Women, makeup, and authenticity: Negotiating embodiment and discourses of beauty

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Women, makeup, and authenticity: Negotiating embodiment and discourses of beauty

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Abstract

This essay examines women's makeup practices and cultural tension between inner and outer constructs of beauty in the United States. Ethnographic research reveals competing discourses of beauty in the embodied experience of women, compared to images of beauty as promoted in advertising by the cosmetic industry. While the discourse of women's embodied experience emphasizes inner worth and connecting internal and external self, cosmetic advertising focuses on physical appearance and critical gaze of self and others. Women incorporate advertising discourses, not yielding to them or resisting them, but rather transforming them to suit their needs in using makeup products for creating confidence and preparing themselves for engagement in the world. At the same time, paradoxical adherence to advertising discourse indicates that gender inequality remains an ideological force in our society. Processes of ritualization produce and legitimize hierarchies of power in society. In this way, women's relationships to their bodies, commoditized products, and makeup practices are transformative as they are paradoxical.

Keywords

Cosmetics, beauty, embodiment, ritual, discourse, identity

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A recent opinion in *The New York Times* claims every day is Class Picture Day for women (Weiner, 2015). The opinion argues that looking good is important to women, especially in the social media era when a woman's image might be snapped, posted, shared, tweeted, and re-tweeted endlessly. Yet, Weiner, journalist and novelist, bemoans a conundrum when she queries, "How can you tell your girls that inner beauty matters when you're texting them the message from your aesthetician's chair?" Her question reveals cultural tension between inner beauty and outer beauty as she advises telling our daughters that who they are matters more than how they look but also finds herself responding to insistent demands of beauty culture.

This essay explores dissonant discourses of beauty that emerge in the embodied experience of women's makeup practices in the United States. Women negotiate an authentic self in daily makeup rituals relative to myriad social relations, materiality and cosmetic industry advertising. While the broad US discourse of beauty focuses on physical appearance and the external self, women's own embodied experience emphasizes inner worth that connects internal feelings with external self. Using makeup is a reflexive agent that paradoxically provides women both a source of identity formation and self-confidence and a means of feeling ready to engage in the world, and yet fosters judgment of beauty against them. As women move through the world, they apply, add, and refresh their makeup throughout the day in anticipation of the different social contexts in which they will interact with others. During heightened moments of self-awareness in makeup rituals, women put effort into outward appearance and link outer with inner beauty.

The consumption of cosmetic products generates a sense of authenticating the self by connecting the search for external expressions to internal orientations (Fillitz and Saris, 2013). At the same time, women's reluctance to appear in public without wearing makeup indicates that women may not only contest standards of beauty that wearing makeup implies but also adopt advertising discourse on the importance of enhancing physical appearance with makeup. This study examines the paradoxical relationship between women's sense of self and wearing makeup products, and how humans and things are entangled (Bennett, 2005; Hodder, 2012; Latour, 2005). We argue that human and non-human agents form assemblages consisting of makeup products, rituals of enhancement, and discourses of beauty, in practices that influence women's concept of self-identity and concepts of authenticity. This analysis provides new ways of examining concepts of self, discourses of beauty, and patterns of beauty consumption. Marketers may attend to such assemblages of practice that achieve meaningful change; in this case, in embodied ritual practices of makeup application that transform the self. Ultimately, we ask, why women rely on makeup for self-confidence and authenticity, when it acts to both judge and liberate them?

Introduction to makeup practices and discourses of beauty

To develop marketing strategies for its brand of cosmetic products, Revlon enlisted the authors to conduct ethnographic research on women's makeup practices.

The company sought to gain insight into the self-transformation that occurs when women put on makeup. It was anticipated that ethnographic research oriented to women's embodied experience would provide a point of departure from traditional advertising in the beauty industry, which has employed discourse on external appearance and sexual attractiveness. As historian Kathy Peiss (1998) points out, since the rise of mass marketing and national advertising in the cosmetics industry in the 1920s, beauty companies have emphasized makeup as a way of increasing women's attractiveness to men. She writes, "Advertising promoted cosmetics as a means of winning and keeping a husband" (p. 176). Instead, the ethnographic research for Revlon intended to explore the emotional transformation of the self and how using makeup leads to feeling good inside as well as looking good for others. As anthropologists, we were concerned with women's makeup practices in relation to feminine identity and the highly prevalent discourses of beauty in everyday life. How does the use of cosmetic products help women generate what we observed as an "authentic sense of self" from the result of their joining external images and public discourses of what it means to be beautiful, with private ritualized actions and embodied practices? How does ritual blend and synthesize the inner and outer? Following sections of the essay present previous research on makeup practices, our approach to discourse, ritual practice and identity, the results of our ethnographic research, and discussion of makeup discourses in women's embodied experience and in advertising and their impact on women's identities.

Previous research on makeup use

Studies of women, makeup and gender identity

The paucity of social science literature on makeup use among women derives mainly from research in social psychology, which is narrowly focused on physical attractiveness and presenting the self to others. Such approaches present women wearing makeup as a form of "impression management" (Goffman, 1959, 1967) in which social interaction is a matter of rational calculation and individuals consciously manipulating their situation. For instance, studies among college students indicate that women wear makeup to appear more attractive and possess desirable personality traits (Cash et al., 1989; Huguet et al., 2004). Research also shows women who wear makeup are perceived to look more healthy and confident, implying professional jobs and greater earnings potential (Nash et al., 2006) or that physical attractiveness measured by specific visual effects of makeup, such as luminance of facial features compared to surrounding skin, is shown to influence perceptions of women's faces (Etcoff et al., 2011). Others take this further and argue makeup functions as "camouflage" for women who are more anxious, defensive, and unstable or as "seduction" for women who are more sociable, assertive, and extroverted (Korichi et al., 2008). Additional research suggests that women's motivation to wear makeup varies during the menstrual cycle and that women's

desire to appear attractive increases around the time of ovulation (Fisher et al., 2015).

These studies from a social psychology standpoint suggest that makeup wearers perform a staged function in the presentation of self to others. According to Goffman (1976), wearing makeup is a performance that informs a socially defined category of what is considered beautiful, which employs certain expressions and socially established routines that determine when and how these expressions occur even when "actions seem spontaneous, natural, unselfconsciously produced" (p. 7). Furthermore, what Goffman calls "gender displays," like other rituals, iconically reflects fundamental features of social structure. "Gender . . . lays down more, per-haps, than class or social divisions an understanding of what our ultimate nature ought to be and how and where this nature ought to be exhibited" (p. 8). Gender displays are not mere "show," he continues but "a considerable amount of the substance of society" (Goffman, 1976).

Other gender studies in consumer research report conflicting discourses in beauty that create ambiguous images and roles for women in constructing identity. Kates and Shaw-Garlock (1999) show, for instance, that women interpret commer-cial advertisements contextually, which invites multiple readings, and so women are likely to create their own negotiated meaning. Other scholars investigate the gender ambiguity of beauty discourses which advertise in Brazil both to women's rising role in the workforce and domestic duties (Rocha and Frid, 2016); or that the female self is always defined relative to other things, ideals, processes (Joy et al., 2010); or that women may choose ads from multiple modes of engagement for various "transportive" effects (Phillips and McQuarrie, 2010). Advertised beauty images also reflect dissonant identity roles, such as between the committed house-wife and free-spirit individual in US jewelry advertising (Crymble, 2012), or even perpetuate the wholesale fragmentation of the female body into hyper-essentialized parts that singularly stress nails, eyes, lips, skin, breasts, or buttocks in beauty discourses, while concomitantly denying a complete identity for women as a whole person (Rocha, 2013).

The range of these studies affirms the widespread nature of ambiguous gender images and gender roles, such that women receive conflicting messages about beauty. Adding to this, cosmetic industry discourse reinforces gender bias by send-ing messages that follow the pattern in advertising of portraying women and vari-ous aspects of their bodies as sexual objects (Zimmerman and Dahlberg, 2008). As Bettany et al. (2010) argue, "Advertising continues to present a picture of, and hence to reproduce, a world divided by cultural gender roles" (p. 5). This discourse affirms what Belk (2014) observed, that things become "increasingly invisible and taken as a 'natural' part of the self" (p. 1110). Our investigation reveals that not only perception of physical attractiveness does play a critical part in women's makeup practices but also the practice of makeup itself serves as a vehicle for self-transformation in connecting inner and outer beauty. In makeup rituals, women carve out time for themselves where they become reflexive and keenly aware of whom they are internally and externally. Moreover, these moments of

self-transformation occur throughout the day as practices in which women make adjustments to their makeup in response to changing activities and social engagements. As Shove and Pantzar (2005) maintain, "...practices, as recognizable entities, are made by and through their routine reproduction" (p. 44). Women are not mere makeup users but "active and creative practitioners" in which appropriation is but "one dimension of the reproduction of practice" (p. 45). Practices, the authors hold, "involve the integration of materials, meanings and forms of competence" (Shove and Pantzar, 2005). This becomes evident in the rhythm and flow of everyday life, where women are able to "read" social situations and predict how they will feel, critical to their sense of identity. Self and makeup adjust and correspond to daily changes in a woman's environment and to feelings of confidence, anticipated social situations, and notions of how beauty applies to her.

Ritual and embodied practices

This study explores the intersection of social discourses on beauty in women's makeup practices and the transformation of self that occur in embodied experience. For women, the core meaning of putting on makeup is connecting internal and external self, inner, and outer beauty, in heightened moments of self-awareness that lead to feeling confident. Women's makeup practices not only reproduce discourses of beauty but also transform the self. Beyond the morning ritual of showering, dressing, applying makeup, and styling hair to begin the day, women add makeup during the day as they anticipate and adapt to the ongoing fluidity of social situations with workmates, friends, relatives, and partners. Women prepare themselves in rituals both internally and externally for changing social contexts with fresh makeup applications.

Rituals are key mediators between embodied practices, feelings, and social discourses. Ritual is simultaneously a precise body movement and symbolic vehicle that "reproduces effects and social relations and practices that reveal the effects of power" (Svasek, 2005: 13; cf. Abu-Lughod and Lutz, 1990: 2). The daily enactment of makeup rituals is not merely a symbolic or referential act of copying "a look" from popular discourses or images of beauty. Rather, ritual transforms discourses of beauty into relevant embodied practices at particular times and places where such events are carried out as meaningful. Every ritual act is a performance and is inherently contingent and emergent (Schechner, 1988; Schieffelin, 1998). Carrying off the correct application of makeup to "look right" is always inherently interactive and fundamentally risky. There is always something at stake (to look your best for an anticipated event) and something can go wrong. Performance invokes the necessary skill to carry it off (Ingold, 2000) and also to evaluate the outcome by the user. Makeup rituals emerge then as improvisations because occasions, moods, products, and the women participating in them are never exactly the same (Bourdieu, 1977: 83). It is this generative sense of creating a new self with an emergent "presence" carved out in time, space, and society that we see enacted in makeup rituals. The creativity of women in applying makeup moves our analysis

from ritual as repetition to ritual as innovation, which "produces new entities" (Bull and Mitchell, 2015: 8), and in our study, expressed as a new authentic self.

Other scholarship also addresses ritual as performative action that is transformative as it is representative of ideals (Bell, 2009; Handelman and Lindquist, 2005; Stewart and Strathern, 2014). Stewart and Strathern (2014) write, "The embodied participation of persons in rituals not only influences them in bodily ways but becomes the actual vehicle by which metaphorical meanings are created and credited with efficacy" (p. 5). When women engage in makeup rituals, they enact what is important to them, namely, the value of connecting inner and outer beauty. They generate emotions such as confidence, excitement, and readiness to participate in social situations that lie ahead. As women anticipate their daily social encounters, they invest greater interest and attention in the ritual act of applying makeup, which concomitantly involves a higher degree of interpretation and reflection. As Maschio (2015) affirms,

> I do believe consumer rituals often reveal people to be engaged in performances that enable them to see or perceive or create the deeper meanings of their everyday activities and of the objects they interact with. Further, these rituals have an emotional payoff and objective. They are often emotionally satisfying to perform, and the performance is meant to evoke certain emotional states. (p. 345)

Women's emotional state changes during makeup rituals from feeling disheveled and unprepared for upcoming social activities to feeling confident, beautiful, happy, and prepared for ensuing events. On the occasions when women do not use makeup, they feel uncomfortable, self-conscious, and embarrassed about physical appearance. This ambiguity about feminine identity indicates tension between inner beauty and outer beauty and relates to previously mentioned studies on gender dissonance. To the extent that women refuse to skip wearing makeup, they subscribe to cosmetic advertising discourse on the importance of physical appearance, while at once they modify this discourse through the embodied experience of integrating internal and external self. The ambiguity arises from differences in discourse and power existing among consumers and the cosmetics industry. As Catherine Bell (2009) theorizes, the process of ritualization is a way of acting and exerting power in shifting and ambiguous contexts where consent and resistance both may be taking place. She writes,

> ... ritualization is a strategy for the construction of a limited and limiting power relationship. This is not a relationship in which one social group has absolute control over another, but one that simultaneously involves both consent and resistance, misunderstanding and appropriation. (p. 8)

Women who wear makeup negotiate power dissonance in different discourses of beauty, one from cosmetic companies and their advertising agencies promulgating communications oriented to physical appearance and the other from embodied

experience combining inner and outer beauty. In this way, makeup practices are transformative as they are paradoxical. So how might ritual transformation assist women in identity formation?

Identity, reflexivity, the body, and authenticity

Makeup rituals are reflexive practices in which women engage when they apply makeup in the morning and then refresh and add products throughout the day. At these moments of heightened self-awareness, women are conscious of enhancing the body, transforming the self, and carving identity. Giddens (1991) observes that the self has to be reflexively made. He writes that the mechanisms of self-identity "... are shaped by – yet also shape – the institutions of modernity. The self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences," but that "... in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications" (Giddens, 1991: 2). Giddens (1994) ties reflexivity to post-Enlightenment modernity, differentiating it from tradition and calls the reflexive project of the self "... a basic characteristic of everyday life in a post-traditional world" (p. 74). Although the tradition–modernity binary is contested (Laplantine, 2015; Latour, 1993), Giddens (1991) recognizes that reflexive processes of identity formation occur across temporal space and that the sense of self changes over time. He writes, "The reflexive project of the self ... consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives ..." (p. 5). In the case of makeup practices, women may choose to wear different cosmetic products over the course of a day and over longer periods of time as they change makeup styles, but identity remains coherent because the connection between inner beauty and outer beauty is situated in embodied experience. Identity is not an essence but a changing sense of self, which is rooted in the body (Belk, 2014). Belk states, "The body and material culture play an important role in our identity" (p. 1102). Makeup practices are part of identity formation since use of cosmetic products brings the interior self to the exterior, producing an integrated and authentic self. In makeup rituals, an authentic self emerges as women move through the day anticipating varying social contexts and applying makeup in sentient and sensual interactions using cosmetic products to correspond with the flow of daily life.

Methodology

Revlon retained the authors to conduct ethnographic research to better understand the personal transformation that occurs when women put on makeup. In particular, the company sought to pursue a new strategic direction focusing brand meaning on love, specifically on how makeup makes women more open to love and romance, or in the discourse of the campaign "love is on." The goal of our study was not to confirm or validate Revlon's "love is on" strategy but to provide deeper insight for communications and public relations purposes. In fact, we did not find a

direct causal relationship between makeup practices and women's openness to love and romance, and our report to Revlon remained truthful to such findings. Anthropologists have explored meanings of love and found that agapic love, which includes romantic love, brotherly love, parental and family love, and spiritual love, is characterized by unselfishness (Belk and Coon, 1993). We left cultural definitions of love and romance open to women's own interpretations.

The scope of the project involved women across life stages, ethnic groups, and age cohorts. It focused on how women transform inner states when applying makeup externally, and how the change they feel relates to thoughts and feelings of love and romance. The investigation was carried out in 2014 in cooperation with Mediacom, a global media company working with Revlon that had developed a consulting relationship with the male author. Both corporate entities, Revlon and Mediacom, gave permission to publish study results.

We conducted in-home interviews with 28 women in friendship groups. Each of seven friendship groups included four women, consisting of a host and three friends. To understand changes in the sense of self through makeup use, we gave each woman a makeup kit supplied by Revlon and interviewed each friendship group two times, once before and once after experimenting with products in the makeup kit. The kits were given to respondents at the end of the first interview. The second interview was conducted a week later. Thus, a total of 14 friendship group interviews were conducted. For the initial interviews, topics included beauty ideals and routines, notions of romance, actions making one feel open or closed to love, makeup shopping experience, and brand preferences. The second interview covered women's experiences after experimenting with products in the makeup kits including changes in inner states, feelings about self and appearance, and response from friends, colleagues, and romantic partners. Each friendship group interview lasted 2 hours and was led by one of the two female authors.

In addition to friendship group interviews, the 28 respondents kept journals and completed collages. We asked respondents to keep a journal concerning daily preparation of the self for 1 week prior to the first interview and to continue journaling for the week after receiving the makeup kits. The journals provided a record of thoughts, feelings, moods, and behaviors relating to beauty rituals and use of makeup when getting ready for work, going out with friends, going on a date, or just getting ready for the day. Respondents were asked to create a two-part collage using words, pictures, images, drawings, and doodles showing perceptions of self before and after applying makeup. The collages visualize transformations that happen as a result of using makeup.

Respondents were selected across an age range (25–49 years old), from different ethnic backgrounds (Caucasian, Latino, and African American) and by marital status. They reflected two segments or "love stages," that is, "looking for love" (single, dating, or living with a partner) and "staying in love" (married). Four of the seven friendship groups were in the "looking for love" stage and three in the "staying in love" stage. There was no income requirement for recruitment, but recruiting specifications did require single persons to be employed and one

person of a pair to be employed if the respondent was married or living with someone. The respondents were paid for participating in the research project and we promised to preserve their anonymity.

The research was conducted in two locations, urban Chicago and suburban Rochester, NY. These geographic locations were selected to represent two distinct markets with a cross section of lifestyles in suburban and urban communities. Our findings refer to women in these localities even though the Revlon campaign attempts to reach wider audiences. Women from other cultural contexts may experience makeup differently.

Analysis of the ethnographic data proceeded in traditional anthropological manner by identifying cultural categories and themes (McCracken, 1986; Spradley, 1979). The authors analyzed their handwritten notes taken while conducting the friendship group interviews and the respondent journals and collages completed prior to the interviews. The authors performed a discourse analysis of naturally occurring talk (Potter, 2004) to provide an interpretive framework of assumptions about the self and emotion underlying makeup practices. During subsequent analytic discussions among the authors, similarities and differences in patterns among respondents in terms of makeup practices and transformations of the self were discerned.

Findings

Makeup rituals as a source of self-confidence

Respondents told us that morning makeup routines play an important role in making them feel more confident and prepared for the day. "I always feel more confident after putting on makeup," a woman said, articulating a refrain heard from other respondents. Women experience a before–after transformation when putting on makeup in the morning, moving from sleepy, tired, and disheveled to awake, aware, beautiful, and ready to face the day's challenges. Jessica, 31, married, a new mother on maternity leave, wrote in her journal,

> My Dad came over this morning. I was so excited. The baby was napping. I could run three miles, shower, get dressed in jeans, not PJs or workout clothes, and put on makeup. I put on minimal makeup – foundation, powder, eyeliner, mascara. It takes two minutes, not long. I feel like I'm dressed, put together, ready for the day.

Andrea, 31, a married teacher, described a morning experience in her journal,

> I'm tired this morning and don't feel like getting ready, not taking extra time to make myself look good. But when I shower the shampoo scent is invigorating, so I style my hair and put on eyebrow powder, concealer and mascara. I felt a little better about myself as I added each product. It makes me feel more awake, ready to take on the day. My students have been pretty tricky lately, but I felt ready to go forth and attack the day.

Figure 1. Shows a participant's feelings, before and after putting on makeup, and her change in mood from feeling disheveled to feeling fabulous.

The role of makeup is to energize the self, reinforce confidence, and prepare for engaging the world and interacting with other people. Morning makeup rituals transform inner states and confirm feminine identity. As collages (Figures 1 and 2) show, respondents described feeling confident, beautiful, sexy, and happy in their skin as a result of putting on makeup, and these feelings carry into the work-place and other social contexts. Feeling more confident inside connects holistically with feeling good about physical appearance and sexual attractiveness. Feeling confident and knowing you look good blend together.

Women participating in the research emphasized that they use makeup primarily for themselves. Kerry, 24, single, wrote in her journal, "I wear makeup because it is fun for me and makes me feel better about myself." Women are dependent on makeup products and their daily routines for enhancing self-confidence and pre-paring to engage the world. Makeup brings inner worth to the surface of the body and creates an authentic self.

Transformative changes throughout the day

In addition to morning routines, women apply and touch up makeup throughout the day either to refresh cosmetic products that have worn off or to add products not previously used that day. Our respondents reported that several times a day they take a moment to check the status of makeup they are wearing to see whether it is fading or smearing. Re-applications are done as needed. Activity changes during the day also lead to makeup alterations. For instance, one respondent,

Figure 2. Shows another participant's feelings, before and after putting on makeup. Emotions indicate a change from feeling gross and ugly to feeling confident, pretty, sexy and beautiful.

going from work to her spouse's family party, touched up her foundation and mascara, and added blush and lipstick. In other words, women adjust their makeup as they respond to the movement and rhythm of daily life. The adjustments involve reflexive moments becoming aware to the self because women are conscious of doing something to make sure they look good and feel confident in the flow of social contexts. Molly, 23 and single, who attends graduate school part-time and works part-time, wrote in her journal,

> I was going to class at the university this morning, so I wore a little makeup – eyebrow pencil, eyeliner, mascara, but I was going to lunch with my grandmother, so I threw my makeup bag in the car because I didn't feel put together enough for grandma.

My face had zero concealer or foundation or blush. Right before lunch, I applied eye shadow in the car and finished my face with foundation, concealer, pressed powder and blush. Only then did I feel good enough to present my best self to my grandma.

Touch-ups and changes throughout the day are ways to add energy and awaken the self, both externally in physical appearance and internally in renewed spirit, and to anticipate the next social encounter. "When I touch up, I feel refreshed, new again. It's like a re-set button," wrote a respondent in her journal. Women envision events in the flow of daily life, imagine how they will feel in different social situations, and adjust their makeup accordingly. In these micro-makeup occasions occurring throughout the day, women depend on things for identity and authenticity. Applying makeup products initiates a transformative process in which women connect inner and outer beauty and prepare themselves for engagement in the world.

Integration of inner and outer beauty

The internal self in relation to the external self was important to respondents. Outer beauty expresses inner beauty, and the relationship is inextricable. In women's experience of using makeup, looking good and feeling good unite, thereby achieving a sense of wholeness. Jennifer, 33, married with four children, wrote in her journal,

Today a workout buddy came over for coffee, and she commented on my makeup. I felt more confident, knowing I had taken 5 or 10 minutes to get ready and put on makeup. I like when others recognize I look pretty. Makeup is a nice way to take a little time for myself, give me a more positive image, a good feeling about myself. It doesn't define me. It just amplifies my inner self-worth.

Wearing makeup does not create self-worth but it can express the inner worth one feels. Jessica, 31, wrote in her journal,

Makeup ads positivity and sparkle to your outer image. I'm not saying that makeup is a must to have self-esteem, not at all. You have to be comfortable with your true beauty. You have to feel strong, independent and appreciate the person you have become over your life, to celebrate your accomplishments and work on your goals to better yourself.

Moreover, women believe that putting effort into makeup rituals helps maintain feminine identity. Michelle, 38, married with two children, said, "We should use makeup, take time for ourselves, connect with our inner beauty, and not lose ourselves in work and kids." Women use makeup to transform themselves and others around them. Good feeling flowing from an integrated self becomes contagious in relationships with significant others. Lisa, 43, married without children,

said, "If I look good and feel good, my husband feels happy and in a good mood." The confidence emerging from integration of inner and outer beauty was so key to respondents that they believe its absence hinders development of sociality, especially for young people in a dating stage of life. Brooke, 22, single, said, "Confidence is such an important thing for men and women. If you're not confident, it's a turn-off." Using makeup makes women more confident in talking about themselves, telling their story, revealing identity, and attracting confident persons as romantic partners. Women depend on cosmetic products to connect inner and outer beauty, and this connection through things spurs relationships among humans and attraction to each other.

Makeup and romance and love

Putting on makeup leads to feeling self-confident but not directly to feeling open to love and romance. The relationship between makeup and love is not a simple linear equation: apply makeup, feel confident, and become open to love. Rather, openness to love and romance is mediated by everyday interactions between partners. Kerry, 24, a recent college graduate, wrote in her journal about an experience with her boyfriend that turned her off to romantic thoughts and feelings:

> I went out last night with Dan and some friends. He decided to stay out later than I wanted to and at first the plan was he was going to come back and stay the night. Well, he was taking way too long and I didn't want to wait anymore, so I said never mind and he agreed. Fast forward a little while, and he still comes over even though I asked him not to, and it's at sometime between 7–8 am! And then he proceeded to sleep in 'til like 2 pm as I'm trying to clean my room and get stuff done. I felt really annoyed.

Sue, 38, married with two children, recounted a story that closed her to romantic thoughts and feelings:

> I was coming home from work late because I stopped at the supermarket to do a big shop. I came through the door with some of the grocery bags and he just sat there on the couch playing video games instead of getting up and helping me.

Such experiences stir up anger and resentment, emotions opposite to how respondents spoke about being open to love and romance. They said that romantic thoughts and feelings involve the sense that you are being paid attention to, listened to, and cared for and the sense that both persons are putting effort into building and sustaining the relationship. This emic notion of love and romance differs from the idea of falling in love which privileges emotional excitement and euphoria, which Becky, 26, single, described in this way, "It's a gloomy day but nothing can get you down." Nonetheless, the self-confidence from wearing makeup does not counteract emotional negativity that may arise in everyday interactions with romantic partners.

Experimenting with makeup and the authentic self

Authenticity, produced in makeup rituals through connecting inner and outer beauty, also materializes in experimenting with cosmetic products. Women routinely try new products and styles, but experimentation takes place within self-circum-scribed boundaries. There are limits beyond which experiments are deemed inappro-priate for how a woman perceives herself aesthetically. Respondents spoke about this when experimenting with the makeup kits given to them. They reported how trying some products took them over the edge of what is right for their looks. For instance, a red lipstick was too bright for one respondent, a ''smoky'' shade of eye shadow too dark for another respondent. There is a comfort zone beyond which the authentic self does not extend. In women's makeup practices, experimentation provides both renewal and stability of identity.

Experimenting with cosmetic products reflects the effort that women expend in makeup rituals and recognition of the materiality of products on which they depend. Lisa, 43, said that she learns about new products from her sisters and friends. If she sees something she likes such as a lip gloss or an eye shadow on someone, then she wants to try it. Respondents were aware of the materiality of products in terms of texture, color, lasting power, and the way the products work with the body. For instance, referring to a particular brand, Lisa added that it costs more but the higher price is worthwhile because you use less and it lasts longer on the face. Product materiality was also noted in crafting different looks. Kerry, 24, single with a boyfriend, wrote in her journal,

> Right now it's Friday night and I'm about to get ready to go out. Dan and I are going to catch our friend's band. It should be fun. I'm listening to Jaywave, drinking some Chardonnay and thinking about my look. I want to do a brownish smoky eye. I wasn't very skilled at makeup until recently. I would just do the same look every day. Now I am realizing it truly is an art, and it is very transformative, and you can take your look in a lot of different directions depending on the effect you want to achieve. I've been watching more tutorials online and playing around more and I think I am getting pretty good at it.

As women experiment with cosmetic products and explore different looks, they may become more skilled at using makeup but the physical appearance they create does not constitute artifice or a false self. Such ideas limit makeup to outward presentation, which assumes a performative self, disconnected and distant from an authentic self. On the contrary, makeup for women joins inner and outer beauty to create authenticity.

Naturalization of the cosmetically enhanced body

Respondents said that they wear makeup more often than not. On occasions when they do not, women described a sense of being incomplete, not fully put together,

self-conscious, and embarrassed about physical appearance. "I hope I don't see anyone I know," wrote Jessica, 31, in her journal, as she ran out to do errands one day without putting on any makeup. Absent makeup, women's bodies become a source of discomfort. When women omit makeup, their emotional state is characterized by feeling uncomfortable, insecure, and lacking confidence. This state reflects women's adoption of cosmetic industry discourse on beauty and the importance it places on enhancing physical appearance. Women recognize how influential cosmetic advertising has been in their lives. Brooke, 22, single, said, "The media has been telling me all my life that I need to wear makeup." As a result, wearing makeup naturalizes the feminine body and, from at least early adolescence on, makeup rituals constitute part of women's daily life. Jessica, 31, referenced this dynamic when she described preparing for an evening out with her spouse:

> I straightened my hair, picked out an outfit, put on foundation, powder, eye shadow (a brown color today–yes, a change), eye liner, mascara. I feel pretty. I'm ready for the night. I feel incomplete without makeup. Not that I need it. It just has been a part of my routine for so long that I feel ready, complete, put together.

Women subscribe to the cosmetic advertising discourse through this naturalization process, while at the same time resisting the way it privileges the external self, and, in contradistinction, employ the discourse of embodied experience which integrates inner and outer beauty. Female consumers accept the cosmetic advertising discourse even though it assumes a gender bias toward female inferiority and objectification of women's bodies. In this regard, makeup practices resemble menstruation practices (Malefyt and McCabe, 2016); both are paradoxes of power.

Discussion

This ethnographic study finds that makeup rituals afford moments of heightened awareness and confidence building when women transform into more authentic selves by connecting inner worth to physical appearance. Authenticity emerges from the subjective experience of internal orientation to external expression (Fillitz and Saris, 2013). Evidence of internal orientation comes from women's experimentation with new cosmetic products and styles within self-imposed boundaries. Women bridge social discourses with embodied practices in ritual to transform into authentic selves.

Makeup rituals implicate authenticity because they are imaginative acts where inner beauty and outer beauty join embodied experience. Women look in the mirror knowing that effort put into enhancing physical appearance reflects inner worth. Rituals join the internal self to the exterior where others can perceive a whole self. The relationship of makeup practices to authenticity concerns correspondence between inner states and external expressions (Fillitz and Saris, 2013).

Fillitz and Saris (2013) contend, "Individuals are longing to be authentic in various contexts..." (p. 14) because the notion of the autonomous individual in Enlightenment Europe inspired personal search for proper external expression of inner states, which today can mean longing for the purity of the physical body through such ideals as youth, health, and beauty. As they write, "In our times, there is a proliferation of external expression and activities, for what should stand for true, real, original inner states" (Fillitz and Saris, 2013: 15). Hence, they note, authenticity is best investigated ethnographically. For participants in this study, beauty expresses the internal and external self and looking good concurs with feeling good. Women's discourse joins inner and outer beauty to build a sense of confidence in the world. In contrast, industry discourse casts wearing makeup as either a mask creating flawless beauty or only an outward presentation of self. Both of these industry conceptions conceal authenticity as constructed by women through makeup rituals. Yet, insofar as women hesitate to go without makeup, they accept this discourse while also resisting it.

Authenticity in embodiment and media representation

Early 21st century media presents three tropes of authenticity in women's beauty magazines (Duffy, 2013), but these tropes differ from the embodied experience of makeup rituals. One trope promotes natural and organic products, another celebrates ordinary-looking women compared to Hollywood's ideal feminine body image, and yet another encourages self-expression. The latter trope emphasizes individualism by suggesting that women choose a look to express their unique identities. However, this trope of authenticity retains a commercial function in focusing on creating an image. As Duffy argues, "Ironically, then, readers are encouraged to be authentic while still creating (manufacturing) *an image*" (Duffy, 2013: 147, italics in original). In contrast to tropes of authenticity in the media, Beverland and Farrelly (2010) relate authenticity in consumption to consumer goals. They state, "...consumers actively seek authenticity to find meaning in their lives, and in line with associated personal goals..." (p. 839). In makeup rituals, the goal is forging a sense of wholeness or completeness by uniting inner and outer beauty, precisely in contrast to advertising discourse that leaves women's identity ambiguous or fragmented. As a result, putting on makeup produces identity benefits that reflect what is "considered genuine, real and/or true" (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010: 841). Makeup rituals are then self-authenticating acts because they are self-relevant conceptualizations of authenticity. Furthermore, as Beverland and Farrelly (2010) point out (p. 848), consumption experience can be compartmentalized around situations. When preparing for the day and for later social engagements, women's physical and emotional awareness of the authenticating process orients their discourse on using makeup. Occasions when women dispense with wearing makeup are compartmentalized, excused for lack of time to put on makeup, but missing identity benefits arising in ritual. In these compartmentalized moments, women are swayed by advertising discourse. Thus, the distinction

and disjunction of experience reveals how women mediate different discourses. They negotiate dissonance in different discourses of beauty by compartmentalizing the makeup ritual from the experience of not wearing makeup. This process involves more than overcoming advertising beauty images that fragment the female body into parts (Rocha, 2013), for the compartmentalized ritual experience gives feminine identity a unity and coherence in re-authenticating the self.

Imagery utilized in cosmetic advertising continues to destabilize women's perceptions of beauty. Schroeder (2002) notes that marketing is fundamentally about image management and visual consumption of an image drives cognition, interpretation, and preferences (p. 5). Cosmetic advertising remains focused on physical appearance, an external orientation to the self, gazed upon and evaluated by others, and an ideology of gender hierarchy. Women's enchantment with makeup products is criticized in both scholarly and popular literature on the basis of gender inequality. Historian Kathy Peiss (1998) posits that cosmetic producers have created false needs: "Today the most formidable judgments about cosmetics often come from feminists who, since the 1960s, have argued that powerful male-dominated consumer industries and mass media have been a leading cause of women's oppression" (p. 4). Historian Joan Brumberg (1997) critiques our hyper-sexualized consumer culture because adolescent girls make the body an all-consuming project. For Journalist Naomi Wolf (2002), the "beauty myth" exhorts external beauty as the premise of feminine identity so that women remain vulnerable to outside approval and keeps male dominance intact (p. 12). The gender bias underlying cosmetic advertising is rooted in society and reproduced in advertising. As Zayer and Coleman (2015) contend, "Through the output of their work – images and messages of gender consumed by the masses – ad professionals reiterate and reinforce (sometimes challenge) discourses of gender and vulnerability" (p. 272). Gender bias in cosmetic advertising discourse becomes part of women's subjectivity, for cultural meaning is produced and consumed in the advertising process (Hackley, 2002). This part of subjectivity surfaces in the behavior and emotional state of women when not wearing makeup. Cosmetic companies ascribe cultural meaning to makeup products through a meaning transfer process (McCracken, 2005), and this meaning reproduced in advertising campaigns is both accepted and resisted at the same time.

Materiality and agency

Although Revlon's advertising images locate agency explicitly in their own branded products and their effect on women, we, however, locate agency in the embodied experience of women, in the various products (Revlon and other brands) they use, in the skilled effort they employ in makeup rituals, and in their relation to other people. This perspective affirms how practice integrates materials, meanings, and competence (Shove and Pantzar, 2005). Women rely on cosmetic products for increasing self-confidence and connecting inner with outer beauty as they assert their identity through appropriating makeup to suit their needs. They depend on

cosmetic products to attain their desired effects, such as dark eye shadow, eyeliner, and mascara working together to create "smoky eye." Material attributes of cosmetic products such as texture, color, and brand name attract female consumers. Makeup products that fade and wear off require refreshing and human re-application. Thus, interdependence between humans and things concerns not only human use but also the materiality of things themselves (Hodder, 2012). Against the "tyranny of the subject" (Miller, 2005: 45), subject and object entangle in our study in women's embodied experience with makeup. The subject–object binary collapses in embodiment and, as Csordas (1990) states, perception and practice become "domains of the culturally constituted self" (p. 7).

In this regard, assemblages of makeup products, rituals, and discourses of beauty operate as regularized practices of women's makeup application that impact women's self concept. Such an understanding of assemblage (Bennett, 2005; Latour, 2005) grants the possibility that collective agents, such as discourses of beauty from magazines, TV and other media, makeup products, the desire to impress another, and women's own skills and self concept, exert agentic capacities for transformation to occur. Understanding the capacity for human and non-human actants to assemble and influence women's lives, the ability of which emerges in relation to other agents and their interactions within an assemblage, offers a unique perspective on the importance of makeup practices in generating transformative and meaningful events that impact women's self-identity.

Conclusion

This essay has examined women's makeup practices and competing discourses of beauty in the embodied experience of women through the images, materiality, and agency of cosmetic industry advertising. The ethnographic research regards consumption in terms of synthesizing embodiment and discourses rather than binary categories as a way to interpret consumer paradoxes (Malefyt and McCabe, 2016). Against patronizing notions of singular agency of women applying makeup to "fall in love" or win over a man, this investigation reveals that women paradoxically adopt cosmetic advertising discourse, which focuses on the importance of outward physical appearance, while at the same time incorporate and transform such views within their own practice of the primacy of connection between inner beauty and outer beauty. Revlon has pursued their "love is on" campaign from the perspective of singular product agency, despite ethnographic results to the contrary showing an entanglement of agentic forces in ritual practice. Nevertheless, the embodied experience of ritual examined in this study affirms that women using makeup join discourses of outer beauty with self-concepts of inner beauty to create an "authentic self."

Nevertheless, the paradoxical adherence to the cosmetic industry discourse at the same time indicates that gender inequality remains an ideological force in our society. As Catherine Bell (2009) points out, processes of ritualization produce and legitimize hierarchies of power in society by incorporating consent as well as

resistance. Consent to advertising discourse animates women's subject formation in compartmentalized occasions of not wearing makeup. Judith Butler commented in an interview, "...discourses do actually live in bodies...nobody can survive without, in some sense, being carried by discourse" (Meijer and Prins, 1998: 282). The compartmentalization of advertising discourse and women's discourse in everyday life reveals how women take on particular subject positions and jettison others because Butler writes, "...a subject only becomes discrete through excluding other possible subject formations..." (Butler, 2009: 141). Women's makeup practices confirm that acting in a culturally gendered world is recognized in consumer culture where women manage their bodies and negotiate their identity in the social context of gender hierarchies.

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