

**An exploration of makeup and all its possibilities through**  
**the lived and learned experiences of upper/middle class**  
**women in Dhaka.**

*A thesis presented by*

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to the Department of Economics and Social Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree with honors of Bachelor of Social Sciences BRAC University

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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing a degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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## Approval:

The thesis titled “An exploration of makeup and all its possibilities through the lived and learned experiences of upper/middle class women in Dhaka.” submitted by Mehnaz Mohsin [17217003] of Spring, 2022 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of BSS. In Anthropology on 25th May, 2022

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## **Abstract**

This paper aims to dive into the makings of a makeup culture among women from upper/middle groups as learned through online sources. This culture has shaped consumer patterns, class identity and superiority and has contributed to the construction of a community. One such that includes routines and rituals, must haves and cannot live without, aesthetic preferences, creating and abiding with class identity that dictates good tastes and the undesirable. This education also expands to specific lingo as cultural capital, allowing for class solidarity in technique, language and products. This culture of makeup is central to transnational exchange of ideas, transforming markets that require digital marketing and beauty influencers in the local scenario to make it accessible. It has also made room for politicized conversations and sensitization through makeup. The political correctness of mis/matched foundations is an extremely charged conversation found in beauty content online, that has allowed for the unlearning and acknowledgment of colored bigotry. This makeup education from online sources has also enabled LGBTQ sensitization among heterosexual viewers from the intersection of makeup, recognizing that a lot of the culture is appropriated from LGBTQ techniques and artistry. This has expanded in the understanding of gender fluidity and normalization of makeup as gender neutral. Respecting and admiring gender diverse beauty gurus while living in a predominantly hetero-oriented society is a phenomenon that has become possible through the exposure to makeup culture online.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This paper aims to explore the relationship between makeup and women from upper/middle income groups within Dhaka. It dives into the issues of embodiment and the construction of the self through the apparatus of makeup. The use of makeup has become ritualized by many into a daily habit by creating routines for the self. Consequently, an obstruction of such a routine, or inappropriate makeup for the day can bring up feelings of muddled self-confidence. Due to the easy access of social media, learning about makeup has become possible. These tutorials are accessible through makeup lessons, product reviews and intensive product descriptions found in beauty-related content. This has allowed for the viewer to be self-taught, essentially changing the way in which women do their makeup now, prompting changes from hands to tools, from pancakes to bottled foundations. Paying attention to the intergenerational changes in the toolkit for makeup explains the transition from viewing makeup as service oriented to an accumulation of individual product possessions. This has brought about a transforming market for foreign makeup products in this city. Viewers of makeup tend to form an association with products that are seen on the internet; so, many local entrepreneurs in makeup have been increasingly replicating and recreating products that look like the same thing, creating dupes inspired from similar ideas. Paradoxically, even though makeup is mostly understood to be a feminine topic, the beauty content that most viewers watch on the internet comes from beauty experts who are queer and unyielding to the gender binary. Understanding of ‘boys in makeup’ is also a topic of discussion that was brought up with my interlocutors. The objective of my paper is to identify what this makeup culture allows by diving into: firstly, the personal relationship to it and the making of class identity, secondly, its role in un/learnings of colorism and class aspirations, thirdly, understanding the local scenario and the intergenerational changes in makeup and fourthly, the topic of LGBTQ exposure through makeup content online.

## **Chapter 2: Relevance/Significance**

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are increasingly being put to use by many entrepreneurs of different groups in the market. All of whom use our user digital data and

habits to formulate algorithms that match the interests of the user. This simultaneously traps users into algorithmic boxes that is cleverly studded with push marketing products related to such habitual content. As an avid online viewer of makeup since the early days of instagram's sprouting in 2012/13 and living through what it is today, I've witnessed firsthand, the neoliberal takeover of the platform that started out more as a picture book, slowly growing into the shopping catalog it is today. In that time, I have also seen and learned from the booming self-taught makeup artists within the same algorithm. These artists themselves have made careers out of learning, teaching and marketing make up products to viewers. I have also noticed the shift from the homogeneity of beauty content made up of mostly white beauty gurus, to a popularization of makeup content that now includes an eclectic mix of peoples across ethnicities, countries and classes. This went hand in hand with today's aspired transnational status quo of diversity and inclusion, something that is ever present in every MNC, INGOs/NGOs and national state making schemes. However, because of this globally produced knowledge, online trends and imperial ideas flow through this channel, almost unnoticed to the viewer where they find themselves swooning over American or South Korean beauty ideals, tricks and techniques alongside their products. This has resulted in a shift in the market for foreign cosmetics in this city. Local makeup brands like Kona by Farnaz Alam have developed items that do and appear like the product seen online, making dupes that have inspired ideas, as viewers learn to appreciate the products online, thus also creating a demand for such products.



a.



b.

Picture a. is the product that inspired the product in picture b.. The product in concern is a highlighter, a shimmery powder that is used at the high points of the face to catch and reflect light, accentuating the high points of the cheekbone. ‘Highlighting’ is an essential step in carving out the face, frequently used in conjunction with contour. However, highlighting was never important to my mother, or her mother. It was not important to my younger cousin sister either, who at the sight of my face with highlighter said ‘ewwww, you look so oily’ to which I said, ‘no apu, this isn’t oily, this is dewy!’ This story is from 2015. Today, she has her own set of contour and highlighter, she has learned, she has bought in. Upon first glance, it is easy to write off product b. as a dupe/copy of product a., given the design of packaging to the embossed patterns that match almost exactly. However, product a. is pink/flesh toned, a little darker in shade and product b. is much more lighter/whiter in color. While design and concept may be copied, the difference in tones is a reflection of what the majority of the local market wants to put on their face.

### **Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework**

The first question I aimed to look at was everyday living in makeup. This question’s focus was to understand embodiment, creation of the makeup identity in subjectivity, ritualized routines of everyday life. It was also important to include everyday feelings of inadequacy induced by ‘inappropriate makeup’ in different cultural/social settings and exploring the importance or vitality to look and feel like one’s class. Using Bordieu’s concept of habitus, it is evident that makeup is one of the biggest apparatus used in everyday disposition to formulate a sense of self. On the internet, influencers thrive based on exchange and relatability, where virtual representations and activities develop a culture in which members seek and share resources



(Caliandro, 2016). This transaction was coined as "social capital" by Bourdieu (1985), who described it as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition." Because they allow viewers/users into a snippet or 20 minute video of their lives and share portions of their digital selves, their feelings and preferences with them are just some of the ways in which these influencers share a great level of social capital with them.

The second question aims at tracing back to where this makeup culture was learned. This question aims to understand who their influencers are, tracing back to the first influencers one learned from comparing to who their influencers are now. Paying attention to the changes in trends, makeup styles, and a shift to influencers of varying ethnicities, has led to a discussion around the gap of understanding colors and tonalities. This then allows a distinction to be drawn between people who do not match shades to their skin tone and those who do. Mismatched shades to the skin color is understood to be a botched makeup look and/or a person's wish to look fairer. The latter look is often associated with people of lower classes because of the preconceived notion that colorism is most prevalent there. However, it is to be noted that due to the language barrier, it is unlikely that a person from the lower class with non-English medium education watches Youtube content in English. They watch local content creators who may or may not be using matching shades. It is here that the agency of the viewers must be acknowledged, in applying agency to purchase a lighter shade of foundation to get their preferred look. As Maya Richardson (2020) writes in her article, 'This fixation on fair skin isn't about looking Eurocentric. The desire to be light is a desire to look like rich Asians, not like whites.' In *The Significance of Skin Color in Asian and Asian-American Communities: Initial Reflections*, a Cambodian-Chinese man said, "In the Cambodian community, [dark skin is] associated with less intelligence, laziness, working manually and lower class, and unattractiveness. Business people are the lighter-skinned ones, more intelligent, more ethical and morally superior. People want to look whiter because it's associated with wealth and status." (Jones, 2013, p. 1116). So, it can be stated that, making a shift from conventional white beauty influencers to influencers of different colors, is something that has serious classist connotations and complexities to be considered.

Thirdly, it was also important to understand the local scenario. As the aforementioned note, it is important to keep in mind the language gap that is present in an education from foreign Youtubers. Are local influencers a product of the makeup market or is it also a result of necessity, making beauty aspirations accessible and desirable for all? The number of local influencers is ever growing. Due to the persuasiveness and influence of social media influencers, many companies and brands collaborate with them (Burgess & Green, 2009). Jui-Lung Chen & Apritika Dermawan (2020) expressed that in this regard, influencers' existence should not be overlooked; it is crucial to analyze what defines "influencers" and how they successfully use electronic word of mouth to convince customers. What does the makeup locally produced look like and why? I also asked about the intergenerational changes in makeup, ie, the transforming tool kit for makeup, as this is a product of digital scopes.

Fourth and finally, I wanted to ask questions that addressed the biggest contributors to the culture of makeup, the LGBTQ community have had many of its techniques and makeup artistry appropriated into the way everyone applies makeup these days. How do learners of makeup understand boy beauty gurus on Youtube? Do they understand and accept their (beauty influencers') queerness, also accepting the foundational influences of queerness in makeup as we know it, or is there a disassociation between learning from them and accepting them? Is buying their products and subscribing to their content the same as accepting all forms of queerness? Increasingly, beauty, makeup and nail care have all been a common sight on boys for a lot of digital users across the capital, even the state through the exposure to K-Pop Stars, who are metrosexual and redefining what it means to be masculine and desirable. Although, male makeup artists were common, it was uncommon for them to be wearing it without having their gender orientation in question, which is still a common question/denial for viewers and interactors. If foreign boys are acceptable, aspirational, artistic and aesthetic as queer folks, is it the same trajectory of thinking for queer folks closer to home?

#### **Chapter 4: Methodology**

The scope of my ethnography is restricted to the women of the upper middle class in Dhaka city, since it is an undertaking of autoethnographic attempts. While I may be a migrant member of the city, many are as they live their lives in and out of this city and country. I have the same

spending capacity as my fellow interlocutors/peers, and we have all gone through similarly expensive English medium schooling. It is necessary in any ethnography for one to immerse oneself in the "community" that is sought after in the research. A detailed evaluation of my interlocutor's engagement is the most critical aspect of my survey work as auto-ethnographic analysis appears to be, as Hayano notes in "Auto-ethnography: Paradigms, Problems, and Prospects" (1979). Further, the process and methodology described by Hayano (1979) involves critique of "ethnic" insiders who do not have any evidence of their role in ethnographic research on the differences and specificities. Auto-ethnography requirements include intimate understanding of the community and their background, and the willingness to "pass as a native member," and the designation requires both self-identification and internal participation with other group members to find them to be part of their life. He also states that field preference is typically dictated by the character traits and group membership(s) of the insider. In my situation, my willingness to "pass" as an observer, one who not only experiences the same complexing habits of makeup but is also local, exchanging ethnic and socio-economic identities, and in some cases class, personalities, has done such that the participants in my study reached up to me in areas that an external researcher probably might not and could not have managed.

My methodology has been centered around frank and intimate conversations with my peers about their lived, learned, personalized and embodied experiences. All of their names have been made up so as their identities may remain anonymous. In short, this is not a very structured research; it is far removed from the traditional approach. Rather, this paper explores ideas that are personal and very much muddled with diversified emotions and sentiments. The questions asked were straight forward and asked in mid conversation, and through a digital Google form that recorded their annual expenditures on makeup, their age and other demographics. The digital form also included in depth questions of makeup preferences, tracing back to where these preferences were learned, and to what extent the correct application of makeup is a telltale sign of one's class. We also explored our everyday makeup essentialities and its link to the embodied affect of 'feeling prepared to face the world and its expectations of womanness.' While my peer thought of what her womanness looks like, I kept in concern that this identity is not just gendered but also constructed by class and the privileges it comes with allowing for the exposure of different style forms.

## Chapter 5: Creating the Personal Classy Look

All of my interlocutors were regular viewers of makeup content on Youtube with favorites among different beauty influencers, and have bought makeup that was recommended to them. Unsurprisingly, their social media was also regularly studded with makeup related content and pushed beauty products.. Users who watch a vlog instead of reading texts or photographs are more likely to have a better comprehension of the products because they can visualize them and are also directed to buy them by the algorithm. The existence of an open channel that allows two-way conversation in social media gives users a sense of social presence (Fortin and Dholakia, 2005). 80% of my interlocutors said that they almost always feel the need to wear makeup before stepping out. While one of my interlocutors mentioned living up to expectations of womanness belonging to a particular class, another interlocutor said "for me, the process of getting ready to go out is more to do with getting myself hyped up and more "awake" for an event. I wouldn't feel as enthusiastic to be somewhere if I didn't have my makeup on." It seemed to me that Pompom has a ritualistic attachment to makeup wherein it allows for her to be more herself. It is a getting ready routine, just like one would brush their teeth for fresh breath, Pompom likes to wear makeup to feel fresh. Whether such a feeling can be understood to be a case of body dysmorphia is unclear but it does raise the question. Interestingly, when asked about five makeup items that they could not live without, no one mentioned less than five products. Instead, I was told by two of them that mentioning just five was not enough for a complete and desirable look! I asked them about their makeup styles for special occasions, all of them had very toned down, non-extravagant, muted color combination preferences. In line with the looks that are presently common of middle/upper classes; neutral but glowy, natural, effortless glam is a top favorite. 'I want that no makeup makeup look, nothing extra', 'Bronzey lids, glowy face, natural lipstick.' Bourdieu (1984) famously critiqued Kant's theory, making clear his idea of aesthetic admiration as a form of cultural capital that establishes class identity, affect and embodiment while also maintaining class superiority between divisions in "taste."

From 'No one's going to work with smokey eyes, babe. That's a night-time look' to 'Everything from your blend to your brows can speak louder than anything someone has to say about their taste' my interlocutors seem to have very clear ideas of what's a good makeup look and what's not. To them, a bold colorful eyeshadow should never be paired with an equally loud and bold

lipstick, but it is a common makeup look I have noticed in most of the weddings I have attended in ever growing rural Chittagong. Our bodies possess influence and the affect is confirmed in contrast to the makeup looks we deem undesirable. The performativities that make these distinctions come alive also keep the body as the vital apparatus of the influence and how we choose to put makeup on it. Therefore, the body with our preferences in makeup styles represents all of our possessions, our class specific aesthetic aspirations allowing for our strong sense of status security without needing to spill the beans on our bank accounts, education and taste to others. While talking to my fellow interlocutors about this class portrayal, Jerin said it best, 'A look that serves', serve is a word of appreciation used in the makeup guru lingo, meaning to be perfectly met with one's standards.

Lingo is another great topic of conversation, a lot of vocabulary is learned in the process of watching beauty content, 'brows on fleek', 'cut crease', 'baking', 'hitting pan', 'transferring' and 'highlighting' are all words my interlocutors learned from watching makeup content through different influencers over the years of online education/exposure in makeup. These words are used on the daily when talking about makeup. Some of these words have now become common between different kinds of influencers who target different classes but it is hard to say to what extent and whether they still carry the same meanings as we understand. Bourdieu (1973) described cultural capital as "linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture." This cultural capital also includes how well we understand, wear and talk about makeup in different social contexts. As a result, while viewing youtube videos, the user feels more engrossed. Users bond and interact more profoundly when they communicate and relate with others and experience warmth and togetherness, a class solidarity based in language, technique and products.

## **Chapter 6: Aspirations of Class**

'Listen, if your skin's gray, you're not doing it right. And I am judging you for it. Stop trying to look fair, it's not going to happen' is a statement Sheyna made, and to write candidly this is something I am guilty of myself. When I bought a foundation for my sister in law, she was not all too excited to wear it as it was a match to her skin tone, she told me she prefers foundations

that are lighter. I judged her for it. I told her that it was not right to mismatch foundation with your skin tone, that concealers were meant for that purpose of brightening under the eyes while foundation was to even out skin tone. With that I went on about how the present industry has started to market to people of various shades to include populations that had been previously excluded and that this was mainly because of public influencers' outcry supported and fueled by their viewers. It is true, higher-end brands like YSL and Tarte even today have very poor shade ranges. In an article by the Insider, Amanda Krause (2021) writes, "Foundation shade ranges have become the ultimate markers of whether beauty brands are inclusive or not. Some call it the "Fenty Effect," referencing how companies have started to release larger shade ranges after seeing the success of Rihanna's Fenty Beauty." The article also notes that consumers can now hold brands liable and expose them on non-inclusive product launches thanks to social media.

Regardless, one thing was more true in our real life context, "Whether we like it or not, a single woman's marketability in Bangladesh is influenced by her skin color. From rural women to the elite upper class, the demand for a fair bride is widespread " (Amreen, 2019), so it makes perfect sense why my relatively new sister in law had the preference she did. In India, a study of fairness product commercials confirmed that they associate fairness with obtaining other life goals, such as marriage, success, empowerment, employability, and self love (Karan 2008). But for people like me and Sheyna, it came from our habitual exposure to online influencers that we have learned to make these distinctions between good and bad foundation matches. Many influencers from the South Asian belt condemned the social messages that were propagated by such advertisements in their videos while also directing people towards makeup brands that were inclusive of different shade varieties. Alongside that, it is from our unlearnings of cultural biases, be it from education, media, or social media hashtags such as Brown&Beautiful that were all efforts of sensitization and humanitarian awareness on discriminations. To that effect, all of my interlocutors understand that matching shades of foundation to your complexion is vital to a good makeup look, and that not doing so is a reflection of internalized colorism. Yet, it is also true that all of my interlocutors have made a transition to K-beauty trends where the ideal look is soft, dewy, fair skin, complemented with pink blush and pink lips, without a lot of contour. Korean beauty face products, like the popular cushion foundation also have very limited shade ranges, all within the ivory to beige category. Idealizing fair, clean and minimalist looks, K-beauty makeup standards are far from what means to be brown and beautiful. Watching POC influencers, the

political debate on shade ranges cannot be missed and choosing to mis/match one's skin tone for the upper/middle class woman is a matter of actively choosing to present their stance on such a matter, a political view on the face they choose to put on.

## **Chapter 7: That's a lot of Makeup**

As previously said, it is critical to remember the translation issue that exists when learning from non-local YouTubers. It begs for the question to be asked, are local bloggers a tool of the booming makeup industry, or are they a necessity in bridging the language gap allowing for beauty standards to be more available and appealing to everyone? Local influencers have become increasingly numerous and my interlocutors think that it is a great thing, "I did not buy her collection but I was definitely very excited to see this happening over here for once" said PomPom when asked about Xefer's collaboration with bronxcolorsbd. Actors, models and influencers on digital platforms like Nazibah Basher, Afia Tabassum, Neha Dewan have partnered with brands like LafzBd and ZaynMaraBd. Users of social media can develop a variety of content to meet social behaviors such as contact and engagement with others. It also encourages content production and exchange. (Heinonen et al., 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Rettberg, 2009). LafzBd markets products that are Halal, meaning it does not contain any ingredient that makes wearing it impermissible and has partnered with many local influencers who post content in English and Bangla. Alongside Lafz, Golden Rose and La Femme are other popular products found locally that have come out with BB creams and fixing sprays, products that have only become recently popularized among the growing number of makeup enthusiasts. BB creams and fixing sprays were all the craze in the beauty content me and my interlocutors watched in 2014-2016, "I don't remember seeing Golden Rose sprays or BB creams, all they had back then was powder and lipsticks" said Lamia. Agreeing with Lamia, Pompom added, "Yeah, back then, I could only find such stuff on MallBd or BanglaShopper, the usual American/UK drugstore stuff, Milani, Rimmel etc."

Local brands such as Groome have come out with makeup brush sets, blenders and hair brushes that all have similar designs to foreign brands but can be bought for less than half the price. While Groome's Facebook page does not have a lot of its content or descriptors in Bangla, it is sold through Shajgoj, a makeup store that frequently does Facebook Lives in Bangla. To that

effect, what has definitely happened is that makeup products and the necessary toolkit have transformed immensely over the last half decade in Bangladesh. What was makeup ten years ago for a person has become completely different today, and in places what used to be a service of having your makeup done at a parlor has now become the personal possession of ten to fifteen products used in the daily, in different ways. My mother always told me that I have way too much makeup. To my mother brushes and sponges were never important, she used her fingertips. Ironically, these days beauty gurus also love using their fingertips because it allows for the best blend with the skin. 90% of my interlocutors agreed that neither did their mothers have such an expansive makeup collection nor did they have the education of makeup as they do. Most mothers had the basics, a kohl pencil, a powder, lipstick and a small eyeshadow quad. They never used the kind of brushes we use for eyeshadow; the crease brush, big/small blending brushes and angled liner brush were all unknown to them and at most were familiar to the double ended sponge applicators that came with the eyeshadow palette. All of my interlocutors agree that the brushes/applicators that come with the product are useless, and that the brush sets/kits are a long time investment. Hence, my interlocutors are happy to see local products that are cheaper and more available for purchase that perform just as well for everyday use. While local influencers, at first glance to me seem to be a neoliberal conquest of the makeup market, it is not just that. It is making beauty and makeup comprehensible, accessible, personal and new by everyone interacting with it. It is allowing for people I know like Neha Dewan to have acquired almost sixty thousand followers on Instagram, and many other influencers partnering with international and local brands to promote and market beauty products, all from home and in many cases without a business degree all the while adding to the culture of commodity fetishization.

## **Chapter 8: Rainbows and Stars**

"Have you heard these names or brands - Jeffree Star, Manny MUA, James Charles, Nikkie Tutorials? Have you bought their products?" An overwhelming response of yes came from all my interlocutors. These are the names of some of the biggest beauty lifestyle influencers on Youtube and they are all from the LGBTQ community. Over the years, these influencers have spoken up in monologue-ish, serious toned videos, about their stories of coming out, the backlash and hate comments they have faced from their viewers. At the same time, they have



also felt supported, encouraged and loved by some of their viewers. María Isabel Carrasco Cara Chards (2018) writes “These bloggers will teach you a lot about makeup and the lives of LGBT people.” The Internet is a valuable source of education for transgender people, specially for those who are young and are geographically isolated from an offline transgender community (Shapiro, 2004). While this is true in the case of transyouth, it is also important to note how LGBTQ influencers’ content have served as an acculturation process into the world of beauty where they have learned to live and share this world with heterosexual people. For my interlocutors and I, these vloggers have had a great effect on the way we have come to view and accept gender nonconformity and diversity. From concepts of queering pronouns to how useful labels can be/are, are all concepts we have grown to be familiar with over the internet and in part from these videos. Unlearning bigotry and respecting gender diverse groups happened simultaneously as we continued to learn from these influencers and their cis collaborators/friends. Even though I began my education by watching makeup content made by ciswomen, these influencers would routinely collaborate with LGBTQ influencers and brand owners. It was from the conversations from such videos that I learned about how much of their labor and artistry had been expropriated into the way women were taught to put on their makeup. I wanted to inspect if my interlocutors were also aware of this appropriation, most of them said yes. I asked them if they were accepting of the LGBTQ folks, they said they were. I also know that most of them understand that makeup has no gender and it can be used by anyone, regardless of their gender and sexual orientation. Lamia loves K-Pop and has crushes on band members of BTS “Yes, even though they wear nail polish and the best part is Jin, Jimin and I all love a good smokey eye.” Does this mean that Lamia understands them to be queer or has she normalized masculinity to look different than it had previously been presented. For Lamia it was the latter, it was also a normalization of makeup as a gender neutral tool. For Sheyna, LGBTQ makeup gurus were teachers, trendsetters to be respected, their styles to be emulated and desired. Her acceptance of their identity came from a place of admiration and respect, “I can’t hate Nikkie just cause she’s a transwoman, she is so much more and I am happy that she is living the life she always wanted to.” It was agreed by all my interlocutors that even though it is normal for men to wear makeup without feeling emasculated, it is still always a topic of ridicule or laughter within their social groups. Noting that this normalization still has a long way to go among others.

I asked them then, what would it be like if people in their immediate and local social groups started wearing makeup in the process of exploring their identity, most of them said they would encourage their friends and indulge in makeup sessions together. I asked them what they thought of the local boys in beauty compared to other gender diverse people they come across everyday. While it was agreed that all of them can and should wear makeup if they like, it was also the general consensus that the Hijra and Transfolx have a lot to learn when it comes to wearing makeup “correctly.” While white LGBTQ makeup techniques are seen as artistic, dramatic, drag and desirable, that kind of appreciation for a different kind of makeup which is their personalized makeup is not evident, neither is it found to be desirable. All of my interlocutors knew of SaadMua, a local Bangladeshi man in makeup and appreciated his style as it matched the imagery to the likes of James Charles and would even be open to recreating one of his looks. Just as it was true for James Charles and Nikkie, Nusrat Jahan Labonnayo (2021) writes “the support he got from the netizens was phenomenal and that outnumbered the hate comments on his videos. He says, "Thus it became easier for me to move forward." This support comes from people who have learned to de-gender makeup, understand gender ambiguity and expressions of it.

### **Conclusion: Worlds of Possibilities**

Makeup is personal, political, classist, gender nuanced and ever transforming. It has been in the center of people learning lingos, looks, likes/dislikes and love for people they had not been exposed to before. While some allow makeup to be a marker of what is ‘classy’ and what is inappropriate, these definitions are ever evolving and changing in their specific class contexts and meanings. Meanings that can be put to use by many to their benefit, to climb up and earn a class view validation or to make money off by propagating these desirabilities to viewers online, makeup is an essential tool in the making of the self in which every person applies their agency to. Cultural reproduction, according to Bourdieu, is the social process by which culture is expected to be followed, particularly through the socializing impact of significant institutions. In today’s digital world, Youtube is an interactive institution where ideas are shared and recreated by people who can hold these positions because of privilege and class. In that continuous process, their class and privilege is emitted, appearing to be appealing enough to emulate. This process is happening simultaneously across state boundaries and within different actors in their

respective classes. Makeup is central to conversations of ever shifting trends that represent imperialistic ideas and soft powers of bigger nationstates. A shift to K-beauty trends from American beauty makes clear the Korean cultural soft power in play by shaping people's tastes and preferences. This is through makeup, along with but not explicit to the popularization of K-pop and K-drama. From pancakes to bottles to cushion pancakes again, from fingertips and hands to brushes, sponges to fingertips again, from bronze and sultry to soft and dewy, ideas flow fluidly from transnational interactors to local market buyers. Amidst all of this, there are also politically charged conversations to be found that discuss matters of inclusivity, affordability, processes of de-gendering and freedoms to express. For many, the culture of makeup is an avenue of self exploration and expression where they are ridiculed, loved, appreciated and respected by those who view this education as important and valuable. Everyone has the ability to make a choice in makeup, and what is desirable is achievable in many ways that do not always require tons of higher end promoted products. What is more important is that beyond the attempts of authentic reviews and marketing made by the influencers, viewers have gained what was most important, the how-to of makeup, the blends, the color corrections for dark spots and pigmentation, and oil control. There is an education to gain here, a vocational profession to be mastered from home, either from creating taste distinctions and superiority or by simple recreation of aspirations through interaction and consumption. What products they use to achieve their look is their wish entirely, "Man, let me tell you, as a woman, I have been told by too many people on what I should and should not do with my money. So, even if I want to buy three lipsticks because of the Euphoria trend, it is no one's goddamn business. I will probably never wear them, but I will buy whatever.....I want to" is a testament to people's active agency in partaking in commodity fetishization and giving into consumerism to chase the feeling of empowerment in the capacity to personally possess things that create class identity.

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