look their best and most beautiful. At least to some extent, this position is then informed by is social rules (or feeling rules) of what it means to be beautiful which directly contradicts which the message of "makeup is art and empowerment". While this contradiction is likely reflective of a social reality which both requires and condemns wearing makeup, it is also possible that feeling one's best or most beautiful stems from creating art, feeling as though one is asserting agency, and feeling empowered, as current beauty narratives suggest. Here, the opposition or congruency between influencers' simultaneous creator and consumer identities is blurred.

This contradiction regarding makeup speaks to a unanimously shared experience surrounding makeup in which influencers felt that they are forced to reduce the complexity of their positions on makeup in their content in order to please viewers. While influencers as consumers had deeply complex and unique experiences surrounding makeup, these opinions and experiences could not be shared openly in their content because of their roles as creators which hold vastly different rules and expectations for their relationship to beauty. As a result, influencers were especially aware that engagement with their content came from viewer's interest in watching videos for their makeup looks, tips, products, etc., and not their opinions on makeup as individuals, thus as creators influencers must provide oversimplified or incongruent displays of their true emotionality. Long discussions of personal experiences and opinions often result in negative comments or video dislikes which ultimately affect influencer's popularity and income. Thus, in order to continue profiting from their content influencers purposefully choose to share oversimplified, short commentaries which do not reflect the true complexity or deepness of their feelings just as other forms of digital labor require a specific set of skills or virtues (Gregory and Sadowski 2021). Here, influencers' consumer and creator identities stand in direct opposition with one another so that their work requires conscious emotional management where personal

feelings are deeply emotional and complex, yet the feeling rules inscribed in their job require a sanitized version of this emotionality.

4.2 The "Beauty Community" and Feeling Rules

It is no surprise that social media as a platform of entertainment expects a certain level of acting from its users. Perhaps the most common critique of social media from its users is that there is nothing but acting on these platforms, in which people create anonymous personas, post over-edited photos, and in some instances fabricate entirely fake lives. While most of these "acts" often result in models with unrealistically smooth and blemish-free skin or beautiful sunsets on "empty" beaches during vacation thanks to photoshop, there is also a level of personal and emotional acting that users regularly engage in. This emotion work is particularly salient in the case of beauty influencers whose simultaneous creator and consumer roles require active negotiation and management.

Thinking then to the specific instances of emotional labor employed by influencers, it is first important to consider what feeling rules define their situation. As feeling rules are not universally shared, it is necessary to delineate boundaries for who these rules apply to. This delineation is done so by creating a so-called "beauty community" online. It should be noted that "beauty community" is a self-proclaimed term used unanimously by its members, not one that I have created for this research. The term "community" here is significant in that community references a boundedness and shared identity amongst members wherein there can be distinct insiders who must follow community guidelines and outsiders who are exempt from these rules. Thus, by calling themselves a "beauty community", members are able to regulate and police one another based on the rules established by the group. Unlike more traditional occupations such as airline attendants as discussed by Hochschild (1984) whose feeling rules largely come from a company code of conduct or onboarding training, rules for those working within the beauty community are established from the members themselves and can change rapidly given that there is no physical book or bureaucratic validation process. Feeling rules within the beauty community are then self-imposed and self-regulated, yet still immensely important to distinguish membership within the community. The current rulebook of the beauty community includes guidelines such as full transparency about product sponsorships, clear instruction of how to

achieve a particular makeup look, and explicit support of a "feminist" beauty narrative that champions wearing makeup as artistic, expressive, and agentive.

Like all rules, members of the beauty community are not technically required to follow these guidelines, though the risk of punishment from not following the rules poses quite convincing reasons to abide by them. Without following the rules, including feeling rules, of the beauty community, influencers stand nearly no chance of being welcomed into the community. This makes online success with beauty content nearly impossible as the majority of viewers, sponsorships, and general visibility comes from naming or collaborating with other influencers. Breaking rules and risking rejection from content creators already in the beauty community means influencers are then unable to gain substantial online visibility in order to profit from their content. This punishment extends to members within the community who are constantly at risk of being "canceled" from inappropriate behavior or content as even some of the most popular beauty influencers have been blacklisted from the community in which company sponsorships and partnerships are rescinded, viewers unsubscribe and unfollow the creator, and other influencers refuse to collaborate. Being "canceled" is a colloquial term that references the same reputation economy discussed by Höhne and Sproll (2020) where an online actor's reputation "forms a distinctive value ensuring the economic success of the subject" (41). Though following these rules does not guarantee an influencer's success, there is no chance of sustained profit within the beauty community without abiding by them.

These feelings rules then dictate what influencers should include in their content so that they are required to feel grateful, positive, excited, about makeup in support of a "makeup is art and expression" narrative. This emotional display in their content is most usually expressed through short moments of personal experience or opinion scattered throughout videos in order to avoid overly personal content which viewers do not enjoy according to influencers. The only exception to this feeling rule is when these emotional discussions of experience or opinion specifically speak to an influencer's marginalized identity or an identity that is generally not accepted in the world of beauty. This exception then not only allows but often *requires* historically marginalized influencers within beauty specifically such as men, transwomen, women of color, people with

disabilities, etc. to include their experiences and opinions of makeup in their content as a political statement and to be a "good role model" for potentially younger viewers.

This additional requirement, wherein minority influencers are bounded by stricter or more feelings rules than others in the same community, is reflective of Hochschild's argument that feeling rules are disproportionately imposed. Though Hochschild's original discussion argues only that feeling rules are unequally imposed across gender and class lines (Hochschild 1979, 567), I argue this claim can be extended to speak to the feeling rules within the beauty community where identities who are historically not represented within the community and thus are minorities in this specific space are held to more intense standards of emotionality. I emphasize the specificity of this argument in regard to feeling rules within the beauty community as it is inaccurate to suppose that men, for example, are held to more intense feeling rules in all social spaces. As such, influencers historically excluded from spaces of beauty must then abide by a strict code of feeling rules in which they must express support for a contemporary "feminist" makeup narrative without overemphasizing or elongating this message while also including narratives of their experiences and opinions in relation to their marginalized identity in order to be welcomed and successful within the beauty community.

4.3 Calculated Emotionality

These hyper-specific feeling rules which influencers are held to require intentional and calculated displays of emotionality. While it is possible for all influencers to display emotionality, to do so in a way that viewers find believable and authentic is far more complicated. Given that social media has a social reputation for producing fake people, stories, and content in general, influencer's displays of emotionality are immediately read as fabricated so that all content is considered "fake" until proven otherwise. Influencers then must show authentic emotion, or emotions that seem authentic, in their content based on the feeling rules of the situation. This requirement is explained by Marina Dekavalla (2020) in her analysis of media creators' strategies to perform authenticity and transparency in which, "Authentic talk involves speaking in a 'real', spontaneous, conversational mode, not in a way that appears scripted or rehearsed" (84). Important here is the notion that this emotionality and discourse need only appear authentic to viewers, regardless of content creators' actual feelings and opinions. Thus, in

order to abide by the feeling rules of the beauty community, influencers must display emotionality and communicate narratives that feel authentic to an audience despite the social setting of this communication being associated with inherent inauthenticity.

With these feeling rules and the necessity of authenticity in mind, the professional role and job requirements of influencers are continually complicated as social media continues to transform and reinvent itself. Beauty influencers then do not merely post content online such as tutorials or product reviews but must engage in a highly specific system of rules and expectations around feelings which force their emotionality and identity to the forefront of their content. Emotionality and emotional performance are central to influencers' work as emotional labor is a requirement of content production and emotions and "authenticity" themselves become commodified.

This trend of emotionality and authenticity in the workplace is not unique to beauty influencers as labor as a whole has come to include emotions in current developments of capitalism as argued by Eva Illouz (2018). Though emotions have always been a concern for those interested in labor and capitalism, such as Marx's conception of alienation, more recent works have attempted to reconceptualize emotionality's place in the exploitation and commodification of labor. According to Illouz (2018), while capitalism has always had an effect on our emotionality and emotions have already been considered as a tool for marketing in which commodities are associated with invoking positive emotions, these frameworks have ignored that emotions themselves can be transformed into commodities which can be fetishized, marketed, sold, and exchanged. Though this emotions as commodity conceptualization, or "emodity", diverges from Marx's original conception of commodity which by nature is external to humans (and in recognition that Illouz is not the first or only one to reconceptualize the possibility of "human" commodities), it presents an avenue to consider the ways in which feeling rules and emotional labor extend beyond merely performance. Influencers then are not only profiting from their expertise and skills, both in terms of beauty and media content creation, but also from calculated, contextually specific displays emotionality in which the "authentic" conversation of their personal experiences, opinions, and identity are commodified.

It should be noted that this process of commodifying emotion is possible because of influencers' unique positionality as creators *and* consumers where only consumers do not have platforms to market their emotionality and only creators such as companies are not expected to engage in emotionality as people do. This process of creating "emodities" is facilitated by the unique feeling rules which bound beauty influencers who are expected to produce an "authentic" emotional display that aligns with contemporary beauty narratives of agency and expression.

Considering emotions as commodities in beauty influencer's content is even more apparent when considering the expectation of authenticity in emotionality. As Hochschild has argued, laborers of all types are required to engage in some form of emotional labor in which they must perform socially appropriate emotions in their interactions. While these expected emotions do not necessarily require an employee to truly feel these emotions, others in the interaction must believe these emotions to be real. As such, workers must not only perform emotionality but also perform authenticity, as paradoxical as this may seem, in which other individuals within an interaction read a worker's actions and words as authentic. As Dekavalla (2020) has explained, what is important here is that people *feel* that the interaction or display of emotion is authentic, not if it actually is. Thus, authenticity as is it related to emotionality becomes commodified in the process of emotional performance so that influencers' "authenticity" and supposed realness is part of the total package which viewers come to expect when engaging in their content. The emotional labor required of influencers, as evidenced by the hyper-specific feeling rules and commodification of emotionality and authenticity, is therefore a substantial portion of the overall labor required of their job despite the role being mediated online with no real-time physical interactions taking place.

Despite never naming their work as "emotional labor", influencers expressed a deep sense of emotionality in their work in relation to their identity and personal experiences. Their accounts of their journey with makeup and the intensity of care they put into their work were nearly always complicated by the feeling rules which bounded their content. As such, influencers were often aware of the labor required of them as creators, but felt motivated, conflicted, or disheartened when thinking of the ways in which these requirements forced them to suppress their feelings of makeup as individuals or consumers. The remainder of this section explores

excerpts from influencers interviews and narratives as examples of the extensive emotional labor, and sometimes emotional alienation, which influencers must engage in their work with an emphasis on the experiences of influencers who have historically been denied access to the beauty community are bounded by harsher feeling rules and standards of labor.

Gender is perhaps the most salient identity in experiences of cosmetics and beauty given the history of makeup. As such, the experiences of women, men, and non-binary influencers differed drastically and the extent to which they are allowed to share these experiences in their content. Women, as expected members of the beauty community, generally were not allowed to express complex or extensive opinions and experiences of makeup despite having arguably the most tumultuous person histories with makeup. Feeling rules which dictate the level of intimacy expressed in content discouraged all women from sharing personal sentiments unless they explicitly contributed to the contemporary makeup narrative as their experiences are considered the "standard". Where the majority of makeup consumers and members of the beauty community are women, women's experiences were considered unoriginal and not entertaining as viewers, who are also mostly women, are familiar with these sentiments wither through personal experiences or close relationships with other women. As one influencer explained, "No one wants to hear what they already know." Women then must consciously manage and suppress their emotionality surrounding beauty and cosmetics in favor of a stoic, reserved persona wherein the only acceptable opinion or experience is one that briefly restates the contemporary makeup narrative found within the beauty community. As such, short introductory remarks such as those made by Nikki Tutorials in the introduction of this work are the only acceptable displays of emotions or opinions per beauty community feeling rules. These feeling rules and emotional labor were often explicitly recognized by women who noted:

> A.L.: I can't really say what I'm feeling or what I'm thinking. My subscribers don't really watch my stuff for a social commentary or really even to know about me. I mean they know a little bit, like they know I'm trans and all. But really they want to know about makeup.
>
> T.E.: It's hard sometimes cause I have so much to say. Makeup means so much to me and I want to share that. It's so complex and symbolic. But you symbolic doesn't get clicks girl. You can sneak in a thing here or there but if I said everything I really want to I'd be cancelled so fast.

Here, women are surface acting as defined by Hochschild (1983) in their roles in that there is no attempt to change their internal emotional state or way of thinking but rather a conscious and determined effort to perform a position on makeup that does not reflect individual opinions. This performed position is not "complex or symbolic", but rather intentionally shallow and congruent with a dominant narrative to avoid the punishments of breaking beauty community feeling rules.

In stark contrast, men and non-binary influencers were expected to include personal narratives and opinions of their experiences and opinions as a form of entertainment and political statement. As efforts to diversify the beauty community in regard to gender have grown exponentially in recent years, consumers of beauty content are eager and interested to know about experiences and opinions which they may not encounter in real life but are readily accessible online. This expectation then forces men and non-binary influencers to include deeply emotional and personal narratives of their lives and journeys with cosmetics. While this initially may appear as a positive expectation in that men and non-binary influencers are allowed space to share their humanity and emotionality, there is a caveat to this seemingly "open space". Similar to the feeling rules which constrain women influencers' content, men and non-binary influencers are not allowed to be critical of makeup and cosmetics and must validate a feminist makeup narrative regardless of their personal experiences or opinions. As such, men and non-binary influencers then must straddle a fine line of emotionality in which they are expected to share intimate stories and opinions while still upholding a dominant narrative that often contradict one another. These hyper-specific feeling rules imposed upon men and non-binary influencers require extensive emotional labor where their content, and livelihoods by extension, are at risk of seeming unentertaining or inauthentic if no stories are shared and socially unacceptable if critical of makeup.

> B.B.: I definitely think I'm held to a different standard because I'm non-binary. Like I'm expected to bear my whole soul. And don't get me wrong I love having a platform to talk about my struggles as a non-binary person and hopefully insp- not really inspire but connect with other non-binary people. But there's so much I can't really say. I'm a influencer not a politician at the end of the day.

> M.L.: I talk about my story and my experiences all the time. It's hard not to when you're a boy in makeup. People will think I'm taking up space if I'm not super intentional about explaining myself.
>
> W.A.: I still don't even know what the fuck I'm supposed to be saying. Like I can't keep up with all of it. Say this but don't say that blah blah blah. I just want to put on my makeup why do I have to do all this extra shit.

Here, the specificity and intensity of feeling rules imposed upon men and non-binary influencers as individuals who are traditionally excluded from spaces of beauty create internal conflict. Navigating which emotions to express and what level of emotionality is appropriate in content amidst ever-fluctuating community rules requires a heightened level of emotional management wherein influencers are either forced to make unwanted emotional commentaries or restrict their emotionality. This expected emotionality is also a process of commodifying emotionality where the emotions and stories of men and non-binary influencers are produced and sold to curious viewers to increase engagement with their content per the social rules of the beauty community. Though all influencers regardless of gender are required to perform emotional labor and produce "emodities" in their content to some extent, the specificity of feeling rules for those whose gender is historically not represented in beauty requires more emotional labor comparatively.

This discrepancy can also be seen in terms of race where more emotional labor is required for people of color and darker-skinned influencers as the beauty community has historically idealized whiteness and lighter skin. All of the eleven influencers who identified outside of whiteness described an indisputable relationship between their experiences of cosmetics and race, whereas the two influencers who identified as white noted no particular connection between race and beauty. Influencers explained that as public figures they felt an immense amount of pressure to represent "people that look like me" in recognition that prominent influencers in the beauty community are nearly all white. As such, influencers were unmistakably aware of their emotionality in their content and how these emotions might be interpreted from an audience. Here, influencers feared misrepresenting people of the same background and "failing" to diversify the beauty community because of expressing inappropriate opinions or experiences. One influencer explains:

> H.A.: Of course I don't say everything I really want to. I know that there's not that many girls that look like me in beauty. So whatever I do reflects on them. And I

> just feel like what I'm trying to do is too important to jeopardize so I just focus on other stuff.

The feeling rules of the beauty community which prohibits criticism of beauty's problematic past in favor of celebrating a supposed diversified and feminist current community then restricts influencers who are people of color from criticizing the racism within the beauty and makeup world. Where several influencers noted that the beauty community still upholds racist and colorist rhetoric, none felt free to openly discuss these issues in their content out of fear of backlash from viewers or other influencers. As is the case with gender, considering the dimensions of race with beauty community demonstrates that the emotions and stories of influencers as consumers and "regular" people conflicts they feeling rules and social expectations of influencers' work as creators where influencers do not feel able to transparently and authentically show their true opinions and emotions. Furthermore, this conflict and opposition between simultaneous creator and consumer identities is exacerbated when dimensions of marginalized identities are accounted for.

The censorship expected of influencers who are people of color sits in stark contrast to their personal narratives and experiences which are often deeply emotional and intimate. Throughout interviews, several participants cried while sharing their stories which described how race has affected their journeys through makeup and experiences as influencers. These narratives often included experiences of explicit racism where they were bullied and harassed growing up, but later found solace in makeup and beauty. As several influencers described:

> H.A.: It was just so hard growing up. Especially since I was like the only Asian one there and everyone else was white. It took me so long to build up that confidence and feel that I'm pretty when everyone was constantly telling me I was disgusting and ugly for my eyes and cheeks and stuff.. I don't know when but I started doing makeup that really helped. And now you know I love my monolids and strong cheekbones.

> B.B.: I love makeup and beauty, it really helped me from a dark place. But there's still so many issues we need to deal with. Like comments under videos are sometimes so disgusting. Straight up just racist. But of course I'm supposed to just ignore those and pretend like "woohoo we accept everyone here". Obviously not.

While the stories from these influencers highlight opposing attributes of the community, where one describes the beauty community as loving and accepting and the other as toxic and racist, both speak to the immensely emotional nature of participating in beauty culture as a person of color. This intense emotionality which is foundational to many of the influencer's platforms must be managed and sanitized so that it is palatable to all viewers as any content which might be considered too personal or overly critical of the beauty community runs is risky. The only exception to this feeling rule is similar to the expectation of men and non-binary influencers in that influencers who are people of color are allowed space to discuss their experiences of race and beauty only if it supports the current beauty narrative which assumes that makeup is a welcoming and empowering act. The emotional labor required of influencers who are people of color then requires both the performance of self-empowered makeup artist who is wholly welcomed within the community and the suppression of emotional experiences which have shaped their sense of self. Additionally, a specific type of emotionality that celebrates contemporary makeup narratives and supposedly diversified makeup community is commodified in that viewers engage in content from influencers who are people of color with the expectations that this hyper-specific display of emotionality will be included to affirm and the beauty narratives already present within the community.

Influencers with disabilities must also operate under a different standard of feeling rules which require more emotional labor than influencers without disabilities. It should be noted that the three influencers with disabilities who participated in this research all had unquestionably visible disabilities such as using a wheelchair or prosthetic limb. Similar to the experiences of influencers who are people of color, influencers with disabilities are prohibited from including critical discussions of the beauty community's treatment of disabilities since this opposes a "beauty for all" narrative. Thus, despite influencers' personal feelings which are critical of the tokenistic or problematic representations of disability in the beauty community, these sentiments were not shared openly in their content. As one influencer explained:

> W.A..: Yes there are people with disabilities in beauty media. But even then it's only to get "diversity points". But you know as a wheelchair user I'm supposed to be grateful to be included. So if I try to suggest a different way or critique it I just know I'll be shot down.

Influencers with disabilities also held deeply emotional and intimate stories regarding their relationship to makeup and experience as influencers which could not be shared in their content. These stories often discussed problematic standards of beauty and prejudice influencers faced while trying to expand their platforms. Thus influencers with disabilities must also manage emotionality in regard to their self-presentation as part of their job in ways that influencers without disabilities do not. One influencer shared her story of including her personal narrative and critiques in her content stating:

> L.R.: There was one time a couple of years ago I made this kinda political video about how disabilities are used a trauma porn for viewers and we just aren't taken seriously and I had my account banned because so many people reported the video. So I learned really fast that being critical of saying what I'm thinking is gonna get me nowhere. And I had bills to pay and mouths to feed so I just kinda let it go and started back over from nothing.

Influencers with disabilities then must consciously censor, manage, and perform a sense of appreciation, happiness, and positivity in their content or risk potentially losing their account and source of income. This emotional labor, while required to a certain extent of all influencers, is more extensive for influencers with disabilities who must censor their experiences and opinions of how their stories and identities are represented.

The feeling rules and emotional labor required of influencers then is not equally distributed, though all influencers are expected to perform emotionality to some extent. These findings are in line with the findings of similar research of labor and capital online where the requirements and risk of online work (and offline work) are harsher for marginalized communities (Hochschild 1983, Höhne and Sproll 2020). While their content is of course informative and focused on sharing makeup products, tips, and tutorials, these videos are also a source of entertainment and thus restricted by the opinions of viewers and other influencers. The emotionality of influencers is then an equally important component of their content so that influencers have not just commodified their skills and art but also their ability to appropriately display emotionality per the feeling rules of the community. While all laborers, including influencers, must perform emotionality in their work convincingly that it is interpreted as authentic by an audience, the specificity and fluctuating nature of rules of the beauty community separate it from other

occupations and spaces. Here, the development of digital occupations and thus digital labor and capital reflects the systems and structures in non-digital spaces wherein a supposedly equally accessible and platform and diverse community continue to reinforce systems of oppression and exploitation.

Conclusion

Despite cultural connotations that assume social media creates vain and vapid people, the emotionality and profoundly reflexive narratives expressed by beauty influencers throughout the course of this research illuminate aspects of underlying complexity of the phenomenon. As individuals, influencers hold deeply emotional and intense feelings surrounding beauty and cosmetics which have transformed them as people, but as laborers this emotionality and humanity must be negotiated, diluted, and suppressed. As a result, the emotionality expected of influencers continues to be sanitized and specified as new feeling rules are imposed within the community and new beauty narratives are created which shift the trajectory of the beauty influencers' content. Furthermore, as digital laborers influencers' emotionality as capital and presentation of self is obscured as online platforms are rapidly and continually being updated.

Though I have discussed the emotionality of influencer's work and content as a form of digital labor and commodity, this analysis cannot speak to the full richness of influencers' experiences and emotionality. In attempting to explore the ambiguity and messiness of emotionality, this research is fundamentally limited in its approach and contents. First, this research was conducted entirely online and thus all displays and discussions of emotionality were mediated through video and textual conversations which undoubtedly affected how participants chose to express their sentiments. Second, this research has only included English-speaking participants and therefore cannot claim to speak to an immense portion of online beauty users despite my attempts to include participants from a variety of backgrounds. While claiming that this phenomenon and position of influencers' is strictly Western undermines the importance of the beauty community's online nature which has expanded across national and regional lines, to assert that the experiences of influencers in this research reflect a global positionality is also inaccurate. As such, further research which centers concrete geographic spaces is necessary to further understand the extent to which the beauty community with an online culture and rule system interacts withs systems and cultures from physical spaces. Third, and most saliently, this research has only highlighted race, ability, and gender, within influencers' experiences and thus does not account for the full extent to which identity informs experiences of cosmetics and emotional labor. While this omission was intentional in order to center visible identities, there are undoubtedly connections between less visible identities such as sexuality and religion which

are equally complex and deserving of research. While I have attempted to include the importance of identity in constructing and navigating a relationship to beauty, the full extent to which identity in all dimensions impacts personal narratives surrounding cosmetics is beyond the scope of this research.

Furthermore, just as it is necessary to consider the limitations of this research's methodology, it is also imperative to consider means of improving its analysis. Despite my attempts to convey the complexity and deepness of influencers' emotionality, this analysis is limited by its very nature in that text cannot communicate the facial expressions, tones, pitch, speed, etc. of participants' narratives which are essential in conveying the emotional qualities of a story. With no auditory or visual materials to supplement this analysis, the emotive narratives shared with me as the researcher are ultimately read as flat, decontextualized monologues. As such, it is our prerogative as social scientists to employ different mediums of analysis in our work which might better communicate experiences and stories of participants for more authentic and transparent engagement as new mediums of communication become available.

With the development of new digital spaces and occupations, processes and systems which are foundational to our social reality are being transformed and translated through an online lens. By documenting and exploring one instance of digital labor in relation to the fundamentally human experience of emotion, I underscore the complexity and centrality of considering our online lives within the context of our humanity. As our humanity and work continue to be mediated through digital platforms, the imperative for continued research into the blurred lines of self, emotion, labor online also grows. With the ambiguity of online self, emotion, and labor in mind, I emphasize the criticality of future work on digital spaces as expressed by Rogers Brubaker:

> [The online world] has inflected our emotions, modified our neurochemistry—and perhaps even rewired our brains. It has profoundly altered our experience of space and time. It has transformed the ways we think, the ways we feel, the ways we desire, the ways we remember, the ways we attend to the world and to one another. (Brubaker 2020, 772).

Appendix 1. The Beauty of Words

Emotionality is central to this research and yet the textual display of this research cannot fully communicate the emotions of influencer's stories. I have concluded this research by considering the importance of new modes of analysis and communication which might better communicate the complexity of emotions This section serves as an exploratory example of what new forms of ethnographic analysis might look like in order to more authentic portrayal of the emotionality shared in interviews. In highlighting the emotional and affective qualities of influencer's relationships to cosmetics, I demonstrate both the complexity of their work and the inseparable connection between cosmetics and identity in which influencers' lived experiences directly impact their conceptualizations.

In order to further emphasize the emotional nature of influencer's work and cosmetics as a whole, I utilize narrative rhythmanalysis to transform the prose-like narratives of influencers into poetry as one of the most emotive and symbolically rich forms of text by analyzing the recorded auditory narratives of influencers, rather than their transcriptions. Generally used in oral histories, such as Maria Tamboukou's work on women's stories of displacement, narrative rhythmanalysis employs listening as a political and analytical tool that focuses on the soundscapes of stories to understand the embodied context of these narratives. Defined by Tamboukou (2020), "Narrative rhythmanalysis eventuates in recognizing the existence of repetitious patterns in the semantics of storytelling as well as in the modalities of voices and sounds" so that a poem is constructed following the natural pauses, elongations, rises, and falls within an oral narrative (4).

For the case of this research, the narratives told in interviews regarding influencers' personal relationships to their work and cosmetics can then be considered both in their textual and transcribed form, as is usually done and demonstrated above, but also for their actual auditory qualities which possess intricate and meaningful patterned speech that reflect the emotional context of these narratives. In using the auditory rather than textual form of these narratives as the point of analysis, the emotionality of influencer's narratives regarding process, labor,

opinions, experiences, etc. are highlighted and communicated textually (with limitations of course) through poetry. As explained by Tamboukou (2020),

> By turning my sensory antennae to what is audible rather than merely visible in the transcript, I got immersed in an assemblage of sounds, silences, pauses, laughter, and cries – soundscapes that enacted the process of understanding and meaning making, and were later on imbued in the writing. Women's voices thus became the sirens that have kept disrupting and destabilizing thought, releasing multiple significations around analytical tropes and themes. (5)

In addition to its emotive qualities, I intentionally include poetry in this work to facilitate engagement with this research for readers from all academic levels and backgrounds in recognition that the academic style writing utilized in this work is not accessible to all audiences. Furthermore, in accordance with scholars of Black Feminist Thought such as bell hooks and Audre Lorde who have foundationally informed the design of this research, I also include poetry in my analysis in order to contribute to larger efforts of social justice and liberation which aim to bridge art and academia through accessible mediums. This sentiment is best explained by Lorde herself who has famously argued that,

> poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives. (1985)

With these objectives in mind, the following poems were created from the narratives of influencers provided during interviews. All words within the poems are from influencers themselves, altered only in their presentation and structure to be read more intentionally as poetry rather than prose. Though I conducted thirteen total interviews, I have included only five poems from five different participants given that this analysis is meant to be an exploratory example to better communicate the emotionality of beauty influencers and their work. Each poem was titled by the respective participant after the poems were constructed.

I am Me
I have a complicated relationship
with makeup
because I know what it means
to use it
to change yourself
and hide those things you hate
and I know I'm guilty
of falling back into that mindset sometimes
but how can you not
when everyone is telling you
change this
hide this
cover that up
but at the same time
I've also come to love myself through makeup
and to emphasize those parts of me
that I want others to know and see
its complicated
to try and hide somethings and flaunt others
and to still be
you

My Sister's Palette
what else was left for me
I was so miserable
I had nowhere else to turn
but when I had nothing else
nothing
I had my art
and I threw myself into it
full force
and I'm better now because of it
it's been so freeing
and exciting
and painful
at times
because I remember where I came from
and I know what I've been through
but I am who I am
today
because I just so happened
to take my sister's palette

Cracked
I hate it sometimes
to know that I rely on it so much
because it never started like that
it was fun
and simple
but now it's so much deeper
and I don't know
if I'd even feel like me
if I could never use it again
it's addictive
in a good way

My Face, My Rules
it's everything
it's my art
it's my work
it's my escape
there's just so much
wrong
wrong with the world
and with my life
as a woman
I can never win
I show too much
I don't show enough
I'm here
but only because they let me in
but with makeup
that's my world
I know the rules
and when I don't
I make my own rules

God is a Woman
there's something so powerful
about being a woman
with a full face on
feeling your femme
like a walking piece of art
I'm the painter and the canvas
at the same damn time
I am the creator
and the creation
what a blessing
and joy
to be woman

In utilizing narrative rhythmanalysis and including poetry into this work, I aim to show the emotionality of influencers work and experiences in recognition that social media is generally considered a rampantly inauthentic, shallow, and emotionless space (which it certainly can be at times). As shown in these poems and in the several excerpts throughout this paper, makeup is a deeply emotional and personal experience for people wherein self and personhood are constantly being questioned and reflected upon. Applying lipstick or using eyeliner is then never just a step of in a morning routine, but symbolic act which holds years of celebration, confusion, and pain that connects thousands of individuals with similar experiences.

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