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MEDIA & COMMUNICATION STUDIES | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Pinning beauty: standards promoted and behaviors encouraged within pinterest's healthy makeup content

Andrea M. M. Weare[1]*

ABSTRACT: This qualitative study builds upon previous quantitative new media studies using Bandura's social cognitive theory of mass communication (SCT) to understand health and beauty content on Pinterest. The thematic analysis investigated Pinterest search results for "healthy" makeup products to contextualize Pinterest's influence on social perceptions of health, beauty, and consumption among women. Pins were analyzed through the SCT constructs of a) standards promoted and b) behaviors encouraged to users searching for healthy makeup products as conveyed through social modeling, messages, and social rewards in "healthy" makeup pins. Additionally, pins were analyzed for their articulation within Pinterest as a postfeminist media culture and their embodiment of medicalization. Results indicate that pins for healthy makeup products largely encouraged appearance-related standards and behaviors, rather than health-related ones. Pins also enacted a postfeminist media culture to perform "health" through the disciplined application of specific makeup products.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrea M. M. Weare is an assistant professor in the School of Communication at the University of Nebraska Omaha. This study is part of a larger research agenda focused globally on digital media, strategic communication, gender, and the body.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This study surfaced and analyzed themes from the first 100 pins of search results for "healthy makeup" on Pinterest. It used Social Cognitive Theory and the concept of "postfeminist media culture" as lenses to view Pinterest's influence on social perceptions of health, beauty, and consumption among women. Search results for "healthy makeup" delivered pins which largely valued appearance concerns, rather than health concerns. While users may aim to use Pinterest to identify healthier products, search results for these keywords produced pins laden with values that have little to do with improved health. Instead, pin results reinforced, at best, medicalizing non-medical skin characteristics and, at worst, systemic oppression like colorism. Pins results also embodied a postfeminist media culture which encouraged users to perform "health" through the disciplined application of specific makeup products.

1. Introduction

Women are among the top users of the social media platform Pinterest (Statista, 2021a) and use the platform "to find tomorrow's ideas" in beauty and wellness (Pinterest Predicts, 2021). Social media platforms facilitate consumer research for a variety of personal care products, including makeup. Historically, women's beauty magazines have disseminated the information to Western audiences (Arthurs, 2003), but social media are now principal sources of both product information (Torres et al., 2019) and reinforcement of beauty ideals at a societal level (Trekels et al., 2018; Wen et al., 2015). These platforms—including Pinterest, as studied here—circulate beauty discourses and hail users to consume for specific outcomes. Amidst the discourse is a linkage of beauty to health and cosmetics to healthy skin. Makeup products promoted as "healthy" have little to do with actual improved health outcomes (Wanner & Nathan, 2019; Williams Merten et al., 2020). Yet, consumers flock to "healthy" products to prevent so-called ailments such as skin darkening (e.g., brown spots). Considering Pinterest's influence on social perceptions of beauty and health, analyzing Pinterest's "healthy" makeup content builds an understanding of the values and behaviors users ought to model when researching beauty products. Doing so contextualizes an $85 billion-dollar global makeup market projected for 2025 (Statista, 2021b) and growing social unrest surrounding colorism in makeup product advertising following the Black Lives Matter movement in the summer of 2020 (Wischhover, 2020).

This study expands upon previous quantitative social media studies which have used the lens of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Guidry et al., 2016; Simpson & Mazzeo, 2017) to analyze pins aiming to promote health. Specifically, this qualitative study investigated pin search results for "healthy" makeup products. First, it analyzed pins through a) standards promoted (e.g., professional-grade performance) and b) behaviors encouraged (e.g., purchase prestige products) that users searching for healthy makeup are exposed to in Pinterest search results. Second, it analyzed how pin results enact what Gill (2007) coined a postfeminist sensibility, specifically a glorification of self-surveillance of the body. Analyzing pin text showcases what users are encouraged to value when searching for healthy beauty products online, a first step in "apprehending the role of cosmetics in conflating self-esteem and body image with the goals of patriarchal hegemony" (Merskin, 2007, p. 591). In doing so, this study answers a call by Levine (2015) to update past postfeminist scholarly inquiries of "feminized popular culture with new questions and issues in mind" surrounding Pinterest (p. 6). More importantly, doing so may help health experts utilize spaces such as Pinterest to communicate messages that could improve health as other scholars have found on social media (Krishnan & Zhou, 2019; Roberts et al., 2017).

1.1. Social cognitive theory in mass communication

"Healthy makeup's" influence on Pinterest can be understood in terms of SCT, which in its basic form states that we learn through observing the actions of others (Bandura, 2001a). The study relies on Bandura's SCT application to mass media which posits that modeling what we see in media can drive our motivation to act in certain ways (Bandura, 2001a; Stefanone, Yue, & Toh, 2018). Media provide a framework on how gender, for example, is defined and perceived (Bussey & Bandura, 1999), and media affect viewers' perceptions about what is desirable and normal (Bandura, 2001b). Much research has examined the application of SCT to health and female audiences in traditional media (Capella et al., 2010; Hawkins & Curtis Hane, 2000; Prividera & Goldbold Kean, 2008; Smith, 1994), but only a handful of studies have done so in social media to investigate such messaging (Guidry et al., 2016; Simpson & Mazzeo, 2017).

Notably, the theory has been used to code health and beauty pins for Bandura's (2001a) SCT constructs: a) standards promoted and b) behaviors encouraged which are present during online exposure (Simpson & Mazzeo, 2017). Based on the presence of these constructs, we can see what standards and behaviors are most promoted and encouraged to users online. It is through these constructs that we see "how bodies are produced and regulated" online and how such information is to be internalized (Barcelos, 2014, p. 478). Incentives for mirroring media standards are necessary for self-conduct (Bandura, 2001a), so viewing pins that link makeup with health can

encourage particular behaviors (e.g., shopping). Since modeling users who have achieved a desirable outcome could create incentive to act, modeling what we see in social media can have a social impact (e.g., valuing light skin over dark skin) (Bandura, 2001b).

Additionally, attitudes communicated via social media can influence individual conduct. As beauty ideals are rampantly modeled on social media, this study illuminates social values regarding beauty and health. Corporate beauty's interest in audience motivation makes the processes of SCT a useful lens for analyzing what users observe and are expected to model. By informing users of new products, pins can aim to shape attitudes and elicit desires, which may affect behaviors such as purchasing a pinned product. Thus, the constructs of Bandura's SCT of mass communication (2001b) were used in this study to investigate a) standards promoted and b) behaviors encouraged as conveyed through social modeling, messages, and social rewards in "healthy" makeup pins.

1.2. Pinterest

With 335 million monthly users, Pinterest defines itself as "a tool for collecting and organizing things you love" (Statista, 2021a). While men's use of the platform has increased worldwide to 14.5%, women constitute most Pinterest users (Statista, 2021a). Like other social media platforms, Pinterest does not rely on "legacy knowledge" of web design for users to engage with it (Tekobbe,

Figure 1. Pinterest pins.
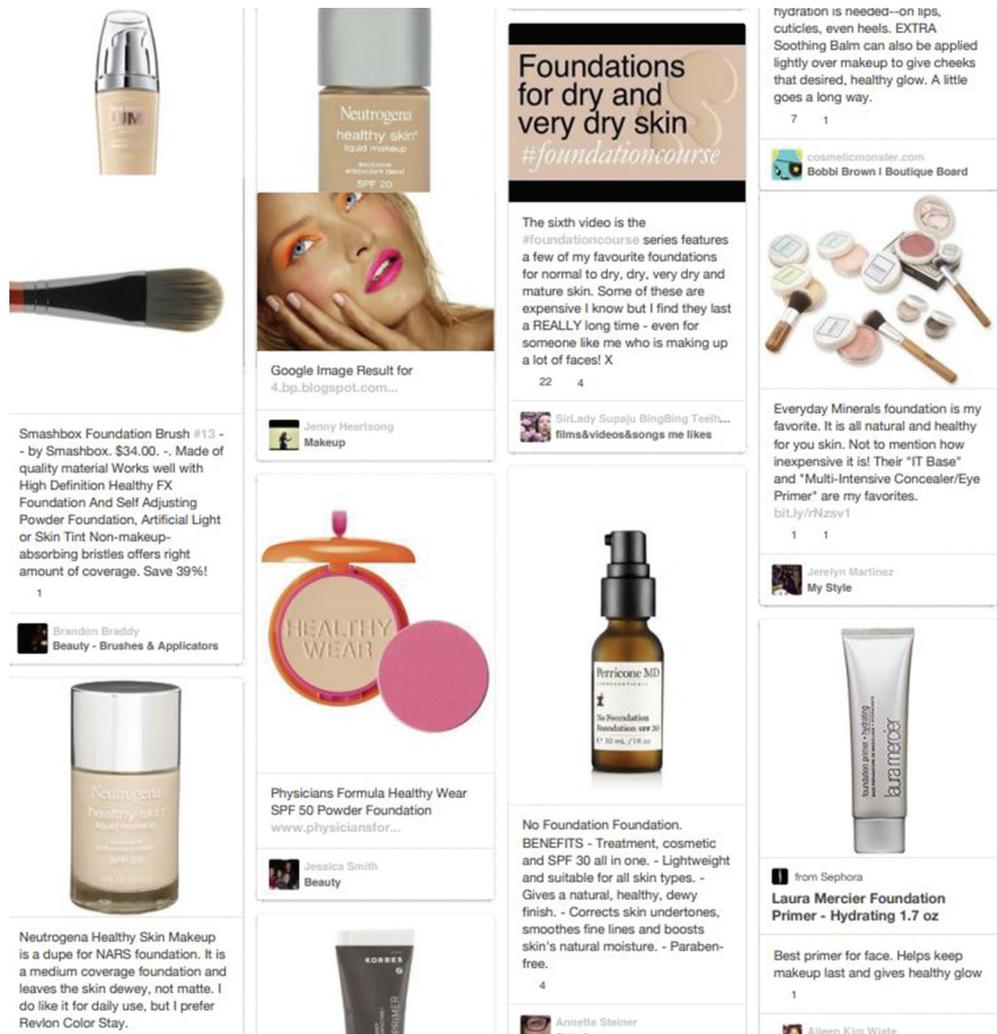
(2013)). Pinterest's visual "wish list"-like function of boards enables users to curate pins with an intent-to-consume (Chocano, 2012). "Wish list" beauty boards are especially common among female users (Bennett, 2014), and beauty boards can range from images of influencers, models, and celebrities; makeup and skin care products; and infographics and articles sharing tips and trends. Pin text located underneath pins (see Figure 1) is a mix of user-generated text (e.g., "My favorite foundation!") and advertising copy (e.g., "follow us @ElleMagazine on Twitter!"). While Pinterest is known for individual account use, corporate accounts extend brands into the pinning space making it difficult for users to discern between individual user and corporate pins. Thus, beauty companies can encourage consumers to plan for their beauty purchases by pinning them in advance (Khang et al., 2012).

1.3. Medicalization in postfeminist media cultures

Though public health-oriented advertising is a contemporary concept, "health" has long been used to sell products from soap to automobiles (Berger, 2007). In the marketplace, the lines between health and beauty blur. Western beauty marketing has a history of using medical rhetoric to promote wellness and self-empowerment through products. For example, beauty industry spokesman Everett McDonough in a 1933 *Good Housekeeping* interview promised that "many a neurotic case has been cured with the deft application of a lipstick" (Peiss, 1998, p. 156). Historically, beauty conglomerates used white models to promote staying indoors and painting their faces with bleaching creams and powders to keep skin looking "normally white" (Peiss, 1998, p. 149). Not until the 1920s was suntanned skin en vogue (Peiss, 1998). Shortly after, consumers were ridiculed for applying artificial products in an age of purity, but this criticism muted in the 1960s when makeup brand Clinique put a health focus in its marketing embodied by its "antiseptic green" packaging (Peiss, 1998, p. 262). While women dominantly ran the beauty industry through the 1910s, it became increasingly owned and produced by men in the 1920s when discourses turned toward promoting youthful looking skin. For example, several Pompeian product campaigns in 1923 declared "the mother of today is more the big sister" (Peiss, 1998, p. 141). Contemporary makeup discourses conflate youth and health by merging skincare with dermatology and makeup with cosmetic surgery. At the heart of the discourse lies the concept of personal responsibility for preventing ailments—a common rhetorical strategy in public health messaging (Lupton, 1995). Today, makeup is marketed to prevent a slew of so-called ailments including fine lines, wrinkles, enlarged pores, sallowness, and dullness among others (Brown & Katigbak-Sillick, 2007).

While feminist scholars have long critiqued the medicalization of female bodies (J. K. Boles & Long Hoeveler, 1996), feminist response to beauty media has surfaced notably in discussions surrounding postfeminist media cultures (Arthurs, 2003; Bartky, 1988; Gill, 2007; Marwick, 2013). Feminist theory's critique of postfeminist culture has largely focused on its premise that choice and consumption can lead to empowerment and its contradictory themes of claiming to be both feminist and antifeminist (Gill, 2007). Postfeminism can be described as incorporated and depoliticized feminism (Stacey, 1987). The "autonomous, calculating, self-regulating subject of neoliberalism bears a strong resemblance to the active, freely choosing, self-reinventing subject of postfeminism" (Gill, 2007, p. 164). Postfeminist media cultures, thus, are characterized by an obsessive preoccupation with the body in a shift from objectification to subjectification, specifically a glorification of self-surveillance of the body (Gill, 2007). Body monitoring methods can be numerous and wide ranging from the popularity of before-and-after beauty selfie culture (Frishberg, 2019) to the rise of dermatillomania (i.e. skin picking disorder) during the COVID-19 pandemic (Brethour, 2020). Postfeminist media cultures on Pinterest, especially, encourage self-surveillance behaviors such as a commitment to the "makeover" paradigm and disciplined monitoring of the body (Rossie, 2020).

Applying the postfeminist concept of the "real me" (McRobbie, 1985), Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer (2006) identified a postfeminist media culture within postmodern reality makeover shows like Fox's *The Swan* "that normalize cosmetic surgery as a means to become the 'ideal' woman" (p. 255). Pinterest's beauty sphere encourages a similar plasticity as pin results encourage

users to uncover their "real," most "healthy" selves through diligent product research. It is this sense of self-regulation and competitive femininity (McRobbie, 2015) that characterizes Pinterest's health and beauty sphere as a postfeminist media culture (Gill, 2007). Thus, this study enabled an analysis of postfeminist consumption ideologies within pin content.

The study posed the following research questions utilizing the constructs of Bandura's (2001b) SCT of mass communication within a postfeminist media culture (Gill, 2007):

RQ1: What beauty standards are promoted in "healthy" makeup pins?

RQ2: What behaviors are encouraged in "healthy" makeup pins?

2. Method

The study analyzed "healthy" makeup pin search results to determine what values (i.e. standards promoted) and practices (i.e. behaviors encouraged) are reinforced to users searching for products and to what end the concept of "healthy" is to be modeled. In doing so, it assessed how pin results enact a postfeminist media culture online (Gill, 2007).

2.1. Data selection

While proprietary, Pinterest's algorithm generally spotlights pins based on metrics it deems popular by particular users and particular content. Because algorithms bias search results, searches were performed on the researcher's office computer rather than their personal computer since search history and device cookies influence search results on Pinterest (Pinterest, 2021). To capture what users see when searching specifically for healthy and age preventative makeup products as determind by the literature, the data consisted of two separate Pinterest keyword combinations: 1) "healthy makeup foundation" (Pinterest, 2019a) and 2) "prevention makeup foundation" (Pinterest, 2019b). This showcased the "pins" that populate when a user searches a combination of keywords to find healthy and age preventative beauty products. Excluded key-word searches were "healthy foundation" which produced largely mental health results and "preventative foundation" which produced repetitive results from the second keyword search.

As determined by L. Boles and Bombard (1998), a small data size is appropriate for a qualitative, text-based analysis since the intention is to analyze the function and use of language rather than the frequencies of appearance or users themselves. Thus, the analysis was steeped within the first 100 pins of each search as recommended by Seale (2003) at which point saturation was reached and themes began to repeat themselves. "Healthy makeup foundation" resulted in 99 pins and seven exclusions. "Preventative makeup foundation" resulted in 91 pins and 11 exclusions. Exclusions consisted of pins for tools, cleansers, or non-facial products.

2.2. Data analysis

Thematic analysis was utilized to unpack written text and locate social constructions related to a "real-world context" (Fairclough, 1993) in order to complement previous quantitative new media studies of Pinterest's health and beauty content (Guidry et al., 2016; Simpson & Mazzeo, 2017). Data were coded, in the first pass, modeling Tracy's analytical protocols for finding underlying themes in texts to create "immersion" (2013). Next, open-coding was used in the second pass (Charmaz, 2006) to gain a grounded understanding of pin text in relation to the search terms. Re-reading and categorizing data allowed for the creation of specific codes, which became represen-tative of standards promoted and behaviors encouraged (Tracy, 2013). The analysis also consid-ered rhetorical strategies deployed by the industry (Seale, 2003) to comprehend the meanings of pins within a postfeminist media culture (e.g., "Rx", "natural", "long-lasting").

Using a constant-comparative method (Glaser, 1965), themes were extrapolated from codes using the SCT and postfeminist media culture theoretical framework to yield examples of how users ought to a) value beauty and health (i.e. standards promoted) and b) pin and consume (i.e.

behaviors encouraged). Specifically, data were validated using the theoretical framework to sur-face codes into final themes (e.g., "medicalization", "professionalization", "anti-industry"). Themes were used to determine answers to RQ1 (standards promoted) and RQ2 (behaviors encouraged). Results indicate three overarching themes presented to users when searching for "healthy" makeup products 1) medicalizing, professionalizing, and digitizing beauty; 2) investing in light skin; and 3) negotiating with "natural" and DIY products.

3. Results

The following themes illuminate answers to RQ1 (i.e. what standards are promoted?) and RQ2 (i.e. what behaviors are encouraged?) when searching for healthy makeup products. Results indicate that most pins promoted appearance-related a) standards and b) behaviors, rather than health-related ones. Pins also enacted a postfeminist media culture to perform "health" through the disciplined application of specific makeup products. The following section details the three over-arching thematic trends in the data.

3.1. Medicalizing, professionalizing, and digitizing beauty

A large portion of pin results discussed improving skin tone and texture and used words like "spots", "dullness", "redness", "lines", "discoloration", "oily", "mature", "splotchy", "aging", "freckles", and "roughness" (Pinterest, 2019a). While some pins addressed dermatological diag-noses such as melasma and rosacea, most pins manufactured ailments while simultaneously offering their cures: "The first sign of aging is not wrinkles, it's dull skin … Healthy Looking Skin starts with exfoliation!!" (Pinterest, 2019a). Strategies were expansive yet united in framing products in medical contexts and qualifying a product's efficacy with medicinal descriptors like "alleviate", "cure", "fix", "clarify", "control", "solve", "treat", and "correct." Other pins were more veiled in their descriptions: "provide the perfect adhesion base", "neutralize the eyelid", "spackle" acne and chicken pox scars, and infuse "niacinamide" and "collagen" into the skin (Pinterest, 2019b).

While there are a few references to dermatologists and plastic surgeons by name (e.g., "derma-tologist-tested", "Perricone MD") (Pinterest, 2019a), pins drew heavily upon the expertise of professional "experts" and professional-grade values and practices. "Orange", "creasing and smudged", and "makeup running down your face" were summarized as the failure of a professional-grade application. Pins described products that would turn a user into a "makeup maestro" and master of "Hollywood tricks" (Pinterest, 2019b). Beyond being instructional, pins were also bolstered by career makeup artists and experts for their "professionalization" and, by extension, legitimacy. Some pins were recommendations from makeup artists like Bobbi Brown and Sonia Kashuk (Pinterest, 2019b), while others were labeled as winners of professional compe-titions like the "*Self* [magazine] Healthy Beauty Awards" (Pinterest, 2019b).

A handful of pins were for "dupe" products (i.e. low-cost versions of high-end products). For example, one pin recommended a $15 Neutrogena Healthy Skin Makeup as "a dupe for [$47] NARS foundation" (NARS, 2021). While the Neutrogena product was more affordable, "dupe" culture is nevertheless built around the promise of luxury-performance from low-cost product lines. Pinners might be searching for cheaper options, but the "healthy" makeup foundation pins still encouraged them to value high-end, professional performance.

Many pins claimed to be "revolutionary", "state-of-the-art", "true innovation", and "long-lasting" for "on the go," "all day long" wear (Pinterest, 2019a), even in warm climates. These pins reflected the values of the information technology industry in product effectiveness and longevity. In line with the 24–7 performance ideology of the digital age, these pins promised skin that was "High Definition Healthy", in "Soft Focus", and a "perfected, airbrushed look" mirroring the jargon of mobile photography (Pinterest, 2019a). Other pins described products that delivered "the big fake" which would make the face "camouflaged" (Pinterest, 2019a) with "stainless steel applicators" (Pinterest, 2019b).

At times, corporate-sponsored pins presented themselves as native advertising by offering tips and tricks, but other times they blatantly read "follow us @ElleMagazine on Twitter!" (Pinterest, 2019b) As human behavior is learned observationally through modeling (Bandura, 2001a), the act of pinning can be heavily influenced by corporate Pinterest accounts and affiliated pins. By conflating product application with ailment treatment, users were encouraged to see themselves as experts who possess the power to purchase their own cures, a self-determination rooted in the promise of postfeminist media cultures. While makeup application is ingrained into girls from youth, the pins hailed users to take their skillset to the "next level." The enmeshment of medicalization, professionalization, and digitization culture is perhaps expected considering the trend for healthcare providers to recruit patients over social media and parlay their expertise into entrepreneurial product lines marketed and sold on the same platforms (Antheunis et al., 2013; Hawn, 2009; Ordon, 2018; Perricone, 2021). This "feeling" of self-determination equips users with the "empowerment" to subject themselves to purchasing healthier makeup. Postfeminist values are packaged through media cultures as a "sensibility"; a feeling or an awareness (Gill, 2007). But coaching consumers to be "autonomous agents no longer constrained by any inequalities or power imbalances whatsoever" (p. 15) disregards the history of sexism in women's medicine and contemporary medicalization in beauty marketing.

3.2. Investing in light skin

Unsurprisingly, many pins addressed facial color and tone. The pin results showcased a variety of skin-lightening products targeting Latina, Asian, and Black skin, clearly idealizing light skinned beauty. Though desires for "lighter skin" are more complex than just Western influence (Darling-Wolf, 2004), many pins promised "white", "light", "brighter", "pearl", and "snow" skin (Pinterest, 2019b) from products like Elizabeth Arden's "White Glove Extreme Brightening UV Protector" and Calvin Klein's "Pure White Whitening Treatment Makeup Base" (Pinterest, 2019a). Simultaneously, pins promoted products with an SPF ranging from 15 to 60, centering sun protection as an important ingredient in "healthy" makeup. Skin "discoloration" was connected to poor SPF discipline. Though dermatologists support that an excessive amount of SPF-laced makeup would need to be applied to reach full sun protection (Cleveland Clinic, 2019), pins aligned themselves with prevention rhetoric promising protection from "harmful rays", "future sun damage", "prematurely aging skin", the "ill effect of the sunburn", and "free radical damage" (Pinterest, 2019b). On one hand, skin-lightening and SPF product pins embodied the discipline demanded of users to prevent "discoloration" (read: dark skin). On the other hand, the same pins were often for products named "Sun Beige" and "Sun-kissed" promising a sun-tanned look (Pinterest, 2019a).

Users may be understandably confused when they are expected to protect their skin to actually *be* healthy, but lighten or darken their skin to make it *look* healthy. In the summer of 2020, this double bind was laid bare when beauty consumers demanded companies support the Black Lives Matter protests following the murder of U.S. citizen George Floyd (Boyd, 30 June 2020). The industry was called out for catering largely to white skin with products labeled "nude" and "tan" but plainly developed for light skin (Wischhover, 2020). The advertising industry has notoriously used health and beauty as proxies for racial-based anxieties (Kilbourne et al., 2010). Racist marketing is present on Pinterest, too, and builds upon these anxieties. Women are implicated differently based on their skin color. By learning of and modeling lightness as a value (Hunter, 2002), pins can encourage users to reassert global social hierarchies of race as well as privilege certain tones over others (Bordo, 1993; Grewal, 1999). Even as pins tout common-sense sun protection, the message to users is to be glowing, even tan, but not dark. By viewing lightness products pinned as "healthy," women of color are expected to see the pins in their search results as legitimate and pin their way to lighter skin (Gill, 2007).

Intersecting the racialization of pins is the economic assets necessary to purchase them. While Pinterest accounts are themselves free, buying pinned products demands substantial economic assets, especially those claiming to be "all-natural," "healthy," and "good for you." This is seen largely in the postfeminist myth of prestige products as "investments." At a glance, Pinterest

search results for "healthy" makeup appear varied, but many pins are for high-end products found at expensive department stores and retailers like Sephora. A pin for Sun Protection Liquid Foundation from Japanese brand Shiseido—one of the oldest cosmetics companies in the world —is priced at $40 an ounce (Pinterest, 2019b). The expected behavior of purchasing (after pinning) monetarily implicates women who make less than men (Barroso & Brown, 2021). Because opting out of makeup application has been correlated with sanctions like lower paying careers (Rhode, 2010), those who cannot participate (i.e. poor women) or choose to opt out face the brunt of these consequences (Bartky, 1988). To sell women on the necessity of high-end products, pins from prestige brands like Dior and La Mer market high-end products as "investments" and promise users a "big return" with "healthier" skin—a clear case of the neoliberal postfeminist sensibility (Gill, 2007). The reigning message in pins fails to consider women's economic realities or actual health.

3.3. Negotiating with "Natural" and DIY products

The "clean beauty" movement appeared in pins repeatedly. "Licorice Root Extract", "vitamin C and E derivatives", and "antioxidant-rich" ingredients invoked the "all-natural" trope to make products sound non-synthetic (Pinterest, 2019b). Some pins promoted products that felt "as if you aren't wearing any makeup at all," yet were steadfast that users should wear it anyway. BareMinerals— the first high-end, mass-produced makeup to be backed by two dermatologists—markets itself as "makeup so pure you can sleep in it" (March, 2017). Some pins drew attention to *actual* healthy characteristics like being "fragrance-free" or "alcohol-free" (Pinterest, 2019b). However, most pins beckoned users to not necessarily be healthy but look healthy with product color names like "natural beige" (Pinterest, 2019b). Products claimed to provide "a glossy healthy looking face" and "a natural, healthy, dewy finish" (Pinterest, 2019a) alongside descriptors like "radiance" and "luminosity" (Pinterest, 2019a). In an objection to "matte", "too thick", "congested", and "the dreaded cakey face" (Pinterest, 2019a), healthy makeup foundation mimicked the "glow" of healthy skin but with a synthetic certainty instead of leaving it to "nature."

There were a handful of pins featuring DIYs (i.e., do it yourself) and non-traditional products. DIY pins made recommendations ranging from repurposing milk of magnesia as a silicone-based makeup primer to "prevent a shiny-oily face and acne" (Pinterest, 2019b) to using zinc-bed diaper rash cream in lieu of a makeup foundation to "even out skin tone and prevent acne!" (Pinterest, 2019b). These pins toed the line of negotiating with the values imbued in the beauty industry. However, corporate marketing values in pins supported an expectation to put something on your face to make it healthier and more beautiful.

By observing what not to do, users learn to pin, purchase, and perform healthy skin by modeling what they see online (Bandura, 2001b). These natural and DIY pins were a site of user negotiation and an important finding in the study but not a rejection of the social construct of beauty. The DIY pins were rare. The early promise of user-generated culture on social media platforms like Pinterest anticipated a democratic online space for users to converge and build community (Baym, 2010; Burgess et al., 2009). However, scholars tempered these claims noting user gener- ated content is easily co-opted as seen by beauty conglomerates on Pinterest (Andrejevic, 2013; Bird, 2011; Van Dijck, 2009). While DIY pins advocate for more accessible and affordable products, they operate within an institution of white male power (i.e. the beauty industry) which capitalizes on female subordination and the empty promise of a cosmopolitan and postfeminist empower- ment (Gill, 2007; Talpade Mohanty, 2013).

4. Discussion

These results corroborate past literature demonstrating that "health" content on Pinterest empha- sizes appearance (Simpson & Mazzeo, 2017). Users were encouraged to perform "health" through their makeup application in order to look healthier and, by extension, more beautiful. Even "natural" or "DIY" pins were merely alternative paths to the same destination. As SCT supports, there is a connection between message production and users' learning processes (Bandura, 2001b). The clear appearance-focus of "healthy" makeup pin results could influence millions of

women's behaviors and standards (Bandura, 2001a). This is enlightening considering young women consume appearance-oriented media online more than any other media source (Bair et al., 2012). The data indicate that "healthy" is just one of many values users ought to adopt when searching for makeup products. Though users may have in mind certain undesirable skin characteristics when conducting consumer research for "healthy" makeup, search results ensure they learn of many more while scrolling.

The search results also produced pins which wholly enacted Pinterest's postfeminist media culture to "make up" at all costs. The costs were expansive including time investment costs, financial costs, personal health costs, and social costs of reasserting global colorism (Fetto, 2020; Fraser, 2021). Time is a necessary asset when pinning. Radway (1984) argues women can use media for empowering experiences, and Antonio (2013) contends Pinterest can create user relaxation through online leisure time. But time paid to Pinterest is labor, nonetheless, to be performed routinely if not round-the clock. While "pinning" may feel like leisurely scrolling to some and disciplined consumer research to others, what is at stake is what women are expected and encouraged to learn along the way. Under the lens of SCT, this is time spent observing, learning, and behaving in a mediated space for a particular outcome: consumerism (Bandura, 2001b). Corporate beauty ideologies are fraught with deadlocks as women are socialized to care about their appearance but criticized for doing so earnestly. Social media platforms like Pinterest enable conversation surrounding these deadlocks. But even as scholars begin to uncover grass-roots-based beauty (and fashion) spheres online (Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015; Duffy, 2017; Liu & Suh, 2017), corporatized influence dominates, as found here.

Pinterest is a vessel of messages that may or may not help users become healthier in their search for "healthy" products. Although "healthy" makeup pins might encourage some users to make safer purchases (e.g., fragrance-free) or even create their own (e.g., DIY), it may simulta-neously impact self-image standards and consumption behaviors negatively. Research has documented the adverse consequences of beauty media on young women especially (Gulas & McKeage, 2000). The deeply embedded medicalization in pins *feels* self-efficacious when women are hailed to pin products that promise better health (Bandura, 2001b). But, as this study concludes, the notion that search results for "healthy" makeup will actually deliver pins which pose less risk to health is tenuous. While pinners are led to believe their labor is in the name of "health," their time may be better spent on behaviors that could actually improve health such as getting skin cancer screenings.

Finally, Pinterest's search algorithm informs the impact of SCT at work here. Importantly, a user who pins frequently will have different search results for "healthy" makeup than a first-time user searching with the same keywords. Because of this, high-frequency pinners will view more pins that link makeup with health and encourage specific behaviors (e.g., consumerism). While pins appear as if they are neutral results for a keyword search, search engine-based platforms like Pinterest are not an equal playing field for collecting health information. Rather, they inherently reinforce systemic oppressions like colorism (Noble, 2018). This study corroborates Noble's (2018) conclusions that Pinterest's search algorithm—like all search engines—privileges whiteness by reinforcing certain standards (e.g., lightness) and behaviors (e.g., skin lightening), thus, further marginalizing women who are already marginalized by systemic racism (2018). Understanding this helps us see how Pinterest could alternatively position itself as a public information sphere that actively works against systemic racism by addressing this in its algorithm and making it transparent to users.

5. Conclusion

This study surfaced and analyzed themes from the first 100 pins of search results for "healthy makeup" on Pinterest. It used SCT and the concept of "postfeminist media culture" as lenses to view Pinterest's influence on social perceptions of health, beauty, and consumption among women. Search results for "healthy makeup" delivered pins which largely valued appearance

concerns, rather than health concerns. While users may aim to use Pinterest to identify healthier products, search results for these keywords produced pins laden with values that have little to do with improved health. Instead, pin results reinforced, at best, medicalizing non-medical skin characteristics and, at worst, systemic oppression like colorism. Pins results also embodied a postfeminist media culture which encouraged users to perform "health" through the disciplined application of specific makeup products.

5.1. Limitations and future research
Pinterest's search algorithm can bias a study's findings because pins are not chronologically organized or time-stamped, meaning search results vary by user. Thus, there is no standardized approach to sampling pins. To combat this, the study followed text-based sampling protocols to analyze the function and use of language in pins rather than frequencies of appearance (L. Boles & Bombard, 1998). Additionally, because this study analyzed pins in regard to a) standards promoted and b) behaviors encouraged (Bandura, 2001b) it cannot draw conclusions about executed behaviors. Future studies should explore how users move from pinning to consuming by interviewing users on how they engage with pins.

Notably, this study uncovered an unexpected finding in the presence of information technology (IT) discourse invoked in health and beauty content on Pinterest. Future studies should analyze the presence of this discourse on other platforms. As health and beauty content online becomes increasingly "native" and difficult to detect in "influencer" marketing, it is important that users know how to critically navigate product information which may adversely impact their health. Considering its popularity among young women, Pinterest is a locale that health experts might consider for communicating messages that could improve health, as scholars have found on social media (Krishnan & Zhou, 2019; Roberts et al., 2017). Pinterest could afford women a space to observe healthy standards and adopt healthy behaviors, as SCT suggests.

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The data that support the study findings are available from the author upon reasonable request.

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