Makeup, Your Mind: Social Expectations and Perceptions of Makeup Use
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Abstract
Unlike other parts of the world, in the United States makeup goes unregulated for certain chemicals and other harmful ingredients. I explore whether the possible health risks associated with makeup use are factors that women consider in determining whether or not to wear makeup. This research asks why women wear makeup and how that reasoning changes throughout the life course. I interview a total of twenty Brandeis University undergraduate females over eighteen years of age, half of whom wear makeup regularly and half of whom do not wear makeup regularly. My findings suggest that in childhood and adolescence, makeup use is a type of performance in which young girls mimic the behavior of maternal figures and female peers. Throughout college, however, makeup use becomes routinized and is reinforced by cultural expectations which are maintained by the accessibility of information on the internet that markets cosmetic products. Although non-makeup wearers argue that in their current lifestyle as university students, makeup is unnecessary for everyday use, all interview subjects claim that upon entering the professional world, expectations surrounding appearance through makeup use are more stringent. I argue that although makeup use initially enables young girls to express their maturity, social structures prevent women from discontinuing makeup use once they begin. Because makeup is unregulated in the U.S., this poses a unique threat to women’s health. By infiltrating social media outlets and raising awareness about the safety of cosmetics, women will be educated and empowered to call for stricter regulation of cosmetics to protect all women’s health.
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Introduction

Cameron: I guess I just inherently trust makeup is FDA approved and it’s probably fine. But once again, I should probably pay attention to that sort of thing.
Interviewer - Do you know that makeup products aren’t approved by the FDA?
Cameron - I...isn’t it like, it’s not approved to any degree at all? Isn’t there like any regulating body though?
Interviewer - Not in the US.
Cameron - Like nothing?? I feel like there has to be something. I feel like they wouldn’t let you sell toxic things.
Interviewer - The FDA has basically no power over what’s in cosmetic ingredients.
Cameron - Why?... (Nervous laughter) Well, that’s disturbing.

“What influences women to wear makeup?” On the most superficial level, makeup tantalizes customers with bright colors and clever names like Daydream, Maraschino, and Plum Fairy. Serving as a gateway to another personality and a greater expression of self, particular colors and wording can transport customers to another realm of reality, influencing how they express themselves. Delving deeper, however, makeup is a social tool used to make women appear more attractive and more professional in a variety of social environments.

In this discussion of makeup, there are generally two groups of women: Those who regularly wear makeup and those who do not regularly wear makeup. Longitudinal studies have yet to be published that show how a woman’s makeup use alters at each stage in life. Although each woman is apt to change her use of makeup over the course of her life, at any given time the term “makeup wearer” or “non-make-up wearer” can be applied, depending on overall behavior towards cosmetics products. Jane is a nineteen year old sophomore in college who has not missed wearing makeup for a day since middle school. She wears makeup to boost her confidence and to make herself feel prettier. Although she began wearing makeup as a way to be like her mom and older sister, now she wears it for herself. Sometimes she feels like if she were
to stop wearing makeup, other people wouldn’t recognize her. She would feel uncomfortable if people stopped to ask her if she was tired or sick, simply because she didn’t put on eyeliner.

Georgia is a twenty-two year old senior in college who has never regularly worn makeup. Although she was interested in makeup when she was younger, her mom believed makeup is meant for professional adults. In college, she will occasionally wear makeup for parties and big events, but she admits almost shyly that she never truly learned how to apply cosmetic products. Georgia says she doesn’t feel makeup is necessary, but thinks that when she enters the professional world, there will be more pressure for her to look a particular way, in which case she may begin to wear makeup regularly.

Each of these women views makeup and the social expectations surrounding its use differently. I analyzed twenty women’s use of makeup products to determine why this difference exists. I find that although there aren’t specific differences between the makeup and non-make-up wearers, each woman formed expectations of beauty culture in the United States and abroad. When differences in opinion surfaced, these differences were attributable to causes more permanent than a woman’s current makeup routine. Messaging from family, friends, culture, media outlets, and other sources all provided explanations for how women’s perspectives on makeup use differed.

In my own experience, I have used makeup products since I was in the seventh grade. At each stage in my makeup use, friends, family, and social pressures affected how I perceived makeup and my use of it. My mom’s enthusiasm and passion for the cosmetics industry coupled with my best friend’s newfound obsession with glitter eyeshadow initially interested me in the world of cosmetics. At the time I began to wear makeup, it made me feel excited and grown-up.
Over the years, however, it has become a habit to start my day by putting on a dab of eyeliner and mascara. Even though I had been relying on makeup in my daily routine for almost a decade, it wasn’t until last fall that I consciously thought about what I was putting on my face.

After reading an article about toxins in makeup products, I began to notice the makeup industry as a business, rather than an outlet for girly purchases. Worried that makeup was harmful to my body, I started researching the claims of the article. Even though I had allergic reactions to particular lip products in the past, I had always attributed the reactions to be my own problem, not indicative of a greater harm associated with the use of makeup. After pondering my findings, I began to question my makeup use not from a chemical standpoint, but through a sociological lens. Why do women choose to start wearing makeup and how has this decision affected their makeup use since then? I decided to explore this question through a senior thesis project.

To answer my research question, I engage with literature from areas of science, society, and policy. Viewing makeup as an issue critical to women’s health and levels of confidence, these products are more than a tool to alter appearances. Although makeup is widely prevalent in American culture, it is not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration or the Environmental Protection Agency. Advocacy groups such as the Environmental Working Group and the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics regularly question the safety of makeup products. Lipstick is known to contain trace amounts of lead in many brands and products, with other heavy metals such as cadmium, chromium, and aluminum regularly comprising other makeup products. By thoroughly examining the relevant literature on the chemical composition of makeup products, I seek to address claims by these groups that makeup is unsafe to use.
Furthermore, I question how the beauty industry pressures women to look a particular way and why appearance is valued. Existing literature reveals that makeup use can affect how women are perceived in both social and professional environments. Sociologists have argued that makeup is used to mask certain emotions and also heavily contributes to beauty culture. Serving as a mechanism in which women project a particular kind of beauty, cosmetics enable women in the United States to express a colorful and youthful appearance. My research explores these ideas by examining makeup use over the course of a woman’s lifetime. In spite of the social and scientific dimensions of makeup culture inciting concerning questions about makeup use, federal policy largely ignores the issue in the United States from all perspectives. By examining the relevant literature, I gain a greater understanding of the complexity of the marketing of products by the makeup industry and how women are affected in many ways by makeup products.

My own awareness of makeup as a public health issue initially began after learning of the potential health dangers associated with its use. As a consequence of this finding, I question whether other women were aware that makeup is not regulated by any large body in the United States. As the segments of my conversations demonstrate, environmental concerns and concerns related to ingredients contained within cosmetics did not exist. If they did, they were extremely limited to particular body products, and not to makeup as a whole. The idea that makeup is unregulated by the Food and Drug Administration, and no one - neither makeup wearers nor non-makeup wearers - seemed to know about it, was extremely puzzling. Throughout my interviews, I became increasingly aware that although the ingredients in makeup should be on the radar of every woman who uses cosmetics, it was something that didn’t even cross most women’s minds.
Methods

This research asks, “what influences young women’s decisions about whether or not to use cosmetics?” To answer this question, in the Fall of 2014, I conducted interviews with college aged women (n=20). My sample was evenly divided between women who do and do not wear makeup. The interviews, which lasted between 30-60 minutes, allowed for an in-depth investigation of the complex relationships between individuals within family and peer groups, social pressures, and makeup itself.

Qualitative methods offer a powerful means of learning about individuals’ decision making processes, the meaning of cosmetics and beauty in their lives, and how these may have changed over time. Qualitative analysis uniquely allows “flexibility of using inductive or deductive approaches” in data analysis, while also having the “ability to extract manifest and latent content meaning.”1 Although I could have conducted a survey to answer questions relating to the number and brand of products used by my sample population, this data would not have allowed me to investigate the emotional connection to makeup and personal appearance that some of the women I interviewed demonstrated. Without the opportunity for self-reflection, data collected would be depersonalized and unrepresentative of the reasoning behind women’s makeup use. Therefore, the influences that shape a woman’s decision to wear makeup can best be understood through methods that allow each subject to reflect on her experiences and tell her story in her own words.

Recruitment and Sample Composition

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The sample for this study was recruited from a private university in New England. Participants were all eighteen years of age or older. The interview process was open to all undergraduate students that met these requirements. However, the group of respondents was only comprised of students completing their sophomore, junior or senior years of college. This may contribute to differences in how subjects perceive how their use of makeup will change after college, as those closer to graduation may have considered this much more frequently.

I chose to interview college-aged women because they are at a crossroads between adolescence and entering their professional careers. By interviewing students at this unique time in their lives, I was able to ask questions about three different moments in their lives: adolescence (the near past), college (their present), and their anticipated transition to the professional world (the near future); the interview included questions about their makeup use in adolescence, what their makeup routine is currently, and how they predict their behaviors to change when beginning their careers. Furthermore, the uniqueness of the college experience allows many students to be both more independent than adolescence yet with fewer responsibilities than as an adult. By asking college students questions about their patterns of makeup use over the course of their life, I seek to address the role of peer and family influences in an individual’s decision-making process.

In total, I interviewed twenty undergraduates ages eighteen and over. As previously mentioned, the sample was split; 10 women who wear makeup and 10 who do not wear makeup were interviewed. I publicized the study by posting flyers about the thesis project and sending emails to club leaders who forwarded information about the project to their listservs. I also relied on word-of-mouth advertising to let my peers and friends know about the thesis project.
Snowball sampling occurred when interviewees informed and recruited their friends and peers to also be interviewed.

Some selection bias may have been introduced into my research through these methods. Specifically, reliance on club listservs, flyers, and the particularly selective nature of word-of-mouth advertising means that respondents may have come from sub-groups within the campus population. If bias were present, this would result in the research being limited to defined groups within the Brandeis community. Although this may be the case, the interview sample consisted of the intended number of makeup-wearers and non-make-up wearers. Each of the interviews lasted between thirty minutes and one hour. On the whole, the interviews with women who do not wear makeup lasted less time than the interviews with women who do wear makeup.

The key criteria in constructing this sample was 1) gender, 2) age, and 3) whether or not a woman wore makeup. The table in Appendix C demonstrates key information about the interviewees that participated in this project.

*Interview Structure and Process*

Prior to conducting my research, I wanted to explore the possibility that family and peer groups most greatly influence women’s decisions to wear makeup products. To test this hypothesis I asked ten women who wear makeup and ten women who do not wear makeup about their makeup habits.

When I interviewed students, I initially provided them with a summary of my research project. They were asked to sign a consent form and gave me permission to audio-record our conversation with the purpose of transcribing the interview for data collection. The conversation
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was recorded on my personal computer which is password protected. Each interview was audio-recorded and stored on an external flash drive. Interviews were transcribed after the data collection process was complete. To protect the confidentiality of each subject, I altered the names of each interviewee through a coding process. I recorded each subject name and each altered name on a master list in a location that was kept separate from other interview data. This was to ensure the protection of divulged information from the interviewees that were studied. All information pertaining to logistical aspects of my research may be found in my IRB documentation, which is located in Appendix A.

The Brandeis University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved my study and my interview guide. The interview guide can be found in Appendix B. Questions were split into four sections: Background, Past, Present, and Future. Separating the interview into four sections enabled me to obtain a clearer comprehension of the diversity of makeup product use over my sample population’s lifetime. This allowed for deeper reflection into the use of cosmetics and enabled the interview subjects to develop a sense of awareness about their own product use.

Background questions pertained to family structure, parental occupations, siblings, and life history. Questions also pertained to how coming to Brandeis University was a change for the student. This was to determine whether or not there was a correlation between altered makeup use between the Past and the Present sections. The background section enabled me to understand surface-level similarities of each participant’s geographical, ethnic, and cultural background for a sample-wide comparison.

When asked about their past, interviewees were asked to recall instances in which they remember being introduced to makeup, their use of makeup during adolescence, and on what
occasions they were likely to wear makeup. This was to gather a broad understanding of their makeup use while young and to ascertain whether particular social influences led them to wear makeup products. Although this section of interviewing could have introduced recall bias, most subjects were recalling general data about their makeup use in the past, rather than specific information. Because the nature of interviews is subject, selective memories could have been reported during the interview process. With most participants, recalling past memories of makeup use proved to be one of the most reflective portions of the interview. Although a few subjects had difficulty answering a couple of the questions, nearly all participants expressed similar connections and early influences among family and friend groups which acculturated them to makeup use.

Questions in the next section were focused on subjects’ daily life in the present day. Interviewees were asked to describe their morning routine, how their use of makeup had changed since they were first introduced to makeup, and whether or not they had been asked to change their makeup routine by family or friends. Respondents also discussed how social media and special occasions impacted their view of makeup. In this section, women who do not wear makeup were also asked about their skincare routine. This was to determine whether respondents were still socialized into applying products that altered their appearance, either directly through cosmetics or indirectly through the use of lotions and skin-preserving products. By gaining a greater awareness of the time, money, and effort placed on appearance, I hope to differentiate among individuals across both groups.

When asked about the future, all interviewees discussed how they believe their personal makeup habits will change after college and how the professional word shapes their perception
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of makeup. I concluded each interview by asking subjects to tell me something about their makeup or skincare use that I had not asked them in the interview. Although asking students about how they feel their makeup use will change throughout their career is not a guarantee that they will behave accordingly, expectations about how the professional world shapes self-portrayal are important to my research.

I initially chose to conduct interviews because interviews typically occur “within a broad context of interaction that includes complex cognitive and linguistic activities within a set of institutionalized and emergent sociocultural constraints.”

This allows interview subjects to discuss multiple areas of content under an array of sociological lenses. I personally learned to conduct interviews through courses such as the Sociology of Science, Technology, and Medicine and the Sociology of Birth and Death, in which conducting interviews was a graded component of coursework.

Limitations

I selected participants into two groups based on whether or not they wore makeup because my research analyzes the influences that incite women to wear makeup products. By examining both women who do wear makeup and those who do not wear makeup, I am able to perceive how personal decisions and reasoning in this group of women determines or influences their behavior. Although I could have interviewed men who wear makeup, the sample size would have been too small to draw common patterns and themes from the data. Additionally, finding participants in the Brandeis community who fit these categories would be difficult.

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Another limitation of selecting only Brandeis University females is that my research ignores the transgender community, who I predict would add to the discussion of makeup as an expression of gender. Again, the small size of the transgender population at Brandeis may be too small to find common themes across the data. Because my sample only included twenty students, however, the choice to selectively interview Brandeis University females was the best decision for my particular research. Perhaps further studies could research these groups more closely to determine if particular influences and decisions surrounding cosmetic use are unique to individuals from those communities.

Although data from these interviews is valuable and representative of the people who shared their time and thoughts on makeup use with me, any information gleaned from this study should not be generalized to other groups. Each interview and group of interviews as a whole that I collected are only representative of the individuals I spoke with, suggesting that common themes I discovered may not be applicable or accurate for others. Therefore, my research should only be interpreted as a study of one particular sample population of female college students at Brandeis University during the time frame in which I conducted my research.

Approach to Analysis

The data collected from these interviews was organized into common themes that presented throughout the interviews. Although participants self-selected into groups based on whether or not they wore makeup, individuals reported high amounts of diversity in their responses. Students in the same sub-group and preparing for the same career, for example, had drastically different perceptions of the makeup industry and differed in their reasoning behind their own product usage. For this reason, findings were grouped not according to whether a
participant wore makeup, but the reasoning behind their product use and the common influences that helped them to make personal decisions.

To sort interview data by theme, all interviews were completed and transcribed. Throughout the interview process, I recorded common elements that were present across multiple interviews. The transcription process allowed me to analyze data for commonalities and anomalies across my sample population. Although each interview proved exceptionally unique, almost every person recounted a similar memory or experience with makeup and personal care products. Conflicting themes and ideas were also present, in which case data was more complex to analyze. After processing each of the transcribed interviews, I organized the data by collective themes to best represent the findings from my research.

In the following chapters, the findings of my research will be presented. After exploring current literature from science, societal, and policy documents, I analyze my data from the interview process. The first chapter discusses how women are exposed to cosmetics. Whether interviewees mimic their mother’s use of makeup or rely on friends to guide them, early exposures to cosmetics suggest young women use makeup as a type of social performance. Wanting to appear mature and more grown-up, young women use their early exposures to makeup to help guide them in their makeup use.

Apart from an individual level, the second chapter explores cosmetics through a more global lens. Because nine of my twenty interviewees expressed strong cultural ties to countries other than the United States, they discussed their perceptions of the differences in makeup use between the United States and their home countries. I argue that the perceptions of makeup use in one’s home country affect individual makeup use more strongly than family or friends alone.
Contributing to the idea of global messaging is the role of media and advertising in both print and online. I argue that a shift in beauty advertising from print to online sources enables and empowers women to become more active and educated consumers about the effectiveness of certain products.

The third data chapter asserts that the individual social expectations of men vs. women, and women who do wear makeup vs. women who do not wear makeup are highly reflective of cultural norms and expectations about beauty culture. Although at very young ages it may be acceptable for boys to wear makeup, and for young women to forgo makeup use during school, expectations requiring adherence to beauty norms increase throughout life. As males “become men” and women become professionals, the social rules become more strict, strongly influencing whether or not both genders wear cosmetics.

I conclude this thesis project by arguing the possible implications my research suggests. Raising awareness about makeup as a women’s public health issue, in part, is similar to the perception of other commonly known public health problems in the present day. By relying on interview data, I assert that the perception among women that makeup is guaranteed to be safe to use needs to change, by altering how we view “quality” in terms of cosmetics products.
Literature Review

“Makeup is superficial but not superfluous” (Payne)

Some women wear makeup every day, and millions of cosmetics products are sold annually. For many reasons, however, makeup itself is commonly contested by reason of its safety, its use by women, and its regulation in the United States. From scientific researchers to feminists to legislators, differing opinions on the appropriate use and composition of cosmetics abound. Because makeup is not a one-dimensional topic, this controversy lends itself to confusion and concern for women, regardless of their makeup use. Makeup poses a unique dilemma for women: although women in the United States may encounter literature that warns them of the safety of their cosmetics, women who do not wear makeup may be confronted by sociological reports about how abstaining from the makeup industry puts them at a social disadvantage in comparison to their makeup-wearing peers. To further heighten both the concerns of women who do and do not wear cosmetics, federal policy supports neither group’s concerns about makeup and remains largely silent on the issue of cosmetic regulation.

Outside of the United States, cosmetic products are also a source of scrutiny and discord among the three sectors of science, society, and policy. European countries strictly regulate cosmetic products to ensure human health and safety, whereas more underdeveloped countries such as Ethiopia have no regulation of cosmetics and women face adverse reactions to several types of personal care products. In these two regions, poor legislative regulation of cosmetics and the low levels of safety in cosmetics are directly correlated. Additionally, there is an altered social perception of women in both of these regions. Whereas women in Europe have equal

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rights to men and equal opportunities as dictated by law, women in countries like Ethiopia do not have these same rights. So while it may be assumed that because women are respected and valued by European laws, their makeup is safer, women in countries such as Ethiopia are not given this same privilege. Therefore, an examination of human rights through makeup reveals that in these two cases, safer cosmetics demonstrates that women are more valued and closer in status to men in that society. Through this perspective, the United States’ lack of regulation of cosmetics and corresponding treatment of women is revealing of relatively high levels of discrimination against women.

In the following chapter, I will review literature on cosmetic products that is based in science, sociology, and policy. By reviewing these three types of literature, I consider the possibility that United States policy ignores the health and safety of women who wear cosmetics while simultaneously failing to socially protect women who do not wear makeup products. As demonstrated throughout this chapter, makeup is a multi-faceted topic. The analysis of sociological and scientific research and policy both for women worldwide proves that a personal decision by women to use (or not use) cosmetics can affect them on a cultural and global level. This literature influences my research by giving perspectives of twenty women in the United States, even though many come from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Globally and nationally, researchers and scientists have proven that particular makeup products are unsafe for human use. Most often, safety concerns center around the presence of toxic ingredients in cosmetics that penetrate the skin and cause illness. These ingredients most often include heavy metals such as lead or cadmium. Most cosmetic products contain trace
amounts of these ingredients due to their natural abundance in the environment\textsuperscript{4}, with varying quantities of heavy metals based on brand and product. Although the safety of cosmetics is regulated minimally in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration, other countries enforce a more stringent structure. In order to alleviate concerns about the safety of makeup through in-depth testing and regulation of cosmetic ingredients, the European Union publishes every ingredient used in makeup to a public registry. This registered list of ingredients protects women’s health by outlining potential harmful ingredients and harmful quantities.

Those concerned about the safety of their cosmetics in the United States, however, receive no such access to information about their makeup by the Food and Drug Administration. In the United States, makeup companies are not even required to list the ingredients on product packaging in the consumer market. Proponents for stricter regulation of the makeup industry in the United States include the Environmental Working Group and the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics. They argue that women have a right to purchase products that have been proven safe for human health and a right to know what ingredients are contained within. However, others argue that women do not actually need to wear makeup, so the FDA should not be required to impose stringent policy. Like any public health issue, this is not entirely true. While individual choice plays a role, education, environment, and engineering enable preventative to prevail. After reviewing the literature, I argue that the federal government largely ignores the safety of women through their lackadaisical approach to researching cosmetic ingredients.

Although makeup is superficially applied, sociologists argue that it is an integral component to the perception of women everywhere. Many women start to wear makeup as

adolescents to mark the transition from childhood to adulthood; however, at later points in life wearing makeup becomes habitual for some women. Reinforced by the workplace, social environments, and other arenas, women are directly and indirectly pressured to wear makeup to enhance their physical appearance. The social repercussions of makeup use are both positive and negative. While women who wear makeup may be more likely to have higher salaries than those who do not⁵, they are also at greater risk for sexual harassment while wearing cosmetics⁶. This demonstrates that makeup affects how women are treated as well as perceived by others.

In my review of literature pertaining to the cosmetics and makeup industry, I will examine scientific, sociological, and policy-oriented publications. Both scientific and sociological research refer to human rights: research related to the chemical composition of makeup demonstrates a concern for health-related rights, whereas research related to the social implications of wearing makeup reveals a concern for women’s rights. The examination of national policy issues regarding gender discrimination as well as policy related to the chemical safety of makeup will reveal the value in which policymakers and the federal government hold makeup, and the health and safety of American women. Research related to the chemical composition of makeup demonstrates a concern for health-related rights, whereas research related to the social implications of wearing makeup reveals a concern for women’s rights. A comprehensive view of how women are impacted by the cosmetics industry is revealed by examining makeup from all three of these perspectives.

There are over 20,000 known ingredients in makeup products. In the United States, a lack of regulation of these ingredients prompts safety concerns from health-activist groups. These concerns are supported by a study which shows that on average, there is a 2-6% decrease in lung function for women who use personal care products such as scented body lotions, lipstick, eye makeup, and perfume, with lower lung function coupled with increased product use. In spite of these concerning health statistics about cosmetic use, women wear makeup every day. In the following section, I consider both the safety of makeup and the biological response that individuals have to makeup.

Safety of Heavy Metals and Nanoparticles in Cosmetic Products

Heavy metals and nanoparticles, known to cause health problems, are contained in many cosmetics products. These metals include lead, arsenic, mercury, cadmium, and antimony. In general use, most of these heavy metals have been banned from many items such as paint, building materials, and children’s toys due to the hazard associated with using these products. Overexposure to lead and mercury can wreak havoc on the central nervous system, while overexposure to other elements severely affects immune response and cardiovascular function. Despite the known effects of heavy metals in the body, however, they are still widely prevalent in makeup products. Revealing a relative lack of concern for women’s health through the use of cosmetics, regulatory industries in the United States largely ignore health hazards associated

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with makeup use, while advocating the importance of heavy metal regulation in other sectors such as paint and toys. After being tested for chromium, nickel, and cobalt, the nine Italian eye products almost all contained quantities of at least one metal that caused a sensitive skin reaction in a sample population. These products were not created in the United States; however, the abundance of hazardous metals in makeup suggests that the safety of makeup is not considered to be a serious health issue. Instead, legislative branches opt to ignore the dangers of these chemicals and metals in cosmetics.

Although the United States itself has not put a limit to the amount of heavy metals that are allowed in cosmetics, the German government has outlined the following limits for the amount of heavy metals in makeup (in parts per million): Lead: 20 ppm; Arsenic: 5 ppm; Cadmium: 5 ppm; Mercury: 1 ppm; Antimony: 10 ppm. Heavy metals are naturally-occurring in the environment, so the total absence of these metals from cosmetics would be nearly impossible; however, keeping the amount of these metals in makeup to a minimum is manageable and better ensures quality of health.

In comparison to other heavy metals research on lead contamination is much more common, which enables lead to be used as a predictor of the safety of heavy metals in makeup. A study determined the presence of lead in a variety of lipstick colors, brands, and lot numbers. Although lead was detected in many of the lipsticks, the amount found was always within the range of lead permitted in color additives, suggesting that the makeup products studied are safe

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11 Bundesgesundheitsblatt (Federal Health Journal, Germany), 28, 1985, Nr. 7, 216.

to use. The FDA does not specify the amount of lead to be allowed in lipstick, but the amounts found are comparable to guidelines on lead use in color additives that the manufacturers use when creating lipstick products. This suggests that makeup products with lead limits within the guidelines for color additives are generally safe for women’s health.

A study of concentrations of lead in lipstick, conducted by the FDA, tested 40 lipsticks of various brands and shades. Following the initial survey, 400 lipsticks were tested. Although some contained < 1 ppm of lead, others contained > 7 ppm within a tube of lipstick. Although there is no legal limit of lead in the United States for cosmetics, the Canadian limit of lead in products applied to the skin is 10 ppm. This finding demonstrates that the amount of lead in the products studied in the United States is acceptable and even expected in consideration of the limits of lead to show the long-term effects of continuously applying products containing lead.

Even though the amount of lead in lipstick appears to be within regulatory thresholds of other countries, the ingredients in makeup and skincare products can have a lasting impact on health. According to the results of an investigation into skin lightening products, the Food and Drug Administration discovered some skin products had extremely high levels of mercury. The FDA advised that the dangerous products be removed from the shelves, although many individuals became ill with mercury poisoning as a result of product use. Mercury poisoning, possible through indirect use of these skincare products, such as a child kissing a parent on the cheek of which the product was applied, affects greater numbers of people than those who applied the product. Those who applied these products became very ill, and their loved ones

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were also negatively affected. This proves that the safety of makeup is not just a women’s health issue, but also a health issue for those with whom they regularly interact on a close basis.

Children are especially susceptible to heavy metals and other chemicals, as their bodies are not fully developed, which can affect the proper functioning of the nervous and other body systems. A recent investigation into the effects of personal care products on endocrine disrupters in 14-18 year olds found that by changing products to low-chemical substitutes, urinary metabolites of harsh chemicals found in fragrances decreased.\textsuperscript{15} Rather than act proactively to prevent these products from entering the market, the FDA does not have the authority to monitor cosmetics before they are sold. If it did, then the FDA could mandate low-chemical products become the norm, which would protect the health of adolescence teens using products with harsh effects. A more stringent regulation of the entire cosmetics industry will enable the prevention of dangerous products on the market, thereby ensuring that any health changes will not be attributed to makeup use.

Another potential threat to health among the known 20,000 ingredients that compose makeup products is the increasing presence of nanoparticles in makeup products. Nanoparticles used in cosmetics, such as the common nanoparticle C60, are potentially damaging to cells and can cause cell death and growth inhibition. The microscopic size of nanoparticles coupled with their increasing prevalence in cosmetics is inciting concern from health advocates about the safety of these particles. Although sunscreen is not a cosmetic product, SPF is frequently added to facial moisturizers, foundation, lipstick, and other cosmetics. An ingredient in sunscreen called nano-zinc oxide can cause lysosomal damage, tissue inflammation, and production of

Currently, there is no testing for the safety of nanoparticles by the FDA. Sparse in cosmetic regulating authority, the FDA’s power to monitor nanoparticles is even more limited than that of other cosmetic ingredients.

Given the safety concerns about heavy metals and nanoparticles in cosmetic products, alternatives to conventional makeup have been found. Among elderly women, conventional makeup is being replaced with permanent makeup in the form of cosmetic tattoos. Although the risks of exposure to heavy metals is fairly different than the exposure to tattoos, there is a real risk for displacement of pigment with facial tattoos, leaving customers wholly unsatisfied with the procedure. Pigment displacement occurs when the dye from the cosmetic tattoo runs, shifts, or simply does not stay in place. This can leave the customer with tattooed eyeliner on their cheek or tattooed eyebrows on their eyelids. In theory, cosmetic tattoos replace the need for makeup; however, due to problems such as pigment displacement, cosmetic tattoos have a range of problems. Of course, another alternative to wearing conventional makeup is simply to not wear makeup at all. This method appears to be a rational, even easy, method to forgo potential harms associated with ingredients in cosmetics. By avoiding potentially harmful ingredients, however, women who do not wear makeup may be negatively impacted socially.

Overall, very little research has been conducted in the United States on the possible hazards of heavy metals and nanoparticles present in cosmetic products. From country to country, regulations on ingredients in makeup differ, suggesting that more comprehensive policy may be needed to ensure the safety of cosmetic products in the United States. In the few

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instances in which makeup was proven unsafe, the Food and Drug Administration was unable to prevent people from becoming ill, even though the products were eventually banned for purchase in the United States. Though typically considered as a conscious choice, wearing makeup can also be a subconscious and biological response to changes in hormone levels. “Superficial but not superfluous” (Payne 2009), cosmetic products affect millions of women each day. The effect of makeup in the body, however, cannot be thoroughly understood without increased regulation and research on the ingredients contained therein. With stricter management by the Food and Drug Administration, the safety of cosmetic products will be ensured.

**Society**

Sociology “can be described as evidence-based social inquiry into the social world and informed by conceptual frameworks and established methodological approaches.” The cosmetics industry lends itself to sociological inquiry by providing a demonstrable example of how one group of products affects millions of people, most often women. Makeup raises questions about gender, body image, identity, and the culture of consumption. In this section, the study of beauty and its relation to cosmetics is shown to change. Both over generations and within an individual’s lifetime, the use of cosmetics has shifted from a cultural, even ritualistic, phenomenon to a constant presence in everyday life. The application of makeup provides a subconscious outlet for judgment by peers; however, wearing cosmetics can also promote a positive body image by incorporating aspects of individuality and emphasizing the role that makeup has on self-perception. By emphasizing the effect makeup has on others, on oneself, and

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the history of makeup use over time, the framework for analyzing how the cosmetic industry affects women will be created.

*Effect on Others*

In storybooks and animated media, beauty culture perpetuates the notion that prettier people are better people. Synnott argues that the beauty mystique portrays the evil as ugly and the good as good-looking across fairytales and animated media.\(^{19}\) This portrayal equates morality with beauty, and casts that viewpoint on young children who may learn of Cinderella’s ‘ugly stepsisters’ whilst growing up. Ingrained into the psyche, this inherent viewpoint that a blemish on the face equates to a blemish on the soul affects women at later points in their social development. Influencing beauty trends, the subconscious messaging sent through children’s stories and cartoons affects self-perception in addition to how an individual’s goodness is perceived by others. By telling young girls that beauty equates to goodness, women who are socially considered as less attractive are negatively stigmatized against. Thus, makeup can be used as a tool which perpetuates the beauty mystique by masking negative perceptions from others through cosmetic products.

Furthermore, the amount of makeup a woman wears directly affects how she is treated by others. In the workplace, women encounter particular challenges when faced with the personal decision to wear makeup. Women who regularly wear makeup to work are told by peers that they look tired or sick when they forget to wear makeup, whereas women who do not wear makeup regularly are complimented when they decide to apply cosmetics.\(^{20}\) Rather than simply

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looking ‘different’ when altering their makeup routine, women are described with adjectives that affect their self-esteem based on whether or not they add or take away makeup products. To maximize compliments from peers and increase self-esteem, women may benefit socially from only wearing makeup on occasion. However, regularly wearing makeup has been proven to increase perceived physical attractiveness, leading women to hold better jobs and have high levels of self-esteem. The use of makeup is a double-edged sword, for it can perpetuate sexism is perpetuated in the workplace. Increasing their perceived level of professionalism, makeup can positively affect women’s social standing in the work environment. Because physical attractiveness can indirectly affect women’s salaries, they may be financially and professionally motivated to wear makeup. This motivation can persist even though women are at risk for injured self-esteem if they choose to forgo their makeup routine and attend work with a natural face for a period of time.

In addition to the workplace, women in everyday social situations are treated differently based on whether or not they wear makeup products. Female American college students who wear makeup were more positively perceived by men than when not wearing makeup; surprisingly, this alteration did not affect women’s perception of other women who did and did not wear makeup. This finding that American college women are viewed as more attractive by men when wearing makeup suggests that physical appearance is not fixed but fluid based on application and removal of makeup products. Because women’s perception of other women was

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unaffected based on the amount of makeup worn, this suggests that women are perhaps more understanding of someone’s overall attractiveness underneath the beauty products. Although this perception may differ among teenagers as opposed to college students, the differences in perception of attractiveness between males and females demonstrates an inequality between genders with regards to the perception of others.

Furthermore, gendered differences in perceptions of makeup and beauty also pertain to how often individuals predict someone would be sexually harassed. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the amount of makeup worn by female models also increased the likelihood that men predicted the woman would be sexually harassed; female reviewers predicted overall lower rates of sexual harassment, though those with the most amount of makeup were thought to be the most harassed. For women, wearing makeup is an expression of self and a routine, not an invitation for harassment. As evidenced by the overall lower ratings from female participants to gauge if a woman will be sexually harassed in comparison to men, the social interpretations of wearing certain amounts of makeup differs between genders. Increasing the perceived likelihood of sexual harassment with increasing amounts of makeup, a woman’s decision to apply a more vibrant lipstick or try a bold eyeshadow can effectively increase her potential to be sexually harassed. This finding suggests women who forgo makeup may limit their chance of being sexually harassed, while simultaneously decreasing her potential to earn as high a wage or be considered as attractive as her makeup-wearing counterpart.

Effect on Self

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Makeup not only affects how women are perceived by other men and women, but also affects self-perception. In many instances, makeup boosts self-confidence and bolsters self-esteem. In a study of 14-18 year old girls in France, makeup was used as a rite of passage to adulthood, and a way to quietly rebel against their mother’s influence. Viewed as a sort of ritual, wearing makeup symbolizes an end to childhood in adolescents. Eventually, wearing makeup becomes a habit rather than a rite of passage. By beginning to wear makeup in adolescence, young women unknowingly create expectations for their own appearance from a very young age. This alters how they ultimately perceive themselves when they alter their makeup routine later in life. Although every person’s self-perception is different, there are commonalities across groups that suggest makeup acts as a bridge to self-esteem and confidence in some people. Although the makeup itself does not change how a woman feels about herself, the positive reactions from peers directly affects confidence levels. With higher self-esteem, women can find better jobs and feel empowered to accomplish their goals.

Also influencing self-perception is the large presence of beauty and cosmetic advertisements on television and in print media. Advertisements for cosmetic products typically promote a false beauty ideology by allowing women to reflect on the effects of makeup. Women who looked at Lancome advertisements and other makeup ads noticed the unrealistic nature of the advertisement, but still expressed amazement at the beauty of the photo and a desire to buy the products. Recognizing that the advertisements were airbrushed and manufactured, women

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in a recent study still had a desire to look like the model in an advertising photo, which demonstrates how women are manipulated by makeup companies to play into beauty culture. Though curious, this is not surprising, as social standards for beauty have only augmented over the past several decades. A focus in the advertisements on preserving youth allows women to experience the cosmetics industry while remaining confident about their own bodies. By emphasizing the importance of maintaining an ageless appearance rather than stirring feelings of low-self esteem, advertisements for makeup influence social expectations of how women are “supposed” to look on a daily basis. Although the literature reveals women aspire to attain unrealistic levels of beauty, my findings demonstrate a rejection of mainstream beauty culture common in advertisements and other print media.

One exception to beauty advertisements that perpetuate impossible beauty standards is the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty Project. The advertising messaging in Dove’s Campaign uses female models of all shapes and sizes to demonstrate that beauty exists in many forms other than stereotypical ideals. Though still a form of marketing, the messaging to women is largely positive and encouraging that all bodies are beautiful, even when wrinkled and full of the ‘flaws’ that other advertisements lament. By providing women with examples of natural-looking models of all ages, races, and sizes, Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty turns the beauty culture’s messaging around and encourages women to be the best version of themselves, rather than a substandard form of an airbrushed model. With prolonged use, this type of advertising can shape self-perception by allowing women to appreciate their natural bodies and appearance.

<http://search.proquest.com/resources.library.brandeis.edu/sociology/docview/1557132818/fulltextPDF/1B8B9628BE8C41DEPQ/1?account id=9703>

**Makeup as an Artistic Expression**

Despite the current uses of cosmetics to enhance beauty, makeup has historically been used as an expression of masculinity. In the past, cosmetic products have been used to show aggression or readiness for battle in men. Musicians such as Kurt Cobain used makeup to signify a difference in expression or in personality while performing, altering his appearance to exaggerate a hardened, rocker persona. Male musicians continue to use makeup to showcase an alternate personality. More than a beauty product, makeup is theatrical in its multiple uses. Essentially a superficial extension of emotion and personality, makeup has historically been used to create an alternate persona, most often in men, of violence or aggression. This use of makeup typically contrasts with the uses of makeup in the present day.

In the last century, makeup has been used primarily by women to play into beauty culture. Joan Jacobs Brumberg, in her book *The Body Project*, emphasizes the change from a focus on inner beauty to one of outer beauty over the last few centuries. Whereas young women were encouraged to be docile and obedient in the past in order to find social success, a shift occurred, causing a focus on outer beauty to play a role in one’s social acceptance by others. Encompassed in this “perfect” ideal are flawless skin and a need for women to improve other elements of their outer beauty. This extends beyond makeup, to include body image in general.

For example, a recent focus on female athleticism has perpetuated beauty culture themes for all women, pressuring them to have a toned and muscular body in addition to a slim figure. Those who cannot conform to the current beauty standards of being attractive, slim, toned, and

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muscular but still ultimately feminine are at risk of injured self-esteem and low confidence levels due to societal pressures placed upon them. If a woman appears too masculine, she is not celebrated for her physique; however, if a woman appears too physically weak, she is considered lazy or unattractive. Although women are injured by the same beauty standards in exercise and in wearing makeup, the beauty industry heavily profits from women who purchase cosmetic products. Setting impossibly high standards for how a woman should look not only creates a greater profit margin for cosmetic companies but also deeply affects how women are judged and perceived when they refuse to conform to normalized aspects of beauty culture.

Conforming to beauty culture through the use of makeup products creates two separate identities and impresses particular emotions onto those with whom an individual interacts. Synnott argues that makeup is the public face and the “particular face we select from a range of possible options...a mask.”31 By masking their true appearance, women choose to show an applied face to social connections and peers. Distorting the way they look, the masked face projects the person women wish to be, rather than who they actually are. Ultimately, this distortion results in an imbalance of self-perception as women become more accustomed to the face they put on, rather than their natural appearance. This change results in more dependence on makeup products in addition to a disconnect from the natural face without makeup. In effect, confidence levels decrease when going without cosmetics products and women develop higher beauty standards for themselves over time.

Conclusion

Current sociological research focuses on how makeup affects women in their daily work and social environments as well as individually. Historical research on the use of makeup has also been conducted. Women who wear makeup face different pressures and are perceived differently than women who do not wear makeup. Whereas women who wear makeup are more likely to excel at work due to perceived physical attractiveness, they are also more likely to be perceived to be sexually harassed. Although women who wear makeup are not necessarily more likely to be harassed in the workplace, gender discrimination laws are meant to protect women from being treated poorly by others based on gender. In the following section, a particular gender discrimination case focuses specifically on the role of makeup in the workplace, and how women are forced to adhere to different policies than men in order to maintain employment.

**Policy**

The United States imposes laws on makeup and cosmetic products through social policy and scientific policy. Affecting people on both a micro and macro scale, policies related to the regulation of cosmetic products change how women use makeup and ultimately alter the social constructions that dominate how makeup is viewed by legislators. Policies that focus on the health and well-being of consumers are largely regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. The intended purpose of these laws is to govern the chemical composition of makeup. Socially-based policies on cosmetic use are largely gendered policies. They seek to reduce discrimination of women by providing equal responsibility and opportunity to males and females. In the following section, both types of policy will be considered. In light of this analysis, I have determined that both variations of law will unfairly discriminate against women whether they choose to wear makeup or to forgo its use.
Buegeler, C.

Social Policies

Current social policies seek to prevent discrimination based on gender; however, the laws most often do not result in due process to women who choose to not wear makeup. As learned in the society section of this analysis, women who do not wear makeup are perceived to be less attractive and on average earn less money than those who wear makeup. Laws against gender discrimination prevent women from being forced to adhere to gender stereotypes; however, in 2006 a woman was fired because of her refusal to wear makeup at her place of employment in the court case Jespersen v. Harrah’s Operating Co.

Citing the Title VII Civil Rights Act of 1964, Jespersen argued that she was wrongfully terminated from her place of employment because of her refusal to adhere to a new policy that required women wear makeup to work, even though she had never worn makeup over several years with the company. Title VII states that employees cannot be fired or discriminated against due to sex, race, color, creed, or age. A ninth circuit judge, however, ruled that there was no merit to her case since men were also required to adhere to standards about their appearance. Men were asked to maintain a clean-shaven appearance while women were required to professionally style their hair and makeup. In the court hearing, Jespersen did not provide evidence to suggest that the process of applying makeup and hair products took more time to complete than a man shaving his beard and brushing his hair. Thus, the judge argued that due to her lack of proof, Jespersen was not unfairly fired from her job. Fired simply because she refused to alter her appearance through the use of cosmetics, Jespersen’s previously exemplary

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/civil-rights-act/>
commendations on the job played no role in her employer’s consideration of her termination. Although it seems obvious that applying makeup and styling hair takes more time and costs more money than simply shaving a beard, the judge’s decision demonstrates that inequality still exists between men and women in the workplace.

The Civil Rights Act seeks to protect against discrimination; however, in the 2006 case of Jespersen v. Harrah’s Operating Co., this policy proved ineffective. Fifty years old, this legislation does not account for ways to end discrimination but simply states that it cannot exist. This case is very important for my research because it emphasizes that makeup is correlated with a sense of professionalism. When young women personally decide to use or abstain from makeup use, they also consider their personal use of makeup in the future, such as when finding employment. When people such as Jespersen are fired for not wearing makeup, it appears that personal choice has little role in whether or not women wear makeup to work. Although policies such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 sought to address these issues of discrimination, they are not wholly successful. Even though this case is somewhat limiting because the company’s policy only affects it’s own employees, the judge’s ruling could be applied to similar cases in the future. Updating existing policies to incorporate methodologies for eliminating discrimination in the workplace would enable women to freely choose whether or not makeup is a tool they wish to use, and protect women like Jespersen who choose to not to wear makeup.

Scientific Policies

Whereas social policy’s intention to protect women from discrimination in the workplace falls short in practice, health-related policy on cosmetics in the United States is outdated and simply does not protect women from potential health risks. Potentially jeopardizing the health of
American women, the Food and Drug Administration remains largely silent on cosmetic safety issues. The most current approved regulation of cosmetics in the United States is the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938. This piece of legislation defines a cosmetic as any product rubbed or applied to the human body to cleanse, increase attractiveness, or generally change appearance. Over seventy years old, this law is extremely outdated and has very little regulatory power. The Food and Drug Administration has no power to pre-approve the safety of a cosmetic product before it enters the market. Rather, it can only review the safety of products once they are being sold in a retail setting. As startling as this finding may be, even more surprising is that the Food and Drug Administration is not allowed to recall products deemed unsafe. This finding highlights that the vague regulatory powers of the Food and Drug Administration are insufficient at ensuring the safety of cosmetic products. Because they neither have the authority to pre-approve cosmetics before entering the market nor the power to recall faulty products, the FDA can only react to cases of harmful products and advise on best practices to remove them from the market.

To correct this sparse regulatory authority, a bill to amend Title VI of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938 was proposed in 2013 to change the way that the Food and Drug Administration regulates cosmetics. Although it has not been approved, the new legislation calls for alternatives to animal testing, and for salon workers to have Material Safety Data Sheets for each product they use to raise awareness about the safety of the chemicals in each product.

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they use.\textsuperscript{36} For the makeup itself, the bill requires that new products introduced by cosmetic companies need to apply for the product to be tested for safety. The product’s ingredients would need to be specified, and any contaminants need to be printed on the packaging of the product. The bill also calls for additional safety regulations and asks that nanoparticles be listed when used.

This legislation is crucial to understanding that the Food and Drug Administration does very little to currently regulate makeup products. It is a common misperception that cosmetics are more than safe, they are “FDA-approved.” Obviously, this is based on an assumption that the Food and Drug Administration was working to ensure the safety of cosmetic products on the market. The reasons behind these misperceptions can be discerned by understanding what factors influence women to wear or not wear makeup products. If individuals naively believe that the products produced by the makeup industry are proven to be safe before being marketed in stores, then they demonstrate a lack of awareness about the regulation that cosmetics undergo prior to their release in the American market. This highlights the importance of presumed safety in the cosmetics industry, and how unsuspecting consumers may unknowingly be putting themselves at risk of using unsafe cosmetic products.

In spite of the logical decision to increase regulation of cosmetics in the United States through the proposed amendment to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938, there are critics who oppose the bill. An in-depth analysis of the proposed legislation argues that billions of dollars need to be spent and animal testing increased by requiring the Food and Drug

Administration to assess the safety of all cosmetic ingredients.\textsuperscript{37} Although the costs and incidence of animal testing would be dramatically reduced after the first ten years due to new advancements in testing product safety, the initial costs are argued to be too high. This perspective is important when trying to understand the barriers to increased regulation of cosmetics.

Another less prevalent viewpoint that opposes the proposed legislation is based on a globalization perspective. Primarily, cosmetic companies argue that due to more stringent regulation requirements by other countries such as the European Union, China, and Japan, there is less need to formally require increased regulation in the United States.\textsuperscript{38} Citing their adherence to global policy rather than national policy, American cosmetic companies who sell their products internationally already create their products based on a more stringent regulatory structure. This perspective complicates my research and understanding of the safety of cosmetic products in the United States. By leaving the regulation of products largely to the cosmetic company, the federal government passively allows makeup to be regulated at a brand’s will. The new legislation would ensure the safety of cosmetics in the United States, rather than leaving safety decisions to the cosmetic companies themselves. Although it may be more costly for the government to impose stricter regulation of cosmetics, a uniform measure of cosmetic testing would ensure product safety.

Conclusion


Policy shapes both scientific research and social perceptions of women who use cosmetic products. Whereas social policies intend to promote equality, scientific regulations are created to promote the health and safety of individuals. Without ample scientific policy in the United States on cosmetics, research related to the safety of makeup and cosmetics is weak. As shown by the lack of change in policies related to cosmetic use over the last seventy years, the law does not prevent women from being harmed by chemicals used in the makeup industry. Without significant amounts of research by the Food and Drug Administration on product safety, however, effective policy cannot be developed. In combination with failed attempts to protect women’s rights to choose to not wear makeup, the lack of scientific regulation of cosmetics complicates how women are influenced by the makeup industry. This is a no-win situation for women attempting to adhere to societal norms while protecting their personal health, for women who wear makeup may suffer health consequences while those who do not may be fired from their place of employment. Although this certainly does not automatically apply to every woman in the working world, the possibility of being terminated based on a refusal to wear cosmetics is present. Therefore, while social policies are designed to promote gender equality and satisfactorily limit the ways in which society feeds on gendered stereotypes, the law is not a sweeping protector of individuals who decide against wearing makeup.

**Conclusion**

Scientific research on the chemical composition of makeup suggests that makeup in the United States is not entirely safe to use. With limited regulation of makeup products, most products are legally allowed to contain a plethora of ingredients that are known to be hazardous to human health. Although the quantities of these ingredients in products is very minute, a lack
of research on the safety of these ingredients (even in small proportions), proves that makeup is not known to be safe. Only with greater scientific research of the products themselves can the safety of makeup be determined. This can mainly be achieved through increased regulation of makeup products.

Current sociological research on makeup use suggests that women who choose to use cosmetics are perceived as more attractive and more successful than those who do not wear makeup. Emphasizing the effect that an individual who wears makeup has on others, as well as makeup’s influence on self-perception and self-esteem, research on cosmetic use is commonly linked to an alteration in both inner and outer perception. Even though makeup has historically been used to express masculinity, the current uses of cosmetics suggest that femininity rather than masculinity is the most common intended expression. Social policy, intended to prevent discrimination for women who do not adhere to gender norms, has in certain instances perpetuated them. In spite of existing research on the discrimination and altered perception of women who wear makeup, researchers have not yet examined the reasoning behind makeup use.

In my personal research, I examine how Brandeis University females over the age of eighteen are socialized from a young age into wearing makeup and how their personal decisions are influenced by those around them. Family groups, peer structures, and other influences each alter whether or not a woman decides to wear makeup. These influences will be analyzed in order to determine whether or not stereotypes are reinforced across cultures, women, and families. Through a more comprehensive understanding of the reasoning behind makeup use, more effective policy goals can be established to ensure the physical and mental health of all women as they transition from youth to adolescence, from adolescence to young adulthood, and
from young adulthood to a professional career. These influences will be analyzed in order to determine whether or not stereotypes are reinforced across cultures, women, and families.
Exposure to the World of Cosmetics: Early Influences

Social science researchers have long been interested in studying how social, physical, and cognitive changes during adolescence affect the formation of identity. While children mimic the behaviors of their parents at earlier stages of life, adolescence is a time in which children are more vulnerable to social messages and cues because of their rapidly developing levels of independence and identity.\textsuperscript{39, 40} The introduction of children, specifically young girls, to makeup and cosmetics reinforces claims about adolescence. Similar to choosing what clothes to wear or what food to eat, deciding to wear makeup is a personal choice that is deeply impacted by individuals with which a subject surrounds herself. This chapter explores how the twenty subjects who were interviewed were initially exposed to makeup and the cosmetics industry, and how their perception of makeup changed based on the influences around them.

Although ten of the women interviewed classify themselves as non-make-up wearers, all of those who were interviewed were exposed to makeup as a child, either at home or in another environment. Therefore, the narratives of the twenty Brandeis University undergraduate females that were interviewed are grouped according to their first memory of makeup use and their experiences with makeup in this chapter. Based on my findings, I argue that the subject’s mother was a common early influence to makeup use. In addition, friend groups were also analyzed as a group that has unique influences over the subject’s early life, especially as a young adolescent. By grouping together these influential people, I demonstrate that multiple family and peer influences affect the ways in which children and adolescents perceive and utilize cosmetics. Based on my findings, I argue that initial exposures to makeup, prompted by both maternal


influences and peer groups, provide young girls with a desire to emulate someone else. Essentially a type of performance, this behavior mimics the actions of others as an attempt to emulate a more mature persona.

*Role of the Mother and Other Maternal Figures*

The immediate family of an individual is typically considered to include the subject’s parents and siblings. Although variations exist within the immediate family structure, for example, if an individual is raised by a single parent, the concept of the nuclear family remains unaltered. Perhaps surprising, all twenty of my participants were raised by both a mother and father in the same household. There were no cases of divorced, widowed, or same sex parents in the sample that was interviewed. Therefore, the role of the mother in each of the twenty subjects’ first exposure to makeup pertains specifically to a heterosexual married woman. I feel this is an important clarification because it demonstrates that the women who were interviewed come from similar family structures. Of course, differences may exist across various family structures due to many reasons; however, there were no significantly apparent differences that arose throughout the interviews.

The subjects who were interviewed frequently included their mothers in their first memories of being exposed to makeup. The way in which makeup is introduced to a child has the ability to encourage particular behaviors or routines. If parents, mothers in particular, act as positive role models to their daughters, then their direct behavior impacts how the child views their appearance (CITES?). For those that have specific memories of seeing makeup for the first time, interviewees most often recall their mother applying makeup. Georgia, who typically does not wear makeup, explains:
My mom has this vanity table, with this enormous mirror and all of her makeup is on the surface. I can still imagine Dior because she bought the same makeup for many years and she puts the same makeup in the same place. Every Sunday we go to church... and I just remember every Sunday I would see her putting on makeup. She doesn’t really wear makeup for anything else - just for church. So that’s my memory of seeing someone wear makeup for the first time.

From a young age, Georgia viewed makeup as part of a ritual of getting ready for church, based on her mother’s actions every Sunday morning. Georgia further explains that she never consciously thought about the reasoning behind her mother’s makeup use, or why her father never bothered to apply lipstick himself. She simply understood her mother’s makeup use as an action her mother felt was necessary to attend church, even though no other members of the household felt the need to do the same. When Georgia was a few years older, she realized that her mom did not want her to use makeup, in spite of her mother’s own makeup use:

> Whenever I [would] buy, like, lip gloss, she says, “Why are you ruining your face, why are you ruining your skin?” But she puts on makeup every week! So I never really went to her for advice. I think the first time I heard that was in 8th grade, when I was wondering if I should put on makeup, but then she said that and it has forever stuck with me.

Emphasizing her mother’s role in her own makeup use, Georgia notes that because her mother did not want her to wear makeup, she ultimately chose to not wear it regularly. Although her mother never offered Georgia advice about purchasing products, she impacted the ways in which Georgia thinks about makeup and minimized her makeup use with her outspoken views against her daughter’s product usage.

In contrast to Georgia’s mother viewing makeup as a tool for adults to use in professional settings, Ally’s mother views makeup as an outlet for creativity and self-expression. Like Georgia, Ally does not typically wear makeup; however, her mother’s influence is still apparent, as she is the person on whom Ally first remembers seeing makeup:
My mom, she actually loves makeup. I think she has a license to do makeup professionally. She is really good at it. She wears makeup nicely. I saw makeup on her when I was little and I thought it was elegant because she doesn't wear too much makeup or bright, “Look at me” makeup colors. It’s always really nice and elegant.

Recalling the precision and adoration with which her mom applied makeup, Ally fuses her current memories of her mother’s abilities with her past sightings of watching her mom apply cosmetics. Even though Ally was never passionate about makeup herself, her mother taught her how to use products and encouraged her to care for her skin with lotions and cleansers. She says, “My mom always bought me good skincare products because she knew about that stuff. I use a cleanser everyday and I typically use a facial moisturizer at night.” Demonstrating respect for her mother’s personal decisions, Ally shares that her own values and identity do not align with her mom’s passion for makeup. However, Ally faithfully follows her mother’s skin care advice because she trusts her mother’s expertise and knowledge about the health and appearance of her skin. Mimicking her mother’s skin care routine but not sharing her passion for cosmetics, Ally still relies on her mother for advice and wisdom.

Several others that were interviewed similarly expressed how the presence of a maternal figure impacted their makeup use. For some subjects, this person was a grandmother, if their own mom did not wear makeup regularly. In these cases, I consider the grandmother as a maternal figure, influencing how her granddaughter perceived makeup at an early stage of life. For example, Olivia vividly remembers her first encounters with her grandmother’s makeup:

This is going to sound really horrible, but my grandma wears a ton of makeup, ever since I can remember. She wears so much makeup that she literally looks like a different person when she doesn’t wear makeup, but she’s been like that ever since I can remember. So I would say, I can remember my grandma in makeup probably from like the age of two or three… And this is going to sound mean, but I probably thought that she looked slightly like a doll at some point.
From an extremely young age, Olivia was aware of makeup’s influence over an individual’s appearance. Claiming that her grandmother looked like an entirely different person with makeup on, she demonstrates her disapprobation of her grandmother’s abundant makeup use. Though she now regularly wears makeup herself, Olivia uses her grandmother’s makeup choices as an example of what not to do, rather than what to emulate.

First impressions of makeup on loved ones can either foster a desire to wear makeup or diminish it. Unlike Olivia, Penelope positively associates her first memories of makeup with her grandmother’s adoration for lipstick. After watching her grandmother apply makeup at age four or five, Penelope says she felt a strong desire to do the same:

I liked it a lot. It definitely made them look pretty and girly and I loved lipstick as a kid, so I wanted to emulate them. I wanted to wear lipstick, too. When I was dressing up and playing school or house with my dolls, I would dress up in lipstick because that’s what I learned and what I wanted.

Cognizant of the femininity that lipstick seemed to elucidate from her grandmother, Penelope would dress up to look like her female role models. Even before kindergarten, she was allowed to use makeup in play settings to express her desire to be more mature and adult-looking. By repeatedly copying her grandmother’s behavior around her home, Penelope expressed her own desire to “perform” grown-up and formed an attachment to makeup at a young age.

While some interviewees recall their first encounter with makeup as watching their mother or grandmother apply it to her own face, others remember first being introduced to makeup to prepare for a dance or theater event. In these instances, makeup was being applied on their faces by their mothers. Several of the women I interviewed had very vivid memories of their first introduction to the world of cosmetics. For example, Felicity recalls:

I know my first memory of having makeup put on me when I was, like, seven or six. I did ballet for a good majority of my life. For those performances, you wore a ton of makeup
because you’re on stage and that’s meant to stand out. I remember being in the dressing room and having my mom put the makeup on me. The whole pencil eyeliner, the big red lips, the pink rosy cheeks, and I remember thinking, “Oh my god! I look like a monster!” when I looked in the mirror. But I remember being obsessed with this pink lipstick she put on me, and I could tell you what the packaging looks like now. It was a tube, but it was this cream. It had ridges and there was a little gold band where it separated through the cap of the tube itself. and there was the prettiest pink - corally pink - that you’ve ever seen. I don’t think my mom ever used it except for my dance performances.

Remembering the specific moment and product with which her mom first introduced her to makeup, Felicity eagerly describes both her excitement and terror at seeing herself in full face makeup. It is clear that although she was intimidated by having makeup applied to her, she was equally entranced by a lip color that was reserved especially for her own use. She emphasized:

I thought makeup seemed so adult and so mature. It was something that I was kind of interested in, but a little too shy and probed my mom more...But I remember thinking that it was just so far off from where I was in my development - Granted, I was six - but I just thought it was so mature and so adult. I was kind of excited to be at a point where I could wear makeup.

Although her mother’s own use of makeup did not impact Felicity’s first memory of cosmetic products, Felicity still mentions her mother as an influence in developing her curiosity about cosmetics. Asking her mom questions about the products led Felicity to remain excited and optimistic about a time in which she could wear makeup for everyday use. However, the most notable thing for Felicity were the particular products she was allowed to wear for ballet recitals. Perhaps that is why, at age twenty-one, Felicity has an extremely large makeup collection and alters her makeup to match her outfit and mood.

Similar to Felicity’s first encounter with cosmetics, Beth was introduced to makeup through theater performances as a child. However, rather than becoming enamored with the lipstick and eyeliner applied by her mother, Beth’s first experience with makeup was less than positive:
I was seven or eight maybe, and my mom had to pin me down in the corner of the bathroom to put it on me. I don’t know what the big deal was. I think it might have been the eye makeup that was the issue. I was just scared having it that close to my eyes, but I cringed into a corner and scrunched up into a little ball.

Afraid of having her mom apply makeup to her eyes, Beth would have rather curled up on the bathroom floor than wear makeup. Beth’s negative reaction towards having makeup applied to her face continued throughout her experience in theatre. Although Beth remembers feeling scared about having things close to her eyes, she says her mother never spoke to her about why she was putting in on her face for the performance.

In another similar case, Elaine had a negative experience when her mom applied makeup on her for dance performances. She says:

I did dance when I was in first grade at a dance studio, and I remember my mom was putting makeup on me. And my mom doesn’t usually wear makeup, so I like, I didn’t really notice it before. I was surprised because she knew how to put on makeup, I guess because I had never seen it before. And it really hurt when she put it on me, and my mom looked at me and said, “Beauty is pain, Elaine”. And, uh, so that was my first memory of makeup. She was pulling on my face. And my hair! And she was putting stuff on my eye and it hurt. I was like six or seven maybe and I did not appreciate it.

For Elaine, the experience of wearing makeup for the first time and recognizing the existence of makeup did not unleash a passion for purple eyeshadow or coral lipstick. Elaine primarily remembers the physical pain she felt as her mother tugged at her hair and skin, in order to prepare her for her dance performance. Although she doesn’t recall her mother wearing makeup, Elaine’s perception of makeup as a child was largely shaped through her mother’s comments and attitude towards makeup and beauty culture. Elaine says:

I always thought [makeup] was just for, like, dancers or people who were professionals. I don’t think it really occurred to me that real people wore makeup because my mom didn’t wear makeup. So, I just assumed that everyone looked, actually just the way that they looked.
Elaine’s experiences with cosmetics were limited as a child to dance recitals. Her beliefs that the average person did not wear makeup were founded on the example set by her mother, who did not wear makeup regularly. However, Elaine’s mother applied cosmetics to her daughter for dance performances early on, and helped her navigate the basics of makeup application later in life. Yet even though her mother was more positive towards makeup use when Elaine’s was fifteen, Elaine never gravitated towards makeup:

And my mom bought it, she took me to the store and I was really embarrassed because I didn’t know what I was doing. I was like, I don’t like new things. But that was sort of my first “stuff” and after a while, my mom thought I was old enough to sort of start my own stuff, because I had been using some of her old makeup that she used to wear. She sort of bought me a Estee Lauder package or something because she asked one of her friends who does hair and makeup for people what she recommended.

Intimidated and shy around makeup products, Elaine remembers seeking her mother’s expertise and relying on her to know what products would work for her skin and complexion. Although her mother did not wear much makeup herself, she guided Elaine through the intimidating rows of products to find what worked best for her. Elaine’s situation demonstrates how her mother sought to shield her from the beauty industry as much as she could until a time that she felt was appropriate for her daughter to use makeup. At this point, her mother helped her as best as she could to learn what products worked best for her.

Literal performances for dance, ballet, and theatre lay the foundation for the act of performing socially for others. In performances, makeup is used so that an individual’s facial features are visible from the audience. Although makeup physically creates visibility for performers on a stage, it also has the perceived power to create social visibility off stage. The initial exposures that these women have to makeup showcase how recitals are a place of literal
performance, and how makeup initially begins as a physical remedy to enable them to stand out on stage.

Like Felicity, Beth, and Elaine, Megan also relied on her mom during special performances as a young child to be the expert on makeup use:

I wore stage makeup for different plays. Probably as early as elementary school, but I think the first big play I was in was in fifth grade, where I know I was wearing a lot of stage makeup for that. Big eyelashes, blush, all that stuff. Crazy!...We had to go all out, your entire face was covered. You used big eyelashes, it was really over the top. You look terrifying, kind of.

Although she describes her first memory of wearing makeup as terrifying, Megan’s experiences on the stage were grounded by her mom’s own makeup use in everyday situations. Megan says:

If I didn’t know she was wearing makeup, I wouldn’t have thought that [she was]. She never took me to the store to buy makeup. I think she was like, “Why are you doing that! You shouldn’t do that!” when she saw I was wearing makeup and stuff outside of theater.

Even though her mother supported her using makeup for the stage, Megan was not encouraged to wear cosmetics in everyday situations. In fact, her mother spoke out against Megan’s makeup use when she began to wear cosmetics more frequently. Unlike Elaine, whose mother eventually introduced her to makeup as a fun way of growing up, Megan’s mom discouraged her makeup use into her adolescence.

Surprisingly, the circumstances by which Felicity and Megan were introduced to the makeup industry are strikingly similar. Both subjects, at first intimidated by makeup, were introduced to cosmetics by their mothers. However, both of their mothers later restricted their use of products when it was worn outside of dance and theatre performances. The initial purpose of makeup for these girls was to make them physically “stand out” on stage, yet the boundaries and limitations of where it was acceptable to stand out remained unclear. Outside of dance,
playing grown up was the norm. Yet even in these instances, makeup was used as its own kind of
social performance. After witnessing makeup use in the real world, Felicity and Megan
attempted to mimic the behavior of others outside of dance, demonstrating the social grandeur
attributed to cosmetics products.

Even Georgia, who was not in theatre or dance, felt as though her mom was sending
mixed signals to her about makeup use. Although Felicity and Megan eventually began wearing
makeup regularly, Georgia never did, citing her mom’s influence as a major factor in her
decision. For Beth and Elaine, the other two girls who performed on stage, makeup never
became a part of their daily routine. Although makeup was eventually introduced to them outside
of theatre and dance, their initial perceptions of who makeup was for and why they were required
to wear it did not significantly change.

As the primary role model for using makeup products, mothers influence their daughters
based on the products they wear and their routines around makeup use, in addition to direct
commentary to their daughter’s about their appearance. In most of the interviews that were
conducted, commentary was negative and discouraging towards makeup use. A striking instance
in which my own perceptions were challenged, however, was with Lauren, a sophomore who
wears makeup. She says:

One time I was with my cousins and they painted my nails. I was so excited, and [my
parents] were kind of upset about it. They were really trying to not put gender roles on
me when I was younger, like, they would always buy both kinds of toys. So they were
like, “Don’t force roles on her.” But I was really excited about it. It’s funny, because
usually, a lot of the times, a mom will be like “Look, dressing up! Look at my little girl!”
But my parents said, “No, we don’t want her to do anything!” But I did it anyway.

Unlike Georgia’s mom, who spoke out against makeup use for her daughter, Lauren’s parents
were more focused on allowing their daughter to grow up without having gender roles placed
upon her. In spite of their reservations about having Lauren use makeup, they chose to support her decisions and never argued with her about her makeup use. When she was a few years older, Lauren remembers how her mom would help her purchase products:

> My mom helped me pick it out and kind of, like, looked at what I thought was best. But when I did it, she would be like, “I don’t know either.” She would be very honest about it. She would ask me why I wanted to get it, and we’d talk about it. But when I think about putting it on, maybe she was there, but I think it was kind of myself, my own kind of thing. But when I think of t.v. or other families putting on makeup… it’s a little different. She’s like, “I don’t really know, but I can help you pick out by reading the backs of stuff.” She still, we still do that. She’s like, “I don’t know what’s best.” I’m like, “Me neither!” (Laughs)

Lauren is one of the only women who expressed neither intimidation nor shyness around makeup products in her interview. Although her mother does not wear makeup regularly, she supported and discussed makeup with Lauren as she purchased products. Trying to understand the reasoning behind her daughter’s makeup use, rather than discouraging her from using the products, Lauren’s mom made shopping for makeup fun and relaxing. Unable to teach her daughter how to use the products, Lauren’s mom allowed her daughter to learn on her own and experiment with colors and styles.

Lauren’s case proved to be an exception in the sample of women that were interviewed. Some of the cases which have been presented include accounts of mothers discouraging their daughter’s makeup use, and there was also an instance in which rules were established about makeup. Though Lauren’s parents did not want her to wear makeup out of fear for placing gender roles on her too soon, she was allowed to express herself through cosmetics after having discussions with her parents. In the United States, it is a common occurrence that while most women wear makeup, men generally do not. For Lauren’s parents, wearing makeup symbolized the expression of femininity and they did not wish to force their daughter into these gender roles.
too early in her development. In the third chapter, the role of gender will be more closely explored.

In Heidi’s family, however, restrictions around makeup use were in place to maintain her role as a child, although they were not necessarily adhered to:

My parents were pretty adamant about when I was fifteen being allowed to wear makeup. But even then, I just did it, but I never thought about it. It was just makeup, so, makeup was officially welcomed and accepted by both parents when I was fifteen. But actually, when I was in sixth grade I would sneak eyeliner. I would go to school and use eyeliner and go home and take it off.

The rules around makeup use were clear in Heidi’s family, yet the reasoning behind it was not. Knowing that she was not allowed to wear makeup until she was older, Heidi hid her makeup use from her parents. Although Heidi was never able to wear makeup around her parents before she turned fifteen, she wore cosmetics in secret, among her classmates and peers. When asked how she was first exposed to makeup, the familiar contradiction emerges:

I don’t know if I thought about why, I think it was that I was curious what my mom had on. I wanted to be like her. It was a game for me. ‘Oh, you’re putting something on your lips, what is that?’

A role model for her daughter, Heidi’s mom was the person whom Heidi most wanted to emulate. Yet in spite of not even being able to wear nail polish or makeup until she was fifteen, Heidi’s desire to make herself look like her mom did not change, as she borrowed makeup from others until she was allowed to wear cosmetics. Later in this chapter, I question how Heidi was able to ignore her parent’s rules, yet others who faced similar discouragement from their parents never went against their decisions with regards to makeup use.

Other than mothers and grandmothers, some interviewees have other female relatives who were briefly mentioned in a few interviews. Although some interviewees grew up alongside
younger or older sisters, these connections were at best vaguely described as connections that had much less impact than that of a mother or grandmother. Therefore, these relationships are not included as having a significant impact in this discussion.

**Role of Peers During Adolescence**

Once in middle school and high school, interviewees became more independent of their parents as they were subjected to the opinions of their peers. In the process of shaping their own identity, the young women who were interviewed expressed the importance that social connections had on their self-perception and self-esteem. Directly and indirectly, friends and peers who were enthusiastic about makeup influenced and assisted others throughout adolescence with identifying themselves as makeup and non-make-up wearers. Kimberly, who was never exposed to makeup at home, discovered the existence of beauty products among her friends. She states:

I guess my friends had a makeover party at the end of middle school, beginning of high school, but I was kind of scared of what I would look like in makeup so I refused to wear it for a while. But then maybe in high school, junior or senior year, I was like, maybe I will look prettier?

After being exposed to makeup by her peers, Kimberly both questioned her peers’ decisions to wear makeup and her own makeup use. Following this incident, Kimberly and her friend bought makeup at Sephora as a way of socially adjusting to the start of high school, and a new phase of life. She even asked a friend who is “really good at makeup” to teach her how to apply the products she purchased. Even so, Kimberly says:

I guess I wanted to try it out, but I mean my friends, people wore it in middle school, even. But I don’t think I was really peer pressured into it. It was my own curiosity trying it out. It didn’t really affect me that much.
Although she claims that her friends’ actions did not affect her, Kimberly’s recollections reveal that the behaviors of her peers impacted her way of thinking, and stirred a curiosity about cosmetics. Although she does not wear makeup regularly in the present day, her experiences as a teenager gave her the opportunity to determine whether or not she enjoyed wearing makeup.

Other women classified their tween and early teenage years as an “awkward phase” - a time in which they were uncomfortable in their own skin, and strived to balance the end of childhood with the next phase of their lives. Makeup served as a tool to help them transition, yet also caused confusion for some subjects. Jane, for example, says:

> There’s the great side of, “I feel great when I’m wearing this and it covers up blemishes.” But then there’s the other side, of “Not all my friends are wearing makeup, do I really need this? When should I wear makeup, when should I not wear makeup?” That was actually a really big issue when I started wearing makeup. I started putting it on before I went to the gym or something and it’s hard to get off of it.

While makeup promised to correct blemishes, it failed to address why some wore makeup and others did not. Seemingly left alone to learn the socially acceptable places to wear makeup, she looked to her friends as a way to measure her own actions.

In much the same way as Jane, Georgia also questioned whether or not she should wear makeup throughout middle school:

> In middle school there were all these social events at my Catholic school. And not even social events, girls and my friends around me would put on makeup casually every day. Badly, in my opinion, but they put on makeup. And I remember thinking, “They’re putting on makeup. Should I put on makeup? I don’t really know how to put on makeup.”

Stressing the uncertainty she felt about the acceptability of cosmetics and her own ability to apply them, Georgia recalls the dynamic between what her friends were beginning to explore and what she had yet to learn. Although some of her peers used makeup to transition out of childhood and to transform themselves into more mature adolescents, Georgia remembered her mother
telling her that makeup was meant for grown ups. As a combined result of her mother’s advice and her own uneasiness about applying cosmetics, Georgia never wore makeup regularly, even in college.

In addition to questioning when it was and was not acceptable to wear makeup, others directly called attention to wanting to change their appearance. Though this was part of their personal transition out of childhood, watching peers become more mature in appearance hastened their questioning for change. Turning to makeup as a tool to alter her own appearance, Lauren says, “I think it was part of that step of Lauren becoming, like, not-awkward Lauren. Like being the person I wanted to be. I don’t know if I needed makeup to do that, or if it was kind of like what I assumed was part of the process.” Although Lauren does not credit makeup as the reason she became less awkward in her own skin, she assumed that cosmetics were a way to make her feel more mature and adult among her peers, based on the changes she witnessed within her friend group.

Like Lauren, Megan noted that applying makeup was not the only change that helped her transition to her new self. She states:

I don’t know if I necessarily really like thought of it as a huge change. It was kind of like, you know, like the transition from middle school to high school. Trying to be less awkward. It was one of those things that came with like getting bangs and wearing makeup and wearing like normal clothing instead of your pink velour sweatsuits. It came with all the other changes. Like I kind of just went went all those other changes. I started straightening my hair and they kind of all run together.

Comparing wearing makeup to changing her hairstyle and her clothing choices, Megan believes that makeup was simply one part of an entire process of blending in with older peers. Although her makeup choices were not drastic, the opportunity to wear eyeliner and mascara made her feel
safer in the transition out of her “awkward phase.” This allowed her to cement her identity as an adolescent and provided her with an opportunity to socially thrive.

In addition to relying on makeup to become less awkward, interview subjects used makeup as a means to gain acceptance from their peers. Climbing the social hierarchy and needing social recognition, young girls turned to makeup as a way of embracing the transition from young girl to teenager. Especially when peers had started to wear makeup in middle school, the desire to join the bandwagon only increased. In their separate interviews, subjects repeated this sentiment:

Olivia: And like, in middle school, girls did wear mascara and eye makeup and more stuff, so I kind of thought it was the cool thing to do. I was interested in just in playing with makeup, you know. So I wanted to wear makeup, too.

Penelope: I felt good about it. It made me look prettier and it was normal to do. I just wanted to do what was normal and it made me feel like I fit in. To keep up with what was cool in middle school, that’s what the popular kids were doing.

Quinn: I thought it was really cool. It was the thing to do. I think it sort of signifies growing up, that you’re able to wear them, so it seemed really exciting that I was finally able to wear clear mascara (Laughs).

Regardless of Olivia’s initial hesitation towards makeup because of her grandmother, she eventually changed her perspective and embraced cosmetics in order to be socially accepted by
her peers. Penelope’s adoration for makeup as a child grew in middle school, as it became more acceptable to wear in public. Quinn similarly fostered her initial interests in lipstick as wearing makeup became the norm. Each of these girls continues to wear makeup continually in college, although they have each adjusted their use of products since middle school. Although in the present day, wearing makeup has become a routine, the initial driving force behind makeup use for Penelope, Quinn, and Olivia was the presence of a social hierarchy in which wearing makeup gave individuals a seat closer to the top.

Particular instances throughout adolescence highlighted the new social pressures to wear makeup. What began as an exciting new way to mark the end of childhood became a social occasion in high school. For particular people, certain occasions stood out as a time in which they were told makeup was necessary. Samantha, who has never regularly worn makeup, remembers an instance in which she felt pressured by a family friend to change her appearance:

She was like, “Oh we need to put on a picture of you on the social network thing. Before we do that, let’s put some makeup on you.” And it was terrible. Absolutely terrible. Eyeshadow all the way to my eyebrows. It was something I was really not comfortable with. Makeup to me is not meant to create an entirely new face, just bring out the good and help with looking a bit better, but she put this really intense eye makeup on and then she took my picture and was like, “You look so great! We should totally use that picture.” She was older than me and actually went to Brandeis herself. I thought, well, I guess this is what you do when you go to college.

Even though Samantha was beyond the age of transitioning from childhood to the next phase of her life, she still felt pressure from a family friend to look a certain way in a photo. Uncomfortable with her new look, she felt unnatural and out of place, yet she followed through with the friend’s advice because she was older and because there was an occasion to which Samantha believed makeup was necessary.
When Beth, at age eighteen, attended her sister’s wedding, the bridal party did not give her a choice in wearing makeup:

During my sister’s bachelorette weekend, she was like, “We’re going out and you’re wearing makeup.” I was like, OK. I was with a group of women who were six or seven years older than I was. It was kind of weird. We were going out and doing things that were more age appropriate for them than for me. I just went along with whatever they said to do. One of the things was “You’re going to wear makeup. You’re going to do this.” We went to a club and I really didn’t like it. I really didn’t want to be there. Other people were dancing and I got really upset… After that, one of my sister’s friends came over and said, “You need to pull yourself together.”

Surrounded by women older than herself, Beth felt powerless in her decision to wear makeup during her sister’s bachelorette party. Having only worn makeup for theatre performances in the past, Beth was alienated by her peers, whose primary focus was on everyone looking glamorous for photos from that evening. When it became clear that Beth was upset, instead of consoling her, a member of the party rudely reminded Beth that expressing an unhappy emotion during a bachelorette party was not socially acceptable. Although Beth adhered to beauty standards that night with regards to her use of cosmetics, the social requirements exceeded what Beth was able to manage, as she was clearly uncomfortable in her environment.

In a more positive though equally social setting, Megan also felt certain pressures from her peers to look a particular way, although her experiences were positive. Recalling high school dances, she says:

I think at dances there was this big emphasis on getting ready with your friends. That was the activity. Going to the dance wasn’t just going to the dance. The fun part of going to the dance was spending the three hours beforehand getting ready. You obviously had to do things while getting ready like straightening your hair and putting on makeup and picking out dress options. I think it was a social thing. Everyone would go to one person’s house. Now it sounds terrible. All of your ten friends smushed in the bathroom getting ready. But it felt very exciting.
In different circumstances, Megan may not have felt pressure to be more formal when going to the dance. However, her friend group created a social gathering beforehand in which friends were expected to adhere to activities such as putting on makeup and fixing hair. Although this was performed as a fun and relaxing ritual to prepare for a social occasion, the standards of the group affected everyone.

In peer groups, makeup was part of a social performance. With the intention of looking cool and fitting in with friends, the use of cosmetics fostered a social environment in which bonds could be made over someone’s new eyeshadow or lip gloss. Similar to having a particular brand of jeans or purse, the use of makeup in adolescent girls centered on popularity within a particular social group. With the pressure to look a particular, interviewees either learned how to apply makeup or distanced themselves from their makeup-wearing peers.

Impact of Early Influences

Early exposures to cosmetics affect how subjects use makeup to alter their appearance, whether influenced most by a peer, friend, or maternal figure. First exposures through maternal influences and dance or theater recitals teach young girls the physical effects of makeup. Meant to enhance visibility from the stage, makeup products physically enable a woman’s facial features to be visible to an audience. Among the women that were interviewed, one person did not solely influence whether or not someone wore makeup. Rather, in most cases, women wore makeup regularly due to a combination of multiple influences in their lives. Whereas makeup use initially began for a literal performance, cosmetic use becomes an emblem of a social performance during adolescence. Appearing mature, cool, and confident through makeup use
became the norm, leaving an indelible mark on the interviewees’ transition out of childhood and into their teenage years.

Felicity, Olivia, Lauren, Quinn, and Kimberly each wear makeup regularly in the present day; however, neither of their mothers wore makeup regularly. So, how did these young women come to wear makeup and become passionate about it as a way to express their own style and personality? As evidenced by their own narratives, other family members and dance performances first introduced them to the cosmetics industry. This first exposure to makeup rendered some of the women entranced with makeup products, whereas others thought it was outlandish and insincere-looking. In middle school, however, each of the interviewees revealed their desire to fit in and look beautiful. Seeing makeup as a tool to help them abandon their awkward phase, each of these subjects embraced makeup use. Even though their mother’s did not wear makeup, they supported their daughter’s by helping them identify products to use and by making makeup feel special and important.

Georgia and Heidi both sought to mirror their mother’s makeup use, yet were prohibited from doing so either through their mother’s cautioning against it or specific rules about cosmetics, even though their own mothers wore makeup. Both of these women initially liked the idea of wearing cosmetics, but their parents limited their makeup use. Yet, one regularly wears makeup and one does not in the present day. As Georgia’s friend group overall did not care as much about appearances and social trends, she did not learn how to apply makeup. Even in high school, she would ask others to apply it for her on special occasions such as the prom. However, Heidi’s friend group was slightly different. Enthusiastic about makeup, they would apply lipstick and eyeliner in the bathroom at school each morning. Wanting to participate and knowing she
could take it off before school was over, Heidi began to wear makeup in spite of her parent’s rules against it.

Crucial moments in identity formation were often in the presence of friends or peers. Looking attractive, participating in popular social activities, and being in the presence of older peers ultimately enticed most subjects to wear makeup on more than one occasion. Beth and Samantha had deeply negative experiences when older peers attempted to alter their appearance. They felt like they were not being true to themselves, and ultimately chose not to wear makeup regularly as a result of their discomfort in a particular social setting. Megan, Kimberly, Penelope, and others never felt as though makeup could have a bad impact on their social standing. This influenced their makeup use, as they made attempts to find their place among the social hierarchy in middle school and high school. For them, makeup itself wasn’t necessarily the most exciting part of wearing lip gloss or eyeshadow; rather, it was the impression they felt they left on their peers.

Overall, early influences and exposures to makeup deeply impacted the identity formation and self-perception of the women who were interviewed. Although women began using makeup for recitals as children, makeup use became a way to socially perform for peers during adolescence. The person or people who most strongly influenced how an individual felt towards makeup varied between peers and maternal figures. For some, parents seemed to have the strongest impact; for others, a particular experience among peers solidified their distrust of cosmetic products. Most often, however, a combination of social groups and maternal influence led individuals to choose to wear cosmetics in everyday use. In the next chapter, I consider the
role that marketing and messaging has played in how interviewees perceive style and beauty amongst makeup trends.
In the previous chapter, I considered how interviewees’ makeup use was directly influenced by family and friends as young girls. When young girls see their mom or grandmother wear makeup, they are introduced to a new aspect of adulthood, and grow curious about becoming a grown up woman. For young girls whose moms never wore makeup, the cosmetics industry was revealed to them by their peers. Fitting in, growing up, and standing out became ideals to strive for in middle school. Most often, makeup was the tool used to attain those ideals.

In this chapter, the use of makeup is examined through the lenses that society places on the women I interviewed. As my interviewees grew older, they accepted that makeup was more enduring than a new toy or a phase of adolescence. Though style and usage of cosmetics changed with age, most interviewees noted a growing perception of what makeup they were supposed to wear, and when they were expected to wear it. As opposed to the direct influence they received from loved ones and friends while young, messaging about the social expectations of makeup use was indirectly learned from outside influences, changing their behaviors as they entered their late teen years.

Messaging about the social expectations of makeup came through many mediums. As others before me have found, beauty ideologies vary across cultures and nations. Although all twenty interviewees attend Brandeis University, nine expressed close cultural ties to another country. In these cases, the messaging and marketing of the social expectations of makeup varied in comparison to American ideals. Unsurprisingly, the standards of beauty in one culture were not consistent between the U.S. and other countries. Partly generational, these standards changed...
for some as they began living in the United States. Because one’s household is often linked to one’s culture, this is not surprising.

However, over the past twenty years another change has developed which has deeply influenced marketing and messaging within the cosmetics industry. The emergence of Internet research, Youtube, blogs, and other social media outlets has made learning about products and techniques more accessible than for previous generations. Although magazines and television still play a role in indirect messaging and marketing of cosmetics, the ability to quickly attain information via the Internet has allowed social expectations to be more fully explained and executed by young women worldwide. The shift in how individuals acquire information from print to social media platforms encourages women to be active and educated consumers rather than blindly purchasing products based on advertisements made by makeup corporations.

In this chapter, I argue that values related to cultural standards of beauty overshadow the individual habits and behaviors of family members, and that the internet allows women to maintain the values and beauty standards of their culture even when living halfway around the world. Instead of passively adhering to the fashion and beauty messaging from United States corporations, women are empowered to research products and messages from around the globe in order to determine what products are best for themselves.

American Beauty Standards

In the United States, women are expected to adhere to certain societal standards of beauty. Although my interviewees from this country did not explicitly refer to the United States’ beauty ideologies in expressing the number and types of products worn, they implicitly referred to these standards throughout their commentary. Eight of the ten women who regularly wear
makeup express no strong ties to another country. Therefore, their perception and use of particular makeup products best demonstrates the cultural beauty standards in America. The social expectations regarding makeup use in the United States will be more heavily discussed in the following chapter; however, this section will provide an introductory glimpse into modern American makeup use.

Based on the responses from my interviewees, makeup is meant to enhance natural features by adding color to the face and erasing blemishes. Interviewees mentioned regularly wearing between two and six products per day to achieve this look. For those who regularly wear less makeup, time constraints and informal social settings were cited as reasons for wearing less amounts of makeup. Lauren typically wears “just mascara and colored chapstick” although she will “do blush or a foundation” if she thinks she doesn’t look her best. Using minimal amounts of makeup products, Lauren feels that makeup should enhance her natural features while providing a pop of color to her face. Similar to Lauren, Megan uses very few makeup products regularly. Megan says, “I put on my pencil eyeliner on top of my liquid eyeliner and then if I am not feeling lazy, or if I’m going somewhere more exciting than class, I will put on eyeshadow or mascara.” Because her face already has pink undertones, Megan feels that she doesn’t need a lot of colorful makeup to stand out. Instead, she relies on two eyeliners for regular use, only wearing more makeup when she feels the need to dress up for a social occasion.

Penelope describes the wear-what-you-need mentality very well, detailing the reasoning behind each of her product uses: “Most of the time, I don’t even wear eyeliner. I just do mascara, so my eyelashes look bigger. I put on some lip color, so my face doesn’t look so pale. And cover-up, if I have little blemishes.” Rather than carelessly applying makeup products, each
makeup product that Penelope applies serves a particular function. Having larger eyelashes, clear skin, and color in her face are the ideals that Penelope strives to present in her use of cosmetics.

While some interviewees use only a minimal number of products to feel they match society’s standards of beauty, others apply various kinds of cosmetics daily. Even though Iris wears mascara and eyeliner, she likes to “stick to face powder and foundation” to even out her complexion. Not alone in her product usage, foundation and powder tended to be considered staples among the interviewees who wear more than three makeup products per day. On an everyday basis, Jane uses: “Cover up and then a powder over, and then sometimes a little bit of blush and mascara, and then some eyeliner and eyeshadow.” Relying on six types of products in her makeup routine, Jane seeks to epitomize American beauty standards through the use of cosmetics. Like Jane and Iris, Olivia wears “foundation, blush, powder, eyeliner, and lip stuff” each day. Although each of these three women uses a greater number of makeup products than others who were interviewed, the look that they are attempting to achieve remains the same.

Among each of these interviewees, makeup is used to look as though the individual naturally has bright, clear skin that is preferably not pale in color. On occasion, however, makeup also provides a way for women to experiment with bold colors and products that are not considered ‘natural looking.’ Rebecca constantly receives comments from her friends about her bright colored eye makeup. She says, “I definitely change the color of eyeliner I use based on what I have to do that day. I definitely won’t wear bold green eyeliner if I have a job interview, but I like to experiment with my makeup.” Specifying certain social settings that restrict her use of makeup, Rebecca claims that she enjoys wearing colorful green and blue eyeliner regularly. Although Lauren does not typically change up her own makeup routine, she notes, “I have a
green colored mascara, so if I want to do something more colorful and different - less natural looking - then maybe I’ll use that.” Although bright colored eye makeup goes against the social norms and expectations for everyday makeup use in the United States, allowances in what products are considered to be permissible are made based on the social setting.

In general, both makeup and non-make-up wearers increased their cosmetic usage for special events such as dances, graduation, and formal settings. Reflecting many aspects of American culture, Megan remarked that she tries to “match the face to the clothes,” meaning that when she wears nice dresses or suits, she will apply more makeup than she typically wears. Throughout the interview process, multiple interviewees echoed this idea, stressing that social occasions required a more dramatic look than what one typically wears - with the single exception of Diane, who has never worn makeup. These behaviors suggest that the culture around makeup use in the United States is to look natural and without flaws, but to wear more dramatic makeup for social occasions such as dances, religious services, or graduations.

Although makeup culture may vary within specific regions of the United States, my interviewees come from many states across the nation, yet hold many of the same beauty standards, suggesting that their use of makeup echoes the American ideals.

Multinational Beauty Standards

Of the twenty women interviewed for this project, nine expressed strong ties to a country other than the United States. Each of the nine women interviewed from different countries express one viewpoint on their respective country’s behaviors and expectations with regards to beauty culture and makeup use. Although this analysis accepts the interviewees’ perceptions of cultural differences as an accurate portrayal of their beliefs about their native country, it is not
representative of opinions of the whole country. Thus, in this chapter, I do not argue that one
country has stronger beliefs than another on makeup use. However, I posit that the interviewees’
perceptions of beauty culture within their home country more strongly impact their individual
makeup use compared to familial impact alone. Whether they were international students, or
simply first generation Americans, their perception of the makeup industry was heavily
influenced by an awareness of the differences between the United States and their home country.
If makeup acts as a mask for social occasions - a way to present oneself to society - cultural
differences interestingly depict various social needs and uses for makeup products.

In comparison to the United States, makeup was emphasized as being more subdued in
South Africa, Korea, and China. Ally, who is originally from Cape Town, South Africa explains:

Miami is very flashy. It’s all about materialism. Having flashy cars, flashy jewelry. Not
eccentric, but overblown. Their makeup reflects that. People wear big earrings, dark
makeup, big lips. Everything is in your face. Cape Town is more subdued, more classic.
If girls wear makeup [in Cape Town], they don’t look done up - they just look pretty.

Emphasizing the differences between Cape Town and her new home in Miami, Ally
characterizes the social environment in Cape Town as being more natural and subdued with
regards to makeup. As demonstrated by her own mother’s elegant appearance when wearing
cosmetics, Ally associates Cape Town with minimalism and femininity. As opposed to the
United States, where wearing makeup is a sign of being a feminine woman, Ally claims the exact
opposite is true in Cape Town. She says:

When I’m in Cape Town, I feel more comfortable and wear less makeup than I do [in the
United States]... There is less expectation to be done up than in America. We were at
lunch one day in Cape Town and my sister said, “When I’m in Cape Town, I feel more
feminine.” I guess there is more a natural way of living in Cape Town than there is in the
U.S.
Ally remarks on the differences between her makeup use in the United States and in Cape Town. Although she is part of the non-makeup wearing group, Ally claims her infrequent makeup use is even less frequent in South Africa. Attributing this to the differences in social expectations of women in Cape Town, Ally and her sister both feel more feminine in South Africa in spite of wearing less makeup. Describing the difference in environments as “liberating,” Ally expresses a that the desire to be feminine and womanly does not require makeup in her home country. In America, however, she feels makeup is necessary to be feminine for a date or social occasion because American expectations are rigid with social rules as opposed to the relaxed South African environment in which she grew up.

In Asian countries such as China and Korea, makeup is also styled differently than in the United States. Cameron and Felicity, both from China, share like minded perceptions of the various social expectations between China and the United States. Cameron shares:

My cultural perception is that once you’re out of school [in China], wearing makeup is pretty important. If you’re in food service industry, it’s very important to look very put together. Especially in corporate settings. My mom probably wears more American brands but the styling of it is a mixture of both [Chinese and American standards]. It’s more toned down, no bright blushes - just facial foundation. More subdued sort of a look. I guess, like, in America you get a full range of cars and other things, so it’s more acceptable to wear a wide range of makeup.

Using her mom’s own makeup use as a way to gauge differences between makeup use across cultures, Cameron expresses how American makeup is more flashy and colorful than that of China. Acting as a tool to blend in and look younger, Chinese makeup is geared towards those out of school and in the professional world. Felicity, in her own interview, echos this claim by describing Chinese makeup as something “for adults who want to look younger.” Whereas Americans emphasize color and brightness in their makeup products, the Chinese focus on
looking natural repurposes the design and use of makeup products and gears it towards a more conservative and older group of consumers.

Like the United States, different regions of China vary in their perception of makeup products. Diane, whose family is from Hong Kong, recalls makeup as being used differently than the ways expressed by Cameron and Felicity. Of course, the history of Hong Kong accounts for this claim, as it was once controlled by Britain in previous decades. The infiltration of European ideologies thus created differing values surrounding beauty culture. Diane, who has never worn makeup, states:

Hong Kong is a very superficial type of society, in that looks matter. So I feel like if I were living in Hong Kong where all my peers were wearing makeup, and you would have to do it to get places, then I would have a very different perspective. Whereas in America, no one is really going to judge me for not doing it. [In Hong Kong] people judge people. But like, it’s a very superficial society because that’s just the way it is. Maybe it is [like that in the US], but I don’t surround myself with people who think it is.

Relying on her own experiences, Diane expresses how she would have been pressured to wear makeup if she had experienced her early teen years in Hong Kong. Saying that Hong Kong’s social standards are “just the way it is,” Diane is unable to ascertain why differences exist across cultures and regions. However, the social expectations within her high school in Massachusetts allowed her to express herself without the use of makeup. Although others believe American society to be more superficial from their home country, Diane’s experience demonstrates that expectations surrounding beauty standards are all relative to where one is from. She describes this in terms of body image:

I feel like America has that mentality about an ideal body shape and ideal measurements. But I feel like it’s not as prevalent as it is in Asia. Especially in the sense that, Japan and Korea and China are very into plastic surgery and getting a silhouette. I mean, as America too, you hear about people who get plastic surgery to look like Justin Bieber but I don’t think Americans are as aggressive in making themselves look a certain way. I
think it’s also in Asian countries are about how they have become so modernized and they are working so hard, they need a way to distinguish themselves from others.

Touching on several aspects of beauty culture, Diane claims that although Americans emphasize the importance of appearance, Asian countries do so with more permanent changes. Speaking to the culture of plastic surgery, Diane explores the necessity of changing one’s appearance as a way to distinguish themselves from other people. With attractiveness being an end goal for some individuals, Diane remarks on the differences of attractiveness in Hong Kong as opposed to in America. She says:

I feel like in Asian countries if you are tall, and you are skinny, and you are whiter than you are tan, then you are ideal. I, on the other hand, have a very dark skin tone, but it’s funny because my friend Eric and I talk about it all the time. My mother really likes him and he’s really white. All Asian mothers want their daughters to marry a pale Asian guy, so he gets all the mothers but not the daughters.

Perhaps alluding to a change in what traits are considered attractive between generations, Diane claims that she is most attracted to darker skin tones, even though pale skin is generally favored in Asian countries and social networks. Unlike the United States, in which tan skin has been considered desirable since the early 1900s, Asian countries value pallor more than a tan appearance. Although Diane expresses that she is attracted to darker skinned Asians, her family believes that those with lighter skin are more worthy of her attention and time.

Outside of China and Hong Kong, three interviewees express strong ties to Korean culture. Of these three interviewees, none of them wear makeup regularly. Ironically, even though none of the interviewees I spoke with from Korea wear makeup themselves, they each emphasized the importance of appearance in Korea today. Georgia, whose mother only wears makeup to church, says the following about Korean beauty standards:

Korea is very obsessed with appearance. It’s the country that has the most cosmetic surgery, I think. Brazil is like number two or something like that. They are obsessed with
beauty products. But they tend to make your face look paler. They are more expensive... Compared to the US, their makeup is less edgy. Their makeup is really designed to make you look younger, more innocent, like no one wears big cat eyes or eyeliner unless you’re a pop star… They tend to aim for natural, young, and innocent looking faces. That’s why of course, you have to look pale. In Korea, the highest compliment you can give a female about her skin is calling her the color of milk. Very white. Paper white, basically. No one tans, tanning is weird over there.

Again, emphasizing the color of one’s skin and the importance of natural beauty, the standards of beauty in Korea appear to gravitate towards a look that radiates permanent youthfulness. An obsession with cosmetic surgery reinforces this claim, as individuals cling to their youth in an attempt to show others that they still have value and worth in society. Although the anti-aging movement is prevalent in the United States, the culture in Korean society more heavily values youthful skin and a subdued appearance. When placed in a cultural context, Georgia’s mother prevented her from wearing makeup at a young age because she did not place value in the same beauty standards that exist in America. While young American girls use makeup to look more beautiful for social occasions, Georgia’s mom perceives makeup as something entirely different - a tool for professional, older women to remain youthful and vibrant.

Reemphasizing this claim, Kimberly describes Korean makeup use in a highly similar way. She says:

[Koreans] focus on the very plain look, because they don’t want to look like they’re wearing makeup. Even though everyone wears it. It’s really interesting. American makeup is more flashy. They focus more on eyeshadow, mascara. More colors on the faces like bronze. Like, um, just like the outline of your face more than the natural look. Like when you’re going out, um, and I don’t think people wear as much. I think most of my friends just do the eyes usually.

Although Kimberly describes Korean makeup as less visible to the eye, her claims that everyone wears makeup in Korea are justified by her belief that makeup is meant to be plain and imperceptible to others. With a focus on looking your best naturally, makeup for Koreans is
neither intended to accentuate features nor hide them. Rather, cosmetics are used to smooth and brighten the skin without drawing unnecessary attention to the face. Kimberly, however, does believe that makeup’s purpose is also to be used in professional settings. She says, “If you don’t wear makeup in Korea, it’s not professional. They think it’s polite to wear makeup.” Speaking of her culture’s belief system, the social expectations surrounding makeup include a sense of respectability and a social need to respect others. By wearing makeup, women in Korea demonstrate that they value their job and want to look a certain way for the workplace.

In contrast to the cases in South Africa, China, and Korea, interviewees from other countries express American makeup as minimal in comparison to the country in which they have close cultural connections. Heidi, a Mexican-American student, recalls the social perceptions of makeup placed on her by her family and her Mexican roots: “My family uses makeup. We watch Hispanic tv shows and they always have so much makeup on.” Attributing the perception that more makeup is beautiful to her family members and Hispanic influences on television, Heidi draws attention to the dichotomy between cultural expectations and familial expectations. While in some cases, the two may be the same, in others there may be a contradiction between cultural norms and family values. Although Hispanic culture typically accepts heavier makeup as their beauty ideals, Heidi’s own family stressed the importance of not wearing makeup until a certain age. The conflicting presentation of beauty culture and family culture ultimately forced Heidi to hide her passion for makeup from her parents until she was fifteen.

Megan, who is from Israel, expresses similar ideologies towards makeup as Heidi. Even so, she finds that there are multiple variations on beauty culture within Israel depending on one’s family history. Megan states:
I think people wear a lot more makeup in Israel. I’ve noticed when I travel other places too, especially like Europe and Poland for example, people wear really heavy makeup there. But in Israel it’s kind of weird. All the Eastern European/Russian people wore a ton of makeup. But all the people born in Israel wore, like, none.

Simultaneously claiming that Israeli women wear more makeup than those in the United States, Megan retracts her claim by saying that those who wear the most makeup in Israel are actually from European countries. Those born in Israel, according to Megan, don’t even wear makeup for Shabbat services. This directly opposes the behavior of the observant Jewish interviewees, who typically wear more makeup to religious services in the United States. Megan herself has Eastern European heritage, suggesting that her own passion for makeup may stem from cultural expectations further in the past than where she was born.

As demonstrated by the interviewees, beauty represents different things to people around the world. Each of the interview subjects who were from countries that wore more subdued makeup did not wear makeup regularly themselves, with the exception of Felicity. Even though their mothers both wore and abstained from makeup use, the societal expectations around makeup impacted their decision to forgo beauty products in everyday use during their late teenage years. Although some people, such as Georgia, believe that they will wear more makeup as they transition to a professional environment, makeup is not a regular part of their appearance in the present day. With the exception of Diane, those from places that emphasize heavy makeup wear makeup regularly. Megan and Heidi fuse the cultural beliefs of their heritage with the expectations in the United States. Both wear makeup in the present day, but keep their makeup usage to a minimum. Overall, the differences and expectations around makeup use between countries demonstrate the relevance of societal standards in determining makeup use.

Shifts in Marketing and Messaging
As demonstrated in the previous section, the expectations surrounding makeup use differ among countries around the world. Even though the women I interviewed have all lived in the United States for at least ten years, and oftentimes most of their lives, they still received messaging of cultural beauty standards from places in which they developed strong ties. Regardless of whether or not their family members wear makeup, they still had a strong sense of what cosmetic use was culturally acceptable and valued. If my interviewees were not receiving these cultural messages solely from family members, but still adhered to their country’s beauty ideologies, then how did they discover what the norms were in their native countries?

Before the Internet became a global phenomenon, people relied on magazines and advertisements to develop an awareness of the best and most effective cosmetic products. Brand recognition and spokespeople instilled trust among consumers. Even today, magazines and other print media serves to influence how individuals purchase products. Among the women that were interviewed, magazines influenced behaviors and attitudes from a young age. Yet as the internet became accessible to every interviewee, they increasingly turned to online resources to gain awareness about cosmetic products. Although the old adage goes, “never believe what you read on the internet,” blogs, product reviews, and Youtube tutorials create an active learning environment for consumers. Rather than passively absorbing the marketing contained in magazines, interviewees rely on online resources to inform and educate them about makeup which shapes their own perceptions about what kinds of products are acceptable for their skin tone and appearance. After conducting a comparison of the impact of print and digital media on makeup use, I argue that digital platforms enable young women to maintain their cultural identity while developing a deeper understanding and awareness of the uses of makeup in social settings.
Although the influence of print media has changed over the years, print media told subjects what they should be wearing and helped them form an image of the “perfect” woman and “perfect” makeup products. Ally says:

When I was younger, coming into womanhood, those magazines affected me a lot more because I hadn’t developed my identity yet. I thought they could teach me something and that I should listen to it. In the end, now I don’t really care about beauty magazines at all. I just remember when I was younger, I paid more attention because I thought I was supposed to, but now I don’t. I guess it was part of socialization as a girl. When you grow up, you’re supposed to care more about makeup and clothes and those kinds of things.

Even though Ally was never infatuated with makeup, she read fashion and beauty magazines because she believed it was expected from her as she transitioned from girlhood to womanhood. As she developed her identity, she realized that magazines, like makeup products, were not something that she cared about. Yet the culture of reading about beauty products existed in her sphere from an early age and contributed to her desire to socially integrate with her peers.

Like Ally, Diane is not influenced by magazines in the present day. However, she uses magazines to develop an appreciation for makeup that she would not otherwise have. Speaking of both her current and past use of magazines, she states:

They don’t really [influence me]. I look at them and think, “Oh that’s a nice technique,” or “Those two colors look good together.” But it’s never like, “Oh they are using Maybelline color and I should be using it.” So I guess they really don’t influence me in any way... I used to read Seventeen. And what else did I read? I don’t know. Like Teen Vogue or ads. I’m not sure. Things that teenagers read.

Even though she has never worn makeup, Diane has developed an awareness of beauty culture through magazines. Complimenting the colors or technique that was used in the ad or article, Diane admires the makeup pages as works of art, but not for her own personal use. Even so, she expresses a similar desire as Ally to adhere to normal social expectations. Seeing magazines as
“things that teenagers read,” Diane expresses her belief that teenagers are expected to read magazines about makeup and clothing, even if they do not adhere to those standards themselves. Both Diane and Ally participated in beauty culture, even though they did not wear makeup, because they adhered to the expectation that caring about your appearance is important and a necessary step in becoming a woman. In a sense, Ally and Diane’s reading of magazines was a type of performance in which they were acting the role of a more “adult” woman. As their own expectations clashed with the cultural norms, they realized that they would rather be true to themselves than read something purely because others felt the need to do so.

Magazines also served as a way for teenagers to learn of new products and provide an example of acceptable beauty products to purchase. Because Lauren’s own mother did not wear makeup, she became the expert by relying on advertisements and print media to guide her. She remarks, “A lot of the products were expensive and not in my price range, but it gave me an idea of what to be looking for.” Seeing what looked appropriate on women with similar skin tones and facial features, Lauren was able to navigate the beauty industry with assistance from advertisements in magazines and on television. Perhaps not wholly unexpected, some of the products she purchased were not as of high quality as they were advertised to be. Frustrated after buying two products that she ended up hating, Lauren learned that ads are not always honest. Speaking of the difficulty in knowing a good product from a bad one, she says, “You really don’t know until you put it on. I think that’s really hard with makeup products because with clothing, you can try it on, but with makeup you don’t know until you buy it.” Given her drugstore budget and inability to ask for her mom’s expertise in selecting products, Lauren was unable to immediately have the knowledge base that other women have with makeup brands and products.
Even so, magazines served as an educational tool for her to learn about existing beauty products on the market.

Magazines also provided a source of role models for some interviewees. Georgia looked at magazines for people to emulate when she realized her mother would not allow her to wear makeup. Relying on her own beliefs rather than blindly trusting what she read in magazines, she says:

Magazines that I look at tend to highlight certain products that they like. Not just beauty products, but like handbags and stuff like that. Or they say, our editors like this! Usually the editors of magazines I read, like O Magazine, they are the women that I think have it together. They are the adults that I want to be. I think, if they have it, it must be the mark of a responsible woman. But if they recommend blue eyeshadow, and I never wear blue eyeshadow, I won’t buy it. But if it’s something I would typically use and they recommend it, then I will go try it.

Emphasizing the importance of staying true to her own beliefs, Georgia relies on people she trusts to recommend products that she might enjoy. Even though she does not know the editors of magazines personally, she places faith in their ability to identify products she may enjoy. Unlike others who may try to emulate supermodels, musicians, or artists, Georgia discovered that her role models were women portrayed in places such as O Magazine. As a young adult, Georgia’s recognition of her own values led her to make decisions about purchasing products that she felt comfortable with.

While Georgia accepted the opinions of women she valued, Olivia stopped reading magazines altogether because she felt they had a negative influence on her. She claims:

I stopped reading magazines. Just because, I don’t think they’re good for people. I just feel like magazines kind of expect people to be a certain way and like, when they talk about diets or like models and they have all these pictures of how they think girls should look. I think it’s very unrealistic and not a good use of my time to aim to look a certain way - The way magazines or society thinks I should look. I just want to dress and look like I want.
Fully aware of the damage that particular beauty magazines can do to self-image and self-esteem, Olivia quit reading them altogether. Claiming that the expectations the magazines placed on her were unrealistic and damaging, her decision to stop reading them enabled her to live with a more positive and healthy outlook on body image and appearance. Interestingly, neither Georgia nor Olivia rely on the women in advertisements to serve as role models. Although Olivia may have originally done so, in young adulthood both women prefer to admire “real” women. While Georgia finds that in the editors of her favorite magazine, Olivia turns to her peers as a source of inspiration for real beauty.

Although magazines still function as tools that portray American beauty standards and expectations, the presence of the Internet over the past twenty years has unleashed the ability to grasp practically any information in minutes, with just a few clicks on various web pages. While it may not be surprising that makeup has become more heavily discussed and featured across various online platforms, the ways in which women shop for makeup has been affected. Instead of relying solely on print ads or brand recognition, individuals from around the world are able to discuss particular products, review/rate the quality, and teach others how to use them.

From my interviews, these actions are most often completed through Youtube videos, blogs, and general Internet research. Whereas magazines emphasize what girls and women should be doing, brand recognition, and the perfect image, online forums enable women to learn how to use products, understand what products are effective, and provide an opportunity to learn about new makeup styles to emulate. Unlike magazines which are controlled by corporations, the information provided by Youtube videos, bloggers, and product reviews emphasizes freedom and choice in a large industry. With the Internet, individuals control what products are rated
highly, shifting the purchase of makeup towards educated consumerism which has begun to dominate the world market for cosmetics.

Some interviewees look at Youtube videos and blogs for aesthetic and fashion inspiration, even if they don’t wear makeup themselves. Emphasizing the artistic side of makeup use, Cameron, who does not regularly wear makeup, explains:

I definitely follow some Youtubers who have vlogs. I like the aesthetic look of fashion but not really for myself. It’s like an art form that some people can execute really well...But I don’t buy the stuff so it doesn’t affect me that much. It’s one of those things that I think looks great on other people but I don’t personally buy into the high end fashion and don’t feel super compelled to change myself.

Although Cameron appreciates and admires the fashion and interesting appeal of makeup styling, she chooses not to wear it herself. Watching Youtube videos allows her to see what others find appealing, while distancing herself from actual makeup products. Unlike magazines, which emphasize the trendiest or most desirable looks, a wide range of Youtube vlogs allows Cameron to learn about a variety of styles.

Felicity also watches Youtube videos to learn more about the aesthetics of makeup. Passionate about cosmetics herself, Felicity attributes her obsession with makeup to the videos she has been watching for several years:

I would watch a lot of Youtube videos and from what people said online and reading these blogs, seeing what other people enjoyed, is how I first started wearing makeup and buying it myself... I came across Michelle Phan, who is now queen of a giant makeup Youtube empire. She just posted a video about a Lady Gaga transformation and I thought it was the most amazing makeup ever. The makeup she does is beautiful. And I remember thinking, that is so cool. I want to see if I could do that. And I don’t think I ever did, but that was my spurt into that whole realm. I love it!

Admiring someone who posts makeup videos on Youtube, Felicity excitedly speaks of the transformative effect makeup can have on others. She has formed emotional connections to
strangers around the world, who she follows online to see their makeup use. Telling of the digital age in which we live, the person Felicity looks up to for makeup use is not a Covergirl model, but an ordinary individual who likes to experiment with her makeup products. This shift from admiring beauty icons to wanting to emulate the girl next door for their style and use of beauty products enables more variety to exist in makeup use. As opposed to one brand and one product dominating markets, now multiple styles are accepted and adored by others.

The internet also helps interviewees learn more about specific products they are interested in. Although Georgia does not regularly wear makeup herself, she relies on the internet to help her research products and navigate social trends. Wanting to be prepared for changes in the expectations of appearance, Georgia claims:

I’m very into Internet research before I purchase or use anything. If I see something better has come out, or if the trend around makeup has changed. Now, like, the natural look is very emphasized, while in middle school and high school I know that girls put on a ton of eyeshadow and weird colors and everything. But now it’s like, “Oh I put on makeup to make it look like I’m not wearing makeup.”

Because she does not feel comfortable identifying the best makeup products to buy or what styles are on trend, Georgia relies on the opinions of others to guide her decision making process. Similar to her appreciation of the editor’s comments on makeup products, Georgia seeks information about each product before she purchases it on the internet. Different than trusting advertisements, Georgia’s trust of blogs and reviews demonstrates that she places her faith in the people who use the products rather than the creators of them.

Others look at the Internet solely to learn about which products are the most effective or most recommended. Again, placing trust in individuals differs from placing trust in a brand or advertising because it promotes honesty about the product’s effectiveness. Heidi says:
I never buy from magazines that I see or stuff like that. Subconsciously you see a brand like L’Oreal and know that it is a makeup brand. In comparison to CVS brand, you don’t know CVS as a makeup brand. I may check blogs to see whether it’s a color that will work with my skin tone, etc. Or that it’s a horrible concealer because it chips away or whatever. But only in that sense do I use blogs. I try to do my own research and run into my inspiration.

Explaining that magazines emphasize brand names of products over cheaper, store brands, Heidi claims that she places her confidence in blogs to help inform her decision making. Although she prefers to do her own styling and ultimately trusts her own instincts, she uses the internet to listen to other people’s opinions about products she wants to purchase. Even though Heidi resists brand marketing and focuses more on the price of the products in relation to quality, others do not necessarily follow suit. Mentioning the influence of brand names on her decisions to purchase particular products, Quinn says:

I think that if someone recommends it to me either personally or on Youtube or a blog then I am more likely to try it because they like it. I think advertising also plays a role. I don’t know about individual products for me, but brands. When I’m in the drugstore looking for something, there are definitely areas I gravitate towards.

Quinn is fully aware that she gravitates towards brands that she is familiar with through advertising. Although she does not remember what particular products work best, her search for the best brands leaves her in one section of the store, narrowing her options. The importance of selecting a quality makeup product is thus dependent on a personal recommendation of a brand name for Quinn, rather than specific items. Placing her trust in those around her, Quinn’s estimation of quality products reflects the knowledge she has gained from fellow consumers.

In addition to trusting Youtube videos or the opinions of bloggers, the Internet can also provide a direct link to products valued by one’s peers who are from similar cultural
Kimberly places her trust in others who share their opinions online. Speaking both in reference to blogs and her Korean heritage, Kimberly shares:

Oh I definitely look at blogs, so these days I’ve started looking at what’s the best mascara, what’s the best eyeliner. I tend to buy those that people say are the best. The best brands and stuff. So they play a big role. I actually look at the Korean websites because Korean people review every single thing.

Kimberly not only feels that she should trust the opinions of those around her, but also that the opinions of Korean websites are the most trustworthy and respectable sources of information. In this case, Kimberly refers to a specific Internet audience as she makes decisions about which makeup to purchase. Even though she typically purchases American brands when she buys makeup, Kimberly’s connection to her Korean roots is stronger than the other connections she’s made since she moved to the United States. The internet thus functions as a tool that allows Kimberly to remain connected to beauty norms in her home country.

Researching makeup online can provide people with more information than simply what the best product is, or what items are becoming popular. Oftentimes, learning how to manipulate makeup to serve a particular purpose is learned from Youtube videos or blogs. Elaine remarks:

Sometimes I use [videos] to figure out how to use products. Like eyeliner. That’s really my big conquest in makeup. I haven’t watched any Youtube videos but there are certain like cartoon, makeup cartoons - like it’s a person but they show it in different shapes. Like on Pinterest. They do it where they see the same person with a different shape of eyeliner and how it makes their eyes look bigger or wider. But then I noticed that when I see someone on tv or something I like their makeup, I think about it more. I’m like, “How did they do that?” I didn’t know that when I was younger, but now I’m more observant of how others wear makeup. Maybe I should try that, maybe not.

Although Elaine’s source of learning how to apply eyeliner is not a Youtube video, she has learned how to apply liquid eyeliner through diagrams and cartoon images on various websites. A necessity if she is going to adhere to social expectations of wearing makeup to special events.
and various social gatherings, turning to the internet as a teacher has become increasingly common.

Despite the popularity of internet research, Olivia shyly remarks:

This probably sounds so weird but sometimes on Youtube I search for a tutorial maybe, because I don’t know how to do a cat eye. I find someone who seems like they know what they’re doing. Sometimes they mention that they have oily skin, so I’m like, “I have oily skin!” so I will watch their videos. If a product works for them, I think maybe it could work for me, so I will get it.

The presence of Youtube tutorials allows Olivia to develop more confidence about her abilities to add specialized makeup techniques to her own repertoire. Furthermore, the comments made by Youtube vloggers during the tutorials allows Olivia a chance for personal connection. Sharing common traits, such as oily skin, makes Olivia feel as though someone understands what her own skin is like. By recommending particular products, vloggers create an atmosphere for dialogue and discussion, while encouraging people like Olivia to join the bandwagon of whatever makeup techniques they are attempting on that particular video. Perhaps more influential than magazines and advertisements, bloggers directly communicate about makeup trends and makeup products with loyal followers.

Shifting from a time in which media outlets were used to convince people to buy a particular brand or product to one in which consumers have an arsenal of knowledge about particular cosmetics that are deemed high quality, attitudes towards the makeup industry have been populated with more confidence from young women. Rather than being intimidated by the number of cosmetics available, women are now able to access each product’s reviews with the touch of a few buttons. Reading other people’s reviews of products online, hearing vloggers discuss their own likes and dislikes of certain items, and watching people apply makeup to their
own “average” faces has collectively made the makeup industry more relatable. In contrast to the photoshopped and retouched photos that smother magazines from cover to cover, internet forums provide real world examples of the social expectations surrounding makeup use and makeup products.

As makeup becomes more accessible and learning about product usage becomes easier for young women, more pressures may be placed on women to wear makeup more regularly. Although this is difficult to predict as the society’s gendered roles become more obsolete in the United States, the availability and accessibility of knowledge of any kind has previously been used as leverage for the best opportunities. Additionally, the rise of internet forums also creates new incentives for makeup industrial executives to send their products to bloggers for review. In turn, the unbiased and real world reviews of makeup products may be hindered by cosmetic conglomerates who manipulate the opinions of bloggers and Youtubers. In any case, learning about the effectiveness of particular makeup products has become paramount to my interviewees’ perceptions of what makeup is acceptable for their own skin tones and appearance.

**Conclusion**

Social expectations of makeup use varies between countries and cultures. The nine interviewees who expressed close cultural ties to another country each discussed how beauty culture differs in comparison to American ideals. Although American standards of beauty were compared to those of South Africa, Korea, China, Hong Kong, and Mexico, none of the interviewees from these countries believed American standards were the same as those in their home country. Families typically reinforced the messaging of their country’s own makeup culture, oftentimes with a direct impact on their child’s makeup use. Six of seven interviewees
from countries with more subdued makeup use (and six of ten overall) do not wear makeup regularly. In contrast, interviewees from makeup-heavy countries and those from America wear makeup more regularly. Although these differences were not apparent solely by apprehending whether or not one’s mother wore makeup, cultural context provides a more complete understanding of how makeup use is influenced by broader cultural cues, based on the social expectations from that region.

The opportunity to share information globally through the internet has enabled interviewees to develop a keener awareness of social expectations with regards to the use of cosmetics. Rather than solely looking to peers or family members for guidance about what is appropriate to wear, interviewees can almost immediately gain information about social trends, quality products, and how to use makeup to accentuate certain features. Consumerism is now seemingly controlled by the opinions of regular people, rather than models who advertise particular brands or products. Overall, the shift towards educated consumerism in the makeup industry has yielded new opportunities for individuals to learn about social norms, while creating an environment in which multiple styles are socially permissible to wear.

In the next chapter, I will explore social expectations of individual women within the American sphere. Comparing the expectations for women compared to men, the expectations women place on other women, and the expectations women place on themselves, I comment on how the socialization of girls emphasizes self-doubt and competition among peers with regards to appearance. By placing a high value on the culturally accepted standards of beauty, interviewees subject themselves to worrying about how they look on a frequent basis.
Expectations of the Self and Others: An Individualized Approach

Chapter Two explored the social expectations of makeup use in a global context. From the culture in which an individual was raised to the mediums in which individuals from around the world glean information about makeup products, I focused on the general social norms of makeup use in a global context. Through this analysis, I found that my interviewees’ makeup use varied based on their perception of makeup use in their home country. In most instances, makeup use in the United States differed from the places in which my interviewees expressed strong cultural ties. The uses of makeup vary from looking vibrant and colorful in the United States to looking as if no makeup is worn at all in countries such as South Africa, Korea, and China. Magazines and various internet sites perpetuated beliefs about beauty culture.

In this chapter, I delve into the individualized social expectations of makeup use in the United States by exploring both gendered norms and the expectations of makeup use women place on other women and themselves. In addition to gendered norms, I explore how both makeup and non-make-up wearers perceive makeup use among others. Although at first these perceptions appear inconclusive, my findings reveal a duality between perceptions of male and female makeup use, and the perception of judgment when others make choices opposite to one’s own. Connecting how individual interviewees judge and perceive others is the presence and absence of makeup from professional settings. I argue that although my interviewees are aware of the social expectations of makeup use, their status as students enables them to have more freedom of expression; however, as they enter the professional world, gender roles become more important to professionalism in the workplace.
Makeup in the Context of Gender

In order to better understand the social expectations of individual women in the United States, we must consider the role that gender plays in the makeup industry. Multiple times throughout the interview process, I was confronted with challenges to the gendered assumptions about makeup use. My study itself was limited to interviews with twenty female students, and males were “naturally” excluded from my study because the majority of makeup wearers are women. The assumptions I had initially made about makeup use between men and women were echoed throughout the interview process, as interviewees discussed male friends and family members in parts of our conversations. Through the discussion of gender, it was revealed that as boys grow into men, cosmetic products become female-only products that are unmasculine and socially unacceptable for males.

Social structures render makeup a distinctly feminine and emotional form of expression. In most situations, women are the only gender that wears makeup. However, in several interviews, women specifically called attention to situations in which males wore cosmetics. At the end of our conversation, Ally called attention to the inequality that exists between men and women on this front. She says:

Remember the emo trend in high school where boys would wear makeup and it was rebelling against the system? I think it makes you very conscious that makeup is not an inherent part of life but they socialize people to believe that if you wear makeup, then you are presenting your best face. And if you do that, then you’re confident. If you present yourself in a different way, then you’re abnormal.

Ally addresses the complicated expectations of both women and men through the identification of an "emo" trend that affected her in high school. The very word “emo” is descriptive of emotion much greater than the normal expectations. Young male high school students who participated in
this movement typically wore eyeliner and other forms of makeup. After Ally witnessed this
trend, she began to realize that the social expectations of makeup use and femininity were not
based on any real difference between men and women. She claims:

\[\text{People associate makeup with femininity. So if men do it, it’s taking on a feminine attribute. That’s why I think men may take on their feminine side or whatever. But if women don’t wear it, then they are considered less attractive and not feminine. I think from what I see around me, gender is changing so there is less pressure for people to be polar opposites. So men can be more emotional and women can be more ambitious. We aren’t polar opposites, we are on a spectrum so that is good that we are changing our perspectives. I’m very feminine but I don’t wear makeup.}\]

Instead of gender dictating who should or should not be wearing makeup, Ally realizes that these expectations had been formed throughout her entire life by celebrities and other people who were in the media. She notes, however, that she defies the trends as she does not wear makeup regularly but feels extremely feminine herself. Justifying her feelings, she explains how changing social norms welcome a gender spectrum rather than a gender binary. This not only provides Ally with the freedom to not wear makeup, but also gives her hope that men may one day be socially accepted if they choose to wear cosmetics.

\[\text{An important distinction in Ally’s word choice is that she called those who participated in the emo trend "boys" instead of men. Although this did not at first appear to be a significant point, in my interview with Quinn, she mentioned that she used to put makeup on her younger brother. After describing her mom's use of makeup, Quinn states:}\]

\[\text{The other people in my family are male and they don’t wear makeup. Except, I guess my younger brother. When he was little, he used to let me put it on him and I was allowed to paint his fingernails. (Laughs). Not anymore though!}\]

Though brief, Quinn's remarks reflect how the social perception of males wearing makeup changes as they reach maturity. As a child, her brother was allowed to wear makeup in the house.
It was perceived by family and friends as cute and childlike; however, the social acceptability of makeup use changed as he grew older and was exposed to gender norms through his cultural settings. Laughing as she recalled applying makeup and nail polish to her now high school-aged brother, Quinn's own reaction reflects the lack of social acceptability of makeup use for men in comparison to young boys.

Interestingly, another interviewee had an experience in which her college-aged friend allowed her to paint his nails. Taylor, a non-make-up wearer, shares:

One time freshman year, I was really upset and stressed out and wanted to paint someone’s finger nails. So I asked my friend Jack and he reluctantly let me paint them clear. He did not want me to do it at all. But then apparently a girl he was dating told him how she liked that his nails were really shiny. So he let me do it whenever I was stressed. I remember once he came to visit my room and he actually asked me if I was stressed, even though I wasn’t, wanting to know if I would do his nails.

Remembering how a male friend was very against putting nail polish on his fingers, Taylor recalls how she convinced her friend let her paint his nails to relieve stress. Seemingly against the polish because it was girly and also had a strong smell, Jack ended up receiving compliments on the healthy looking sheen of his nails. Realizing that he liked the compliments from his girlfriend, he enjoyed the effect of the nail polish. Not wanting to appear unmasculine, he sought out Taylor's nail services as a way to help her deal with stress, rather than openly admitting that he liked wearing clear nail polish on his fingers. The social expectations Jack faces as a male, and as a man in college, made the nail painting sessions a secretive task rather than an open one in which he was able to remain masculine while openly engaging in beautification rituals.

As Ally expressed, for men, vulnerability is viewed as a weakness. Whereas women’s gender roles paint them to be nurturing and emotional, men’s gender roles are centered on power.
Because beauty products are perceived as expressing emotion through color and texture, women are socially rewarded when they wear these products, while men are socially disadvantaged. Therefore, the implications of gendered stereotypes with regards to beauty culture affect far more than whether or not an individual wears eyeliner.

Culturally, Americans tend to accept that women wear makeup and men do not. When she was younger, Georgia recalls, “I didn’t really think about why mom is putting makeup on her face, and why dad is not putting makeup on his face, why am I not putting makeup on my face? It was just something my mom did.” The normalcy with which her mom applied makeup and her father did not shaped Georgia’s perceptions that makeup was meant for grown-up women rather than men and children. The expectation that her mom would wear makeup for social occasions such as church, like many other interviewees, impressed that makeup is a distinctly feminine form of expression. Trying to look younger, express themselves differently, or to command respect and attention, women reflect on their choices of cosmetics. Lauren, very passionate about the role that gender differences play in everyday decision-making, says:

Guys literally, all they do is put on jeans and a t-shirt… But part of my day consists of me thinking about mascara and the outfit I’m wearing. It’s like we are painting our faces. And it’s just a really weird concept. Because even when I’m picking out what to wear, I think about how do I want to feel with how I’m dressed, and there are moments when I realize how much of my day and time is spent thinking about what I’m wearing. And then I think about the quote that says “It doesn’t matter what you are wearing.” But it’s true, but it also changes how you feel. Like if I dress this way (points to her outfit), I am comfortable but I don’t feel good about myself… It’s the same way with makeup. If I don’t wear any, then I feel like a bum all day.

Describing the extent to which beauty culture affects her everyday decisions, Lauren realizes that from her hair conditioner to her clothing to her makeup, she makes choices that she feels are necessary as a woman. Lauren matches her makeup and clothing to her emotions in order to

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present a cohesive look. Surprised and somewhat shocked that her male friends have no concept
of what women experience on a daily basis to look socially presentable, Lauren herself feels
“like a bum” when she goes without makeup. Continuing her discussion of the expectations of
men and women, Lauren states:

I just think I was interested by the idea of this topic and really, like once in a while, I will
have these moments where I freak out at how much girls think about it and guys are just
so unaware. I’ve already said this, but it just really blows my mind. Like when I realize,
“Oh, can you meet me at this time?” And it’s thinking about how much time I need to get
ready and how much I need to do to get ready. And they can’t even conceptualize what
we need to do, and I just can’t understand how it takes them that little time. It’s crazy! I
don’t know if I want it to change, because I like doing it, but, Do I like doing it because
I’m supposed to like doing it? Did I just get stuck in this place? Like, I don’t know.

Questioning her own love of makeup use, Lauren wonders if she only enjoys using makeup
because it’s what she used to believe was part of being feminine and grown up. Citing the time it
takes to get ready and how she must plan her day around selecting clothes and makeup to wear,
Lauren cannot fathom the differences in the culture of men and women. This awareness of
gendered differences reveals that the social expectations for men in comparison to women are
highly unequal. Required by social structures to focus more on appearance, women place
considerably more effort into the way they look compared to men in order to achieve social
recognition.

For Lauren and other interviewees, their sense of self is doubted when they dress down in
clothes or in makeup. Tying their appearance to self-confidence, makeup wearers believe that
their clothing and makeup choices reflect the inner personality. Continuing the idea of a social
performance, women elect to wear particular emotions quite literally on their sleeves.

*Makeup Wearers: Self Perception*
The gendered social expectations of makeup use help frame the ways in which women perceive and judge one another. Questions during the interview sometimes revealed contradictory expectations of makeup use. Primarily, these contradictions highlighted the pressure that makeup wearers placed on themselves to look a particular way, and the lack of judgement they placed on women who never wear makeup.

To understand the contradiction between pressures placed on the self in comparison to others, I asked women how makeup affects them. Heidi asserts:

It always makes me feel prettier. I guess, more of, even it’s just eyeliner, more than I’m used to wearing. But then a lot of the times it has to do with what I’m wearing. It always makes me feel prettier. In a way it’s prettier, more attractive. Even if I’m not looking for a guy, it boosts your ego to know that someone finds you attractive. It’s one of those things where I like to feel confident about who I am and this helps me do that… It’s to make myself more pretty and to make myself feel better and differentiate myself from someone else I guess.

Heidi’s own perceptions of makeup are that it makes her look more attractive and feel more confident in social situations. Wanting to appear different from others, makeup allows Heidi to feel beautiful instead of self-conscious. Like Heidi, Olivia also turns to makeup to feel attractive. She states:

It honestly, it makes me feel prettier. For sure… I’ve always had kind of bigger - not bushy - but bigger eyebrows. I was always teased about it. Do you know Nair? Well, I put that kind of on my eyebrows. If you look, it doesn’t look really bad or anything, but they’re uneven and I have to fill it in. I’m very self-conscious about it when I’m not wearing makeup. I feel subconscious about that and in general, I feel subconscious when I’m not wearing makeup. My skin also gets oily sometimes so I feel gross when I’m not wearing makeup or powder. I feel more confident. I feel good about myself, I think, when I wear makeup.

Afraid of what will happen if she exposes her uneven eyebrows and oily skin to others, Olivia chooses to wear makeup every day. Unfortunately, Olivia’s negative self-perception was created, in part, due to bullying from peers when she was younger. Because she looked slightly different,
with full eyebrows, she began changing her appearance in order to fit in with the other girls in her class. Although makeup allows Olivia to feel prettier, she “feels gross” when she doesn’t wear makeup. This demonstrates the powerful effect of beauty products on young women and girls. Like the children’s story in which an ugly duckling is transformed into a beautiful swan, women seek out makeup products to alter their appearance, yet discover that when they don’t wear makeup, they are not nearly as confident. This creates a cosmetic consciousness which women who wear makeup are thrown into a cycle of makeup use, from which they see no escape even if they wished it, because they would be considered less pretty or less beautiful.

Similar to Heidi and Olivia, Quinn wears makeup to feel confident. Describing her own cosmetic consciousness for makeup use on particular occasions, she notes:

I feel more confident when I’m wearing makeup. I don’t really think it has a huge impact. On the days I’m not wearing makeup, I think “Oh I look a little gross today” but once I get into my day, I don’t really think about. But if I was going to be at a big event, then I would feel subconscious if I wasn’t wearing makeup. I feel like it’s the societal expectation that at certain times you wear makeup. There are people who never ever wear makeup, so for them it’s less expected. But if you’re one of those people who sometimes wears makeup, then it’s expected you wear it at big or fancy events.

After making the decision to wear makeup daily or on occasion, Quinn believes that it becomes much more difficult to stop wearing makeup. Also describing her unmade up face as “a little gross,” Quinn expresses her dissatisfaction with her own appearance when she doesn’t wear makeup. This demonstrates how the process of wearing makeup can create pressures of looking a particular way.

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42 In this section, I keep describing how women self-describe as lazy or bums when they don’t ascribe to social expectations; yet, when others act in the same way, they are extremely positive and say that personal choice is the most important. To me, it’s kind of like being unable to get off the bandwagon, or feeling forced into “personal choices” that really have nothing to do with choice, but expectation and experience. As far as I know, there’s not that describes this phenomenon in which women maintain their makeup use in order to avoid negative comments and perceptions from others. I used the term “cosmetic consciousness” to describe it in this section.
Speaking to the differences she sees in herself when she goes without makeup, Lauren says:

I feel like if I set the standard of what I look like wearing that much makeup, then I can’t go back… You know what I mean?... I think if you get used to seeing someone, you know what they look like that way. But it looks like a recession, like they’re going back. And that’s not necessarily true, but it’s just how you perceive them. Like when you see celebrities without makeup, everyone’s like, “Oh my god!” You know?

Lauren describes the shocked and dismayed reactions of her peers and friends to celebrities when they forgo their usual makeup regimen in favor of a natural face. Seeing this reaction, she internalizes those emotions and applies them to herself. Wearing minimal amounts of makeup on a daily basis, Lauren later details how she purposefully won’t wear eyeliner regularly, in order to deter negative comments when she changes her routine. This behavior suggests that Lauren uses makeup as a defense mechanism. Although her makeup use initially began as a way for her to break out of her shell and become a woman, the social pressures surrounding appearance led Lauren to continue everyday makeup use out of precedent and a need for approval from others.

Whereas Quinn and Lauren rely on cosmetic products to protect their established level of beauty, Megan’s associates makeup use with feeling energetic and awake. She claims:

Sometimes it makes me feel more put together and more awake and like, I don’t know, ready to actually do something. Sometimes when I don’t wear makeup, I’ll think it’s a lazy day. And in turn, thinking that it’s lazy, I will dress lazy and I will just sit around and watch tv and not be productive. But if I wear makeup, I feel like I have to go somewhere and must be productive, and must do what I’m supposed to be doing that day. I don’t know, I guess it makes me feel more put together.

Since she wears makeup outside of her home, Megan associates makeup with productivity. When she does not wear makeup, she feels lethargic and less motivated to leave her house. For Megan, makeup is used less as a defense mechanism, even though she never wears makeup when
she spends the day without any social interaction. Closely tied to her emotions, makeup use enables Megan to express how she feels on a particular day.

These accounts from women who wear makeup reveal that they judge their own appearances with a critical and unforgiving perspective. Judging themselves to be gross or lazy without makeup, the makeup wearers are particularly harsh when it comes to their own appearances without makeup, attributing days in which they do not wear makeup to personal failures or shortcomings. For this reason, it was unexpected that although makeup wearers were hypercritical of their own appearances, they were extremely understanding and encouraging when it came to the appearance of other women.

**Makeup Wearers: Perception of Other Women**

After hearing the opinions of those whom I consider to be beautiful young women use critical language to discuss their own appearances without makeup, I was eager to unearth their viewpoints on women who don’t wear makeup regularly. Throughout the interview process, the phrases “it’s fine” and “that’s a personal choice” helped express how makeup wearers feel about those who do not regularly wear makeup.

Both Iris and Olivia express total contentment with the decisions others make to forgo makeup use. Nonchalant towards non-make-up wearers, Iris says, “It’s fine. Whatever. They can wear what they want. People can do what they want. It’s their choice. I don’t feel like there should be any pressure in any way.” Expressing her belief that individuals should have complete autonomy over their makeup use, Iris emphasizes how there should not be pressure on women to wear makeup, and she does not negatively judge those who choose to keep their faces natural. Similarly, Olivia wants non-make-up wearers to do, “Whatever makes them happy.” She claims,
“I don’t judge anyone. I know, generally, when I’m hanging out with someone, I don’t think about why they aren’t wearing makeup. I’m focusing on their personality. If someone doesn’t wear makeup, it’s their decision.” Again, the idea that wearing makeup is completely up to the individual surfaces. As Olivia was so critical of her own appearance without makeup, it seemed contradictory that she would be very accepting of those that did not hold the same beliefs regarding appearance. Even so, both Iris and Olivia’s open and encouraging attitude towards those who don’t wear makeup suggests that interviewees are most severe on themselves.

Although Iris and Olivia accept those who don’t regularly wear makeup, Heidi, Megan, and Quinn each express feeling jealous or envious of women who embrace their natural appearance. On the subject of those who don’t wear makeup, Heidi says:

I think that’s a personal choice. It’s like you either like makeup or you don’t like makeup. I think it’s great either way, because at the end of the day, what makeup is, is a product that women buy to make themselves feel pretty. That shouldn’t be blamed. If anything, that’s props to them for not wearing makeup, because they’ve totally accepted the way they look.

Heidi recognizes that makeup is a product in which women find peace and happiness about their own appearance. By her own reasoning, Heidi concludes that women who do not wear makeup are to be admired because they already have confidence in their appearance. She explains:

They don’t have to change, but I mean, I don’t have a strong opinion towards them. It’s a choice. You can wear a lot of makeup because you have acne and you feel uncomfortable and you want to hide it. And that’s a choice too. Or it can be that you really don’t care, well not that you really don’t care, but maybe it helps you bond. Or you just weren’t in the right environment to wear it. It’s really personal and the way you were raised and how you want to project yourself.

Identifying the personal factors that may induce women to wear makeup, Heidi expresses her admiration of those who have fully accepted their appearance and don’t wear makeup. Citing
personal choice and the freedom to choose what makes a woman personally satisfied with her appearance, Heidi asserts that makeup is an extension of a woman’s personality.

Although women who wear makeup shouldn’t be judged for choosing to alter their appearance, those who never wear cosmetic products are seen as an enviable group. Like Heidi, Megan states:

It’s fine. I think it’s like, you know, like sometimes I’m like “I hate them. They look so pretty without makeup. Why do I feel I need to wear it?” But no. I think it’s, like, individual choice. Some people don’t wear makeup. Some people do. Especially at Brandeis, no one would judge you. I certainly would not.

While encouraging individuals to make their own choices with respect to the use of cosmetics products, Megan reflects on how seeing women without makeup look beautiful in their own right makes her envious. Comparing herself to others, Megan demonstrates how not wearing makeup can be beautiful for her peers, even she does not find it applicable for herself.

Rather than comparing her makeup use to that of her friends, Quinn expresses her admiration of non-makeup wearers through the discussion of her mom’s makeup use. Quinn expresses:

I think it’s fine. I don’t have a problem with it. My mom never wore makeup, so I lived with it and I understand why she doesn’t. I think it’s how you feel about it. If they are comfortable going into the world without it, I wish I felt the same way. I definitely don’t think other people are lazy if they don’t wear makeup.

Wishing that her own confidence levels were high enough so she wouldn’t need to wear cosmetics, the use of makeup products becomes based solely on perception. Although the women who never wear makeup are functioning in social environments without the need for mascara and lip gloss, the pressure women like Quinn feel to wear makeup is very great.
Unlike all of the makeup wearing interviewees, Lauren questions those who don’t wear makeup. Believing that non-make-up wearers are missing out on an opportunity to express themselves through their appearance, she says:

In a way, I’m like whatever you want to do is fine. But in a way, it’s also fun to try out, um, like I think in a way it kind of sucks that girls were expected to look, wear makeup and all these things. Like I like that there are a lot of clothing styles, and I like that there are a lot of different hair styles and colors, and we have the option of different boyfriends, or dealing with pimples isn’t a big deal. It’s weird. In terms of makeup, it’s probably your chance to experiment with it. It’s like what do I look like with eyeliner on? You get to keep dressing up. In a way, it’s like missing out on a chance to like just try something. But it’s not like they’re wrong for it.

Believing that makeup is like clothing, in that women are free to try out many different styles and forms of expression, Lauren believes makeup can serve as a fun outlet in which to experiment with a particular look.

Overall, makeup wearers tend to judge themselves more harshly than their non-make-up wearing counterparts. Feeling unconfident and bare without cosmetic products, makeup wearers use makeup to avoid harsh comments from others. Even though they were critical about their own appearances, makeup wearers would never intentionally offend someone who did not wear makeup, because personal choice was more important than fashion.

Non-Make-Up Wearers: Self Perception

Most women who classified themselves as non-make-up wearers tend to apply makeup for specific social occasions much more infrequently than those who identify as makeup wearers. Instead of turning to makeup to not “look gross” or lazy, they wear makeup in situations that are more formal. Most respondents use neutral language to describe themselves without makeup, stating that they feel most normal or true to themselves. In spite of the more neutral tone, respondents often called attention to the same social predicaments that affect makeup wearers.
Ally and Georgia choose to wear makeup in extremely specific social situations in which they would feel uncomfortable without it. Ally says:

When I don’t wear makeup, I feel like I’m in a totally different mindset. I’m doing work, I’m cooking, chilling out. I just want to relax and don’t want to worry about stuff on my face. [When I wear makeup] I’m either going out with friends, going on a date - I’m going to be in a social situation so it feels more appropriate. It’s not only that it’s expected you look nice, but I feel more comfortable and I don’t feel so out of place I guess.

Characterizing the situations in which the use of cosmetic products makes her feel more natural in social settings, Ally relies on her comfort level to indicate when she should apply cosmetics. Like Ally, Georgia shares that makeup allows her to feel included and on the same level of dress as other women. She explains:

When I don’t wear makeup [to a party], I feel underdressed. Like if I show up in jeans to a wedding, to a lesser degree of embarrassment, not embarrassment, I just feel different… When I wear makeup, yeah. I go to a party and it’s like, “I’m wearing makeup! I’m not different.” And when I don’t wear makeup everyday, um, I actually don’t really think about it. Um. Occasionally I will see someone who is wearing a very nice makeup casually and I will think, “Oh, that’s nice” but then not like, “Oh I should be doing that”. Just that it’s nice.

Although for everyday use she feels that makeup is unnecessary to blend in socially; however, in the same way that wearing jeans to a wedding feels inappropriate to her, Georgia reveals that she believes certain occasions warrant and expect makeup use. In spite of both Ally and Georgia specifying instances in which makeup use is expected, they do not describe themselves in negative tones in order to express this idea. Instead, they remain surprisingly impartial and objective.

One reason for an almost ambivalent attitude towards makeup use is that those who don’t regularly wear makeup aren’t in the position to constantly analyze their appearance. Kimberly states, “I still feel I am very unnatural with makeup but I can wear it a little bit better now that
my friends told me how to wear it.” Unlike regular makeup wearers, those who don’t typically ascribe to beauty culture norms feel most comfortable when their face is makeup-free. Diane explains, “I think I’m so used to not wearing it that I don’t give it a second thought. I’m sure that if I did use it and then stopped using it, then it would make a difference. But I feel like since I haven’t started wearing makeup then I don’t know what the difference is, so I don’t think about it.” Whereas contemplating aspects of appearance is a regular part of the day for makeup wearers, non-make-up wearers place less emphasis on not only makeup, but styling as well.

A near-exception to this ideal is Elaine, whose response strongly resembled that of a makeup wearer. Elaine notes:

I feel like when I wear makeup, mostly I feel like I don’t look as tired, from like school and everything, so that’s nice. I feel like I look more ‘normal’. You know, pretty, and you know, that’s why you wear makeup. To feel pretty. And, um, when I don’t wear makeup I feel like, I don’t know, I don’t really think about it, I’m just me, being me.

Like many makeup wearers, cosmetics make her feel pretty and normal; however, they do not define who she is. Even so, Elaine does not feel like she can be pretty without makeup. When asked if she feels pretty when she doesn’t wear makeup, she replies:

Not like, noticeably pretty. I don’t know. I don’t think so. Not really. I’m not sure with people. This happens a lot. People come up to me and are like “Are you okay?” and I’m like, “How bad do I look?” My close friends do it. People I work with do it. And I’m like, so… So maybe makeup would have helped that, but… Nobody has time for that.

Reflecting on certain occasions in which friends and coworkers negatively commented on her appearance by asking her if she was ill or tired, Elaine’s situation strongly resembles that of a makeup wearer. The difference, however, is that while makeup wearers actively avoid such comments by applying a daily dose of cosmetics, Elaine chooses to focus on other activities instead. In a way, this behavior is reflective of the entire group of non-make-up wearers. While
comments about appearance may exist, the non-make-up wearers believe that they look most normal and most like themselves when their faces are devoid of makeup products.

*Non-Makeup Wearers: Perception of Others*

Similar to makeup wearers who regularly used phrasing such as “it’s fine” and “it’s a personal choice,” non-make-up wearers repeatedly made claims that daily makeup use is “not necessary” and that those who wear makeup daily “care a lot about their appearance.” Although the phrasing used by non-make-up wearers towards others is not inherently negative, it is not quite as positive as the language used by makeup wearers.

Cameron and Diane are the most positive respondents of the group. Cameron, who has a close friend who is extremely passionate about makeup, states:

I think it’s just something almost like a hobby you engage in. You get some joy out of it in some ways. Whatever makes you happy. I think in a lot of ways, women dress up for the attention of men, but it also makes people feel better independent of that as well, it’s kind of self-affirming and treats you to a better appearance.

Recognizing that makeup allows some women to develop confidence through an artistic form of self-expression, Cameron does not negatively judge those who wear makeup. Also speaking of confidence, Diane says:

I think if it makes them feel good, it’s fine. But I feel like it’s not something that I notice or care too much about. If it makes you feel good about yourself, then you should wear it. Because confidence is beautiful. Confidence is what makes people beautiful and if people feel like makeup gives them that boost, then that makes them look a thousand times better. And some people just naturally have that confidence. I don’t know. I also don’t have time to do it. I don’t know. I feel like I’m making makeup sound like something torturous thing that takes forever to do, and I know it’s not. I don’t know.

Unlike makeup wearers who use makeup to feel pretty, and therefore confident, non-make-up wearers like Diane believe that confidence develops from within. Believing that people wear
makeup to feel confident, and therefore beautiful, Diane’s way of thinking is extremely different than makeup wearers even though the conclusion both parties reach is the same.

Some non-make-up wearers believe that those who regularly wear makeup are hiding who they really are with cosmetic products. Ally explains:

I think just for me personally, if you wear makeup everyday it’s not necessary at all for our age. We are not aged. I don’t think makeup products are that good for your skin. It dries your skin. It’s not good for your skin’s health, so I feel that if you’re wearing it everyday, you’re wearing it to hide your flaws. I don’t think it’s necessary. I don’t judge them but I wish I could go up to them and say you think you have flaws but you don’t. It’s in your head.

Attributing regular makeup use to a lack of self-confidence, Ally wishes that more women felt they were naturally beautiful. Almost taking pity on those who wear makeup, Ally can only justify regular makeup use that is meant for anti-aging purposes. Georgia also feels that daily makeup use must be because a woman has been made to believe that it’s necessary. She says:

Actually the first thing I think about is that they must come from a background where they were exposed to these things early and that they care more about their appearance than I do. Not that I don’t care about my appearance. But that they are just at a higher level of caring about their appearance...Because I think putting on makeup requires a lot of energy and I also think that putting on makeup isn’t necessary... I think it has something to do with their appearance. It must mean they care about their appearance enough to warrant that extra effort.

It becomes apparent throughout these two conversations that perceived necessity is very impactful on my interviewees. Makeup wearers cling to their cosmetics to make themselves feel pretty, yet they don’t feel like not wearing makeup is really a choice for them. On the other hand, non-make-up wearers view those who wear makeup as people who emphasize their appearance even when social situations are more informal.
While non-make up wearers like Ally and Georgia are not especially harsh towards the
makeup wearer group, Elaine provides an example of when regular makeup use seemed almost
ridiculous to her:

One of [my high school friends] has started wearing eyeliner and mascara and stuff like
that, and foundation and that sort of thing. So sometimes it’s like looking, “Whoa! Are
you photoshopped right now? I know that’s not what you really look like.” All in love,
you know.

Expressing her complete shock at a friend’s new “normal” appearance has caused Elaine to judge
her friend. Although she reassures me that her judgments are “all in love,” Elaine’s critical
comments reveal a distaste for those who regularly change their appearance through makeup use.
Although I believed her comments were applicable to everyone who regularly wears makeup,
Elaine goes on to say that wearing makeup every day requires certain skills that she does not
possess. When asked what she thinks of people who regularly wear makeup, she replies:

Um...nothing really. A lot of people do. They get up much earlier than I do. (Laughs).
And have a lot better skills than I do. I feel like when I do put on makeup, it’s a struggle
sometimes. Also, when we’re trying to go somewhere, it takes too long.

Referring to the skill and time makeup application requires, Elaine focuses on more technical
requirements that regular makeup wearers must possess. Although she was critical of her friend
who began to regularly wear makeup, none of that judgment is apparent in her response to
general women who wear makeup.

Overall, non-make up wearers are more critical towards those who wear makeup
regularly. Throughout the interview process, I was surprised at how makeup wearers were
overall less judgmental of their peers who don’t wear makeup. If societal norms tell women that
wearing makeup creates and enhances beauty, wouldn’t it make sense that those who don’t
ascribe to beauty norms are more harshly judged? The cosmetic consciousness that women
develop enables them to differentiate between social norms and their own belief system. Whereas women who don’t wear makeup reject beauty standards except for social occasions, the women who do wear makeup feel self-conscious of their awareness that wearing makeup enables them to feel beautiful. Yet, once women begin to wear makeup regularly, the cycle cannot be broken without comments from others. This perpetuates continued makeup use by creating a need rather than a desire to apply cosmetics.

The Role of Professionalism

Although both makeup and non-makeup wearers identified times in which makeup is unnecessary, I questioned whether those beliefs could be attributed to the expectations of a college student. When young women enter the workforce, they are viewed as professionals rather than as students. This alteration in societal role shapes their perception of the necessity of makeup.

Speaking to the role of particular professions, interviewees identify careers in which makeup use is essential to being taken seriously. Ally says:

When I’m a doctor, I don’t know. I want my patients to look at me, and it sounds silly, but I want to look put together. If I’m stressed and freaking out, you can see that in me. I look disheveled. But when I see my patients, I want them to think of me as someone confident and assured, so I guess I will wear makeup.

Ally resigns herself to wearing makeup as a way of appearing self-assured in front of her patients. Even though she believes that women should be confident without makeup, she feels that part of being professional includes looking put together through makeup use. Cameron speaks to the different expectations between particular professions. She states:

It seems like with certain professions, it’s more necessary than others to be clued into fashion. So like more corporate, more of a sense that you have to come in with certain workwear every day. But if I’m working in a research lab, with people who don’t care, it’s less corporatized and less of a...not less professional, but different culture. I feel like
Corporate America is pretty sexist and misogynist and women have to wear heels and hair and makeup for work everyday. It’s part of the culture and it’s a cycle and reflects how much you care about your job.

Explaining the different expectations that exist between a corporate setting and that of a lab, Cameron feels that her environment will determine her makeup use in the future. Although she does not wear makeup regularly in the present day, the social pressures regarding female appearance will alter her makeup use.

Again, necessity appears to be the most descriptive word used to describe makeup use in a professional environment. Diane, who has never worn makeup in her life, can attest to this.

When asked if her makeup use will change after college, she says:

Maybe. Unless, well if the professional world requires it, then I will use it. But I don’t think at this point I will use it. Because I’m so young and I think I’m fine the way I am. But maybe in the future. If I were to work with high school students, then I may wear makeup to distinguish myself from the students. Because as a teacher it’s important to look professional and get respect in the workplace I might wear it.

Diane, who wants to be a teacher, explains the importance of looking professional and gaining respect from her students. As a young educator, she feels that makeup may be an essential part of gaining distinction among her students and coworkers. Although she hesitates to commit to the idea of makeup use, Diane recognizes that there may arise a professional need for her to wear it.

Heidi recognizes that although she already wears makeup regularly, the scope of her makeup use will change based on her profession. She says:

It’s expected for a girl to look more polished and more makeup will be on whether it’s some primer and it changes the perception of makeup for me. I think it will kind of be more growing up, I have to, versus because I want to. But like I said, I will try to keep it where I can change it up. Because I’m not big on heavy makeup. Ideally in your perfect day, it’s like a party but not a nightclub party. You still want a professional side.
Heidi explains that the workforce streamlines women’s appearances with particular accepted makeup styles. Even though she loves to wear makeup, Heidi predicts that her passion for makeup products will diminish as she is pressured to look a particular way. Echoing this claim, Georgia states:

I think when I enter the workforce, I definitely would be wearing makeup every day, not like a lot of makeup but start off small. With mascara and eyeliner and maybe like a little blush or something. Um, I think part of me still believes that makeup is for adults. Even though women, it’s a huge part of dominant culture in the workforce. You’ve got to wear professional clothes and put on makeup. It’s part of it.

Linking dressy clothing with a painted face, Georgia associates makeup with professionalism. This comparison applies to the present day, in which social occasions that require fancier clothing also require cosmetics. Quinn, who wears makeup daily, says she believes, “It’s important to look like you’re professional” in the work environment. For both makeup and non-make up wearers, the association of necessity for makeup is highly prevalent in the workplace.

Conclusion

The gendered expectations of men and women are vastly different. Women are expected to wear makeup in professional and social situations, in order to look feminine and be respected by others. My interviewees emphasized that boys who wear cosmetics as part of a trend or to play dress up with their family members are not socially ridiculed, whereas men who do so are conditioned to think this behavior is unmasculine. Extending into professional workplaces, women are expected to wear makeup in order to appear professional, even though men are not expected to match their business clothing to any particular beauty standards.
The individualized social expectations and explanations from women who do and do not wear makeup are oftentimes contradictory. In general, interviewees who regular wear makeup are extremely self-critical about their appearance without makeup and incredibly accepting of others who never wear makeup. Wearing makeup is also closely tied to a form of emotional expression. However, interviewees who do not wear makeup are often more critical of others and neutral towards their own appearance. I deduce that this variation exists because non-makeup wearers do not ascribe to beauty culture. Though all interviewees perceive beauty norms in their daily life, their opinions towards the necessity of beauty products shapes their perception of other individuals.
Conclusion

Why do women wear makeup? I initially began this project after discovering that makeup is not regulated by any governing body in the United States. Upon the realization that my interviewees were also unaware of possible negative health effects of makeup, I questioned why some women wear makeup and others do not. My interactions with twenty Brandeis University undergraduates empowered me to more closely examine the social expectations and reasoning behind women’s makeup use.

First, I explored how early direct exposures to cosmetics affect how interviewees use makeup to alter their appearance. Discovering that a key aspect of early makeup use or admiration of cosmetics pertains to appearing older or more mature, I argue that makeup is viewed as a type of performance. I specifically analyze how young girls are influenced by their maternal figures’ own makeup use. Realizing that several makeup wearers have mothers who do not wear makeup, I discover that dance recitals, or other performances, enraptured several interviewees into purchasing products from the cosmetics industry. Additionally, friend and peer influences commonly contributed or conflicted with maternal influences. Especially in cases in which the mother does not wear makeup, the decision of friends to wear cosmetics became a deciding influence. In these instances, the notion of performance was reflected by how interviewees believed they were supposed to act as a more grown-up woman via a maternal figure, and how they were expected to transition into adulthood through their peers. Young women used makeup to form their identities during the transition from childhood to young adulthood.
The second chapter reveals that in addition to family and friend groups, women are socialized into wearing makeup indirectly through global cultural messaging. Nine of the twenty interviewees expressed strong cultural ties to a country other than the United States. Using American standards of beauty as a point of comparison, interviewees express how their perception of their home country’s beauty ideals impact their makeup use. By examining cultural influences, I discover that cultural stereotyping of makeup use overrides familial or peer influences. Furthermore, the cultural messaging is reinforced by a wave of Internet advice and tutorial videos on makeup use. A shift from print to social media has enabled women to better understand what products work best on their skin tone, and which products will give them the most value for their money. This has enabled women to become educated and knowledgeable consumers, rather than blindly purchasing products based on advertisements made by makeup corporations.

Lastly, the duality between men and women, and women who wear makeup as opposed to women who do not wear makeup, is questioned. The individualized social expectations of men and women, in comparison to global standards, suggests that those who do not ascribe to standard beauty culture norms classify themselves as different than normal. Overall, makeup represents a form of feminine expression and is highly emotive of particular feelings. Males who wear makeup are often boys or young teenagers, thus not represented as men who are in possession of their full expression of masculinity. Men are expected to not wear makeup, whereas women feel professional and social pressures to adhere to beauty norms. Between women who wear makeup and women who do not wear makeup, contradictory themes emerged. Those who regularly wear makeup are very self-critical towards their own appearance without
cosmetics, but are very encouraging and accepting of those who never wear makeup. However, those who do not regularly wear makeup tend to be more critical of those who find regular makeup use necessary and are neutral about their own appearance. Because non-make-up wearers do not ascribe to beauty culture, their opinions about the necessity of beauty products shapes their perception of others.

Although makeup appeared to be a method of transitioning from girlhood to womanhood for most interviewees, the initial excitement around the use of cosmetics quickly faded into a ritual designed to maintain appearances. Using friends, family, and their own culture as reference points, those who wear makeup interpret their actions through the actions of others. Becoming more self-critical as a result, women turn to online blogs, Youtube videos, and other online sources to find the products that will enhance their appearance to the utmost according to the ideals set forth by their society. These actions implicate that women care about the efficacy of the products they use, and seek to find the most highly rated products for their own makeup use.

While makeup wearers generally admire women who do not wear makeup on a regular basis, women who do not wear makeup are often critical of regular makeup wearers. A surprising finding, women who wear makeup receive the most critical levels of judgement among my interviewees. Whether makeup wearers are being critical about their own appearance, or non-make-up wearers feel that cosmetics are unnecessary for everyday use, the harshest judgement is against those who adhere to cultural norms. Non-make-up wearers are neutral towards their own appearance and admired by makeup wearers for their confidence. Implying that beauty norms with regards to cosmetics are a hindrance to both groups, the underlying social expectations prevent both makeup wearers and non-make-up wearers from fully expressing this
idea. The implications of my research suggest that if women did not feel as though they had to wear makeup in order to be beautiful, they would likely not engage in daily use of cosmetics. Although exceptions apply to makeup wearers who wear cosmetics as a passion or form of artistic expression, other makeup wearers feel they cannot stop wearing makeup after years of use.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations of this study. Although my study represents women from a variety of cultural backgrounds, there was no diversity of family structure. All respondents were raised in a two-parent household by a mother and father, who held various jobs of varying levels of socioeconomic status. Second, this study was not inclusive of males who may have been interested in participating. My initial assumptions at the start of my research were that men would not want to be interviewed because they do not wear makeup; however, as I conversed with interviewees, it became apparent that the gendered aspects of makeup use are worthy of discussion. By including a male viewpoint, a more thorough comparison could have been made about the expectations of men in comparison to women. Lastly, the study itself looks at only 20 Brandeis University undergraduate female students. This small sample population allowed me to draw themes from my research data, yet it does not include a vast number of respondents.

Future research in this field should include include studies with greater numbers of interviews and encompass greater levels of diversity. It would be beneficial to study the social expectations surrounding the appearance of men in comparison to women in order to ascertain how men view cultural norms. On a more scientific level, future research could include studies about the environmental effects of makeup use in the long-term of women who regularly use
makeup. I also believe that interviewing women over a long period of time at different stages of their life would more fully capture the essence of beauty culture. Although I tried to capture this by having women recall their past use of makeup and anticipate their future use of makeup, a longitudinal study would minimize biases.

**Implications of Particular Phrases**

I wish to conclude this project by positioning my findings of the social reasoning behind makeup use in a public health context. Although women consider the familial, social, and cultural expectations of makeup use in context of their decisions to wear or not to wear makeup products regularly, they rarely expressed any knowledge of negative health effects of doing so. Especially in consideration of the shift to purchasing products based on educated consumerism online, it baffled me that women were unaware that makeup goes highly unregulated in the United States. Throughout the interviews, respondents referred to products they want to purchase as “high quality.”

Quickly, I learned that high quality is not synonymous with healthy. Quinn states that high quality products “work better and last longer” than their counterparts and that they are “generally better in whatever function they are supposed to do.” Unaware of health hazards posed by some ingredients in cosmetics, the fact that women I interviewed were not thinking about health effects was concerning to me. I came to the conclusion that one reason why women were not aware of health effects of makeup is because of the purpose of makeup itself as a beauty product. “Beauty” and “cosmetic” are two words commonly used to describe makeup products. This language suggests that makeup has neither a substantial impact on health nor is worthy of consideration as a topic with gravitas. Quality refers to permanence of beauty, or the
duration of cosmetic change that a product generates. By calling makeup “cosmetic” and “beautifying,” the word loses consideration of more serious consequences such as ill health.

However, in countries in which tighter regulation exists, quality can be synonymous with efficacy. In recently published online media articles, I am cognizant of the differences in the ingredients of makeup between the United Kingdom and the United States. Because the European Union tightly regulates and registers ingredients contained within cosmetics products, the products are safer to use. On February 24th, 2015, a Buzzfeed.com article titled “I Tried Everything In Poundland’s £1 Make-Up Range” was published. The author of the article does exactly as the title suggests, and attempts to wear every product that costs £1 at the store, in order to determine which products are most effective. Upon reading this article, my first instinct was to ask, “These products may be effective for their cheap price, but are they safe to use?” Suddenly, however, I realized that because these products are made in the European Union they undergo extensive regulation. Not only do these products not contain harmful ingredients, but they are additionally not animal tested, as per EU regulations. In the United States, even the most expensive products on the market cannot give women both of those guarantees, nor are makeup companies required to do so.

Women in the United States are not given the right to know what they are putting on their faces, yet beauty norms in this country place expectations on women to wear makeup, especially in professional settings. Because they are not even aware that makeup goes unregulated, all makeup wearers are subjected to potential health consequences. If the government protects people from buying contaminated food products, or houses with asbestos, then the government

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Buegeler, C.

should protect those who wear makeup against harmful ingredients. In spite of efforts made by
the Environmental Working Group and the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, the policy surrounding
regulation of makeup remains over seventy years old.

*Makeup and Tobacco Use*

The same social hindrances which prevent makeup from being recognized as a category
of products in need of regulation in the United States apply to the government’s stance on the
tobacco industry several decades ago. Much like makeup is today, cigarette smoking was widely
accepted and encouraged in the twentieth century. By reading Allen Brandt’s description of
cigarette smoking, it is clear that replacing the word “cigarette” with “makeup” is easily doable.
He states, “The cigarette became an icon of twentieth-century American life - it signalled
attractiveness, glamour, and sexual allure. It became a mark of independence, strength and
autonomy. Ironically sophisticated marketing and advertising made the cigarette a symbol of
independence at the same time it represented conformity.”44 These descriptions of the
perceptions of those who smoke cigarettes in the twentieth century are nearly identical to the
social perceptions of makeup use in the twenty-first century. Whereas young women initially use
makeup to transition into adulthood - a time of independence and autonomy - individuals used
cigarettes to do the same when it was a socially accepted practice. The role of marketing and
messaging likewise portrays smoking as a practice that everyone must engage in to be
independent. Similar to the marketing of makeup products, women who wear makeup are
beautiful, independent, and strong.

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When studies demonstrated that smoking contributed to lung disease and other chronic conditions, the United States began to regulate cigarettes. However, policy was difficult to create because “the cigarette was widely perceived as a so-called ‘voluntary’ health risk, and the risks incurred were to the individual.” Because people chose to smoke cigarettes, the government argued that it could not prevent people from smoking, even if there were obvious negative health effects. While I agree that smoking an individual cigarette may be a voluntary choice, the social expectations and pressures surrounding smoking prevented true voluntary measures from occurring. In addition, smoking is highly addictive due to the properties of nicotine. Therefore, while the first cigarette may be voluntary on some level, a long-term smoker will find it more difficult to quit.

As knowledge about secondhand smoking became more prevalent, the government was empowered to institute regulations which prevented people from smoking in particular public spaces. As a result, the social attitudes around smoking changed: “The fragrant has become foul; an emblem of attraction has become repulsive; a mark of sociability has become deviant.” By understanding the risks of smoking, and the health outcomes of all the people smoking affects, the social attitudes towards cigarette use drastically changed. Although I do not imagine that there is such a thing as “secondhand makeup wearing,” makeup wearers influence non-makeup wearers perceptions of beauty culture.

Perhaps the argument that makeup affects everyone would be equally as efficacious in raising awareness about the health risks associated with makeup use. Although makeup use is

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considered “voluntary” much like how cigarettes were considered in the twentieth century, women who begin wearing makeup express how once they start applying cosmetics, it becomes almost impossible to stop doing so. As demonstrated in the third chapter of my research, women who wear makeup are extremely self-critical when they consider themselves without cosmetics. This demonstrates that makeup use, while it may be voluntary during adolescence, becomes involuntary after a period of time. Although in the literature review, Synott is shown to argue that makeup is a mask to cover up the true self, my findings prove otherwise.

My research demonstrates that in young adulthood makeup is not a mask, but an extension of the self. During adolescence, makeup use represents a type of social performance and a way to connect with peers. However, as women become routinized into wearing makeup, cosmetic products do not as much represent a social performance for others, rather a performance for the self as a representation of true identity. Although women are not physically addicted to makeup use, they feel as though they could not stop wearing it without receiving negative comments from peers. They do not view their faces without makeup as their true self; thus, the face with makeup is the real expression of identity.

As seen with cigarettes, if makeup use is not affecting anyone but the individual, then the government has no interest in regulation. However, I argue that because the parents, peers, and culture directly influence an individual’s use of cosmetics, makeup should be regulated in order to protect young girls from health risks as they engage in socially accepted behaviors. I am not advocating for women to stop using makeup altogether; however, I implore the government to institute regulations which protect the health of current and future generations of women who use

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cosmetics. The social determinants and expectations of cosmetic use help frame the argument for viewing makeup use as an issue crucial to the public health of women.

Recommendations

In order to inspire the government to impose regulation of cosmetics, public health officials should encourage awareness about the harmful ingredients contained within makeup products. Raising awareness about the presence of heavy metals such as lead, cadmium, and chromium in cosmetics will encourage women to demand that makeup be regulated in order to not include these substances. As seen with the powerful anti-tobacco campaigns, inciting public anger over the lack of protection of consumers leads to results in the form of legislation.

Although the road to regulation will be a long, arduous battle with government policy makers, public health officials should situate themselves in the media. As demonstrated by my second data chapter, women are continuously turning to the internet to find product recommendations, tutorials, and blogs about makeup products. Although women are educated consumers about which products work best for their skin tone or appearance, they are unaware of the harmful ingredients contained therein. I suggest that proponents for safer makeup inundate blogs, reviews, and Youtube videos with comments about the lack of regulation of makeup in the United States. This will not only encourage awareness from those who read the blogs and watch the videos, but the bloggers themselves will develop an understanding of the issue. As such, they may become empowered to become advocates themselves. This will inspire a ripple effect of change in which awareness will trickle down to many makeup wearers.

Lastly, I propose that counter-advertising the makeup industry’s advertisements about makeup will lead to increased awareness. The Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, discussed in the
literature review, turns socially constructed ideas of beauty on it’s head by portraying women of various ethnicities, weights, and heights. This campaign encourages women to see the beauty within themselves, regardless of the messaging by the beauty industry telling them that a particular skin tone and weight are the most beautiful. The makeup industry in particular, could be counter-advertised by having commercials of diverse groups of women without makeup performing social and professional activities. Sending the message that beauty is not defined by which eyeliner or lip gloss a woman selects out of her collection of cosmetics, this type of advertising will change the way in which women are expected to adhere to beauty norms. Furthermore, the advertising could include information about how women who wear makeup are not protected by the FDA or other regulating bodies. This will not only bring awareness about the lack of regulation, but will also empower women to go without makeup if they so choose.
Appendix A - IRB Protocol

a. Title of Study: A Face That Speaks: The Multiple Influences Affecting Young Women’s Decisions to Wear Makeup

b. Purpose of Study: The purpose of this study is to examine the influence that friend groups and parents have on socializing young women into wearing makeup. While people perceive themselves to be choosing whether or not to wear makeup on their own, there are likely effects from interactions with others that influence the decision to wear makeup, the use of specific brands, or the motivation to wear makeup in different settings. Such factors may include direct social interactions, such as verbal cues, or more internal processes, such as a social comparison. A central question in this study is whether these factors differ between women who do and do not wear makeup.

c. Sponsor of Study and COI: There is no external funding for this project. There are no individual or institutional COIs for this project.

d. Principal Investigator’s Professional Qualifications: Sara Shostak is Associate Professor of Sociology and Chair of the Health: Science, Society, and Policy Program at Brandeis University. She has more than a decade of experience designing and conducting qualitative research studies, and is the author of a book (2013), and many peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters. She teaches qualitative research methods at the graduate and undergraduate levels, and frequently supervises Brandeis University students’ independent research projects on health related topics.

e. Student Researcher’s Qualifications: I am a senior at Brandeis University with a double major in Health: Science, Society and Policy (B.S.) and in Sociology (B.A.). I have taken “Sociology of Science, Technology, and Medicine,” “Health, Community, and Society,” “Order and Change in Society,” and “Epidemiology, Biostatistics, and Population Health.” While taking the course “Epidemiology, Biostatistics, and Population Health,” I had the opportunity to read case studies and practice research through the examination of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. In the first three courses listed, I had the opportunity to conduct interviews and conduct a sociological analysis of what was studied.

f. Other Research Personnel: n/a

g. Results of Previous Related Research: This study will pull together different areas of research relating to how individuals experience the effects of others in their decision to wear makeup products. There has been research conducted on women’s decisions to wear makeup in the workplace. Dellinger and Williams examined how some women face pressure from institutions and places of employment to wear makeup products (2007). Whether directed by employers to wear makeup, or choose to use makeup as a means of making themselves more noticeable in the workplace, some women utilized cosmetics for the advancement of their career (Dellinger and Williams, 2007). At the basis of makeup use is the importance of physical attractiveness in psychological well-being, as well as social areas of employment, earnings, and
obtaining friends and partners (Umberson and Hawes 1987). The ways in which women are
socially affected by their decision to wear makeup are not only demonstrated in these areas, but
also when first exposed to makeup by their family and friends. Payne argues that the use of
makeup and manipulation hair can be viewed as an expression, or extension, of an individual’s
personality (2009). The proposed research seeks to understand whether and how these theories of
individual and general acculturation to makeup use evolve on a college campus. As college
students transition from the influence of parent and adolescent peer groups to a professional
workplace environment, their use of makeup will be studied to determine whether their behaviors
have been influenced by particular groups of people present throughout their life.

h. Subject of characteristics & inclusion/exclusion criteria: There will be one set of subjects
included in this research:

I will be conducting 20 in-depth interviews of students within the Brandeis University
community who volunteer themselves to speak with me. This will include anyone who is
interested in the subject being studied. Half of the subjects will wear makeup and half will not
wear makeup. All subjects will be female. Interview subjects will be 18 years of age or older.

i. Justification for use of any special/vulnerable populations: There are no special/vulnerable
populations included in this research project.

j. Recruitment Procedures: Potential interview subjects will volunteer themselves in response
to the recruitment procedures. These will include flyers around campus, emails to leaders of
female-based clubs at Brandeis University asking to share the opportunity with their participants,
and snowball sampling. The subjects will identify themselves through email, and we will identify
a mutually convenient time and place for an interview. I will enroll subjects until I have
interviewed 10 women who wear makeup and 10 who do not.

k. Study design: This is an exploratory study which seeks to understand the impact that social
groups and family have on women’s decision making about makeup use. The proposed project
will use in-depth interviews with women who do and who do not wear makeup to describe their
experiences and decision-making processes. By selecting subjects based on variance in the
outcome of interest, I hope to identify meaningful differences in the experiences, beliefs, and
perceptions of these women.

l. Procedures to be performed:  
1) In-depth interviews will be conducted by me, with recruitment pending the approval of this
protocol. Potential subjects will be self-identified in response to announcements in the student
union emails, flyers around campus. They will volunteer themselves and I will take the first 20
students who respond, recruiting 10 women who do and 10 women who do not wear makeup.
Those who agree to be interviewed will be asked to identify a time and location convenient for
them, where the interview will be held. After obtaining informed consent, and pending the
permission of the research subjects, interviews will be audio-recorded; if the subject prefers not
to be recorded, I will ask permission to take notes by hand. To protect confidentiality, each
subject – and each tape or set of notes – will be assigned a numeric identifier, which will be the
only way it is referred to in study materials and data storage. All computer files will be stored on a password-protected computer, which can only be accessed by the student researcher. The files will be encrypted. A master list will contain the names from the consent forms and the assigned numeric identifier. A paper version of the master list will be kept in a locked drawer in the student researcher’s room separate from all other identifying material.

**m. Anticipated risks and benefits to subjects:** This project poses minimal risks to participants. For some, it may involve a slight psychological risk as a result of being asked about the reasoning behind their personal use of makeup. However, the questions will not be focused on the products, but rather on the subjects’ social interactions, beliefs, and valued about the use of makeup products. At most, the risk will be causing people to reflect on personal choices, so it seems unlikely that the risk posed by being interviewed are any greater than those encountered in daily life. The anticipated benefits are also minimal. I anticipate that subjects may enjoy the opportunity to talk about their own experiences and reflect on the choices they have made.

**n. Provisions for managing risk:** The principal strategy for managing the potential psychological risk posed by this study will be providing subjects with confidentiality and maintaining this confidentiality throughout the research process (i.e., including analysis and presentation of results).

**o. Cost and compensation to subjects:** The only cost to participants will be their time. There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

**p. Plans for obtaining and documenting informed consent:** Consent will be obtained and documented prior to conducting in-depth interviews. Subjects will be given the informed consent form, asked to read it, and invited to share any questions or concerns. After discussing the study and its procedures, and addressing any specific questions or concerns, I will ask the interviewee to sign and date two copies of the consent form. I will give her a copy of her records, and I will keep one for my records. Signed consent forms will be kept in a locked drawer in my bedroom in my residence hall at Brandeis University, and will be kept separate from the transcripts of the interviews.

**q. Plans for data storage:** All electronic files (e.g., audio files, interviews transcripts) will be stored in the student researcher’s password protected computer and they will be encrypted. They will accessible only to her. Paper files (e.g., informed consent sheets) will be stored in a locked drawer in the bedroom of student researcher’s residence hall at Brandeis University in which only she has access to. Data will be saved for one year after the student researcher finishes the writing of her thesis. At that time, the electronic files will be deleted and the paper files will be shredded.

**r. Bibliography/Citations:**


Appendix B - Interview Questions

For Subjects Who Wear Makeup:

Background
1. Where did you grow up?
2. How would you describe your family?
   a. Probe for whether lived with both parents, number and gender of siblings, and parents’ occupations.
3. In what ways, if any, was coming to Brandeis a big change for you?

The Past
What’s your first memory of seeing someone wear makeup?
   a. Probe: Who was it? (in person or in media?)
What did you think about makeup when you saw it on this person?
What did you think of makeup products at that time?
When did you first wear makeup products yourself?
When you started wearing makeup, who helped you purchase and/or apply the products?
How did you feel about wearing makeup when you first began wearing it?
How often did you wear makeup at the time?
Did your friends wear makeup?
Were there particular activities at which you were more or less likely to wear makeup?

The Present
1. What is your current morning routine?
2. Do you ever change the products you use? Why?
3. How has your use of makeup changed since when you first began to wear makeup?
4. Do your close friends and family wear makeup?
5. How does wearing makeup make you feel?
6. On what occasions, if ever, do you alter your makeup routine?
7. Are there any occasions in which you do not wear makeup?
8. What do you think of women your age who do not wear makeup?
9. What factors influence your decision to purchase a makeup product?
   a. Probe about cost, access, environmental concerns, ingredients, etc.
10. How would you rank the importance of the previously mentioned factors?
11. What would induce you to try a new product?
12. How has the influence of beauty/health blogs and/or magazines played a role in this decision?
13. Has a loved one ever suggested that you try a certain product?
14. Has anyone ever suggested that you alter your makeup routine in any way? If so, who and under what circumstances?

The Future
1. Do you feel that your use of makeup products will change after college? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. How does the professional world shape your perception of makeup?
3. Is there anything that I haven’t asked you, that you would like to add to the conversation?

For Subjects Who Do Not Wear Makeup
Background
1. Where did you grow up?
2. How would you describe your family?
   a. Probe for whether lived with both parents, number and gender of siblings, and parents’ occupations.
3. In what ways, if any, was coming to Brandeis a big change for you?

The Past
1. What’s your first memory of seeing someone wear makeup?
   a. Probe: Who was it? (in person or in media?)
2. What did you think about makeup when you saw it on this person?
3. What did you think of makeup products at that time?
4. Did you ever wear makeup products yourself?
5. If yes, when you started wearing makeup, who helped you purchase and/or apply the products? If not, are there any specific reasons why you did not wear makeup?
6. How did you feel about wearing makeup when your peers first began wearing it?
7. How often did you wear makeup at the time?
8. Did your friends wear makeup?
9. Were there particular activities at which you or your peers were more or less likely to wear makeup?

The Present
1. What is your current morning routine?
2. Do you ever change the skincare products you use? Why?
3. How has your use of makeup changed since when you first noticed peers beginning to wear makeup?
4. Do your close friends and family wear makeup?
5. How does not wearing makeup make you feel?
6. On what occasions, if ever, do you alter your makeup or skincare routine?
7. Are there any occasions in which you wear makeup?
8. What do you think of women your age who wear makeup?
9. What factors influence your decision to purchase a makeup product?
   a. Probe about cost, access, environmental concerns, ingredients, etc.
10. How would you rank the importance of the previously mentioned factors?
11. What would induce you to try a new product?
12. How has the influence of beauty/health blogs and/or magazines played a role in this decision?
13. Has a loved one ever suggested that you try a certain product?
14. Has anyone ever suggested that you alter your makeup routine in any way? If so, who and under what circumstances?

The Future
4. Do you feel that your use of makeup products will change after college? If so, why? If not, why not?
5. How does the professional world shape your perception of makeup?
6. Is there anything that I haven’t asked you, that you would like to add to the conversation?
Appendix C - Demographic Information

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References


Bundesgesundheitsblatt (Federal Health Journal, Germany), 28, 1985, Nr. 7, 216.


Buegeler, C.


